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EUROPE
& PACIFIC
WEEKEND
EDITION

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'The Life of Chuck'
now a film
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JAE C. HONG/AP

California National Guard members stand guard along a street near protesters and Trump supporters in Santa Ana, Calif., on Tuesday.

DOD eyes troops beyond LA

Hegseth: National Guard may be deployed to anti-ICE protests elsewhere

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Wednesday said the National Guard could be deployed to immigration protests beyond Los Angeles and suggested the role of troops in immigration enforcement could expand despite concerns from lawmakers about legality.

Hegseth maintained the call-up of 4,000 National Guard members and 700 active-duty Marines was "lawful and constitutional" and said the same legal authorities that the Pentagon used to mobilize



JOSHUA LOTT/The Washington Post

National Guard soldiers stand in front of a federal building as protests continue Monday after Immigration and Customs Enforcement raids.

the National Guard in California over the objections of its governor could be employed in other cities.

"If there are other riots in places where law enforcement officers are threatened, we would have the capability to surge National Guard there if necessary," he said in testimony to the Senate Appropriation Committee's defense subpanel.

Hegseth did not answer when asked whether he would approve a request from the Department of Homeland Security this week to provide military drone surveil-

SEE TROOPS ON PAGE 8

DOD allows families to exit Mideast amid tension

BY CAITLYN BURCHETT
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Senate hearing to discuss U.S. forces in the Middle East was postponed Wednesday as the Defense Department authorized the families of troops stationed in the region to leave in the face of rising tensions with Iran.

Army Gen. Michael Kurilla, commander of U.S. Central Command, was slated to testify Thursday before the Senate Armed Services Committee about American forces in the region. The hearing was postponed less than 24 hours before it was scheduled to take place, according to a Senate webpage.

Earlier in the day, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth authorized "the voluntary departure" of troops' families from locations across the Middle East due to rising tensions, according to a defense official.

CENTCOM, which oversees U.S. military operations in the Middle East, was working with the State Department and allies in the region to "maintain a constant state of readiness," according to the defense official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The State Department also authorized the departure of nonessential personnel and family members from Bahrain and Kuwait.

Tensions in the region have

SEE TENSION ON PAGE 5

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Breaking down the departure plan for families in Bahrain
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BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Germany	\$3.538	\$4.117	\$4.467	\$3.901	Azores	..	..	\$4.325	..
Change in price	-1.9 cents	-2.5 cents	-3.2 cents	+2.0 cents	Change in price	..	..	-3.2 cents	..
Netherlands	..	\$4.704	5.279	\$4.883	Turkey	..	..	\$4.117	\$4.104*
Change in price	..	+4.0 cents	+4.4 cents	+11.1 cents	Change in price	..	..	-3.2 cents	No change
U.K.	..	\$4.129	\$4.479	\$3.913	Fuel prices are updated daily. These prices are effective June 13. The change in price is from June 6.				
Change in price	..	-2.5 cents	-3.2 cents	+2.0 cents					

PACIFIC GAS PRICES									
Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel					
Japan	..	\$4.099	..	\$3.539	South Korea	\$3.199	..	\$4.129	\$3.569
Change in price	..	-4.0 cents	..	-2.0 cents	Change in price	-2.0 cents	..	-4.0 cents	-2.0 cents
Okinawa	\$3.229	..	..	\$3.539	Guam	\$3.229**	\$3.809	\$4.159	..
Change in price	No change	..	..	-2.0 cents	Change in price	-2.0 cents	-3.0 cents	-3.0 cents	..
*DieselEFD **Midgrade									
Pacific prices for the week of June 13-19									

EXCHANGE RATES									
Military rates									
Euro costs (June 13)				0.84	Switzerland (Franc)				0.8125
British pound (June 13)				\$1.33	Thailand (Baht)				32.38
Japanese yen (June 13)				141.00	Turkey (NewLira)				39.3244
South Korean won (June 13)				1334.00	(Military exchange rates are those available to customers at military banking facilities in the country of issuance for Japan, South Korea, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. For nonlocal currency exchange rates (i.e., purchasing British pounds in Germany), check with your local military banking facility. Commercial rates are interbank rates provided for reference when buying currency. All figures are foreign currencies to one dollar, except for the British pound, which is represented in dollars-to-pound, and the euro, which is dollars-to-euro.)				
Commercial rates					INTEREST RATES				
Bahrain (Dinar)				0.3745	Prime rate				7.50
Britain (Pound)				1.3595	Interest Rates Discount rate				4.50
Canada (Dollar)				1.3621	Federal funds market rate				4.38
China (Yuan)				7.1928	3-month bill				4.37
Denmark (Krone)				6.4387	30-year bond				4.91
Egypt (Pound)				49.7717					
Euro				0.8632					
Hong Kong (Dollar)				7.8493					
Hungary (Forint)				346.03					
Israel (Shekel)				3.5587					
Japan (Yen)				143.51					
Kuwait (Dinar)				0.3052					
Norway (Krone)				9.9559					
Philippines (Peso)				55.64					
Poland (Zloty)				3.68					
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)				3.7470					
Singapore (Dollar)				1.2793					
South Korea (Won)				1354.67					

WEATHER OUTLOOK



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MILITARY

At hearing, top general breaks with Trump

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff contradicts president's assessment of Russia threat, Los Angeles protests

BY ABIGAIL HAUSLOHNER
The Washington Post

Air Force Gen. Dan Caine, who since becoming chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in April has assiduously avoided the public spotlight, on Wednesday broke with President Donald Trump's assessment of the threat posed by Russia and the ongoing protests and violence in Los Angeles.

Caine's comments during a Senate Appropriations subcommittee hearing were restrained but significant, coming from the nation's top military officer who Democrats and moderate Republicans had feared might show little appetite for going against a president prone to pushing falsehoods in pursuit of his political agenda.

Trump has routinely downplayed alarm about Vladimir Putin's territorial ambitions in Eastern Europe and, in an address this week, branded those in the United States protesting his immigration policies as agents of a "foreign invasion." But Caine declined to confirm either assessment.

When asked by Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., whether Putin intends to "stop in Ukraine," the general was frank: "I don't believe so, sir."

When pressed by Sen. Brian Schatz, D-Hawaii, to say if he believes the demonstrations and violence in Los Angeles are a sign the United States is "being invaded by



ROD LAMKEY JR./AP

Gen. Dan Caine, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, testifies during a Senate Committee on Appropriations subcommittee hearing on Capitol Hill on Wednesday in Washington.

a foreign nation," as Trump told an audience of soldiers Tuesday in North Carolina, Caine said he doesn't.

"At this point in time, I don't see any foreign, state-sponsored folks invading," the general replied, before adding, "but I'll be mindful of the fact that there has been some border issues throughout time."

When Schatz asked if there has been a "rebellion" against the government, another politically charged term the president and his administration have employed since unrest flared in Southern California, Caine declined to affirm that either. "I think there's

definitely some frustrated folks out there," he offered.

Trump's second term in office has been remarkable, in part, for the frequency with which false and misleading statements by the president go unchecked by a majority of Republicans on Capitol Hill, and Caine's responses Wednesday offered a stark contrast with the man seated beside him, Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth.

As the president's top military adviser, the Joint Chiefs chairman is expected to provide honest and unflinching advice to the commander in chief, the defense

secretary and to Congress, even when that assessment conflicts with the political messaging of the administration in power. During his confirmation hearing, Caine, a surprise selection for the job after Trump abruptly fired the general's predecessor, Air Force Gen. CQ Brown Jr., in February, promised to earn lawmakers' trust.

Hegseth tried to paper over what Caine had said.

"It's quite easy to point out that there has been an invasion of 21 million illegals in our country under the previous administration," he told Schatz. "So this administration was elected to get a hold of that."

To Graham's question about Putin's intent to pummel Ukraine and turn his war machine westward, Hegseth allowed only that "it remains to be seen."

Graham — whom Republican lawmakers often view as the senator best equipped to persuade the president on the GOP's more traditional foreign policy postures — laughed. "Well, he says he's not," the senator said, referencing the Russian leader. He likened Putin's ambitions to Adolf Hitler's stated intentions to kill Jews and take over Europe in the 1930s. "It doesn't remain to be seen," Graham went on. Putin, he added, "tells everybody around what he wants to do."

Wednesday's hearing was the second time in as many days that

Hegseth and Caine faced lawmakers' questions, while another hearing, before the House Armed Services Committee, was set for Thursday. Senate Democrats, just as their House counterparts had on Tuesday, seized the opportunity to attack Hegseth's record of "chaos and poor judgment" while helming the Defense Department, and his unwillingness to respond to congressional inquiries and the news media.

The Trump administration has so far failed to provide Congress with a complete defense budget proposal for the coming fiscal year, and meanwhile the Pentagon has diverted funds meant to rebuild barracks and improve U.S. troops' quality of life to support instead Trump's immigration crackdown on the U.S.-Mexico border, said Sen. Chris Coons of Delaware, the subcommittee's top Democrat.

Coons accused Hegseth of committing the "unthinkable" mistake of sharing sensitive military plans over an unclassified messaging app, including with members of his family; of firing some of the military's most senior commanders "without cause"; and of "censoring" military academies' libraries.

"Far more of your time so far has been spent inside the building on culture wars, rather than outside the building, deterring real ones," Coons said.

Hegseth gets pushback from both parties on defense spending plan

BY CAROLINE COUDRIET
CQ-Roll Call

WASHINGTON — Senate appropriators from both parties denounced Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Wednesday for relying on Republicans' partisan budget reconciliation bill to meet his spending objectives in fiscal 2026.

The Trump administration has proposed spending \$1.011 trillion on national security in fiscal 2026, with \$961.6 billion for the Defense Department — but that total would include \$113.3 billion from the reconciliation bill currently making its way through Congress.

"Reconciliation, Mr. Secretary, was meant to provide one-time supplemental funds to augment the defense budget, not to supplant the investments that should be in the base budget," said Senate Appropriations Chair Susan Collins, R-Maine.

Without the reconciliation dollars, the budget calls for \$848.3 billion in base funding for the Pentagon — roughly on par with fiscal

2025 spending levels.

"DOD's ability to take care of our warfighters should not be contingent on whether Congress can pass a bill that also explodes the national debt, gives billionaires tax cuts, cuts access to health care — in short, is controversial and uncertain," said Sen. Chris Coons, D-Del., ranking member of the panel's Defense subcommittee.

Hegseth defended his department's approach, suggesting that lawmakers view reconciliation spending and base budget spending as two parts of the same whole.

"We have two bills and one budget," he said. "Ultimately we're looking at it as one investment for FY26."

Senators also took Hegseth to task for what Collins called an "unacceptably slow" release of its budget plans. The Pentagon last month unveiled a "skinny budget" for fiscal 2026 but has yet to publicly release the in-depth budget details that typically help Congress craft spending bills.

"The department has been AWOL in the '26 debate, as it was in the '25 debate," Coons said. "The department's inability to explain its budget is slowly making it less relevant to what it receives in fiscal year '26 in our appropriations process."

Hegseth and Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., who chairs the Defense Appropriations subcommittee, also sparred over the administration's approach to Russia's war in Ukraine. McConnell repeatedly pressed Hegseth to clarify which side he believes is the aggressor and who he hopes will prevail.

"Which side do you want to win?" McConnell asked.

"As we've said time and time again, this president is committed to peace," Hegseth replied.

The Trump administration in March paused U.S. aid shipments to Ukraine, instead urging European allies to do more to support Ukraine as the conflict stretches into its fourth year.

Meanwhile, the House's draft



ROD LAMKEY JR./AP

Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth testifies during a Senate Committee on Appropriations subcommittee hearing on Capitol Hill on Wednesday in Washington.

Defense appropriations spending bill, unveiled this week, would not provide any money for the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, which has previously enjoyed bipartisan support.

Hegseth was also pressed on recent reports that the Pentagon diverted thousands of anti-drone missiles originally intended for Ukraine to American forces in the Middle East.

"Is there any plan to provide Ukraine with the necessary technology to replace those anti-drone defenses?" asked Sen. Jerry Moran, R-Kan.

"We would have to review the capacity," Hegseth responded. "But it's one of the challenges of all the munitions that we've given to Ukraine over these three years — it's created some challenges in other places."

MILITARY



Capt. Charles Chmielak, the new commanding officer of Naval Station Rota, Spain, gives remarks during the change of command ceremony on Thursday. Chmielak took over from Capt. Teague Suarez.

Helo pilot Chmielak assumes command of NS Rota in Spain

By ALISON BATH
Stars and Stripes

NAPLES, Italy — A helicopter pilot whose career includes service at U.S. Africa Command took the helm Thursday of one of the Navy’s most strategic bases in Europe and the Middle East.

Capt. Charles Chmielak took over from Capt. Teague Suarez as commander of Naval Station Rota, Spain, on Thursday.

Rear Adm. Brad Collins, commander of Navy Region Europe, Africa, Central, presided over the roughly one-hour ceremony that included Spanish military officers and other dignitaries.

Chmielak, a U.S. Naval Academy graduate whose most recent assignment was at the Bureau of Naval Personnel in Millington, Tenn., also has served as commanding officer of Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 6 in San Diego, according to his LinkedIn biography.

He spent two years in Stuttgart, Germany, supporting short and long-range planning at AFRICOM and was a department head and maintenance officer in separate as-

signments with Helicopter Sea Combat Squadron 8 in San Diego, the biography states.

Chmielak said the principles of readiness, steadfastness and professionalism would guide him at NS Rota. Supporting Navy families would be a top priority as well, he said.

“They are the strength behind the uniform and the heart of our success,” he said. “When we take care of our people, we take care of the mission.”

Suarez, who took command of NS Rota in July 2022, oversaw the base as it expanded its destroyer fleet with the addition of USS Oscar Austin last fall, a long-awaited increase in NATO firepower.

In addition to an airfield, the base is the homeport for five destroyers that deploy throughout Europe, Africa and the Middle East. A sixth destroyer is anticipated to join the squadron next year.

Suarez also was responsible for overseeing the transport and redeployment of over 2,000 tons of equipment from U.S. bases in Niger last year and for 16 major infrastructure projects at Rota, including an explo-

sive ordnance disposal facility, Collins said.

Those and other accomplishments, such as quality-of-life initiatives for Navy families, impacted the lives of sailors, strengthened relations with Spain and increased the service’s capacities and capabilities throughout the region, Collins said.

Suarez was awarded the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct. His next assignment is as chief of staff at U.S. Naval Forces Japan.

In relinquishing command, Suarez encouraged sailors to remember their oath to the Constitution in weathering change and to reject the idea that strength comes from “tearing down or pushing out.”

“Our strength, the strength of our nation has, and I hope will always be, our steadfast dedication to keeping alive the flame of this last great experiment for promoting human happiness — the flame of a nation which was founded on the loftiest human ideals of equality,” said Suarez, who graduated from the Naval Academy in 1998 and has served in the Navy for more than 27 years.

Hegseth: DOD has contingency plans to take Greenland

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth appeared to acknowledge that the Pentagon has developed plans to take over Greenland and Panama by force if necessary but refused to answer repeated questions during a hotly combative congressional hearing Thursday about his use of Signal chats to discuss military operations.

Democratic members of the House Armed Services Committee repeatedly got into heated exchanges with Hegseth, with some of the toughest lines of questioning coming from military veterans as many demanded yes or no answers and he tried to avoid direct responses about his actions as Pentagon chief.

In one back-and-forth, Hegseth did provide an eyebrow-raising answer. Rep. Adam Smith, D-Wash., asked whether the Pentagon has plans to take Greenland or Panama by force if necessary.

“Our job at the Defense Department is to have plans for any contingency,” Hegseth said several times.

It is not unusual for the Pentagon to draw up contingency plans for conflicts that have not arisen, but his handling of the questions prompted a Republican lawmaker to step in a few minutes later.

“It is not your testimony today that there are plans at the Pentagon for taking by force or invading Greenland, correct?” said Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio.

As Hegseth started to repeat his answer about contingency plans, Turner added emphatically, “I sure as hell hope that is not your testimony.”

“We look forward to working with Greenland to ensure that it is secured from any potential threats,” Hegseth responded.

Time and again, lawmakers pressed Hegseth to answer questions he has avoided for months, including during the two previous

days of hearings on Capitol Hill. And frustration boiled over.

“You’re an embarrassment to this country. You’re unfit to lead,” Rep. Salud Carbajal snapped, the California Democrat’s voice rising. “You should just get the hell out.”

President Donald Trump has said multiple times that he wants to take control of the strategic, mineral-rich island nation of Greenland, long a U.S. ally. Those remarks have been met with flat rejections from Greenland’s leaders.

“Greenland is not for sale,” Jacob Isboethsen, Greenland’s representative to the U.S., said Thursday at a forum in Washington sponsored by the Arctic Institute.

In an effort not to show the Pentagon’s hand on its routine effort to have plans for everything, Hegseth danced around the direct question from Smith, leading to the confusion.

Hegseth’s use of two Signal chats to discuss plans for U.S. strikes on Houthi rebels in Yemen with other U.S. leaders as well as members of his family prompted dizzying exchanges with lawmakers.

He was pressed multiple times over whether he shared classified information and if he should face accountability if he did.

Hegseth argued that the classification markings of any information about those military operations could not be discussed with lawmakers. That became a quick trap, as Hegseth has asserted that nothing he posted — on strike times and munitions dropped in March — was classified. His questioner, Rep. Seth Moulton, a Massachusetts Democrat and Marine veteran, jumped on the disparity.

“You can very well disclose whether or not it was classified,” Moulton said.

“What’s not classified is that it was an incredible, successful mission,” Hegseth responded.

Hegseth resists when pushed to explain Air Force One deal

The Washington Post

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth on Wednesday resisted lawmakers’ demands for transparency about the luxury airplane from Qatar that President Donald Trump wants to use as Air Force One, rebuffing several sharp questions about the Boeing 747-8 jetliner and the terms surrounding its transfer to the U.S. government.

At a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Demo-

crats were intently focused on the plane that Trump has claimed would be a “gift” to the United States. The Pentagon said last month that it had taken possession of the jetliner, even though legal teams representing the two countries have not finalized an agreement that would allow such a transfer.

Hegseth confirmed the agreement has not been signed despite one of his top aides having claimed

that the secretary had accepted the Qatari jet. Yet Hegseth declined to answer several other questions about it, citing the unclassified nature of the hearing.

When Sen. Jack Reed, D-R.I., asked how long it might take for a contractor to reconfigure the aircraft to meet rigorous safety and security standards for the Air Force One mission, Hegseth said that information was “not for public consumption.”

Hegseth also said he could not reveal the cost of such a contract, a rebuff that appeared to anger the usually low-key Reed, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

“Why can’t it be revealed in this setting?” Reed snapped. “This is the Appropriations Committee of the United States Senate. We appropriate the money that you will spend after it’s authorized by my committee.”

Air Force officials estimated it could cost \$1.5 billion to bring the Qatari plane up to satisfactory maintenance conditions for presidential transport, and another \$500 million to remove the military gear and convert the aircraft for civilian use after Trump’s term.

Trump, who has denied the plane is a personal gift to him, has said the aircraft would be transferred to his presidential library after he leaves office.

MIDEAST

Iran announces 3rd nuclear enrichment site

By **STEPHANIE LIECHTENSTEIN**
AND **JON GAMBRELL**
Associated Press

VIENNA — Iran said it has built and will activate a third nuclear enrichment facility, ratcheting up tensions with the U.N. on Thursday immediately after its atomic watchdog agency censured Iran for failing to comply with nonproliferation obligations meant to prevent it from developing a nuclear weapon.

“The Islamic Republic of Iran has no choice but to respond to this political resolution,” the Iranian Foreign Ministry and Atomic Energy Organization said in a joint statement.

The censure by the International Atomic Energy Agency, its first in 20 years over Iranian non-compliance, could set in motion an effort to restore sanctions on Iran later this year.

U.S. President Donald Trump had previously warned that Israel or America could launch airstrikes against Iranian nuclear facilities if negotiators failed to reach a deal on Iran’s rapidly advancing nuclear program. A sixth round of Iran-U.S. talks is scheduled to begin Sunday in Oman, and as tensions simmer some American government staffers deemed nonessential have begun leaving the Gulf region.

Nineteen countries on the IAEA’s board of governors voted for the resolution to censure Iran, according to diplomats who spoke on condition of anonymity to describe the outcome of the closed-doors vote.

The resolution was put forward by France, the United Kingdom, Germany and the U.S. Russia, China and Burkina Faso opposed it, while 11 abstained and two did not vote.

The resolution calls on Iran to provide answers “without delay” in a long-running investigation into traces of uranium found at several locations Tehran has failed to declare as nuclear sites, according to a draft seen by The Associated Press.

Western officials suspect the uranium traces could provide further evidence that Iran had a secret nuclear weapons program until 2003.

Speaking to Iranian state television after the U.N. agency’s vote, the spokesman for the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran said that his agency immediately informed the IAEA of actions Tehran would take.

“One is the launch of a third secure site” for enrichment, spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi said. He did not elaborate on the location, but the organization’s chief, Mohammad Eslami, later de-

scribed the site as “already built, prepared, and located in a secure and invulnerable place.”

Another step would be replacing old centrifuges with advanced ones at an underground site at Fordo. “Our production of enriched materials will significantly increase,” Kamalvandi said.

Iran has two underground sites, at Fordo and Natanz, and it has been building tunnels in the mountains near Natanz since suspected Israeli sabotage attacks targeted that facility.

Iran said other measures were also being planned in response to the U.N. agency’s censure. The IAEA draft resolution said “Iran’s many failures to uphold its obligations since 2019 to provide the Agency with full and timely cooperation regarding undeclared nuclear material and activities at multiple undeclared locations in Iran ... constitutes non-compli-

ance with its obligations.”

Under those obligations, which are part of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran is legally bound to declare all nuclear material and activities and allow IAEA inspectors to verify that none of it is being diverted from peaceful uses.

The IAEA’s draft resolution hints at reporting Iran to the U.N. Security Council to consider more sanctions, stressing that the global body is the “organ bearing the main responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security.”

It also said it supports “a diplomatic solution to the problems,” which includes the talks between the U.S. and Iran.

A senior Western diplomat last week described the U.N. watchdog resolution as a “serious step,” but added that Western nations are “not closing the door to diplomacy on this issue.”



J.P. LAWRENCE/Stars and Stripes

Troops belonging to multiple organizations are stationed at Naval Support Activity Bahrain.

Tension: Caution is urged

FROM PAGE 1

been rising in recent days as talks between the U.S. and Iran over its advancing nuclear program appear to have hit an impasse, the Associated Press reported.

The talks seek to limit Iran’s nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of some of the crushing economic sanctions that the U.S. has imposed on the Islamic Republic. Iran insists its nuclear program is peaceful.

President Donald Trump, who has previously threatened to use military force against Iran if negotiations failed, gave a less-than-optimistic view about reaching a deal with Iran, telling the New York Post’s “Pod Force One” podcast Monday that he was “getting more and more less confident about” a deal.

Iranian Defense Minister Gen. Aziz Nasirzadeh told journalists Wednesday that he hoped talks with the U.S. would yield results, though Tehran stood ready to re-

spond, the AP reported.

“If conflict is imposed on us, the opponent’s casualties will certainly be more than ours, and in that case, America must leave the region, because all its bases are within our reach,” he said. “We have access to them, and we will target all of them in the host countries without hesitation.”

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, a Mideast-based effort overseen by the British navy, issued a statement Wednesday warning ships in the region that it “has been made aware of increased tensions within the region which could lead to an escalation of military activity having a direct impact on mariners.”

It urged caution in the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz.

It did not name Iran, though those waterways have seen Iranian ship seizures and attacks in the past.

Breaking down the departure plan for US military families in Bahrain

By **SHANNON RENFROE**
AND **LARA KORTE**
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — Military family members in the Middle East are now authorized to fly anywhere in the United States at government expense for up to six months under guidance released by base officials in Bahrain, as expectations mount of conflict between Israel and Iran.

The decision to depart is voluntary for spouses, children and other dependents in Bahrain, an island kingdom located less than 100 miles across the Persian Gulf from Iran. The country hosts the U.S. 5th Fleet.

Flight tickets will be issued through military travel agencies and officials have discouraged families from booking commercially out of Bahrain. Reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenses isn’t guaranteed, according to a fact sheet disseminated by the U.S. military.

Officials expect a quick turnaround on issuing tickets, though processing time could depend on the volume of requests received. It remained unclear Thursday just how many people planned to take the offer.

Those who do leave will receive a per diem stipend for expenses while the voluntary departure rules remain in place. The pay drops from 100% of authorized rates to 60% after 30 days for dependents over 12; children younger than that receive 50% of the authorized locality rate for the first month, and 30% afterward, up to 180 days.

Students at Department of Defense Education Activity school in Bahrain may choose to disenroll if they take the voluntary departure due to its length, DODEA spokeswoman Jessica Tackaberry said Thursday.

Families are expected to enroll their children in a school near their designated safe haven. However, high school students enrolled in DODEA’s Expanded Eligibility Pilot Program may take online courses if their new schools do not offer the classes needed to stay on track for graduation.

A departure checklist notes that families can ship up to 350 pounds of unaccompanied baggage per dependent 12 years and older or 175 pounds for those under 12, with a total not exceeding 1,000 pounds.

Dependents can take up to two household pets — defined as cats and dogs — if they currently own them at their permanent duty stations.

For households with two active duty parents or a single parent, one guardian is authorized to escort children to the departure location and must have a plan in place for the dependent at their safe haven location before leaving.

Mission essential personnel aren’t authorized to travel with their dependents to the safe haven location unless they are unable to travel alone.

Authorized locations include all states, Washington D.C., Puerto Rico, the Northern Mariana Islands and U.S. territories.

An alert from the Joint Maritime Information Center in Bahrain warned Wednesday that any hostilities between Israel and Iran could spill over into the broader region.

Alerts went out on Wednesday to service members as reports came in of the State Department also drawing down the presence of nonessential staffers throughout the region.

In addition to ordering the departure of personnel in Iraq, the State Department on Thursday restricted government employees and their families in Israel from traveling outside the greater Tel Aviv area.

The department added that mortar, rocket and missile fire, as well as drone attacks, often take place without any warning. Employees and their families should know the location of the nearest shelter, the advisory said.

The U.S. for months has been in engaged in stalled talks with Iran over the future of its nuclear program while also trying to negotiate a peace deal between Israel and the Iranian-backed Hamas in Gaza.

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been under public pressure over exemptions that allow ultra-Orthodox citizens to avoid registering for military service. The 20-month war in Gaza has required repeated call-ups of Israeli reservists.

Netanyahu survived an attempt to dissolve parliament Thursday morning with support from ultra-Orthodox coalition partners.

PACIFIC

Chinese fighter jets tail Japanese patrols

BY BRIAN McELHINEY
AND KEISHI KOJA
Stars and Stripes

Chinese fighter jets had two close encounters with Japanese patrol aircraft as Beijing's two aircraft carriers operated simultaneously in the Pacific for the first time, according to Japan's military.

A Shenyang J-15 carrier-based fighter tailed a Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force P-3C patrol plane for 40 minutes Saturday morning and 80 minutes Sunday afternoon, coming within 150 feet of the Japanese aircraft during both incidents, the Ministry of Defense said in a news release Wednesday.

On Sunday, a J-15 also crossed within 3,000 feet in front of the Japanese aircraft.

A photo released by the ministry shows the Chinese jet flying to the left of the P-3C over international waters.

No injuries or damage oc-



Japan's Ministry of Defense

A Chinese J-15 carrier-based fighter flew unusually close to a Japanese P-3C patrol aircraft twice over the weekend, Japan's Ministry of Defense said Wednesday.

curred, the ministry said.

A spokesman with Japan's Joint Staff did not confirm

whether the same Chinese jet was involved in both incidents. Some Japanese government offi-

cials speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

"The unusual approach of such Chinese military aircraft could provoke accidental collisions," the release said.

The ministry called on Beijing to prevent similar incidents in the future.

Both encounters involved a J-15 that had taken off from the aircraft carrier Shandong, one of five Chinese warships operating about 340 miles southeast of Miyako Island.

The group entered Japan's exclusive economic zone, or EEZ, on Monday, according to a Joint Staff news release that day.

Meanwhile, the aircraft carrier Liaoning and three accompanying warships were spotted over the weekend in Japan's easternmost EEZ, approximately 185 miles southwest of Minamitorishima, the Joint Staff said Sunday.

It marked the first time China's

two carriers have been seen operating simultaneously in the Pacific, Defense Minister Gen Nakatani said Tuesday during a news conference in Tokyo.

The movements are likely part of Beijing's efforts to expand its blue-water naval capabilities, a Joint Staff spokesperson told Stars and Stripes this week.

In response, Japan is "advancing the installment of mobile warning and control radars in the remote islands on the Pacific side to strengthen air defense in the surrounding airspace of our nation," Nakatani said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said at a news conference Monday that the carriers' operations are "fully consistent with international law and international practices."

In a post Tuesday on its official X account, the Chinese navy said the carriers were "[testing] their capabilities in far seas protection and joint operations."

Restored US bomber to go on display in Papua New Guinea

BY SETH ROBSON
Stars and Stripes

An American bomber from World War II that sat hidden in Papua New Guinea's jungle for decades will soon go on display at a museum in Port Moresby, the island nation's capital, according to the Australian air force.

The Douglas A-20 Havoc, built in 1943 in Long Beach, Calif., was assigned to 5th Air Force during the war and crash-landed in the island's interior after a combat mission the following year.

Known as the Hell'n Pelican II, the aircraft was rediscovered in 1976 and has since undergone extensive restoration in Australia.

The bomber was shipped to Melbourne in 1943 before being flown to Papua New Guinea — then the Australian-administered Territory of New Guinea — according to information published June 6 on the Pacific Wrecks website. In March 1944, it arrived at Gusap Airfield, where it was assigned to 2nd Lt. Charles Davidson and Sgt. John McKenna.

Painted with nose art of a pelican carrying a bomb, the Hell'n Pelican II flew its first mission on March 29, 1944, striking Bunabun Harbor at low altitude, according to Pacific Wrecks.

On April 16, the bomber participated in another low-level strike on Holladia — present-day Jayapura — before running low on fuel in poor weather and crash-landing near the village of Amalmon.

"During the landing the propellers were bent backward and the leading edge of the left wing was damaged when it impacted small trees," the website states.



PHOTOS BY JESSICA GRAY/Australian Defence

Crew members painted the Douglas A-20 Havoc bomber Hell'n Pelican II with an image of a pelican carrying a bomb.



The Hell'n Pelican II is loaded onto the ADV Reliant in Townsville, Australia, on June 5, for transport to the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery.



The Hell'n Pelican II is loaded onto the ADV Reliant in Townsville, Australia, on June 5.

Behind enemy lines, Davidson and McKenna received air-dropped supplies, including a radio and life raft, according to Pacific Wrecks. The pair evaded Japanese patrols and crocodiles for two weeks, eventually floating down the Gogol River to safety. They were rescued by the Australian ship HMAS Matafele and returned to Gusap Airfield.

Covered by vegetation, the bomber remained hidden until its discovery in 1976.

Six years later, the Papua New Guinea government offered the Havoc and another airframe to the Australian air force for restoration, Squadron Leader Karyn Markwell, an Australian air force history and heritage spokeswoman, said by email June 5.

In 1984, a CH-47 Chinook airlifted the bomber to the HMAS Tarakan, a landing craft, which sailed it to Australia, Markwell said.

Restoration efforts were carried out from 1985 to 1993 at bases in Richmond, Wagga and Amberly, using parts from other Havoc fuselages.

Although the restored aircraft was gifted to the Papua New Guinea National Museum and Art Gallery in 1996, it remained at Amberly's aviation heritage center while a dedicated exhibit space was built.

The aircraft was recently disassembled and shipped back to Papua New Guinea aboard the ADV Reliant, Markwell said.

It is scheduled to be unveiled at the museum's new Aviation Heritage Hangar in time for the 50th anniversary of Papua New Guinea's independence on Sept. 16.

PACIFIC

N. Korea broadcast stops as strain eases

BY DAVID CHOI
AND YOOJIN LEE
Stars and Stripes

North Korea stopped broadcasting propaganda along the inter-Korean border late Wednesday, hours after the South took the first step by silencing its own loudspeakers — a move aimed at easing tensions.

South Korea halted its broadcasts along the 160-mile Demilitarized Zone at 2 p.m. Wednesday, according to a statement from the presidential office the

following day.

By that evening, no North Korean broadcasts were heard along the border, South Korean army Col. Lee Sung-jun said during a news conference Thursday.

The South's loudspeakers have typically played K-pop music, news and other content intended to challenge Pyongyang's ideological control. North Korea's broadcasts, in contrast, feature political monologues condemning South Korean society and democratic governance.

The mutual silence follows a move by newly inaugurated South Korean President Lee Jae-myung, who campaigned on restoring trust with the North. It also marks one of the first foreign policy actions of his administration.

In June 2024, then-President Yoon Suk Yeol restarted the loudspeakers after a six-year pause, citing North Korean ballistic missile tests and waves of trash-carrying balloons launched into the South.

The escalation led both coun-

tries to scrap a 2018 agreement that restricted military drills and flights near the heavily fortified border.

Pyongyang's quick response may indicate openness to improved relations under the new administration, said Koh Yuhwan, professor emeritus of North Korean studies at Dongguk University in Seoul, South Korea.

"North Korea will pay attention to how the new South Korean government will define its

stance," he told Stars and Stripes by phone Thursday. "Since South Korea has made positive moves, I believe North Korea will refrain from further provocations."

Koh added that while immediate reconciliation is unlikely, gradual steps could lead to a more stable relationship.

"It would be hard to return immediately to the peaceful past," he said. "However, we can expect North Korea to adjust their stance on South Korea, not aggravating our current situation."

Iwakuni base marks bomb-scarred Zero Hangar's decades of history

BY JANIQUEA ROBINSON
Stars and Stripes

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI, Japan — For decades, it stood largely ignored, its thick concrete walls weathered by air raids and time — a relic from a different era, tucked away on this modern military installation south of Hiroshima.

On Wednesday evening, the Zero Hangar was formally rededicated in a ceremony that sought to both honor the past and underscore the present strength of the U.S.-Japan alliance.

The event drew a crowd of American and Japanese military personnel, including Rear Adm. Ichiro Ishikawa, head of Fleet Air Wing 31 of the Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force.

The air station's commander, Col. Richard Rusnok, delivered remarks that recalled MCAS Iwakuni's wartime role and the hangar's survival. During World War II, the base served as a training site for the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service and became the target of repeated American air raids.

"On 9 August 1945, Iwakuni was once again attacked by B-24s from the 11th Bomb Group operating out of Okinawa with a focus on roads, railways, remaining oil facilities, and the air station," Rusnok told the crowd. "In this raid,



Marines rehearse in front of the Zero Hangar ahead of a rededication ceremony Wednesday for the historic structure.

three of the hangars were destroyed with likely casualties in at least one of those hangars where civilians took shelter."

The Zero Hangar was the only one of its kind left standing after the bombings, its 40-centimeter-thick concrete walls withstanding blasts that flattened the rest of the base.

The structure is believed to have housed various aircraft during the war, including the Mitsubishi A6M, better known as the Zero, or Type 00. Sleek and maneuverable, the aircraft played a central role in the war's closing chapters.

"It fell into disrepair over the years," Rusnok said of the hangar. "It was slated for demolition multiple times. At times, deployed personnel found reasons to bor-

row their leader's cars and park in the top of the hangar — a true testament to the strength of materials used to build it."

Rusnok shared insight into the hangar's unofficial legacy among the U.S. military community.

"There was also a 'Zero Hangar qualification' that involved riding a bicycle over the top," he said, drawing laughter from the crowd. "As air station commander, I implore you not to do any of those activities today."

In 1986, the base's then-commander, Col. D.J. McCarthy, worked with the Japanese American Cultural Friendship Association to preserve the structure and repurpose it as a museum. A replica Zero aircraft — used in the 1984 Japanese film "Zero Fighter in



PHOTOS BY JANIQUEA ROBINSON/Stars and Stripes

Guests check out the replica Zero fighter on display inside the historic Zero Hangar at Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

Flames" — was placed inside.

Navy Chief Petty Officer Steve Parson collaborated with Petty Officer 1st Class Andrew Busken, the Seabee lead, to spruce up the hangar, according to a statement emailed Thursday by 2nd Lt. Justin Weinstein, a base spokesman. As part of the project, the team added custom-built display cases to showcase key artifacts tied to the hangar's history.

The displays include a historical flag signed by Japanese Imperial pilots, a parachute, and a letter from the film studio that donated

the Zero replica to the air station, the statement said.

"Today, we are here to rededicate that museum, nearly 40 years from when it opened and 80 years later from when the shrapnel scars on its outside were made by falling bombs," Rusnok said at the rededication. "Tonight is an opportunity to remember the past, but also to celebrate all that is good here in Iwakuni. There is no greater force for good in the Indo-Pacific region than the U.S.-Japan alliance, and that alliance is stronger than ever here in Iwakuni."

Army rotates Colorado-based Stryker brigade to South Korea

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — A Stryker brigade from Colorado arrived in South Korea late last month as the Army's latest rotational unit tasked with deterring regional threats for the next nine months.

Soldiers from the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division out of Fort Carson landed at Osan Air Base on May 30

to replace troops from the 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 7th Infantry Division, according to an Eighth Army news release.

The outgoing Stryker team, out of Joint Base Lewis-McChord, Wash., has served in South Korea since October. It will officially transfer authority to the incoming team in a ceremony Wednesday at Camp Casey, about 15 miles from the border with North Korea.

"Our presence in Korea is a

clear demonstration of U.S. resolve, and the Raider Brigade is honored to enhance our long-standing alliance," Col. Clint Tisserand of 4th ID said in the release. "This deployment is more than a rotation; it's a chance to sharpen our edge and uphold the commitment we share with [South Korea]."

During its rotation, the 7th ID soldiers took part in numerous joint drills with South Korean

troops, including the 10-day Freedom Shield exercise on air, land, sea and cyberspace.

Roughly 3,500 soldiers and 1,500 pre-positioned vehicles comprise the rotational force, which supports the 2nd Infantry Division headquartered at Camp Humphreys, the largest U.S. military installation overseas.

The Army began rotating units into South Korea in 2013 to bolster the country's defenses against the

North, while also offering U.S.-based soldiers the opportunity to train in unfamiliar terrain. The rotations are also viewed as a deterrent to China's growing military influence in the region.

Initially composed of armored brigade combat teams with heavy equipment like M1A2 Abrams tanks, the rotational force shifted in 2022 to lighter, more mobile Stryker brigades equipped with eight-wheeled combat vehicles.

Use of troops to help raids faces test in court

By Jake Offenhartz
and Hallie Golden
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — President Donald Trump’s use of troops to help carry out intensified immigration raids faces its biggest challenge yet on Thursday, when a federal judge is set to weigh a request from California Gov. Gavin Newsom to put an emergency stop to the practice.

Newsom has warned that the military intervention is part of a broader effort by Trump to overturn norms at the heart of the nation’s democracy. He also said that sending National Guard troops on the raids has further inflamed tensions in Los Angeles, where large and sometimes volatile protests have broken out since the crackdown began nearly a week ago.

The Trump administration on Wednesday called the lawsuit a “crass political stunt endangering American lives.” A hearing is set for Thursday afternoon.

Demonstrations have picked up across the U.S., with protests popping up in more than a dozen major cities. On Wednesday, police in Seattle used pepper spray to clear out protesters, and officers in Denver used smoke and pepper balls to



JAE C. HONG/AP

Members of the California National Guard conduct exercises after being deployed to the LA protests Wednesday, in Los Alamitos, Calif.

control a crowd.

Police in riot gear — many on horseback — charged at a group of protesters Wednesday night in LA just before the start of the second night of the city’s downtown curfew. The officers struck some demonstrators with wooden rods and later fired crowd-control projectiles. After the curfew went into effect, a handful of arrests were made before the area cleared out.

The Trump administration has rapidly expanded military to deployments to Los Angeles over the past week and has said it is willing to send troops to other cities to assist with immigration enforcement and controlling disturbances — in line with what Trump promised during last year’s campaign.

Some 2,000 Guard soldiers are in the nation’s second-largest city and are soon to be joined by 2,000 more,

along with about 700 Marines, said Maj. Gen. Scott Sherman, who’s in charge of the operation.

About 500 of the Guard troops deployed to the Los Angeles protests have been trained to accompany agents on immigration operations, the commander said Wednesday. The Guard has the authority to temporarily detain people who attack officers, but any arrests must be made by law enforcement.

While some troops have already gone on such missions, he said it’s too early to say if that will continue even after the protests die down.

“We are expecting a ramp-up,” Sherman said, noting that protests across the nation were being discussed. “I’m focused right here in LA, what’s going on right here. But you know, I think we’re, we’re very concerned.”

Dozens of mayors from across the Los Angeles region banded together Wednesday to demand that the Trump administration end the stepped-up immigration raids and stop using military troops alongside agents.

“I’m asking you, please listen to me, stop terrorizing our residents,” said Brenda Olmos, vice mayor of Paramount, who said she was hit by

rubber bullets over the weekend. “You need to stop these raids.”

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass said the raids spread fear at the behest of the White House and that the city’s nightly curfew would remain in effect as long as necessary. It covers a section of downtown where the protests have been concentrated in the sprawling city.

“If there are raids that continue, if there are soldiers marching up and down our streets, I would imagine that the curfew will continue,” Bass said.

Those who have been caught up in the nationwide raids include asylum seekers, people who overstayed their visas and migrants awaiting their day in immigration court.

LA police have made nearly 400 arrests and detentions since Saturday, the vast majority of which were for failing to leave the area at the request of law enforcement, according to the police department.

There have been a handful of more serious charges, including for assault against police officers and for possession of a Molotov cocktail and a gun. Nine police officers have been hurt, mostly with minor injuries. Some were transported to a hospital and released.

Texas governor orders Guard to prep for protests

By Rose L. Thayer
Stars and Stripes

AUSTIN, Texas — Gov. Greg Abbott has ordered the Texas National Guard to prepare to manage any “lawlessness” that could arise Saturday during protests planned in cities throughout the state.

“Texas National Guard will be deployed to locations across the state to ensure peace & order,” Abbott said Tuesday evening. “Peaceful protest is legal. Harming a person or property is illegal & will lead to arrest.”

His office declined to confirm how many troops were called up

for the weekend or where they will go, but a national movement known as “No Kings” has dozens of cities listed as hosting protests across the state.

“Texas National Guard soldiers are on standby in areas where mass demonstrations are planned in case they are needed,” said Andrew Mahaleris, spokesman for the governor. “Peaceful protests are part of the fabric of our nation, but Texas will not tolerate the lawlessness we have seen in Los Angeles. Anyone engaging in acts of violence or damaging property will be swiftly held accountable to the full extent of the law.”

President Donald Trump ordered 2,000 California National Guard troops to LA late Saturday against the wishes of state and city officials. Trump then ordered 2,000 more Guard members Monday as well as 700 active-duty Marines.

Those troops are now protecting federal agents as they conduct immigration-related arrests. About 500 of the Guard troops deployed to the LA protests have been trained to accompany agents on immigration operations. Others are protecting federal buildings and personnel located near protests.

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass has said there has been little cooperation between the military troops and the city throughout the situation.

Two Texas cities — Austin and San Antonio — have confirmed troops are expected to be there and described a similar lack of coordination. The San Antonio Police Department said the police chief had to call the Texas National Guard to confirm troops would be there.

“We don’t have additional details about their deployment,” the department said in a statement.

Austin Mayor Kirk Watson said

the troops will assist state police, if deemed necessary.

“The City of Austin will continue to protect the right of people to peacefully assemble. We will continue to recognize the humanity and value of our immigrant community,” he said in a statement. “However, destructive actions or efforts to hurt police is wrong. You are damaging your city.”

Austin has already experienced immigration protests this week, where four officers with the local police department were injured — three from being hit with rocks. Eight people were arrested, according to police.

Troops: Democratic senator says Hegseth’s responses hint at selective deployment

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lance to the agency and authorize military forces to detain or arrest American citizens protesting immigration raids.

“We very much support President Donald Trump’s focus on defending the homeland, on our southern border, as well as supporting law enforcement officials doing their jobs,” he said.

“So, the answer is yes,” said Sen. Jack Reed of Rhode Island, a member of the subpanel who is also the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Hegseth’s testimony before the

subpanel was his second appearance on Capitol Hill this week and came as protests that started in Los Angeles against the Trump administration’s immigration crackdown spread across the country.

U.S. Northern Command confirmed Tuesday that service members have started accompanying federal agents as they conduct immigration raids and arrests in Los Angeles, a move that California has called unlawful.

“Service members are protecting federal assets and personnel while they perform their federal

functions,” the command said in a statement. “Military service members will not directly participate in law enforcement activities.”

A federal judge in California has set a hearing for Thursday to hear California’s request to limit Marines and National Guard troops to guarding federal buildings.

Reed pointed out to Hegseth on Wednesday that maintaining law and order is a civil function under the Constitution.

Hegseth countered there is “plenty of precedent for U.S. military support.”

In an exchange with Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., Hegseth also refused to answer whether it was appropriate for the Pentagon to deploy the National Guard to Washington, D.C., in response to the attack on the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

Hegseth only said it was “the right decision” to deploy the National Guard to Los Angeles and criticized former President Joe Biden’s administration for revoking his assignment to protect Biden’s inauguration when Hegseth was a member of the District of Columbia National Guard.

Murphy said Hegseth’s responses appeared to confirm concerns from many Americans that the Trump administration is “not willing to defend against attacks made on our democracy by supporters of the president” but is willing to deploy the National Guard against protesters criticizing the president.

“That’s not how our taxpayer dollars are supposed to work,” he said.

“They’re supposed to be used to defend the United States, no matter the nature of the political affiliation of the protesters.”

NATION

Troops begin detaining immigrants at border

BY MORGAN LEE
Associated Press

EL PASO, Texas — U.S. troops have begun directly detaining immigrants accused of trespassing on a recently designated national defense zone along the southern U.S. border, in an escalation of the military’s enforcement role, authorities said Wednesday.

U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel Chad Campbell described in detail the first detentions by troops last week of three immigrants accused of trespassing in a national defense area near Santa Teresa, N.M.

Those migrants were quickly turned over to U.S. Customs and Border Protection and are now among more than 1,400 migrants to have been charged with illegally entering militarized areas along that border, under a new border

enforcement strategy from President Donald Trump’s administration.

Troops are prohibited from conducting civilian law enforcement on U.S. soil under the Posse Comitatus Act. But an exception known as the military purpose doctrine allows it in some instances.

Authorities “noticed three individuals crossing the protective barrier into the United States,” Campbell said. “A Department of Defense response went to interdict those three individuals, told them to sit down. ... In a matter of three minutes, border patrol agents came into to apprehend. So that three minutes is that temporary detention” by the military.

Trump has designated two national military defense areas along the southern U.S. border for New

Mexico and a 60-mile stretch of western Texas, from El Paso to Fort Hancock, while transferring much of the land from the Interior Department to oversight by the Department of Defense for three years.

The sTrump administration plans eventually to add more militarized zones along the border, a military spokesman said Wednesday at a news conference in El Paso.

“We have been very clear that there will be additional National Defense Areas across the southern border,” said Geoffrey Carmichael, a spokesperson for an enforcement task force at the southern border. “I won’t speculate to where those are going to be.”

Proponents of the militarized zones, including federal prosecu-

tors, say the approach augments traditional efforts by Customs and Border Protection and other law enforcement agencies to secure the border.

“These partnerships and consequences exist so that we can promote the most humane border environment we’ve ever had,” El Paso sector Border Patrol Chief Agent Walter Slosar said. “We are dissuading people from entering the smuggling cycle ... to make sure that smugglers cannot take advantage of individuals who are trying to come into the United States.”

Defense attorneys — and judges in some instances — are pushing back against the novel application of national security charges against immigrants who enter through those militarized zones —

and carry a potential sentence of 18 months in prison on top of a possible six-month sentence for illegal entry.

A judge in New Mexico has dismissed more than 100 national security charges against immigrants, finding little evidence that immigrants knew about the national defense areas. Those migrants still confronted charges of illegal entry to the U.S.

In Texas, a Peruvian woman who crossed the U.S. border illegally was acquitted of unauthorized access to a newly designated militarized zone in the first trial under the Trump administration’s efforts.

U.S. Attorney Justin Simmons, who oversees western Texas, vowed to press forward with more military trespassing charges.

Hundreds of laid-off employees at the CDC are being reinstated

Associated Press

NEW YORK — More than 460 laid-off employees at the nation’s top public health agency received notices Wednesday that they are being reinstated, according to a union representing the workers.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services confirmed reinstatement notices went out to the former Centers for Disease Control and Prevention employees, but provided few details.

About 2,400 CDC employees lost their jobs in a wave of cuts across federal health agencies in early April, according to a tally at the time.

Whole CDC programs were essentially shut down, including some focused on smoking, lead poisoning, gun violence, asthma and air quality, and workplace safety and health. The entire office that handles Freedom of Information Act requests was shut-

tered. Infectious disease programs took a hit, too, including programs that fight outbreaks in other countries, labs focused on HIV and hepatitis in the U.S., and staff trying to eliminate tuberculosis.

An estimated 200 of the reinstated workers are based in the CDC’s National Center for HIV, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and Tuberculosis Prevention, HHS officials confirmed. Staffers at a CDC lab that does testing for sexually transmitted diseases are being brought back, said one CDC employee who wasn’t authorized to discuss what happened and spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity.

Also reinstated are an estimated 150 employees at the CDC’s National Center for Environmental Health, including people staffing a lab that works on lead poisoning, according to the union and em-



ARVIN TEMKAR, ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION/AP

Michael Beach protests President Donald Trump’s proposed cuts to health services outside the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention headquarters in Atlanta on Tuesday.

ployees.

Layoffs at federal agencies were challenged in lawsuits, with judges in some cases ordering federal agencies to halt terminations of employees.

Officials at HHS have never detailed how they made the layoff decisions in the first place. And they did not answer questions about why the notices went out, or how decisions were made about

who to bring back.

HHS spokesperson Andrew Nixon said the agency was streamlining operations and that “the nation’s critical public health functions remain intact and effective.”

Kennedy’s new CDC panel includes some who have criticized vaccines

Associated Press

NEW YORK — U.S. Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. on Wednesday named eight new vaccine policy advisers to replace the panel that he abruptly dismissed earlier this week.

They include a scientist who researched mRNA vaccine technology and became a conservative darling for his criticisms of COVID-19 vaccines, a leading critic of pandemic-era lockdowns, and a professor of operations management.

Kennedy’s decision to “retire” the previous 17-member Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices was widely decried by doctors’ groups and public health organizations, who feared the advisers would be replaced by a group aligned with Kennedy’s desire to reassess — and possibly end — longstanding vaccination recommendations.

On Tuesday, before he announced his picks, Kennedy said: “We’re going to bring great people onto the ACIP panel — not anti-

vaxxers — bringing people on who are credentialed scientists.”

The new appointees include Vicky Pebsworth, a regional director for the National Association of Catholic Nurses, who has been listed as a board member and volunteer director for the National Vaccine Information Center, a group that is widely considered to be a leading source of vaccine misinformation.

Another is Dr. Robert Malone, the former mRNA researcher who emerged as a close adviser to Ken-

nedy during the measles outbreak. Malone, who runs a wellness institute and a popular blog, rose to prominence during the COVID-19 pandemic as he relayed conspiracy theories around the outbreak and the vaccines that followed. He has appeared on podcasts and other conservative news outlets where he’s promoted unproven and alternative treatments for measles and COVID-19.

He has claimed that millions of Americans were hypnotized into taking the COVID-19 shots and

has suggested that those vaccines cause a form of AIDS. He’s downplayed deaths related to one of the largest measles outbreaks in the U.S. in years.

Other appointees include Dr. Martin Kulldorff, a biostatistician and epidemiologist who was a co-author of the Great Barrington Declaration, an October 2020 letter maintaining that pandemic shutdowns were causing irreparable harm. Dr. Cody Meissner, a former ACIP member, also was named.

Weinstein's sex trial ends in split verdict

Ex-studio boss found guilty of 1 charge, acquitted of 1 as mistrial declared on 3rd

By JENNIFER PELTZ
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The judge in Harvey Weinstein's sex crimes case declared a mistrial on the remaining rape charge after the jury foreperson said he wouldn't continue deliberating.

Deliberations were ended Thursday, a day after the jury delivered a partial verdict in Weinstein's sex crimes retrial. The jury got stuck on a third charge. It was a rape accusation dating to 2013.

The foreman complained that he felt bullied by another juror and said Thursday he wouldn't go back into the jury room.

The panel convicted the ex-studio boss of one of the top charges but acquitted him of another. Both of those charges concerned accusations of forcing oral sex on women in 2006. Those verdicts still stand.

The jury of seven women and five men unanimously reached

those decisions last Friday, the foreperson later told the judge. The verdict was delivered Wednesday only because Judge Curtis Farber asked whether there was agreement on any of the charges.

The third charge was over a rape accusation involving a woman who also

said she had a consensual relationship with the Oscar-winning producer. Under New York law, the third-degree rape charge carries a lesser penalty than the other two counts.

Weinstein denies all the charges. In an unusual exchange with the judge during some legal arguments before the partial verdict was disclosed Wednesday, he insisted it was unfair to continue the trial after two jurors came for-



Mimi Haley, right, listens to attorney Gloria Allred during a press conference outside Manhattan criminal court Wednesday.

ward with concerns.

Jury-room strains started leaking into public view Friday, when a juror asked to be excused because he felt another was being treated unfairly. Then Monday, the foreperson complained that other jurors were pushing people to change their minds and talking

about information beyond the charges.

The man raised concerns again Wednesday. In a closed-door discussion with prosecutors, defense lawyers and the judge, the foreperson said another juror was yelling at him for sticking to his opinion and at one point vowed,

"You going to see me outside."

"I feel afraid inside there," the foreperson told the judge and attorneys, according to a transcript.

Weinstein's initial conviction five years ago seemed to cement the downfall of one of Hollywood's most powerful men in a pivotal moment for the #MeToo movement against sexual misconduct.

But that conviction was overturned last year, and the case was sent back for retrial in the same Manhattan courthouse.

Weinstein's accusers said he exploited his Tinseltown influence to dangle career help, get them alone and then trap and force them into sexual encounters.

His defense portrayed his accusers as Hollywood wannabes who willingly hooked up with him to court opportunity, then later said they were victimized to collect settlement funds and #MeToo approbation.

Miriam Haley, the producer and production assistant whom Weinstein was convicted — twice, now — of sexually assaulting, said outside court Wednesday that the new verdict "gives me hope."

Judge: Government must release protester

By JAKE OFFENHARTZ AND PHILIP MARCELO
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A federal judge has ruled that the government must release Mahmoud Khalil, the former Columbia University graduate student whom the Trump administration is trying to deport over his participation in pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

But Khalil, a legal U.S. resident, will remain in custody until at least Friday, giving the government time to appeal, U.S. District Judge Michael Farbiarz in New Jersey said Wednesday.

"The court's decision is the most significant vindication yet of Mahmoud's rights," said Ramzi Kassem, one of Khalil's lawyers. "But we aren't out of the woods until Mahmoud is free and back home with his wife and child."

Dr. Noor Abdalla, Khalil's wife and a U.S. citizen, expressed hope he could be returned to New York in time to enjoy his first Father's Day with his son, Deen, who was born while Khalil has been held in a detention center in Jena, La.

"This is the news we've been waiting over three months for," she said in a statement provided



Khalil

by the American Civil Liberties Union, which is also representing Khalil.

The Department of Homeland Security confirmed the administration intends to appeal.

Khalil was detained by federal immigration agents on March 8 in the lobby of his university-owned apartment, the first arrest under President Donald Trump's crackdown on students who joined campus protests against the war in Gaza. He was then flown thousands of miles away to Louisiana.

Khalil's lawyers challenged the legality of his detention, accusing the Trump administration of trying to suppress free speech.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio has said he can deport Khalil, citing a rarely used statute that gives him the authority to expel those who pose "potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States."

Farbiarz had ruled earlier that expelling Khalil from the U.S. on those grounds was likely unconstitutional.

In his new ruling Wednesday, the judge said that Khalil had shown that his detention is causing irreparable harm to his career, family and free speech rights.

However, the judge put his order on hold until 9:30 a.m. Friday to allow the government time to appeal. He also required Khalil to post a \$1 bond before he is freed.

Oregon wildfire prompts evacuations

Associated Press

THE DALLES, Ore. — A wildfire in Oregon prompted officials to issue evacuation orders for hundreds of homes and to close nearly 20 miles of an interstate in the Columbia River Gorge on Wednesday.

Gov. Tina Kotek invoked the state's Emergency Conflagration Act for the Rowena Fire, allowing the state fire marshal agency to mobilize resources, it said.

The agency said it was mobilizing an incident management team and six structural task forces, with three responding Wednesday night and the other three arriving early Thursday.

"This early season conflagration should come as a reminder to Oregonians to be ready for wildfire," State Fire Marshal Mariana Ruiz-Temple said.

The Oregon Department of Transportation said Interstate 84 was closed between Hood River and The Dalles. Hood River, a popular tourist destination about 55 miles east of Portland, is home to some 8,000 people, and more than 15,000 people live in The Dalles farther east.

Residents of more than 700 homes were ordered to evacuate in an area stretching northwest of The Dalles along I-84 and farther inland, according to the Wasco County Sheriff's Office. Residents of more than 1,300 homes were told to prepare to leave, including in part of the town's northern end.

A middle school in The Dalles was set up as a temporary shelter, while the county fairgrounds opened as a shelter for livestock and horses, the sheriff's office said.

Photos shared by the transportation department showed flames burning alongside and in the median of I-84 as wind gusts fanned the smoke. A water helicopter and a plane dropping fire retardant helped fight the fire, which broke out Wednesday.

Department spokesperson David House said in an email that the interstate will be closed indefinitely "due not only to the wildfires but also due to the extreme danger of driving in smoke."

Washington state's transportation department said a separate brush fire resulted in the closure of 8 miles of State Route 14, which also runs along the Columbia River.

Authorities urged people traveling in the area to use alternate routes.

Rains bring deadly flooding to San Antonio

Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — At least four people are dead in San Antonio and dozens of water rescues were made around the city after heavy rains flooded highways and stranded motorists, officials said Thursday.

Fire officials said they were still searching for two people who were missing. Calls for water rescues began shortly before sunrise, according to the San Antonio Police Department.

Two women and two men were found dead, police Chief William McManus said. He did not have their ages.

The deaths all occurred in the northeast part of the city, where authorities found 13 vehicles in the water.

"It's hard to determine at this point exactly how they got swept away," San Antonio Fire Department spokesman Woody Woodward said. "But it is an area where there was high water that

was moving rapidly and there were several people that were caught in that water that had climbed up into trees and we did do a couple of rescues out of trees and some rescues out of vehicles."

The department had made 65 water rescues since midnight throughout the San Antonio area, he said.

By midmorning, rain had stopped and the flooding was receding.

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WORLD

Russia's military losses top 1 million, Ukraine's military says

By ILLIA NOVIKOV
Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — The number of Russian troops killed or wounded in Ukraine has topped 1 million, military officials in Kyiv said Thursday, describing the huge price that Moscow has paid for its 3-year-old invasion.

The claim by the General Staff of the Ukrainian armed forces is in line with Western intelligence estimates.

The U.K. Defense Ministry also

said in a statement posted Thursday on X that Russia has suffered over 1 million casualties, including roughly 250,000 killed since it launched the full-scale invasion on Feb. 24, 2022.

On June 3, the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington said Russia likely would hit the mark of 1 million casualties this summer in what it called “a stunning and grisly milestone.”

Russia last reported its military

casualties early in the war when it acknowledged that about 6,000 soldiers had been killed. Earlier this year, the General Staff of the Russian armed forces claimed that Ukrainian military losses had topped 1 million.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy last spoke of Ukrainian military losses in February, when he said in an interview that 45,100 troops had been killed and about 390,000 injured.

The mutual claims of the other

side's losses couldn't be independently verified.

The casualty estimates came as Russian forces pummeled Ukraine with drones and other weapons, killing three people and injuring scores of others despite pressure to accept a ceasefire.

According to the Ukrainian air force, Russia launched 63 drones and decoys at Ukraine overnight. It said that air defenses destroyed 28 drones while another 21 were jammed.

Ukrainian police said two people were killed and six were injured in the past 24 hours in the eastern Donetsk region, the focus of the Russian offensive. One person was killed and 14 others were also injured in the southern Kherson region, which is partly occupied by Russian forces, police said.

The authorities in Kharkiv said 18 people, including four children, were injured by Russian drone attacks overnight.

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WEEKEND



Pulp makes
a comeback
Music, Pages 28-29



Dancing at the end of the world

‘The Life of Chuck,’ a Stephen King
adaptation, shows the horror writer’s
joyful side despite apocalyptic setting

Movies, Pages 16-17

Tom Hiddleston stars in
“The Life of Chuck.”
NEON/AP

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

A scene from “The Matrix” is surrounded by immersive urban visuals creating a shared reality cinematic experience on May 28 at Cosm Los Angeles in Inglewood, Calif.

Immersive tech reshaping music, films

Bono, Metallica, ‘Matrix’ using headset devices like Apple Vision Pro, next-gen venues like Cosm to redefine entertainment

BY JONATHAN LANDRUM, JR.
Associated Press

With a mic in hand, Bono belts out “Vertigo,” close enough to reach out and touch, as if you’re sharing the stage with him at the Beacon Theatre in New York.

As he performs, the front-row seat experience becomes deeply personal, with the U2 frontman seemingly locking eyes with you before the camera swings to his side to reveal the crowd, pumping its fists in excitement. The song’s lyrics leap from beneath Bono’s feet through 3D animation, gathering around him while hovering over the crowd.

This isn’t your typical concert. It’s an all-access pass into Bono’s performance and documentary film “Bono: Stories of Surrender,” which premiered May 30 on Apple TV+ and gained new life through the Apple Vision Pro. The device places viewers right onstage with Bono, delivering it all in 8K with spatial audio for a fully immersive 180-degree video.

“There’s a kind of intimacy afforded to us,” said Bono, who added that immersive technologies tap into viewers’ senses and emotions more deeply than traditional media. “It’s not just being in the room. You can be in your head.”

These days, experiences like Bono’s concert film have become the next frontier of music, film and live perfor-

mances. Headset devices like the Vision Pro and Meta’s Quest 3, alongside next-gen venues such as the Sphere and Cosm, are making these experiences borderless, turning every seat into the best one in the house.

Some of music’s biggest names — including U2, Metallica, Megan Thee Stallion, Alicia Keys, T-Pain, Phish and The Weeknd — have had projects featured on these platforms. Even the iconic film “The Matrix” has been reintroduced in this immersive space.

“This is the future. These experiences enhance the connection,” said Robert Trujillo, guitarist for Metallica, whose powerhouse Mexico City performance was delivered in an immersive concert experience through the Vision Pro in March. After watching their show on the device, he was in awe.

“It almost felt like you could touch the crowd and us,” he said. “It was really incredible. The sound is amazing. The dynamic ranges from the ambient noises and the crowd. It’s a special experience.”

How music greats view future of immersion tech for industry

Bono has long embraced innovation and technology to forge a connection with U2’s audience. The band’s 2014 album “Songs of Innocence” was added to every Mac, iPhone, iPad and iPod. In 2023, the foursome became the

first band to perform at the Sphere, launching a successful residency at the \$2.3 billion, 366-foot-tall Las Vegas venue that illuminates the city’s skyline.

U2 guitarist The Edge felt the Sphere was a “quantum leap forward” in terms of the sensory impacts of a live concert.

Now, with “Stories of Surrender,” Bono goes solo, reflecting on his life from childhood and family to his career as a rock star and activist. It’s the first feature film shot in Apple Immersive Video, bringing the artwork from his book “Surrender: 40 Songs, One Story” to life with 3D animation.

Bono even used the Apple Pencil Pro to create images featured in the film. He believes the immersive technology can connect with audiences on a profound level and hopes the \$3,500 Vision Pro will eventually become more affordable.

“All of this is impressive,” he said. “I think about the film, when I’m singing about my mother, and (my mother’s name) Iris start to appear. I was completely taken aback, even though I’d drawn the Iris. There are other moments when I see my father in the chair beside me as a drawing partially by me.”

Bono added: “Then I thought, ‘We might be getting

SEE IMMERSIVE ON PAGE 15

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY

Immersive: Sphere president says bar will continue to get higher

FROM PAGE 14

beyond technology here into some kind of magic. Not just a magic trick like ‘Hey, presto.’ But more alchemy, more of ‘What did I just feel?’”

Trujillo, who typically avoids watching replays of his performances, found himself drawn in by the immersive experience of his show, which included interviews and close-ups of fans. He said the technology amplifies the energy of a live performance at a time when that excitement can feel diminished.

“For a lot of bands, especially in the hard rock genre, it felt like it was disappearing,” he said. “To me, this really brings it back and relevant again. It shows you the strength in the performance and the emotional attachment to the fans.”

How immersive venues are making their mark

While virtual reality headsets offer a personal window into performances, venues like the Sphere and Cosm are expanding these experiences to entire crowds.

In their own way, both are redefining the possibilities of live performances and shared experiences.

“It’s virtual reality without the glasses,” said Baz Halpin, the CEO and founder of Silent House Group, who produced and designed the Eagles’ residency at the 17,500-seat Sphere.

Halpin said Silent House will also be involved in the Backstreet Boys’ upcoming Sphere residency, kicking off in July.

“You can create optical illusions that I didn’t think were frankly possible,” Halpin said. “It’s such a big swing. It’s such a bold idea. It’s still that concert experience, but somehow the visuals have turned into a roller coaster and movie, and you’re a part of it.”

Shared reality through ‘The Matrix’

While the Sphere looms large over Las Vegas, Cosm offers a more intimate experience, featuring a new venture into Keanu Reeves’ iconic world as Neo.

Cosm is stepping into “The Matrix” with a shared reality cinematic experience, celebrating the film’s 25th anniversary with screenings at their locations in Dallas and Inglewood, Calif., which started June 6.

Inside Cosm’s 87-foot LED dome, the original film plays while the environment dynam-

ically mirrors the on-screen action, pulling audiences deeper into the world.

“We are continuing to push the immersive tech industry forward,” said Jeb Terry, the CEO and president at Cosm, which also hosts live sports, “O” by Cirque du Soleil, “Orbital” and “Big Wave: No Room for Error.” The company plans to open its third location in Atlanta in 2026.

With “The Matrix,” Cosm believes the shared reality experience will pave the way for showcasing more classic films, complementing the traditional movie theater experience.

“We’re really commemorating some of these legendary amazing films,” said Alexis Scalice, Cosm’s vice president of business development and entertainment. “We’re keeping that interactive and exciting approach to it.”

What’s next for Sphere?

The vision for a second Sphere location will come to fruition in the United Arab Emirates. In collaboration with the Abu Dhabi Department of Culture and Tourism, the new venue will replicate the cutting-edge technology and scale of the Las Vegas version.

The Abu Dhabi Sphere is part of a broader plan to establish additional Spheres globally and domestically, alongside smaller U.S. venues with seating capacities of 3,000 to 6,000.

“We are advancing our vision of this global network,” said Jennifer Koester, the president and chief operating officer at Sphere. She said the smaller Spheres will make the concept more deployable across different markets.

As construction of the Abu Dhabi location progresses, the Las Vegas Sphere is preparing to bring a timeless classic to life. In late August, the original “The Wizard of Oz” is set to premiere at the venue.

Koester said artificial intelligence models were trained on original scene drawings, set designs and materials sourced from the Academy Museum to fully fill the Sphere’s massive screen. She said that evolving the technology is key to staying ahead.

“In the industry, we’re seeing a lot of people talk about bringing forward experiences that are more immersive,” she said. “People are looking for it, and people are expecting it. The bar is going to continue to get higher and higher.”



The SwamCam artificial intelligence-powered drowning detection system has a fish-eye lens with a 160-degree field of view, records in 1080p, has night vision and works in temperatures ranging from minus 4 degrees up to 140 degrees Fahrenheit.

Protect kids at pool with SwamCam system

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

When it comes to pool safety, you can never be safe enough. According to the American Red Cross, 69% of young children who drowned were not expected to be in or near water.

That brings me to the SwamCam, touted by the company as a first-of-its-kind artificial intelligence-powered drowning detection system designed to help prevent child drownings by notifying parents when children enter the pool area and before entering the water.

SwamCam is available in a single camera system (\$499 with Wi-Fi repeater, \$449 without) or dual camera system (\$799 with a Wi-Fi repeater, \$749 without). Depending on the size of the monitoring area, the dual system can double the coverage area of the single SwamCam system. I enlisted a family member with a pool and a toddler to test the single-camera system. His pool is already a safe location, with child-proof door locks, gates, etc. But when I proposed testing the SwamCam, his family was all about it.

The AC-powered camera has a fish-eye lens with a 160-degree field of view, records in 1080p, has night vision and works in temperatures ranging from minus 4 degrees up to 140 degrees Fahrenheit. The camera’s speaker sounds an alarm at 80 dBA at a 10-foot distance. Notifications are sent to smartphones (iOS and Android), and there is two-way communication and one-touch emergency dialing on live view.

The single-camera package includes a SwamCam camera, quick start guide, 20-foot power cord, alarm/repeater, battery-operated (2 AAAs) keypad and mounting kit. Of course, you need your own Wi-Fi.

How did it work? My nephew said installing the camera was one of the most straightforward electronic setups he had ever encountered. The entire installation process took about 10 minutes. The most challenging aspect was determining the optimal installation location. His residence lacks outdoor outlets near the pool, necessitating routing it to an outlet in his screened-in patio.

The packaging was exceptionally organized, and each component was meticulously documented in the comprehensive setup instructions. The instruc-



The most challenging aspect of installing the AC-powered SwamCam for the writer’s nephew was figuring out the optimal place to put it since his residence lacks outdoor outlets near the pool.

tions guided users through downloading the application, creating an account and navigating each device’s setup with voice prompts.

The installation process was remarkably intuitive, providing step-by-step instructions for each device and specific prompts for both Apple and Android-based devices.

Overall, the installation process was exceptionally user-friendly, the application was highly intuitive and the video quality was exceptional. The alarm’s volume is substantial, and there was minimal lag time when receiving notifications on my smartphone.

Online: theswamcam.com/products

WEEKEND: MOVIES



CHRIS PIZZELLO, INVISION/AP

Author Stephen King, left, and director Mike Flanagan appear at the premiere of their new film, “The Life of Chuck,” during the Toronto International Film Festival in Toronto on Sept. 6, 2024. The film, adapted from King’s novella of the same name published in the 2020 collection “If It Bleeds,” opens this weekend in select on-base theaters.

Horror juxtaposed with light, love, empathy

Author King, director Flanagan discuss the film adaptation of ‘The Life of Chuck,’ his other books, the end of the world, joy

By JAKE COYLE
Associated Press

Stephen King’s first editor, Bill Thompson, once said, “Steve has a movie camera in his head.” So vividly drawn is King’s fiction that it’s offered the basis for some 50 feature films. For half a century, since Brian De Palma’s 1976 film “Carrie,” Hollywood has turned, and turned again, to King’s books for their richness of character, nightmare and sheer entertainment.

Open any of those books up at random, and there’s a decent chance you’ll encounter a movie reference, too. Rita Hayworth. “The Wizard of Oz.” “Singin’ in the Rain.” Sometimes even movies based on King’s books turn up in his novels. That King’s books have been such fodder for the movies is owed, in part, to how much of a moviegoer their author is.

“I love anything from ‘The 400 Blows’ to something with that guy Jason Statham,” King says, speaking by phone from his home in Maine. “The worst movie I ever saw was still a great way to spend an afternoon. The only movie I ever walked out on was ‘Transformers.’ At a certain point I said, ‘This is just ridiculous.’”

Over time, King has developed a personal policy in how he talks about the adaptations of his books.

“My idea is: If you can’t say something nice, keep your

mouth shut,” he says.

The most notable exception was Stanley Kubrick’s “The Shining,” which King famously called “a big beautiful Cadillac with no engine inside.” But every now and then, King is such a fan of an adaptation that he’s excited to talk about it. That’s very much the case with “The Life of Chuck,” Mike Flanagan’s new adaptation of King’s novella of the same name published in the 2020 collection “If It Bleeds.”

In “The Life of Chuck,” which opens this weekend in select on-base theaters, there are separate storylines but the tone-setting opening is apocalyptic. The internet, like a dazed prize fighter, wobbles on its last legs before going down. California is said to be peeling away from the mainland “like old wallpaper.”

And yet in this doomsday tale, King is at his most sincere. “The Life of Chuck,” the book and the movie, is about what matters in life when everything else is lost. There is dancing, Walt Whitman and joy.

“In ‘The Life of Chuck,’ we understand that this guy’s life is cut short, but that doesn’t mean he doesn’t experience joy,” King says. “Existential dread and grief and things are part of the human experience, but so is joy.”

Stephen King, the humanist

It’s telling that when King, our preeminent purveyor of

horror, writes about doom times, he ends up scaling it down to a single life. While darkness and doom have, and probably always will, mark his work, “The Life of Chuck” is a prime example of King, the humanist, rather than the more playful, instinctual, genre-skipping writer he’s often credited as.

“An awful lot of people assume, because he writes so much stuff that’s so scary, they kind of forget the reason his horror works so well is he’s always juxtaposing it with light and with love and with empathy,” says Flanagan, who has twice before adapted King (“Doctor Sleep,” “Gerald’s Game”) and is in the midst of making a “Carrie” series for Amazon.

“You forget that ‘It’ isn’t about the clown; it’s about the kids and their friendship,” Flanagan adds. “‘The Stand’ isn’t about the virus or the demon taking over the world; it’s ordinary people who have to come together and stand against a force they cannot defeat.”

King, 77, has now written somewhere around 80 books, including the just released “Never Flinch.” The mystery thriller brings back King’s recent favorite protagonist, the private investigator Holly Gibney, who made her stand-alone debut in “If It Bleeds.” It’s Gibney’s insecurities, and her willingness to push against them, that has kept

SEE KING ON PAGE 17

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW

When ordinary is extraordinary

Heartfelt ‘The Life of Chuck’ about finding the meaning, joy in life amid inevitability of death

By KATIE WALSH
Tribune News Service

The film “The Life of Chuck” is a trick. It’s a trick you’ll be delighted by, but a trick nevertheless, conjured by author Stephen King, on the page, and filmmaker Mike Flanagan, on screen. Of course, if you’ve read the source material, a novella published in 2020 as part of the collection “If It Bleeds,” you’ll know what’s afoot, as Flanagan doesn’t stray from King’s structural play or themes. But if you go in fresh, with wide eyes and an open heart, it’s like watching a bubble grow bigger and bigger, before it pops, suddenly, with a sense of surprise and wonder.

Attempting to maintain that sense of surprise for a viewer makes the film extraordinarily difficult to write about, even though it’s a film about an ordinary life, and the ways that all ordinary lives are, in their own ways, extraordinary. It’s extremely apt that one 2025 King adaptation, “The Monkey,” by Oz Perkins, is about accepting death, in all of its randomness and horror, while the other, “The Life of Chuck,” is about finding the meaning and joy in life.

These two films represent the multitudes contained in King’s work, the yin and yang of his point of view: that the sweetness

of life can only be appreciated with the inevitability of death. And because this is King, the sentimental message of “The Life of Chuck” is wrapped in an existentially unsettling narrative.

“The Life of Chuck” is presented in three acts, “I Contain Multitudes,” “Buskers Forever” and “Thanks Chuck.” Throughout, we get to know Charles Krantz (Tom Hiddleston), who starts out as a man of mystery.

During a period of apocalyptic turmoil, Marty (Chiwetel Ejiofor), a teacher, and his ex-wife, Felicia (Karen Gillan), a nurse, are befuddled by the proliferation of numerous billboards, advertisements and TV ads thanking Krantz — Chuck — for 39 great years.

In a time of cosmically terrifying strife, these sunny messages are a strange anomaly that both distract from, and call attention to, the crumbling of society around them. It’s something to focus on other than the horrors.

This act, “Thanks Chuck,” is rattling. What Marty and Felicia and everyone around them are experiencing is the kind of slow-moving apocalypse that feels all too familiar.

It’s the mundanities, the small indignities and the sheer weirdness of the universe rending itself apart that impacts their lives the most: the traffic, the



Neon

Even though he knows how the world is going to end, Charles Krantz, aka Chuck (Tom Hiddleston), dances in the street to the beat of a busker drumming in this scene from “The Life of Chuck.”

internet being down for months, the suicides. That it comes first is crucial because it casts a pall over the proceedings, even as the rest of the film soothes the nervous system.

What Flanagan — and King — do is a sort of slow sleight of hand that mimics the emotional journey of Krantz. If you know the world is going to end, how do you live your life? Do you dance in a town square to the beat of a busker drumming, pulling in a dance partner and putting on a show, the way Chuck does? Or do you let the worry and pain of knowing that it’s all going to end someday eat you alive?

“Chuck” argues that knowledge is a life-affirming power, while in its evil twin, “The Monkey,” it was the not knowing that caused the characters so much

anguish. Knowing empowers us to live more, brighter, bigger, to embrace every single one of our multitudes, whether it’s dance or math, or whatever makes us feel alive.

This is the lesson that Chuck learns while he’s growing up (played over the years by Cody Flanagan, Benjamin Pajak and Jacob Tremblay). Like many a King child protagonist, he is all too familiar with death, having lost his parents in a car wreck. Grief takes over the life of Chuck and his grandparents until one day his grandmother (Mia Sara) decides to cast it off. She teaches Chuck to dance in the kitchen, and shows him movie musicals. After her sudden death, he joins the “Twirlers and Spinners” at school, developing his skills, and more importantly, the gumption

it takes to get up and dance.

So is “The Life of Chuck” a movie about the power of dance? Kind of. But it’s also so much more than that. It contains multitudes, after all, just like Chuck, and just like every person walking this earth — little galaxies and universes of people and stories and memories unto themselves.

Flanagan’s trick is simply how he imparts this eternal lesson to us: We know life will end, so how you spend the time is all that matters.

It’s simple, and it may be delivered in a way that’s a bit too clever by half, but it’s still a gut-punch, and a message worth absorbing now, and always.

“The Life of Chuck” is rated R for language. Running time: 110 minutes. Now playing in select on-base theaters.

King: Latest movie more precious to him than previous ones

FROM PAGE 16

King returning to her.

“It gave me great pleasure to see Holly grow into a more confident person,” King says. “She never outgrows all of her insecurities, though. None of us do.”

“Never Flinch” is a reminder that King has always been less of a genre-first writer than a character-first one. He tends to fall in love with a character and follow them through thick and thin.

“I’m always happy writing. That’s why I do it so much,” King says, chuckling. “I’m a very chipper guy because I get rid of all that dark stuff in the books.”

Contemporary anxieties

Dark stuff, as King says, hasn’t been hard to come by lately. The kind of climate change disaster found in “The Life of Chuck,” King says, often dominates his anxieties.

“We’re creeping up little by little on being the one country who does not acknowledge it’s a real problem with carbon

in the atmosphere,” King says. “That’s crazy. Certain right-wing politicians can talk all they want about how we’re saving the world for our grandchildren. They don’t care about that. They care about money.”

The original germ for “The Life of Chuck” had nothing to do with current events. One day in Boston, King noticed a drummer busking on Boylston Street. He had the vision of a businessman in a suit who, walking by, can’t resist dancing with abandon to the drummer’s beat.

King, a self-acknowledged dancer (though only in private, he notes), latched onto a story that would turn on the unpredictable nature of people, tracing the inner life of that imagined passerby. In the film, he’s played by Tom Hiddleston. Chuck first appears, oddly, on a billboard that haunts and confuses a local teacher (Chiwetel Ejiofor) who’s struggling to get his students to care about literature or education with the possible end of the world approaching.

Sincerity for a cynical world

It’s a funny but maybe not coincidental irony that many of the best King adaptations, like “Stand By Me” and “The Shawshank Redemption,” have come from the author’s more warm-hearted tales. “The Life of Chuck,” which won the People’s Choice Award last fall at the Toronto International Film Festival, is after a similar spirit.

When King reached out about attending the TIFF world premiere, Flanagan was shocked. The last time King had done that for one of his own adaptations was 26 years ago, for “The Green Mile.” That movie, like “The Shawshank Redemption,” was a box-office disappointment, King recalls, a fate he’s hoping “The Life of Chuck” can avoid.

“He views this movie as something that’s a bit precious,” Flanagan says. “He’s said a few things to me in the past about how earnest it is, how this is a story without an ounce of cynicism. As it was being

released into a cynical world, I think he felt protective of it. I think this one really means something to him.”

The Stephen King industrial complex, meanwhile, keeps rolling along. Coming just this year are series of “Welcome to Derry” and “The Institute” and a film of “The Long Walk.” King, himself, just finished a draft of “Talisman 3.”

If “The Life of Chuck” has particular meaning to King, it could be because it represents something intrinsic about his own life. Chuck’s small, seemingly unremarkable existence has grace and meaning because, as Whitman is quoted, he “contains multitudes” that surprise and delight him. King’s fiction is evidence — heaps of it — that he does, too.

“There are some days where I sit down and I think, ‘This is going to be a really good day,’ and it’s not, at all,” King says. “Then other days I sit down and think to myself, ‘I’m really tired and don’t feel like doing this,’ and then it catches fire. You never know what you’re going to get.”

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEWS

Redemption of live-action adaptation

‘How to Train Your Dragon’ not a poor imitation of its predecessor but a thrilling fantasy adventure worthy of the big screen

By Lindsey Bahr
Associated Press

Ever wanted to soar through the skies on the back of a friendly dragon? The new “How to Train Your Dragon” may be the ticket, from a decidedly safer, though possibly still vertigo-inducing, distance.

This live-action adaptation of the underdog adventure story sends the audience cascading through the clouds with the teenage Viking boy Hiccup and his dragon friend Toothless. It’s the kind of immersive sensation and giddy wish fulfillment that might just have you forgetting momentarily to breathe and, maybe more importantly, that you’re still in a movie theater. Credit to veteran cinematographer Bill Pope, no stranger to fantasy worlds, whether it’s “The Matrix” or “Scott Pilgrim vs. The World.”

“How to Train Your Dragon” doesn’t stray far from the original, from shots to story beats. Gerard Butler once again plays Berk’s Chief Stoick the Vast. The new Hiccup, actor Mason Thames, even sounds a bit like Jay Baruchel. But unlike so many live-action remakes of animated films, it also doesn’t feel superfluous, or, worse, like a poor imitation of its predecessor that trades the magic of animation for photorealism.

Perhaps that’s because filmmaker Dean DeBlois, who made the three animated films, stayed in the director’s chair. Who better to kill their darlings than the one who brought them to the screen in the first place? And, crucially, to know where live-action might actually enhance the fabric of the world created by author Cressida Cowell.

It helps that dragon technology has come a long way since, say, “Dragon-Heart.” These fire-breathing CG creatures feel disarmingly real. And though it might look like “Lord of the Rings” or “Game of Thrones,” its tone stays light enough for younger filmgoers. There are a few intense sequences, but none that takes it any



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP photos

Mason Thames plays Hiccup in the live-action version of “How to Train Your Dragon,” now playing in select on-base theaters.

further than the animated film did 15 years ago.

“How to Train Your Dragon” does start a little slow, however, which is odd because it also begins with a fiery battle between the Vikings and the dragons on the Isle of Berk. There’s a lot of exposition and introduction that needs to happen before you can just give yourself over to the story. In this more multicultural version, the warriors on Berk have been recruited from tribes around the globe to try to defeat the dragons.

Hiccup is a Viking nepo baby. As the chief’s son, he sits in a place of privilege, but he’s also a general outcast in this world of ruthless warriors — skinny and weak, he just longs to be part of the action, not sharpening the weapons. Killing dragons is currency in this society, and his crush Astrid (Nico Parker) happens to be one of the most promising up-and-comers. His sole champion is Gobber (a delightful Nick Frost), the blacksmith and dragon



Nico Parker as Hiccup’s crush, Astrid.

slayer teacher, who convinces the chief to give the clever Hiccup a shot.

The film finds its internal engine when Hiccup finds Toothless, the wide-eyed “Night Fury” dragon whom he can’t bring himself to kill. Instead, he decides to study this discovery, who he finds is not nearly as fearsome as everyone assumes. “How

to Train Your Dragon” teaches empathy and ingenuity without a sermon.

Thames, a teenager himself, is the perfect embodiment of adolescent awkwardness and boldness. You can have all the cute dragons you want, but the audience would be lost if the human conduit to the relationship isn’t up to the task. Butler seems to be having a good time, resplendent in fur and chest-thumping ideas about ancient duties. And Parker gives Astrid a relatable depth — the best in the bunch who is outshone in an unequal fight.

Kids deserve movies that are made on the biggest possible canvas. “How to Train Your Dragon” is one that’s worth the trip to the theater. It might just spark some young imaginations, whether it’s to go back and read the books or dream up their own worlds. And, chances are, no one is going to be yelling “chicken jockey.”

“How to Train Your Dragon” is rated PG for sequences of intense action and peril. Running time: 85 minutes. Now playing at select on-base theaters.

‘Ocean’ is a brutal, beautiful wake-up call from the sea

By Annika Hammerschlag
Associated Press

An ominous chain unspools through the water. Then comes chaos. A churning cloud of mud erupts as a net plows the seafloor, wrenching rays, fish and a squid from their home in a violent swirl of destruction. This is industrial bottom trawling. It’s not CGI. It’s real. And it’s legal.

“Ocean With David Attenborough” is a brutal reminder of how little we see and how much is at stake. The film is both a sweeping celebration of marine life and a stark exposé of the forces pushing the ocean toward collapse.

The British naturalist and broadcaster, now 99, anchors the film with a deeply personal reflection: “After living for nearly a hundred years on this planet, I now understand that the most important place on Earth is not on land, but at sea.”

The film traces Attenborough’s lifetime — an era of unprecedented ocean discovery — through the lush beauty of coral reefs, kelp forests and deep-sea wanderers, captured in breathtaking, revelatory ways.

But this is not the Attenborough film we grew up with. As the environment unravels, so too has the tone of his

storytelling. “Ocean” is more urgent, more unflinching. Never-before-seen footage of mass coral bleaching, dwindling fish stocks and industrial-scale exploitation reveals just how vulnerable the sea has become. The film’s power lies not only in what it shows, but in how rarely such destruction is witnessed.

“I think we’ve got to the point where we’ve changed so much of the natural world that it’s almost remiss if you don’t show it,” co-director Colin Butfield said. “Nobody’s ever professionally filmed bottom trawling before. And yet it’s happening practically everywhere.”

The practice is not only legal, he adds, but often subsidized.

“For too long, everything in the ocean has been invisible,” Butfield said. “Most people picture fishing as small boats heading out from a local harbor. They’re not picturing factories at sea scraping the seabed.”

In one harrowing scene, mounds of unwanted catch are dumped back into the sea already dead. About 10 million tons of marine life are caught and discarded each year as bycatch. In some bottom trawl fisheries, discards make up more than half the haul.

Still, “Ocean” is no eulogy. Its final act offers a stirring glimpse of what recovery can look like: kelp forests rebounding under protection, vast marine reserves teeming with life and the world’s largest albatross colony thriving in Hawaii’s Papahānaumokuākea Marine National Monument. These aren’t fantasies; they’re evidence of what the ocean can become again, if given the chance.

Timed to World Oceans Day and the U.N. Ocean Conference in Nice, the film arrives amid a growing global push to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030 — a goal endorsed by more than 190 countries. But today, just 2.7% of the ocean is effectively protected from harmful industrial activity.

The film’s message is clear: The laws of today are failing the seas. So-called “protected” areas often aren’t. And banning destructive practices like bottom trawling is not just feasible — it’s imperative.

As always, Attenborough is a voice of moral clarity. “This could be the moment of change,” he says. “Ocean” gives us the reason to believe — and the evidence to demand — that it must be.

“Ocean” is available on Disney+ and Hulu.

WEEKEND: MOVIE REVIEW

The final ‘Straw’

Perry’s version of ‘Dog Day Afternoon,’ starring Henson, stands with stressed-out single mothers everywhere

By Ty Burr
The Washington Post

Few filmmakers portray the Black American experience with so much heart and so little finesse as Tyler Perry. Doesn’t matter if his movies aren’t art — they reach an audience whether they’re comedies (his Madea movies), middle-class melodramas or period pieces like 2024’s World War II-era “The Six Triple Eight.” That last was a high point in a career of directing nearly 30 movies in 20 years, not counting Perry’s many TV shows and stage plays — a run of inspired workaholicism that has made the writer-director one of the most financially successful filmmakers of his generation.

Streaming on Netflix, “Straw” is Perry’s version of “Dog Day Afternoon.” Anchored by a heroic if undisciplined lead performance by Taraji P. Henson (“Hidden Figures,” TV’s “Empire”), it finds solidarity with every overworked, underpaid, stressed-out single mother in a coldhearted America, even those who don’t go to the extreme of shooting their boss and robbing a bank.

Technically speaking, Janiyah Wilkinson isn’t robbing a bank. A supermarket checkout clerk having the worst day ever, she just wants her paycheck cashed and happens to have a gun in her hand, prompting the teller (Ashley Versher) to panic and hit the silent alarm. Before that, we’ve looked on as Janiyah has gotten

evicted from her apartment, been a victim of road rage from a psycho off-duty cop (Tilky Jones), had her car impounded, lost her job, seen her sick daughter (Gabby Jackson) taken away by social services and had her workplace robbed by gunmen with unexpected results. The teller pushing all the money in the bank at Janiyah instead of the \$521 she’s due is merely the final straw from which the movie takes its title.

“Straw” has a bone-deep empathy for the struggles of those living below the poverty line or just keeping their chins above it. While Perry sets up a familiar scenario, with an army of police outside the bank and a handful of hostages inside, the movie is really about Black women bonding across boundaries of class, profession and the law. The bank manager, Nicole (Sherri Shepherd), is well aware of how hard she’s worked to get where she is and how much responsibility she has to help the people in her community. The hostage negotiator on the phone, Detective Kay Raymond (Teyana Taylor, a little too glam for the role), is a single mother who gives Janiyah the benefit of the doubt when her partner (Mike Merrill), her chief (Rockmond Dunbar) and a racist FBI agent (Derek Phillips) are all urging her to shoot first and ask questions later.

When one of the other tellers (Shalèt Monique) starts livestreaming from inside the bank and Janiyah’s Job-like litany of woes goes out on the local news, “Straw”



Netflix

Taraji P. Henson as Janiyah, a supermarket clerk who’s recently gotten evicted from her apartment, been a victim of road rage, had her car impounded, lost her job, seen her sick daughter taken away by social services and had her workplace robbed, in “Straw.”

brings in a supportive mob chanting for her freedom from behind the police line. Even some of the other hostages take her side, including a woman (Diva Tyler) who serves as Perry’s wise elder, schooling the callow younger characters in the hardships of life. It’s a cheering development in the midst of looming disaster, and what suspense there is comes from the fear that Janiyah — and maybe the others — won’t get out of it alive.

“Straw” plays fast and loose with that fear in a wholly unnecessary penultimate scene, but it’s already tripped over its own feet with a final-act twist that is simply one too many — one more piano falling on poor Janiyah’s head after the whole orchestra has come crashing down. To her

credit, Henson plays her role without false ennobling: Janiyah is a believable mess, a woman barely clinging to the bottom rung of the working class, and the movie is smart enough to hint at an entire system that keeps the Janiyahs of America running frantically in place.

Perry’s not quite brave enough to tackle that system head-on, though, and he stands back while his star’s performance turns chaotic and screechy — a big, heart-felt turn that could have used a lot more guidance. Likewise, “Straw” has all the feels it wants and little of the art it needs. But there’s nothing to suggest Perry would have it any other way.

“Straw” is unrated, but contains language and potential violence. Running time: 105 minutes. Now available on Netflix.

Classic Alfred Hitchcock movies now available on Netflix

By Neal Justin
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Netflix usually focuses more on Adam Sandler movies than the classics. So it’s a pleasant surprise to see the streaming service showcasing seven of Alfred Hitchcock’s best, including “Psycho,” “Rear Window” and “The Birds.” You’ll marvel at how well they hold up.

“His films are still as good as ever,” said Rob Silberman, who has been teaching a class on Hitchcock at the University of Minnesota for more than two decades. “They’re not just antiques or costume dramas that feel detached. The excitement is still there.”



Hitchcock

Despite the heavy push from Netflix — it also just added 2012’s “Hitchcock,” with Anthony Hopkins hamming it up in the title role — a significant number of subscribers are bound to ignore the invitation to revisit the past. They’re too busy counting the days before the July 25 release of “Happy Gilmore 2.”

That’s a mistake.

Hitchcock’s films aren’t always great. Too many of them have abrupt, sloppy endings. At times the camera operator exhibits more pizzazz than the actors. But if you want to appreciate the twists and turns of contemporary flicks, his work is required viewing.

“Sinners” is getting props for the way director Ryan Coogler lulls the audience into thinking they’re getting a dissertation on racial tension in 1930s Mississippi, waiting until the second half of the film to unleash vampires. But Hitchcock pulled off that trick 60 years earlier in “The Birds.” It takes nearly an hour before Tippi Hedren and the townspeople face their first full-fledged attack from above.

Each episode of Netflix’s “Adolescence” was shot in one continuous take, making it harder for viewers to turn away from the horrible acts of a seemingly normal teenager. Hitchcock set the standard for that approach with 1948’s “Rope.”

There’s a reason Tom Cruise recruited Hitchcock’s most famous disciple, Brian De Palma, to helm the first “Mission: Impossible.” The franchise’s exotic locations, charismatic villains and nonstop action were blended together in 1959’s “North by Northwest.”

The audacity to kill off a major star early in the film? It happened in “Psycho” long before Drew Barrymore suffered an early demise in “Scream.”

“‘The Birds’ and ‘Psycho’ are starting points for contemporary horror,” Silberman said. “The special effects can seem a little hokey, but the students are fascinated by things like the sounds and silences.”

For those already familiar with Hitchcock’s work, multiple viewings reap new rewards. Silberman points out that the immortal line from “Psycho” — “Mother ... She isn’t quite herself today” — is a lot funnier when you already know what’s coming.

For me, the biggest takeaway from rewatching the Netflix collection is just how often women steal the show. I never considered Hitchcock a feminist, especially after Hedren accused him of hurling real ravens at her, dramatized in the excellent 2012 film “The Girl,” currently available on Max.

But women are often the smartest, most capable protagonists in a Hitchcock film. In 1956’s “The Man Who Knew Too Much,” Doris Day’s character has left behind a successful singing career to play domestic housewife to Jimmy Stewart’s domineering surgeon. In one scene, he forces a sedative on his wife to keep her calm. It’s about

as dated as John Wayne “romancing” Maureen O’Hara in John Ford’s “The Quiet Man” with sticks and spankings.

But Day is three times smarter than anyone else in the picture, thinking one step ahead of Stewart, who spends too much time on a wild goose chase and trying to figure out how to eat an African dinner with one hand.

The best thing about 1976’s “Family Plot” is Barbara Harris’ sex-starved psychic looking to pull off a major con. The scene in which she crawls all over her boyfriend (Bruce Dern) as their runaway car threatens to go over a cliff is a comic masterpiece.

But “Plot” isn’t among Hitchcock’s best. His two finest films, “Notorious” and “North by Northwest,” aren’t included in the Netflix tribute. Silberman wishes the streaming service would have included more black-and-white gems, such as “Shadow of a Doubt.”

And there’s no substitute for seeing Hitchcock in a theater where you can hear fellow film lovers gasp and guffaw.

“It’s always a win to be in an environment with other human beings,” said Barry Kryshka, executive director of the Twin Cities-based Trylon Cinema, which just wrapped up its annual Hitchcock Film Festival. “People sometimes ask why they should go to the theater when they can watch films on a quality screen at home. Well, you can get drunk in your basement, but it hasn’t killed the appeal of going to bars. There’s something special about that communal experience.”

Still, Netflix does a nice job of filling the void until next year’s fest. If you still can’t fathom watching anything made more than 50 years ago, settle for Sandler’s 2019 flick “Murder Mystery,” in which he gets framed for murder in Europe. It owes a lot to Hitchcock.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



CAMERON HEWITT/Rick Steves' Europe
The “Your Rainbow Panorama” walkway atop Aarhus’ art museum in Denmark is experiential art at its best.

Ease on into Denmark’s big little town, Aarhus

Aarhus, Denmark’s second-largest city, calls itself the “World’s Smallest Big City.” I’d argue it’s more like the world’s biggest little town: easy to handle and easy to like. A pleasant three-hour train ride from Copenhagen, Aarhus is well worth a stop. Aarhus is the lively cultural hub of Jutland, the part of Denmark that juts up from Germany — a land of windswept sandy beaches, inviting lakes and fortified old towns. It’s also one of the oldest cities in Scandinavia. When its Viking founders settled here in the eighth century, they were attracted to its strategic location, where a river hits the sea.

Today, Aarhus bustles with a buzzing port, an important university, a bursting-with-life pedestrian boulevard and an adorable old quarter filled with people living well. This “second city” enjoys a friendly competition with Copenhagen, whose sophisticates sniff that there’s no need for intercity rail connections in Denmark because there’s only one city — theirs. But modern Aarhus is elbowing its way into the itineraries of tourists with some notable attractions and a thriving street scene.

The Aarhus art museum — called ARoS — is a must-see sight, thanks to a statement contemporary building and a curatorial staff who have a knack for making cutting-edge art accessible and fun. One of the biggest draws is a work by Olafur Eliasson, Your Rainbow Panorama — a 360-degree walkway that perches on the rooftop like a rainbow-colored halo. My favorite piece in the collection is one very big Boy by the Australian artist Ron Mueck. This superrealistic crouching figure, nearly 16 feet tall, always stops me in my tracks.

If modern art isn’t your thing, check out Aarhus’ more traditional fare, including a fine open-air museum known as Den Gamle By (The Old Town). With 80 historic buildings carefully moved here from throughout Denmark, it gives visitors the best possible look at Danish urban life in decades past. Don’t be afraid to open doors or poke into seemingly abandoned courtyards — you’ll likely find a chaty docent inside, dressed in period attire eager to describe the artifacts, answer questions or demonstrate a craft such as blacksmithing or beekeeping. You can travel even farther back in time at the

town’s Viking Museum. In 1960, when a new bank was being built in downtown Aarhus, local archaeologists had a chance to excavate the site. Working their way down through the layers of time, they uncovered a section of the long-ago Viking town, including the remains of houses, wells, streets, tools and pottery. Most curiously, they discovered the headless skeleton of a man — possibly Aarhus’ oldest murder victim. The artifacts are on display in a basement museum just off Cathedral Square. Aarhus has another famous corpse — the Grauballe Man, the world’s best-preserved “bog man.” Archaeologists think he was a sacrificial victim, killed more than 2,000 years ago and tossed into a peaty swamp. Because of the oxygen-free, acidic environment, he looks like a fellow half his age. He’s displayed on the outskirts of town at the Moesgård Museum, which is dedicated to prehistory and ethnography.

The city also has a fascinating exhibit about life under Nazi rule during World War II. Aarhus’ police station, used by the Nazi occupiers for their Gestapo headquarters from 1940 until 1945, now hosts Occupation Museum, telling the story of the Danish resistance. Each visitor receives an ID card and follows that person’s life through the war as they grapple with sticky situations and moral dilemmas.

But there’s more to Aarhus than museums. As you wander the streets, the city just entertains. The higgledy-piggledy Latin Quarter, encompassing six or eight square blocks, is the oldest quarter, built in the late 14th century after the city knocked down the old Viking fortifications. This area is great for shopping, cafés and strolling. Its streets have historical names like Klostergade (Convent Street), Volden (The Rampart) and Badstuegade (Bath Street) — from the time when the riffraff visited public bathhouses for their annual “Christmas bath” (finer folk bathed monthly).

Another fun people zone stretches alongside the town’s canal (Aboulevar den). In the 1930s, Aarhus covered over its river to make a new road, but in the 1980s, locals decided to remove the road. They artfully canalized the river, creating a trendy avenue that’s now the town’s place to see and be seen. Lined with modern eateries, the street stays lively even after the short Danish summer fades away.

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Midsummer festivities soon to fire up in various locales

The long days and short nights near the summer solstice in Europe can be nothing short of magical. Here are four settings in which to celebrate the official start of the summer season:

Mountains: The bowl-shaped valley of the Tyrolean Zugspitz Arena in northern Austria lends itself ideally to the annual spectacle known as Bergfeuer, in which the outlines of giant images are placed upon the mountain slopes, waiting for just the right moment to be brought to life. Hearts,

crosses and stag heads are among the most common motifs carefully laid out by hundreds of volunteers. As darkness slowly falls, these images created by bags filled with sawdust and rape-seed oil are set alight and burn brightly for two to three hours.

This year’s Bergfeuer have been scheduled to take place on June 21. In the event of adverse weather conditions, the date will be rescheduled to June 28. The lit-up shapes and figures can be viewed at approximately 9:45 p.m. Those traveling from Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany, might wish to consider parking by the Esso gas station in Ehrwald. There are other good vantage points in Lermoos and Biberwier. Online: zugspitz-arena.com/sommer/bergfeuer.html

A similar phenomenon can be witnessed on the eve of the feast day of St. John the Baptist. The numerous bonfires placed along the peaks of the Waxenstein Ridge can be observed from Grainau, a municipality at the foot of the Zugspitz mountain some four miles west of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. These fires, known as Johannifeuer, are always set alight on June 23. Dates and times of other mountaintop illuminations are online at tinyurl.com/2bkuw3a7.

Riverbanks: Two regions along Austria’s stretch of the Danube River celebrate the summer solstice with fireworks displays, torchlit vineyards and floating lights on the river. The Wachau region comes alive on the evening of June 21; the Nibelungen-gau region follows suit on June 28. While many choose to view the phenomenon on board passenger ships, there’s plenty of land-based activity as well. Some of the best places to view the show of lights in the Wachau include the Danube’s embankments in Spitz or Arnsdorf, as well as the beaches in the towns of Weißenkirchen, Dürnstein, Loiben, Rossatzbach and Krems. Online: donau.com/de/sonnenwende



iStock
St. John’s bonfires will take place in many locations in Europe on or around June 23 this year.

Coastlines: The Hogueras de San Juan, or Bonfires of Saint John, is a longstanding tradition observed across many parts of Spain. Traditions run deep in the city of Alicante, where celebrations take the form of a multi-day festival. Originating from the ancient custom of burning unwanted objects at the time of the summer solstice, elaborate statues known as “hogueras” are paraded through the streets prior to being set alight.

Alicante’s celebrations are accompanied by the election of beauty queens, public dancing, daily fireworks in the Plaza de los Luceros and a folklore parade featuring dance groups from around the world. The cremà, or burning of the statues, takes place at midnight on the night of June 24. Most other areas of Spain celebrate on June 23. Online: tinyurl.com/2bczmxsj

Denmark also wholeheartedly celebrates St. John’s Evening. Throughout the land, “Sankt Hans Aften” is marked by community gatherings featuring singing and the lighting of large bonfires. Many of these bonfires feature the effigy of a witch. Cities and towns not located along the coast use parks and sports fields as the sites for their bonfires. Most communities celebrate on June 23. Online: tinyurl.com/yc4cfybr

Cities: The city of Porto, Portugal, celebrates São João with particular flair. In what’s one of the city’s most anticipated events of the year, celebrations kick off on June 23 and continue until the dawn of the following day. This vibrant midsummer celebration includes informal street parties, live music, the grilling of sardines and playful traditions such as tapping people with plastic hammers, which is supposed to bring them good luck. Young and old alike leap over the bonfires lining the city streets, a ritual said to burn away the old and welcome what is new. Fireworks are launched from barges on the Douro River. The dazzling show is best seen in the vicinity of the Dom Luís I Bridge. Online: tinyurl.com/5n8ecd5x



Rick Steves

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

BY SUMAN NAISHADHAM
Associated Press

In the heart of Spain’s capital, Sobrino de Botín holds a coveted Guinness World Record as the world’s oldest restaurant. Exactly three hundred years after it opened its doors, Botín welcomes droves of daily visitors hungry for Castilian fare with a side of history.

But on the outskirts of Madrid, far from the souvenir shops and tourist sites, a rustic tavern named Casa Pedro makes a bold claim. Its owners assert the establishment endured not just the Spanish Civil War in the 1930s and the Napoleonic invasion in the early 1800s, but even the War of Spanish Succession at the start of the 18th century — a lineage that would make Casa Pedro older than Botín and a strong contender for the title.

“It’s really frustrating when you say, ‘Yes, we’ve been around since 1702,’ but ... you can’t prove it,” said manager and eighth-generation proprietor Irene Guiñales. “If you look at the restaurant’s logo, it says ‘Casa Pedro, since 1702,’ so we said, ‘Damn it, let’s try to prove it.’”

Guiñales, 51, remembers her grandfather swearing by Casa Pedro’s age, but she was aware that decades-old hearsay from a proud old-timer wouldn’t be enough to prove it. Her family hired a historian and has so far turned up documents dating the restaurant’s operations to at least 1750.

That puts them within striking distance of Botín’s record.

Clients and rivals

Both taverns are family-owned. Both offer Castilian classics like stewed tripe and roast suckling pig. They are decorated with charming Spanish tiles and feature ceilings with exposed wooden beams and underground wine cellars. And both enjoy a rich, star-studded history.

Botín’s celebrated past includes a roster of literary patrons like Truman Capote, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Graham Greene. In his book “The Sun Also Rises,” Ernest Hemingway described it as “one of the best restaurants in the world.” Casa Pedro boasts its own VIPs: Its walls are adorned with decades-old photographs of former Spanish King Juan Carlos I dining in one of its many rooms. The current Spanish monarch, King Felipe VI, dines there, too, albeit more inconspicuously than his father.

But the similarities between the two hot spots end there.

Casa Pedro was once a stop on the only road heading north from the Spanish capital toward France. Its clientele is largely local regulars, like David González and Mayte Villena, who for years have spent every Friday lunching at the tavern.

“It wouldn’t change a thing for us,” Villena said about the res-



The exterior of Casa Pedro restaurant in Madrid, Spain, on May 16. The rustic tavern on the outskirts of the city is trying to prove to Guinness World Records that it is the oldest restaurant in the world and has continuously operated in the same location with the same name since 1702.

PHOTOS BY MANU FERNANDEZ/AP

Contending for a title

The world’s oldest restaurant, Sobrino de Botín, faces a challenge from another Madrid tavern, Casa Pedro, that says it’s even older



Irene Guiñales, right, and Pedro Guiñales del Valle, owners and managers of Casa Pedro restaurant, review documents May 16 in Madrid regarding the restaurant’s opening date.

taurant someday securing the Guinness title.

Botín, on the other hand, is a stone’s throw from Madrid’s famed Plaza Mayor, where any day of the week, tour guides are herding groups around town — and often straight through the restaurant’s front door.

Antonio González, a third-generation proprietor of Botín, concedes that the Guinness accolade awarded in 1987 has helped business, but said the restaurant had enough history to draw visitors even before. “It has a certain magic,” he said.

Pretenders to the crown

The question then becomes: How can either restaurant definitively claim the title? Guinness provides its specific guidelines for the superlative only to applicants, according to spokesperson Kylie Galloway, noting that it entails “substantial evidence and documentation of the restaurant’s operation over the years.”

González said that Guinness required Botín show it has continuously operated in the same location with the same name.

The only time the restaurant closed was during the COVID-19 pandemic, as did Casa Pedro.

That criteria would mean that restaurants that are even older — Paris’ Le Procope, which says it was founded in 1686, or Beijing’s Bianyifang, founded in 1416, or the 1673-established White Horse Tavern in Newport, R.I. — aren’t eligible for the designation.

But La Campana, in Rome’s historic center, claims more than 500 years of operation, citing documents on its menu and in a self-published history. Its owners say they have compiled the requisite paperwork and plan to submit it to Guinness.

A dream for Casa Pedro

Guiñales and her husband couldn’t consult archives from the former town of Fuencarral, now a Madrid neighborhood. Those papers went up in flames during the Spanish Civil War. Instead, they delved into Spanish national archives, where they found land registries of the area from the First Marquess of Ensenada (1743-1754) that showed the existence of a tavern, wine cellar and inn in the small town as of 1750.

In their spare time, the couple continues to hunt for records proving that Casa Pedro indeed dates back to 1702, as is proclaimed on its walls, takeout bags and sugar packets.

But even if they dig up the final documents and wrest the Guinness honor from Botín, Guiñales concedes that her restaurant’s quiet location makes it unlikely to draw Botín’s clientele in central Madrid.

“To think that we could reach that public would be incredible,” Guiñales said. “It’s a dream, but it’s a dream.”

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



Handblown glass Christmas ornaments from 2024 for sale at Meisenthal Glassworks in Meisenthal. Each year, the facility designs a new ornament, which is highly sought-after.

Kept in shape for centuries

Meisenthal Glassworks in France doesn’t just sell ornaments; it also explains the fragile art

BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN
Stars and Stripes

If you ask staff at Meisenthal Glassworks in northeastern France why the site is closed to the public during the first three months of the year, they’ll tell you they need that long to recover from the Christmas rush.

Each winter, thousands of people descend on the tiny village of Meisenthal a little more than an hour’s drive from the Kaiserslautern Military Community to buy handblown glass Christmas ornaments.

The glassworks releases a newly designed ornament each holiday season, and because its wares aren’t sold online, customers must buy them in person, sometimes waiting in line for up to three hours.

But those who come before the holiday rush, when the pace is slower and the workshop is still open to the public, will find more than souvenirs.

Between April and October, visitors can check out live glassblowing demonstrations, museum exhibits and hands-on workshops. Come November, the sole focus at the glassworks is on making and selling the Christmas ornaments.

Zelia Collot works in cultural outreach at the facility, known in French as the Site Verrier Meisenthal. During my recent visit, she shared a wealth of insights into the operation.

“When people come here, they understand glass — how you can

make it, how you can work it — and how important it has been to this area,” Collot said.

From an elevated observation area of the International Center for Glass Art, known by the French abbreviation CIAV, visitors can watch craftsmen shape molten glass into objects, while they periodically explain the process to onlookers.

Demonstrations are in French, but they’re easy to follow even with little or no knowledge of the language. English-speaking guides are available by advance reservation and can assist with translation if desired.

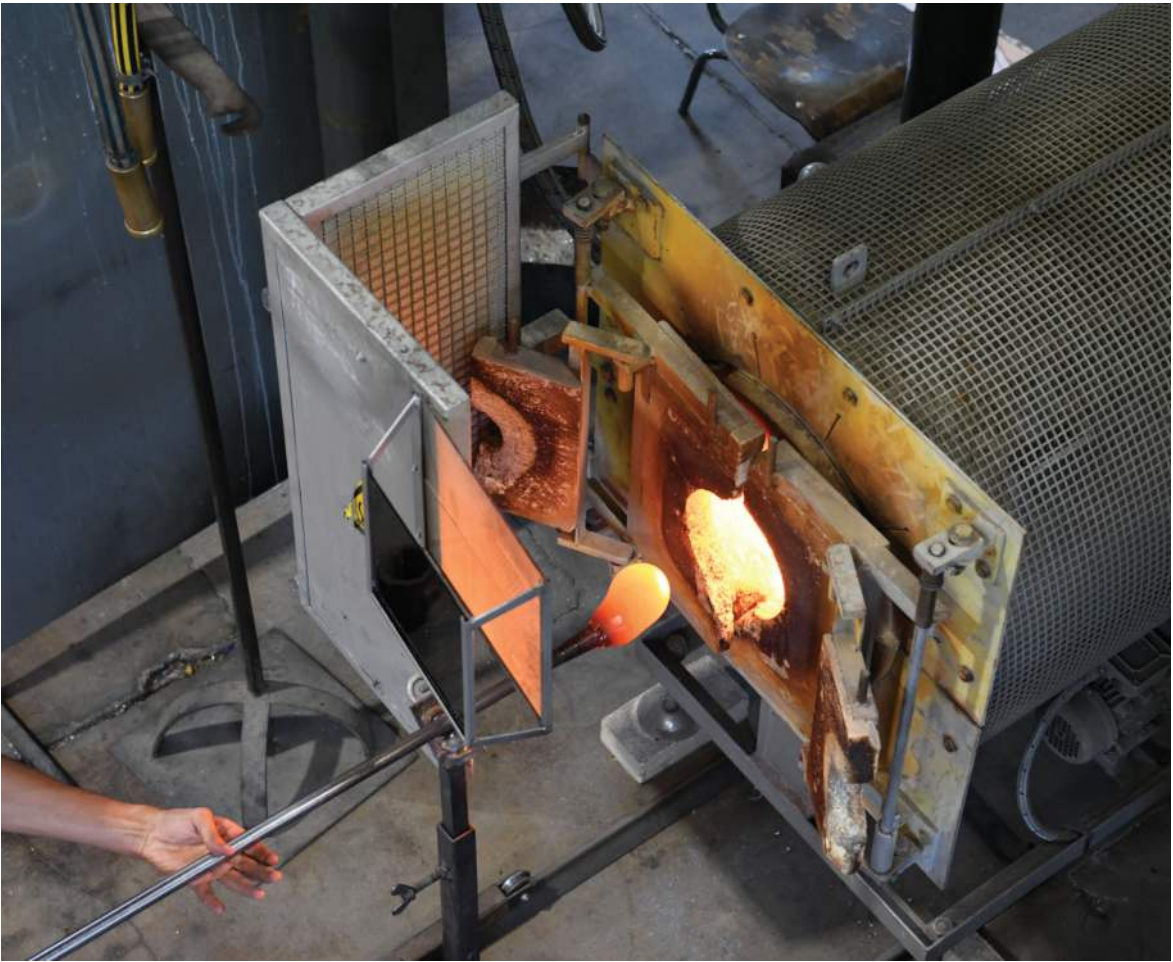
Visitors can also access a free digital guide in English by scanning a QR code on site. It provides information on all areas of the glassworks.

The opening of the CIAV in 1992 marked the start of a revival of glassblowing in Meisenthal after decades of dormancy. The goal wasn’t mass production, but the preservation of traditional techniques and the training of a new generation of glassmakers.

Since at least the Middle Ages, artisans have used the area’s silica-rich sandstone, potash, wood and water to make glass. Meisenthal’s factory began operating in 1711, part of a growing network of glassworks in the area.

In the 20th century, though, the rise of plastic, shifts in global trade and high energy costs contributed to the decline of the traditional glassworks. Meisenthal’s factory closed in 1969.

Nowadays, the CIAV is the



PHOTOS BY PHILLIP WALTER WELLMAN/Stars and Stripes

Glass is heated in a furnace at the International Center of Glass Art in Meisenthal, France, May 29. The glass must be kept above a certain temperature as workers transform it into different objects. Between April and October, you can see glassblowing demonstrations, museum exhibits and hands-on workshops.



The International Center of Glass Art and the Glass Hall, left, in Meisenthal, are part of Meisenthal Glassworks, a production facility where the area’s long tradition of glassblowing is being kept alive.

heart of the glassworks. In addition, the site includes a glass museum featuring technical displays and touchable objects that explain traditional production methods.

Visitors can also see a collection of works by Émile Gallé, a pioneer of French Art Nouveau who collaborated with Meisenthal glassmakers in the mid-1800s, as well as pieces by modern artists.

The third component of the glassworks is the Glass Hall, a towering brick-and-steel structure built in the early 20th century. Once used in production, it now hosts concerts, exhibitions and other events.

The space can accommodate up to 3,000 spectators despite retaining two large glassmaking furnaces that are no longer used.

Swedish musician Eagle-Eye Cherry, known for his 1997 hit “Save Tonight,” is scheduled to perform there in October.

For those eager to explore more of the region’s glassmaking legacy, Meisenthal is one of three stops along the ÉtoilesTerrestres, or Earthly Stars, glass route. The other two are the Saint-Louis crystal works in Saint-Louis-les-Bitche and the Lalique Museum in Wingen-sur-Moder.

Monuments to glass production can also be found in nearby villages, including Lemberg and Goetzenbruck, which is credited with starting France’s glass ornament tradition in the 1800s.

At the time, apples were commonly used to decorate Christmas trees. But a poor harvest one year is said to have inspired Goetzenbruck glassblowers to

On the QT

Address: Place Robert Schuman, Meisenthal, France

Hours: Glassworks (except for special events at the Glass Hall) April 1-Oct. 19, Tuesday- Sunday, 1:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. After October, the glassworks focuses on ornament production and it is only open for sales, no visits.

Cost: Full adult price, 9 euros; students, people with disabilities, 4.50 euros; children 6-17, 4 euros; children under 6, free; family/day pass, 18 euros; adult annual pass, 12 euros; annual pass for children 6-17, 7 euros.

Information: ciav-meisenthal.fr/acueil; +33 3 87 96 81 22; contact@site-verrier-meisenthal.fr

Phillip Walter Wellman

create glass apples to hang on the trees instead.

By the late 1800s, the village had become France’s leading producer of holiday ornaments. Over time, Goetzenbruck’s factory shifted to industrial glass used in watches and glasses, and the handmade ornament tradition gradually faded.

It might have disappeared entirely if not for several former Goetzenbruck glassblowers who in the 1990s passed on their knowledge to a new generation of artisans in Meisenthal.

The ornaments that draw most people are only the most visible part of a much older story. People who head to Meisenthal for more than just Christmas commercialism will find a village that’s keeping its past alive, one piece of glass at a time.

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WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Tree’s company at Zum Goldstein in Mainz

Formerly a brewery, the German eatery situated near 170-year-old chestnuts offers a menu that changes with the seasons

By MICHAEL ABRAMS
Stars and Stripes

Even in Germany, it’s uncommon to dine in a place once patronized by revolutionaries, or to sip and sup under 170-year-old chestnut trees in the middle of a bustling city.

At Zum Goldstein in the center of Mainz, you can. The restaurant used to be one of the city’s largest breweries. One after another, most of them closed, but the eatery here remained.

When Germans joined in the uprisings that swept through Europe in 1848, revolutionaries and Prussians got into a big fight here that left five rebels dead. The magnificent chestnut trees that shade the restaurant’s garden also were planted about that time.

On a recent hot, sunny day in late May, my wife and I made our way to Zum Goldstein for a meal under their leafy branches.

There are only 10 indoor tables and about 17 outside, so reservations are recommended. On this day, the small, friendly staff offered solely outdoor service.

The menu also isn’t large: There were six or seven offerings each among starters, salads and main courses. Still, every section has vegan or vegetarian choices.

The beer, unfortunately, is from Bavaria. Nothing against Bavarian beer, but it’s too bad that none of the many excellent local brews were represented. It might be a contractual thing.

The wines served here come from either the Rheinpfalz, on this side of the Rhine, or from the Rheingau, in Hessen, on the other. I chose a sauvignon blanc from Rheinhessen, while my wife had a rieslingschorle, wine mixed with sparkling water.

Then we studied the menu, which is regularly updated with seasonal dishes. For starters, I ordered a daily special, a tartare of brook char, a fish similar to trout, served with a potato pancake. My wife chose a trio of Mainz specialties.

My tartare was delicious. The chunky chopped fish and vegetables in a mayonnaiselike sauce were finely seasoned and topped with a variety of lettuces. The potato pancake was nicely browned, quite firm and just a little greasy.

For those watching their calories and carbs or looking for a small, light dinner, this would have sufficed.

My wife’s starter offered a quiche with sausage; spundekäs, an herbed cream cheese; and grüne sosse, or green sauce,



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL ABRAMS/Stars and Stripes

Zum Goldstein in Mainz, Germany, has been a restaurant of some kind since at least the mid-1800s. There was once a brewery here, and diners can enjoy a meal made from fresh ingredients under its more than 170-year-old chestnut trees.



Zum Goldstein

Address: Kartäuserstrasse 3, Mainz, Germany
Hours: Monday to Friday, 5-11 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday, noon-11 p.m.
Prices: Appetizers, 7.50 to 13.80 euros; entrees, 23 to 30 euros; desserts, 7 to 13.50 euros; soft drinks, 3.50 to 5 euros; beers, 3.50 to 5.40 euros; wines, 5.50 to 7.90 euros.
Information: www.zum-goldstein.de

Michael Abrams

served with a hard-boiled egg.

We were not quite sure what made the quiche a specialty of the city, but we guessed it was the fleischwurst sausage, a type typical of Mainz.

Spundekäs is typical of the Rheingau vineyards and the Rheinhessen area of Rheinland-Pfalz. It is heavily flavored with paprika powder and often served with wine.

The starters were quite filling and we were happy that it took the main courses a while to arrive. If you are in a hurry, Zum Goldstein is probably not the place for you.

For our main courses, my wife chose a quarter of baked chicken, served with grilled asparagus and green sauce, while I took Zum Goldstein’s LIM-burger.

The burger gets its name from the tangy Limburger cheese on top. It had a ground pork and beef patty served on a bun with bacon, wild garlic mayonnaise, lettuce, tomato and fried onions. A side of rosemary fried potatoes came with it.

The steak knife that was pro-



The Meenzer Dreierlei starter at Zum Goldstein in Mainz. It was small portions of, from left, a quiche with sausage; spundekäs, an herbed cream cheese; and grüne sosse, or green sauce, served with a hard-boiled egg. It was served with bread and butter. Meenz is slang for the city on the Rhine River.



A tartare of brook char, a fish similar to trout, served with a potato pancake was a daily special as a starter recently at Zum Goldstein.



A quarter baked chicken served with grilled asparagus and grüne sosse, or green sauce. Grüne sosse is traditionally made with seven different herbs and yogurt and/or sour cream and is a spring specialty of the Rhine-Main area of central Germany.



The strawberry-rhubarb crumble served with a scoop of vanilla ice cream at Zum Goldstein.



A bowl of strawberries topped with vanilla ice cream and whipped cream and served with an espresso at Zum Goldstein.

vided allowed me to slice the rather tall burger in half, making it slightly easier to eat. The patty was juicy, not dry at all, while the mayonnaise was spicy. In summary, delicious.

I’ve been a fan of rosemary fried potatoes since first eating them years ago in Italy with scaloppine. Although I prefer them perhaps a bit greasier, after the potato pancake these were fine.

My wife enjoyed her chicken. The quarter was a breast and a wing. She thought that the breast was a little dry, though still tender and tasty. The asparagus, chopped into bite-sized pieces, was crunchy on the outside but cooked through on the inside.

Grüne sosse is traditionally made with seven herbs, yogurt and/or sour cream and is a spring specialty of the Rhine-Main area of central Germany.

The green sauce here was delicious, but unfortunately for Zum Goldstein, a day earlier we had sampled a version of the

sauce that recently took top honors at Frankfurt’s Grüne Sosse Festival.

That winning one from Darmstadt’s Ratskeller restaurant proved superior for us, but that’s not a knock on Zum Goldstein’s green sauce.

The desserts were refreshing and satisfying. I had a strawberry-rhubarb crumble served with a scoop of homemade vanilla ice cream. My wife had a little bowl of strawberries topped with vanilla ice cream and whipped cream and served with a cup of espresso.

The meal was delightfully delicious under the chestnut trees. We definitely want to return, perhaps in the dark days of winter, for a seasonal meal under the ancient wooden beams of Zum Goldstein’s interior.

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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY TREVARES JOHNSON/Stars and Stripes

A towering vertical drop slide stands ready for thrill-seekers at Sports Monster in the Starfield Mall in Goyang, South Korea, west of Seoul.

Fusing fitness and fun

Sports Monster in South Korea adds digital element to indoor activities

BY TREVARES JOHNSON
Stars and Stripes
At the heart of Starfield Mall in Goyang, west of Seoul, Sports Monster blends traditional sports with digital gaming, offering an indoor experience that appeals to children, teens and adults.

Since opening in 2016, the indoor complex has provided more than 30 physical and virtual activities, including trampolines, basketball dunk zones and a simulated rock-climbing wall.

Digital offerings range from rhythm games and motion-based soccer to immersive virtual reality stations.

The facility, entirely indoors, is designed to accommodate South Korea's unpredictable weather. The space caters to a range of ages and energy levels, with staff stationed throughout to assist guests and ensure safety, allow-

On the QT

Directions: Inside the Starfield Mall in Goyang, South Korea. Google Plus code: JWVV+C5 Goyang-si, Gyeonggi-do, South Korea
Times: Open daily, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.
Costs: A two-hour pass costs 26,000 won (about \$19) during the off-peak periods and 30,000 won during popular times. One-hour passes are available for 17,000 won and 19,000 won, respectively.
Food: Starfield Mall boasts a plethora of options.
Information: Phone: 82-1668-4832

Trevares Johnson

ing parents to shop or relax nearby.

Though not all staff speak fluent English, employees are

known for being approachable and enthusiastic, helping guide patrons and maintaining a family-friendly environment.

Weekday afternoons tend to be the least crowded, allowing for shorter waits and more time at each attraction.

A standout feature is the VR baseball pitching game, a fast-paced, intuitive option that attracts both children and adults.

Admission is tiered by time and duration. A two-hour pass costs 26,000 won (about \$19) during the off-peak periods and 30,000 won during peak periods. One-hour passes are available for 17,000 won and 19,000 won, respectively.

For military families, this attraction offers an affordable, interactive way to explore Korea's evolving recreation landscape.

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Sports Monster's 360 Swing offers a full-body rotation.



Climbing walls and a jumping tower are in the harnessed activity zone.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Craft beer and laughter

Tokyo Comedy Bar’s small, no-frills venue hosts shows in both Japanese and English

By **SETH ROBSON**
Stars and Stripes

There’s something funny about one of the bars near Shibuya Station in Tokyo.

In my opinion, a lot of stuff in Shibuya is laughable — there’s a fine line between incredibly cool and unintentionally amusing.

People at the Tokyo Comedy Bar are OK with others laughing at — or along — with them.

The third-floor club includes a cramped bar serving craft beer and snacks, but the action happens in the room next door where comedians prowl in the darkness.

The venue isn’t fancy — just a room with 55 foldout chairs, a small stage and a sound system — but its intimate setting means you’ll have a good chance of interacting with the performers.

Are you an expert heckler? Everyone in the room will be able to hear your jibes. But be prepared to become the butt of the joke.

Tokyo Comedy Bar opened three years ago, cofounder Johnathan Wakrat, a Canadian expat, told me during a recent Saturday night session.

That evening, a diverse audience, including members of the U.S. military community, packed the house for a showcase hosted by Kenyan Evans Musoka and featuring Hong Kong comedians Garron Chiu and Tim To, alongside local favorite Yurié Collins.

Musoka kicked things off by riffing on immigrants’ struggles in Tokyo, such as being arrested by extremely polite police.

To told some R-rated jokes related to his experience as a Chinese Canadian before Collins explained her dream of landing a “sugar daddy” who could fund cosmetic surgery. Chiu shared a story about getting upgraded to business class and leaving his wife to ride in economy on a recent flight.

American troops and their family members are often in the crowd, Wakrat said, before adding that a few members of the U.S. military community also perform there.

After starting a few years ago with four or five shows a week, Tokyo Comedy Bar now hosts around 75 shows a month in both Japanese and English, he said.

There are also regular shows in Spanish and for the LGBT community, Wakrat said.

“People who can sell 5,000 tickets usually go to a theater,” he said of big-name comedians who visit Tokyo. But some enjoy performing for smaller audiences at the comedy bar, he added.

Tokyo Comedy Bar’s main draw is its nightly 7:30 p.m. Stand-Up Comedy Showcase, with a 9 p.m. slot typically featuring open mics, international headliners or Japanese-language acts.

While tickets are sometimes available at the door, Wakrat



PHOTOS BY SETH ROBSON/Stars and Stripes

Evans Musoka, of Kenya, performs at Tokyo Comedy Bar on May 17. The club hosts around 75 shows a month, and its intimate 55-seat capacity means audience members will be close to the action.

Tokyo Comedy Bar

Location: 1-5-9 Dogenzaka, Shibuya, Tokyo 150-0043
Hours: Regular shows run daily starting at 7:30 p.m. and 9 p.m.
Prices: As low as 2,000 yen (about \$14) for weekday performances to 5,000 yen for international headliners.
Dress: Casual
Directions: A short walk from Shibuya Station’s Hachiko Exit.
Information: Online: tokyocomedybar.com

Seth Robson

recommends reserving online to avoid being turned away.

Tokyo Comedy Bar is expanding its reach beyond the Shibuya venue. It now hosts a quarterly comedy event at the U.S. military’s New Sanno Hotel in Tokyo, part of a growing portfolio of comedy ventures in Japan.

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[@SethRobson1](https://twitter.com/SethRobson1)



Craft beer and snacks are an accompaniment to the entertainment at Tokyo Comedy Bar, just steps away from Shibuya Station.

At Japan’s Chiringashima Island, you can walk across the sea

The Japan News

A sandbar that appears at an uninhabited island during low tide is attracting attention in Ibusuki, Kagoshima prefecture.

An approximately half-mile-long sandbar can be observed at Chiringashima Island for several hours a day during low tide from March to October, allowing visitors to walk between the island and the Satsuma Peninsula.

At least 600 people a day are said to visit to enjoy the phenomenon.

The island sits at a point where two ocean currents collide, causing sand to accumulate.

The sandbar has made the island popular as a romantic location, too, as it connects two places. A heart-shaped monument has also been placed on the island.

The beautiful sandy beach lies near a campground where the former Ibusuki naval air base was located.

Toward the end of World War II, the base served as a suicide attack base for sea-based aircraft, with many young soldiers departing from there.

Remnants of seaplanes are said to still be found on the beach even almost 80 years after the end of the war.



The Japan News photos

Left: At low tide, a sandbar connects Chiringashima Island to the Satsuma Peninsula in Ibusuki, Kagoshima prefecture. Right: High tide. A campground, formerly a naval air base, is seen in the foreground.

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Great graphics, but few games

True potential of Nintendo Switch 2 is tough to measure until developers pump out more titles

By LOU KESTEN
Associated Press

I'm cruising around Bowser's Castle with my old pal Toad. It's not exactly relaxing, what with all the lava pits and banana peels and turtle shells littering the road. Add 23 other characters — is that a cow driving? — who are trying to get to the finish line first, and it's chaos.

The hectic, high-speed insanity of any race in the new Mario Kart World would have caused the eight-year-old Switch console to wheeze a bit. And that's why we've got the Switch 2 (\$449.99), the souped-up sequel to Nintendo's popular home-and-portable hybrid.

It looks prettier, too. The 7.9-inch portable display (up from 6.2 inches) boosts the resolution to 1020p (from 720p), and while the LCD screen isn't quite as sharp as an OLED screen might have been, it's much cleaner than the original recipe Switch. It looks even better when connected to an HDTV since it now supports 4K and HDR.

Nintendo has always stood apart from the technological arms race that fans of Sony's PlayStation and Microsoft's Xbox obsess over, insisting that first-rate games don't necessarily depend on high-powered computer chips. But you could feel the strain in 2023's The Legend of Zelda: Tears of the Kingdom,

with its at-times blurry graphics and sluggish framerate. The Switch 2, with a faster framerate of 120 fps, corrects much of the fuzziness.

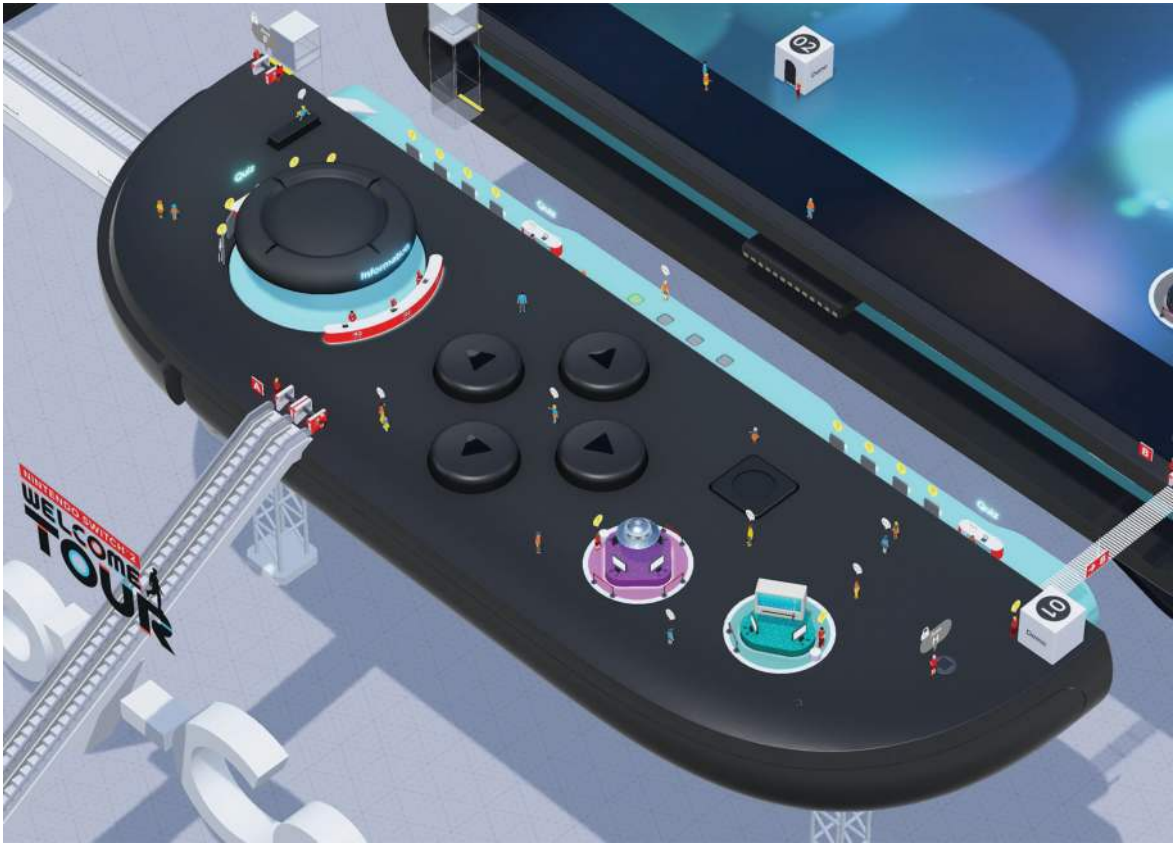
That's not to say it comes close to matching the high-definition performance of the PlayStation 5 or the Xbox X/S. If you're expecting the jaw-dropping graphics of, say, Ubisoft's Assassin's Creed Shadows ... well, no.

There is good news for those of us who have gotten weary of the old Switch's dinky 32 gigabytes of internal storage. The Switch 2 multiplies that by eight, for 256 GB. Of course, flashier games take up more space, so if you want more room, you'll have to invest in a microSD Express card — which is a bit pricier than the standard memory card used in most portable devices.

How do magnets work?

The Switch 2's Joy-Con controllers have undergone some tinkering. As before, you can attach them to the sides of the screen if you're playing on the go. If you're at home, you can attach them to a doohickey that feels more like a traditional joystick. Either way, they're now more firmly connected with magnets, which provide a satisfying snap.

Both the left and right Joy-Cons now include an optical mouse, which you can use by



Nintendo photos

Nintendo Switch 2 Welcome Tour is a demo package that offers an inside look at the features and tech that power the gaming experiences. It and Mario Kart World are the only exclusive titles out right now.

placing the controller on its edge and rolling it around on a table. (Nintendo says you can also use it on your pants, but I prefer using a clipboard on my lap.) It remains to be seen how many Switch 2 games will call for a mouse, but 2K's port of Sid Meier's Civilization VII seems like a good candidate.

Social options

And then there's a new button labeled "C" on the right-hand Joy-Con. That calls up GameChat, which lets you start up a conversation with other players — provided you've all taken the time to register yourselves as friends. (Eventually, you'll also need to subscribe to the Nintendo Switch Online service, but that requirement doesn't kick in until March 31, 2026.) The microphone is built into the Switch 2, though if you want to upgrade to video chat, you'll need to buy a separate Nintendo camera.

Finally, there's GameShare, which lets you play selected titles with other Switch users even if they don't own the software.

Nintendo has been emphasizing the new social features in its marketing, though it feels like it's catching up to the competition. The kids I know who play Fortnite or Minecraft on competing consoles seem to have figured out long ago how to chat with their pals. Welcome to the 2010s?

Who's got game?

As with any console launch, the driving question is: Does it have the games?

There are just a couple of Switch 2 exclusives out now: Mario Kart World and Nintendo



The Nintendo Switch 2 adds new social capabilities with the built-in mic and the new online feature GameChat, where up to 12 friends and family can play games and talk, even when they're miles apart.

Switch 2 Welcome Tour, a \$10 demo package that really should have been free. There are some new-to-Nintendo ports of excellent titles like Split Fiction and Cyberpunk 2077. You can get upgrades of classics like the last two Legend of Zelda adventures. And the Switch 2 is fully backward-compatible, so you can play everything that came out for the Switch as well as a substantial library of older titles.

There's no other machine that will let you play future installments of beloved franchises like Zelda, Super Mario Bros., Super Smash Bros. and Animal Crossing. None of those have been announced yet, but some marquee names — Donkey Kong and Kirby — will star in Switch 2 exclusives later this year.

There's plenty of competition out there, though, and not just in

the TV-connected console market Switch shares with the PlayStation and the Xbox. Nintendo no longer has the portable market to itself, thanks to Valve's SteamDeck. Some models of that device cost less than the Switch 2, and it already has a huge library of PC games. Meanwhile, Microsoft announced over the weekend that it's teaming up with Asus on the ROG Xbox Ally, a handheld that will be out before Christmas.

We should have a better idea of the Switch's quality a few years down the line, after developers get a handle on what the new hardware can do. If you're dying to get back behind the wheel with Mario, Luigi and Princess Peach right now, though, you know what you need to do.

Online: nintendo.com/sg/switch2



WEEKEND: BOOK REVIEWS

From a firefighter's perspective

‘When It All Burns’ covers recent events in California, as well as history of land mismanagement

BY JEREMY NORTON
The Minnesota Star Tribune

Jordan Thomas’ “When It All Burns” is a tremendous book that deepened my understanding and appreciation not just of the men and women who serve as wildland firefighters but also of the long, tragic history of land mismanagement in the American West. Without concerted efforts to reverse our abuse of the land and a dedicated examination of what we have done to create these dire conditions, it shows that all of us will continue to suffer the consequences of megafires.

“When It All Burns” presents the former firefighter’s learning curve and his harsh immersion in the elite Los Padres Hot Shot Crew. As an inexperienced newbie facing the tumultuous 2021 wildfire season in California, he

shares his vivid reflections of the arduous and terrifying work. He delineates the interconnections between not just the climate crisis and the ever-increasing megafires that now destroy more in a season than have burned previously in decades or centuries, but also the history of fire as landscape control and the (spoiler alert!) tawdry and tragic legacy of white supremacy, climate change and corporate greed.

The rote explanations — that these fires were caused solely by hapless government agencies, drought or stray sparks — obscured their true form: They were the consequence of centuries of colonial rule and corporate greed.

This book is powerful, instructive and well written. Thomas shows the reader the vast beauty of the land, the fascinating and destructive power of fire and the

legacy of our rapacious westward expansion. This legacy includes the earliest settlers in the West, first the Spanish and then the Europeans, whose violent eradication of the Indigenous population interrupted eons of successful interactions between humans, fire and the natural environment.

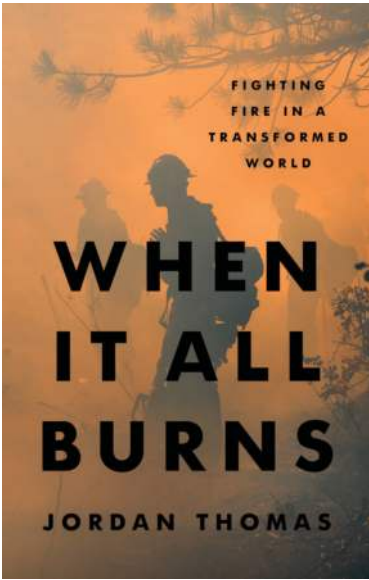
Thomas is an unlikely addition to the hyper-masculine, hotshot crew, a lithe intellectual with deep lung capacity. He details the deep, complicated bonds of the hotshots, forged in extreme toil and dangerous conditions as well as in the idle hours, waiting or performing tedious labor. He gives us a vivid portrait of those who put themselves between the roaring monster and whatever remains unburned.

The work is strenuous and dangerous. His brief orientation informs him that, beyond the

plentiful natural threats — shifting fire patterns, falling trees, swarms of bees, endless poison oak — the principal hazard to confront would be the danger posed by the crew’s masculine tendencies. He writes that early on, he felt the cultural paradox that to survive on the crew (socially and literally), members needed to embody the very traits that could kill them.

Unlike city firefighters, wildland firefighters don’t retreat to their own stations for hot showers and cool beds: They sleep in the dirt at the edges of massive conflagrations, going weeks without showers.

It could be nice, sleeping deep in the mountains under the stars — except the night sky is smothered by the impenetrable, billowing smoke. And someone has to stand sentry against encroaching flames.



Scientists warn that wildland firefighters face more challenges than most when it comes to the consequences of climate change, because their survival depends on knowledge that is calibrated to a world that no longer exists. “When It All Burns” entertains and educates without being preachy or despairing.

Jeremy Norton is a Minneapolis-based writer and firefighter. His “Trauma Sponges” was published in 2024.

The Listeners

Maggie Stiefvater

Stiefvater has brought her magical prose with her to her first adult novel.

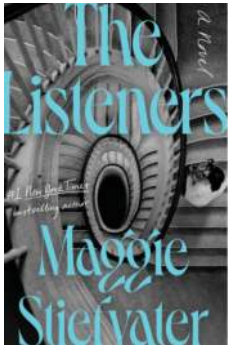
“The Listeners” takes place at a luxury hotel in West Virginia as World War II begins. In need of a place to store their foreign nationals — i.e., Axis diplomats and their families — the U.S. government takes over the Avallon Hotel, forcing its manager and her staff to scramble to balance hospitality and hedonism.

June Porter Hudson, the hotel’s general manager, is a self-assured woman, wholeheartedly devoted to the Avallon Hotel at the cost of her identity. Tucker Minnick is a tough but emotionally wounded FBI agent, responsible for diplomatically monitoring his hostages and any accomplices. When June and Tucker meet, their logistical tug-of-war serves as mutual annoyance, entertainment and self-discovery.

Humanizing and detail-oriented, “The Listeners” is a story about both people management and self-regulation. It’s a unique, domestic take on World War II that showcases the encroaching nature of war as men are drafted, families torn apart and rations enforced. At the same time, the novel shows how class divide fosters privilege — and ignorance — in the rich, especially during dark times.

In her afterword, Stiefvater revealed that “The Listeners” was inspired by real people, events and attitudes, which made the novel that much more impressive. It was well-researched and tactful, handling dark issues with sensitivity and embedding colorful detail onto each page.

— Rachel S. Hunt/AP



Beach House Rules

Kristy Woodson Harvey

Charlotte Sitterly and her 14-year-old daughter, Iris, are suddenly shut out of their comfortable life in an upscale coastal community in North Carolina. They’ve lost access to their money, car and even home after husband and father Bill was arrested on suspicion of financial fraud.

With nowhere else to go, they wind up at a beachfront former bed and breakfast in Juniper Shores where a group of single women and their children live, sharing the domestic chores and forming bonds.

“Beach House Rules” is delicious, high-end Southern chick lit, a fun novel to stash into a tote with your towel and sunscreen on the way to the pool this summer.

It has everything you need in a modern beach read — romance, mystery, family tension and even an anonymous social media blogger with tons of attitude.

At the former bed and breakfast, members of the “mommune” promise to follow the beach house rules: keep secrets, visit the beach daily and make a snack for someone else if they get one for themselves. Owned by Alice Bailey, a young widow three times over who has no children, the house becomes home as well to three other women and their kids, who are allowed to live rent free while they sort out complicated life situations.

Bailey is dubbed the “Black Widow” by the blogger, who speculates that she may have killed her husbands.

There are plenty of surprises as the story develops, always centered on the power of female friendships and the importance of family.

— Anita Snow/Associated Press



We Don't Talk About Carol

Kristen L. Berry

At age 13, Sydney Singleton discovered an old photograph tucked away in a drawer in her paternal grandmother’s guest room. It was a portrait of a Black girl just entering her teen years — a girl who looked a lot like Sydney.

Next morning, Sydney asked her grandmother about it. The woman would say only this: “We don’t talk about Carol.”

Two decades later, Sydney, now a married woman in her mid-30s, flies from her Los Angeles home to Raleigh, N.C., to help prepare her late grandmother’s home for sale. There, she and her younger sister, Sasha, find the photograph again. They also find Carol’s diary.

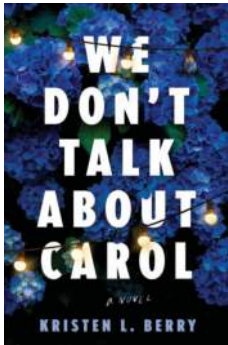
So begins Berry’s fine debut novel, a tale that is at once an exploration of family secrets, a 60-year-old cold case investigation and a damning indictment of the short shrift missing Black girls get from both the authorities and the media.

Carol, it turns out, was Sydney’s late father’s older sister. Her diary, written when she was about 16, reveals that she had an older boyfriend, aspired to be a singer and planned to run away to Detroit to try out with Motown. Carol’s family, believing the child had run off, never filed a missing person report.

So Sydney, a former investigative reporter, feels compelled to discover what happened to the aunt she never knew.

The result is a well-written, emotionally wrenching tale about the generational consequences of evil, the meaning of family and what a single dedicated woman can accomplish.

— Bruce DeSilva/AP



Nightshade

Michael Connelly

Detective Sergeant Stillwell of the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department has been banished from the homicide division. His sin: accusing his former partner of dropping a murder case for lack of evidence when, according to Stillwell, there was plenty of it.

Branding him a troublemaker, his superiors packed him off to Catalina Island and put him in charge of a small, backwater office where cases normally range from petty theft to drunk and disorderly.

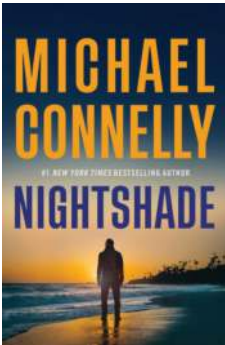
This was supposed to be punishment, but Stillwell likes it. The island is beautiful. Recently divorced, he’s already found a new love. And he’s relieved to be free of department politics — or so he thinks.

In “Nightshade,” Stillwell is introduced as a new series character. Like another of author Connelly’s protagonists Harry Bosch, Stillwell doesn’t bow to authority and is relentless in pursuit of justice for crime victims. However, he’s younger, easier to get along with and seemingly less prone to violence.

The trouble starts when the body of a woman is found bound to an anchor at the bottom of the harbor. The local mayor, whose main concern is attracting tourists and developers to the island, demands that the case be handled quietly.

In his new role, Stillwell is required to turn the investigation over to the homicide division on the mainland, but when his former partner is assigned to the case — and ultimately arrests the wrong man — Stillwell again defies authority and launches his own investigation.

— Bruce DeSilva/AP



WEEKEND: MUSIC

Pulp's unlikely comeback

Even the iconic Britpop band seems surprised by the release of 'More,' its first album in 24 years

By MARIA SHERMAN
Associated Press

Pulp has returned with a new album, its first in 24 years. Who could've predicted that? Not even the band, it turns out. "It took us by surprise as well," dynamic frontman Jarvis Cocker told The Associated Press. "Why not?"

If there are casual Pulp fans, they don't make themselves known. The ambitious Britpop-and-then-some band emerged in the late-'70s in Sheffield, England, artistic outsiders with a penchant for the glam, grim, and in the case of Cocker, the gawky. Fame eluded them until the mid-'90s, and then it rushed in with the trend of Cool Britannia.

Their songs varied wildly from their contemporaries, like the recently reunited Blur and soon-to-be back together Oasis. Instead, Pulp's David Bowie-informed synth-pop arrived with humor,

ambiguity and intellect — songs about sex and class consciousness that manage to be groovy, glib, awkward and amorous all at once.

Then, and in the decades since, Pulp has inspired devotion from loyal fans across generations. They've charmed those lucky enough to catch band members in their heyday before a kind of careerism led to a hiatus in 2002 — and those who saw them for the first time during reunion tours in 2011 and 2022. With all that reputation on the line, it's reassuring that the band has decided to give its audience "More," their first new album in more than two decades.

Give them 'More'

There were a few catalysts for "More." The first: "We could get along with each other still," jokes drummer

SEE PULP ON PAGE 29

Jarvis Cocker, frontman of the English band Pulp, performs at the Hollywood Palladium in Los Angeles on Sept. 18, 2024.

AP



WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEW

Addison Rae making pivot from influencer to pop star look easy

By CHRIS RICHARDS
The Washington Post

In a world that requires celebrities to broaden themselves into multi-hyphenates, let's stop acting perplexed when a media personality takes up a new line of work. Especially if it's in the tower of song. Why are fame's transitive properties so fluid in pop music? Maybe because the fundamental nature of the gig involves transposing life experience into sound.

We're probably more familiar with this than we'd like to be. As an early reality star, Paris Hilton embarked on pioneering adventures through the attention economy that surely taught her something about a head-turning pop hook. Being named NBA Rookie of the Year likely gave Shaquille O'Neal that extra smidgen of confidence necessary for making straight-faced rap records. And obviously, the platinum career arcs of Britney Spears, Justin Timberlake, Miley Cyrus and many others have proven that the Disney Channel is something like pop's MIT.

So instead of being surprised by the fact that TikTok influencer Addison Rae just released one of this year's very best pop albums, let's try to tune our ears to all the things she learned while plowing the fields of digital content creation. The 24-year-old Louisiana native got her start dancing to songs that were trending on social media, then quickly branched out into everything else. A little podcasting here. A little Netflix acting there. With her follower count on TikTok currently standing at 88.4 million, she remains finely tuned to what audiences are drawn to, what they return to, how to perpetually delight them with-



Addison Rae
Addison (Columbia)

out boring them, how to surprise them without scaring them off.

Her fantastic debut album, "Addison," was co-written with Elvira Anderfjård and Luka Kloser, two Swedish song factory supervisors who know how to push synthesizer patches and bass melodies in all kinds of unexpected directions. As for Rae, she's clearly a student of Lana Del Rey's dead-eyed sotto voce ("Diet Pepsi"), Madonna's regal pomp ("Aquamarine"), Ariana Grande's aspartame coo ("Summer Forever"), with her overall aesthetic falling square in the nuclear green shadow of Charli XCX — and if this is the first great post-"Brat" album, may a hundred summers bloom.

Timbre-wise, Rae's closest contemporary parallel is Billie Eilish, an intimacy-minded singer who understands our ears as well as she understands her own voice. There's a breathy, ASMR-like softness tucked into most of Rae's songs — as well as some louder fourth-wall breakage during the finale of "Money Is Everything" when a fleet of Addisons materializes to shout along with the refrain, prompting us to do the same. On the album opener, "New York," the big cue to heed Rae's loudness-softness is lyrical, describing the thump of a nightclub subwoofer and a



AP

Addison Rae, shown in 2024, has just released her debut album. The TikTok influencer is staking a claim on pop stardom, and "Addison" shows that she's clearly a student of Lana Del Rey, Madonna, Ariana Grande, Charli XCX and Billie Eilish.

masticated rhythm that only exists inside your head: "Kick drum, chew gum."

Even better is "Fame Is a Gun," a dreams-come-true anthem that spins Gwen Stefani's "What You Waiting For?" and Laurie Anderson's "O Superman" into a new kind of cotton candy. "There's no mystery. I'm gonna make it, gonna go down in history," Rae sings in the exquisite second verse. "Don't ask too many questions. God gave me the permission," her voice suddenly shooting upward in the middle of the word "permission" as if she

were nudging heaven. Is it a perfect pop song? There's no such thing. We're reminded of that whenever someone gets this close.

And so it seems that the best way for an influencer to truly supplant a pop singer in this overstimulated digital world is to literally become one. It's hard to imagine the thrill of amassing nearly 90 million TikTok followers — or becoming a television star, or winning an NBA scoring title — coming anywhere close to having made something as wonderful as music like this.

Pulp: Death of founding member convinced band to write new material

FROM PAGE 28

Nick Banks. "It wasn't too painful." The second: The band worked a new song into their recent reunion show run — "The Hymn of the North," originally written for Simon Stephens' 2019 play "Light Falls" — and people seemed to like it.

The third and most significant: The band's bassist and core member Steve Mackey died in 2023.

"It made me realize that you don't have endless amounts of time," Cocker says. "You've still got an opportunity to create things, if you want to. Are you going to give it a go?"

And so, they did. Cocker assured his bandmates Banks, guitarist Mark Webber and keyboardist Candida Doyle that the recording process could be done quickly — in three weeks, lightspeed for a band that has infamously agonized over its latter records, like 1998's "This Is Hardcore."

Webber describes a "reticence to get

involved in a yearslong process" that was alleviated when they started to work on new songs that came "quite easily."

That's at least partially due to the fact that, for the first time in the history of the band, Cocker elected to "write the words in advance. ... It's taken me until the age of 61 to realize it: If you write the words before you go into the studio, it makes it a much more pleasant experience."

The 11 tracks that make up "More" are a combination of new and old songs written across Pulp's career. The late Mackey has a writing credit on both the sultry, existential "Grown Ups" originally demoed around "This Is Hardcore," and the edgy disco "Got to Have Love," written around "the turn of the millennium," as Cocker explains. "I did have words, but I found myself emotionally unable to sing them."

"Without love, you're just making a fool of yourself," he sings in the second verse. "I got nothing else to say about it."

It makes sense, then, that the romantic

song was held until "More," when Cocker believed them — coincidentally, after he was married in June of last year.

A pop band reflects

Maturation — the literality of growing up on "Grown Ups" — is a prevalent theme on "More," delivered with age-appropriate insight. "I was always told at school that I had an immature attitude. I just didn't see any point in growing up, really. It seemed like all the fun was had by people when they were younger," said Cocker. "But, as I said on the back of the 'This Is Hardcore' album, it's OK to grow up, as long as you don't grow old. And I still agree with that, I think. Growing old is losing interest in the world and deciding that you're not gonna change. You've done your bit and that's it. That doesn't interest me."

"You have to retain an interest in the world, and that keeps you alive," he adds. "So, you grow up. And hopefully you live

better, and you treat other people better. But you don't grow old."

In addition to "More," 2025 marks the 30th anniversary of the song that defines their career, "Common People."

"That one, we've never really fallen out of love with," says Webber.

"Because of the way it affects people, really, you can't fall out of love with it," adds Cocker.

"More," produced by James Ford (Arctic Monkeys, Fontaines D.C.), arrives Friday. The band will immediately embark on a U.K. and North American tour. Then, who knows? Is this the beginning of a new, active era for the band?

"The next one is going to be called 'Even More,'" Cocker jokes. "Nah, I don't know. The album wasn't conceived of as a tombstone. ... The jury is out."

"It wouldn't be good for it to end up feeling like you're stuck on a treadmill," Banks adds. "And at the moment, it's still pretty exciting."

WEEKEND: MUSIC

10 essential Sly Stone tracks

‘Underdog’ (1967)

The introduction of “Underdog” feels like the opening of a Hollywood epic ... until Sly and company crash in with a soul groove full of breakbeat drum rolls, big-band horns and the front man at his most sincere. Lyrically, Sly tackled discrimination against underdogs of all types with an “I know how it feels” refrain — an answer to the “How does it feel?” hook of Bob Dylan’s 1965 “Like a Rolling Stone.”

‘Dance to the Music’ (1967)

After “Underdog” and the rest of the band’s debut album “A Whole New Thing” underperformed, record impresario Clive Davis advised Sly to try something poppier. The band delivered it in their own way with “Dance to the Music,” which sandwiches a roll call for a hit song and a good time — drums, guitar, bass, organ, trumpet, vocals — between two slices of that call-to-action chorus.

‘Everyday People’ (1968)

This list could have been the entirety of “Stand!,” a no-skips eight-tracker released before the band’s performance at Woodstock, but just a few cuts will have to stand in for the rest. “Everyday People,” a paean to inclusivity that feels like the ’60s at its best, is as deceptively simple as “Dance to the Music,” but with a “different strokes for different folks” message that seems to have fallen on deaf ears in recent years.

‘Sing a Simple Song’ (1968)

The B-side to “Everyday People” is all funk — especially in the give-and-take of the guitar, bass and keys — but feels like proto-hip-hop with its talking-talking-walking-walking pitter-patter. And when trumpet player Cynthia Robinson shrieks, “Sing a simple song!” — you better do it.

‘I Want to Take You Higher’ (1969)

With its squealing harmonica and descending guitar riff, “I Want to Take You Higher” feels like it begins in medias res: Sly and the Family Stone, mid-jam, in the pocket and ready to rock, down to the onomatopoeic “boom-laka-laka” of its refrain. A few years later, “higher” lyrics would likely only be about drugs, but at this point, the lyric evoked a Pentecostal church as much as a psychedelic trance.

BY CHRIS KELLY

The Washington Post

Few artists left so large an imprint on music history in so short a burst of activity as Sly Stone, who died Monday at 82. At his creative peak as the mastermind of Sly and the Family Stone, the bandleader tie-dyed soul, funk and psychedelic rock into a pattern that was often imitated, never replicated and channeled by genre-hopping acts in every generation since.

Stone’s major work was completed in about half a decade, beginning in 1967, before his career and life were derailed by drugs, health issues and periods of reclusiveness.

Here are 10 songs to start with. Feel no pressure to stop.



Sly Stone of Sly and the Family Stone performs in Los Angeles in 2006. Stone died Monday at age 82.

AP

‘Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)’ (1969)

“Thank You” slaps and pops its way into your sternum with one of the band’s many iconic bass lines. And while its hook (in Speak & Spell phonetics) is gratitude from an artist who only knew how to be himself, the lyrics (“Lookin’ at the devil, grin-nin’ at his gun”) nod to the end of the feel-good ’60s.

‘Everybody Is a Star’ (1969)

The B-side to “Thank You” is another celebration of universal unity, but with a somber tone that is more cloud than silver lining. As the microphone and focus shifts, everyone in the Family Stone gets their chance in the spotlight, with Sly begging and pleading for them to “shine, shine, shine.”

‘Family Affair’ (1971)

With its rubbery bass line, wah-wah guitar and early drum machine programming, the laid-back funk of “Family Affair” was a Trojan horse for “There’s a Riot Goin’ On,” Sly and the Family Stone’s dark, twisted fantasy and one of the best albums to capture the post-’60s comedown.

‘Que Sera, Sera (Whatever Will Be, Will Be)’ (1973)

After the tumult of “There’s a Riot Goin’ On,” the band returned with “Fresh,” a poppier but still crucial album (a favorite of funk maestro George Clinton and one cited by musician and producer Brian Eno as a landmark in recording history due to its focus on rhythm in the mix). It’s the only song the band ever covered on record, showing how boundless the Family Stone could be. The crew pulls a reverse Pat Boone, adding Black soul to pristine pop and taking Doris Day’s “Que Sera, Sera” to church.

‘If You Want Me to Stay’ (1973)

Sly and the Family Stone’s last great song, “If You Want Me to Stay,” has another of those in-the-bones bass lines and one of Sly’s rawest vocal performances (the way he sings “get this message over to you now” through gritted teeth still has bite). The song began its life as a soul-baring letter to a lover, but has taken new meaning over the decades — especially in the years when Sly was lost to the world (and possibly himself). Now, it offers an epitaph for a singular artist who never compromised, no matter the cost: “For me to stay here, I got to be me.”

WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE



LLOYD GREEN/AP

Some pet owners are too doggone determined to let their pets sleep wherever they want to, and are willing to suffer whatever the consequences might be.

Pets in your purrsonal space

Some say cuddling at night with furry friends is worth any sleep loss that might result

By ALBERT STUMM
Associated Press

It turns out, our furry best friend might be our sleep enemy. Lots of pet owners let their animals sleep on the bed with them, which usually disrupts sleep. But many would say it's worth it. And researchers don't necessarily disagree. Melissa Milanak, a professor at Medical University of South Carolina specializing in sleep health, said most people at her clinic say their pets disturb them often at night. "You can't say that hands down, it's bad for every single person, but there is a lot out there saying it negatively impacts your sleep," she said. Generally speaking, having a pet is good for many people's health. Pets have been shown to lower their humans' stress levels, get them to exercise and more. Many pet owners also say they feel an immeasurable amount of comfort by having their pets close as they sleep. But dogs' and cats' natural sleep cycles aren't the same as those of humans. Dogs tend to be light sleepers and wake up multiple times at night. Some display

instinctual behavior like scratching at bedding, which can prevent deeper phases of sleep even if it doesn't wake you up. As many cat owners know, "the zoomies" often happen before they are ready to get out of bed. Cats evolved to hunt in low light, meaning they are particularly active at dusk and dawn. Milanak also said allergens such as pet dander and microbes brought into the house can affect owners' breathing, preventing them from getting enough deep sleep. Brian Chin, a professor of social and health psychology at Trinity College in Connecticut, said his research has found sleeping with pets was associated with poor sleep, "particularly those dimensions of sleep quality and insomnia symptoms." That's even accounting for the fact that pet owners may be less inclined to report problems in a survey because they don't believe their beloved pets cause problems. "I hate to even admit that my cat disrupts my sleep at all," said Chin, who has one cat that keeps him awake and another that leaves him alone. Moreover, a higher number of pets was associated with higher sleep disruption, he said.

A solution isn't as simple as telling pet owners that they shouldn't share the bed, Milanak said. For a lot of people, it becomes part of their sleep routine, which makes it difficult to sleep without it because they have come to associate pets with sleep. Because the topic is sensitive, Milanak asks new patients several questions before getting to whether they sleep with a pet. If they're waking up multiple times a night, for example, they may not realize why. Once the association is made, she then asks whether they are open to not sleeping together. "It's like if I said to somebody, you need to stop smoking," she said. "They're going to give me all the reasons why they want to continue smoking." The first, most obvious solution is putting a dog bed on the floor in the bedroom, or locking the cat out of the room at night. For those who insist on having the pet in bed with them, she advises washing the sheets more frequently and perhaps adjusting their sleep schedule to match their pet's routine. "Maybe you need to go to bed earlier so you can get up earlier to accommodate the pet," she said.



KRISTINA DEFRAIN/AP

Angela Wilson says it doesn't disturb her sleep to have her dog, Sadie, photographed Feb. 14, in bed with her. Despite any problems, many pet owners feel that the bonding and emotional benefits outweigh minor sleep disruption. Angela Wilson, who lives in Cobb County, Ga., said she has bought a series of ever-more-plush beds for her golden retriever, Sadie. But Sadie jumps into her bed anyway. Then they usually sleep peacefully back to back. "People complain about their dogs waking them up, but she doesn't wake me up," Wilson said. "She's very gentle."

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

Throwing cold water on plunge therapy

New study finds popular exercise recovery tool may slow blood flow to muscles

BY GRETCHEN REYNOLDS
The Washington Post

Ice baths and cold plunges — interchangeable terms for soaking in near-freezing water — have grown wildly popular in recent years, thanks to podcasters, social media influencers, professional athletes and others touting their uses for exercise recovery and personal wellness.

But do they actually work?

That question was at the heart of a new study of frigid water and resistance training. The study's authors found that plunging your limbs into icy water after lifting weights slows blood flow to muscles, hampering their ability to recover and grow, potentially reducing the benefits of the workout.

"It looks like it's not a great idea" to soak in freezing water after lifting weights, said Milan Betz, a doctoral student at Maastricht University in the Netherlands, who led the study.

The findings add to mounting evidence that ice baths may undermine the effects of lifting and also raise the provocative issue of when, if ever, ice baths are a great idea.

Muscles that are 20% smaller

Fans of cold plunging typically say the practice is beneficial for both body and mind, lifting moods, building grit, soothing aches and stiffness, and, perhaps above all, speeding up and intensifying recovery from exercise, so you get more from each workout.

But little science has supported the purported benefits of ice baths, and in recent years, studies have frequently undercut them. In a 2015 experiment, for instance, scientists in Australia asked 21 men to lift weights twice a week. Half of the men cold plunged after every session; the others didn't. After three months, the cold plungers' muscles were nearly 20% smaller and weaker than the other men's, although everyone followed the same exercise routine.

Similarly, a 2024 review of prior research, cheekily titled "Throwing Cold Water on Muscle Growth," concluded that the best available research indicated cold plunges after resistance training can "at-

tenuate hypertrophic changes." In other words, your muscles won't grow as much.

What happens to blood flow after a cold plunge

How would cold water undo resistance exercise? The review's authors speculated that frigid temperatures shrink blood vessels, impeding blood flow to muscles. Blood carries nutrients, including protein, that muscles rely on to rebuild and bulk up after draining exercise. Less blood flow means less protein and a feebleness recovery.

But no study had yet shown that process in action.

Enter Betz and his colleagues. They wanted to see what happens to blood flow after ice baths, so they recruited 12 healthy young men and used portable ultrasound machines to track baseline blood flow in their legs as they rested at the lab.

The volunteers then sweated through a tough session of leg press and leg extension exercises, before immediately clambering onto a bicycle-like contraption with large buckets where the pedals should be. One contained tepid 80-degree water, the other icy 30-degree water. The men slid a leg into each bucket, so one limb cold plunged, the other didn't, and stayed there for 20 minutes.

Afterward, the volunteers drank a re-

covery shake containing protein molecules marked with a biochemical tracer. Researchers could track the tracer to see whether the proteins wound up in muscles or not. The scientists also checked blood flow with an ultrasound several more times over the next few hours.

Cold plunges may undo benefits of weight training

What they found was that blood flow dropped substantially in the volunteers' cold-plunged leg, compared to their other limb, and stayed low for hours. The muscles in that chilled leg consequently received and absorbed far less protein from the shake. Over time, this reduced protein intake would likely mean blunted gains in strength and muscle mass from the lifting.

The results "provide confirmatory evidence" that cold plunges can alter the desired effects of weight training by reducing blood flow and protein uptake, said Brad Schoenfeld, an exercise scientist at Lehman College in New York, who studies resistance training and co-wrote the 2024 review.

But this was a single, small study, and many questions remain unanswered. Would ice bathing likewise affect recovery from other exercise?

"I would think you'd see similar effects with other sports" such as running, cy-

cling and team sports, Betz said.

What about the effects on women and older people, who weren't studied here? Betz said he believes, again, the impacts would be much the same in almost everyone, but those studies need to be done.

It's also unclear whether and to what extent timing and other details matter, said Denis Blondin, a professor of health sciences who studies metabolism and cold exposure at the University of Sherbrooke in Canada. He wasn't involved with the new study. Maybe ice baths several hours after a workout would have different effects on muscles, he said, as might tweaking how long you soak, how much of your body is submerged and the water's exact temperature. More large-scale research is needed to understand the nuances of cold soaks and exercise response, Blondin said.

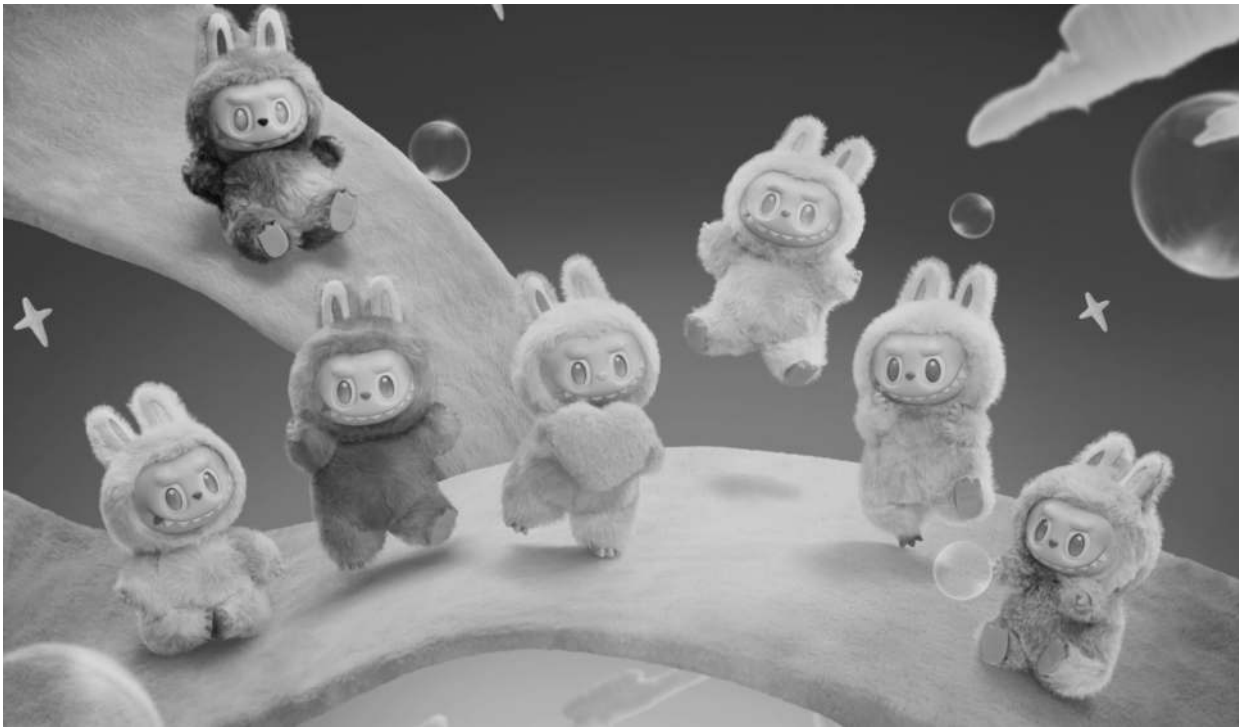
Some people also ice bathe for reasons unrelated to exercise recovery, including to make themselves feel mentally stronger and more resilient. The new study did not consider psychological outcomes from chilling out, Betz said, and, if you find comfort in cold plunges, "there's no reason to change your mind."

But, to get the most gains from weight training, he said, the bulk of the available evidence, including the new study, suggest you should probably skip an ice bath soon afterward.



iStock

WEEKEND: FAMILY



POP MART/AP

The Labubu first appeared in three Kasing Lung picture books inspired by Nordic mythology in 2015. Now they're a popular Pop Mart push toy.

Latching onto the Labubu

Part collectible, part style symbol, the viral toys a long time in the making

By MICHELLE CHAPMAN
Associated Press

Labubu, the plush toy from China's Pop Mart is a social media darling, but the toothy little monsters are far from an overnight success. Having appeared a decade ago, Labubus may have finally cemented their place in the collectible toy market for years to come.

The Labubu, by artist and illustrator Kasing Lung, first appeared with pointed ears and pointy teeth in three picture books inspired by Nordic mythology in 2015.

In 2019, Lung struck a deal with Pop Mart, a company that caters to toy connoisseurs and influencers, to sell Labubu figurines. But it wasn't until Pop Mart started selling Labubu plush toys on key rings in 2023 that the toothy monsters suddenly seemed to be everywhere, including in the hands of Rihanna, Kim Kardashian and NBA star Dillon Brooks. K-pop singer Lisa of Blackpink began posting images of hers for her more than 100 million followers on Instagram and on TikTok, where Labubu pandemonium has broken out.

There are 1.4 million #Labubu TikTok posts and counting, videos of fans unboxing them, showing styles inspired by them, and of course, Labubu cosplay.

Fans have latched on to Labubu's mashup of play and fashion, making them accessories on handbags, backpacks and belts, or hanging them from car mirrors.

"The character has evolved into a collectible and style symbol, resonating with fans who connect with its quirky aesthetic and unique backstory," Emily Brough, Popmart's head of intellectual property licensing in the Americas, said.

Labubu has been a bonanza for Pop Mart. Its revenue more than doubled in 2024 to 13.04 billion yuan (\$1.81 billion), thanks in part to its elvish monster. Revenue from Pop Mart's plush toys soared more than 1,200% in 2024, nearly 22% of its overall revenue, according to the company's annual report.

Aside from their ability to pique the interest of toy aficionados and fashionistas, Labubu latched on to the blind box phenomenon, where the purchaser doesn't know exactly which version of the plush toy they'll get. And Pop Mart made sure there is a Labubu for everyone, regardless of income. Most are priced in a wide range between \$20 and \$300, with certain collaborations or limited editions priced higher, according to Brough.

Unlike many toys, Labubu devotees include a large number of adults. Buyers ages 18 and over drove a year-over-year increase of more than \$800 million in the U.S. toy market in 2024, according to market research firm Circana. Adult shoppers, mostly female, bought the toys for themselves. In 2025's first quarter, toy sales for those ages 18 and over rose 12% from the prior-year period. At \$1.8 billion, adults also accounted for the highest spending among all age groups in the quarter.

Like many retailers, Pop Mart is actively monitoring negotiations between the U.S. and just about every one of its trading partners as prices may be impacted. The situation with China is at the forefront, with President Donald Trump saying on May 30 that the country "violated" an agreement with the United States on trade talks.

Right now Pop Mart, whose products are manufactured across Asia, says that it is continuously scaling production and expanding distribution across its online shop, retail stores and blind box vending machines to meet increasing demand.

Short supply has led to long lines at stores and at least one physical fight at a shopping center in the United Kingdom. Pop Mart said in an Instagram post late last month that it was temporarily suspending all in-store and blind box machine sales in the U.K. Peter Shipman, head of Europe, said in a Facebook post that the company is currently working on a new method to distribute toys to stores.

Resellers have become problematic, and many Labubu fans are still willing to pay exorbitant price markups.

Kena Flynn was at The Grove shopping center in Los Angeles recently when she stumbled upon some Labubus being sold at a kiosk. Flynn said in a TikTok on June 1 that the prices were "really bad," but her boyfriend bought two anyway.

"At a certain point, you can't buy them," Flynn said in her video. "I just want a Labubu and I cannot buy one from Pop Mart, so here we are."

Looking to keep up with the overwhelming demand, Pop Mart says it's on track for 50 more retail locations in the U.S. by the end of the year. That'll give shoppers more chances to hunt for Labubus, as Pop Mart says it's planning multiple new Labubu releases tied to seasonal moments and holidays throughout the rest of the year.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Leader of the pack gets to use the bigger suitcase

"I have a challenge for you," I offered my husband, Francis, this week while planning a family vacation to North Carolina. "Let's limit our packing to one carry-on bag each."

Silence. Then Francis stuttered defensively, "Well, sure, but I, you, I don't—"

"Now honey, remember you're a bit of a clothes horse," I said as delicately as possible. "So, for example, just pack two quarter zips instead of six—"

"You worry about packing YOUR bag, and I'll worry about MINE," he sternly interrupted.

Although we are empty nesters, our young adult children will be flying from their respective areas to meet us at the rental house in North Carolina, in addition to my mother and our daughter's very tall boyfriend. The complicated logistics asks a lot of our midsize SUV, which will need to carry five people and their luggage to the airport on the final day.

Years ago, when Francis was active-duty Navy, he packed efficiently for TDYs, deployments and other trips. But when he retired after 28 years in the service to take a corporate job, his eyes opened to a whole new wardrobe.

Gone were the days of wearing the same uniforms every day. Suddenly, the empty spaces on his side of the closet had potential. His eyes sparkled when clothing catalogs arrived in the mail. He disappeared on Saturday afternoons, sneaking home with shopping bags containing new suits, fancy brand-emblazoned shirts and leisure wear.

With his uniforms tucked away in a wardrobe in our attic, my military retired husband developed a particular penchant for comfortable shoes, specifically Skechers. When a Skechers store opened at a nearby strip mall, Francis visited, coming home with two boxes at a time. "They were having a BOGO sale," he'd say if I gave him an accusing look.

Francis also took a liking to quarter-zip pullovers made of various materials (wool for winter, cotton for summer, quick-dry synthetic blends for warmer weather) and embroidered with fancy brand insignia (polo horses, whales, etc.)

Package bags began arriving in the mail regularly. If I found them before Francis intercepted, he'd say sheepishly, "They were having a sale." Before I knew it, Francis had not only filled his side of our closet, he'd taken over the closet in our son's old room, too. I often see him gazing lovingly at his new wardrobe and at his own reflection when donning his curated outfits, proud of his new sense of style.

The trips we've taken in recent years are very different from those we took during Francis' Navy years. Like many traditional married couples, I used the larger suitcase for my clothing, shoes, jewelry and toiletries, and he happily took the smaller one for his simple yet manly belongings.

But nowadays, Francis needs the big suitcase. Alternatively, he packs his overflow items in my bag. Once, checking in for a flight to Florida, my bag came in overweight on the airline's scale. While we opened it to remove a few items, Francis put on a show for the male counter agent, rolling his eyes and tsk-ing as if to say, "Women always overpack."

Little did the agent know, my bag contained Francis' dress shoes, a full suit and shirt on a wooden hanger, a belt, two bathing suits, flip-flops and his CPAP machine.

Although the cost of Francis' new clothing acquisitions sometimes worries me (I've always been a thrift and clearance shopper), I can't protest too much, because I have my own overpacking tendencies.

In fact, even if Francis and I manage to successfully pack our clothing into two carry-on bags, I'll still need trunk room for items I deem absolutely essential for our family vacation — games, crafting supplies, jigsaw puzzles, beach towels, sunscreen, beach chairs and a vast array of snacks, drinks and miscellaneous stuff I haven't even thought of yet.

I don't consider this to be overpacking, as long as we leave our worries behind.

Read more at themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa's book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com." Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@gmail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

MAKING ARRANGEMENTS
BY SAM BRODY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Sam Brody, of Brooklyn, is a research scientist and software engineer specializing in natural language processing. He has been constructing crosswords since 2022. This is his first for The Times. “A fond memory from childhood,” Sam says, “is my grandmother collecting newspaper clippings of ‘Jumble’ from the daily newspaper and mailing them to me. I’m sure she’d have been very proud to see this.” — W.S.

ACROSS

1 Warm shade of brown

6 Otherwise

10 Place

15 “In that case . . .”

19 Warm shade of white

20 Leader of the world’s smallest country

21 Vice follower

22 Cambodian cash

23 LEGAL NICETY

27 Whole lot

28 “____, so good!” (furniture store pun)

29 Example of industry in Proverbs 6:6-9

30 They might be ripe for changing

31 Polish language

33 Camera inits.

35 Coerced (into)

37 Magicians’ cries

39 EARTH

42 Bridge support

43 Suffers the cost

44 Substance adapted to lab use by Fanny Hesse in 1881

45 Grow weary

47 Kind of policy that encourages transparency from leadership

49 “OMG, enough!”

51 Northwestern abode

54 Rent

55 GLIBNESS

58 One “M” of the M.M.R. vaccine

60 Inflation meas.

61 “Paradise ____”

62 Pepsi, e.g.

64 Big Apple airport code

65 Guess

69 Obvious choice

73 Org. enabled by the 16th Amendment

74 Smell

76 On

77 Darn, say

79 Home of Morehouse College

83 RESIST

87 One may be fawning

88 European capital through which the Akerselva flows

90 Chill

91 Pod or husk, botanically

92 Army N.C.O.

94 Word after game or floor

96 Sweden joined it in 2024

98 Consumed

99 RAGES

103 Peddled things

104 Hawaiian song of farewell

105 Meas. roughly equivalent to 10 billion 12-Downs

106 Bit of equipment for a vault

107 Layer

109 Surveillance org.

111 Nerve

113 Give for free

117 ROYAL PERMIT

121 Number after zwei

122 Carbon copy

123 Weakness

124 Confident bearing

125 ____ Lee

126 Cut down

127 Hot things, briefly

128 Adjust

17 Fortuneteller

18 Early automaker

24 Egyptian fertility goddess

25 Muffler material, maybe

26 Comfort

32 Fantasy role-playing game, for short

34 Endures

36 Way out of town, perhaps

37 Author’s assistant

38 Loss of the ability to read

39 Is so inclined

40 Narrow the gap with, competitively

41 Branching diagram

42 Ceremony

43 Some collared shirts

46 Figures in some storied abductions, for short

48 Regional divisions in Russia

50 It may be dropped for effect

52 Lose progress, in a way

53 Members of a priestly caste of ancient Persia

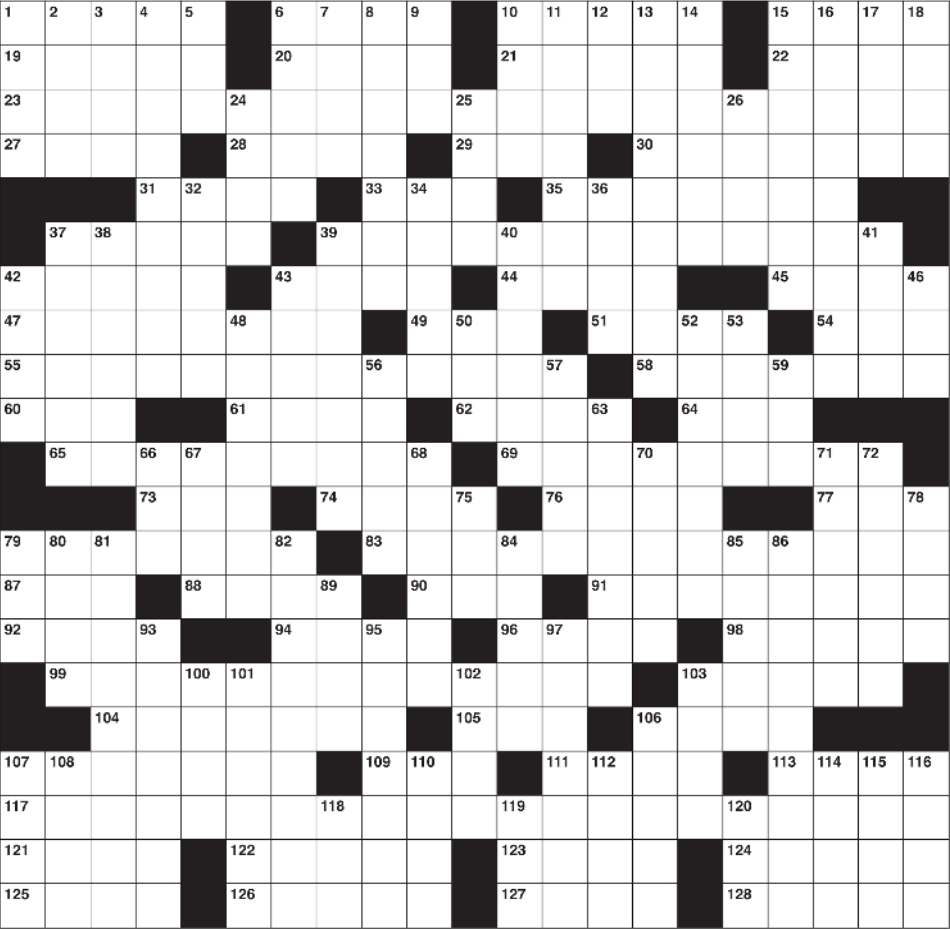
56 German town

57 Rudely revel in victory, say

59 Japanese honorific

63 Two-version marketing experiments

66 Rio maker



67 Puzzlemaker Rubik

68 Fiddler’s skill

70 Wyoming’s Cheyenne Frontier Days, e.g.

71 What you will

72 Brand with cup sizes from “minis” to “world’s largest”

75 Rock’s Ocasek

78 Small songbird

79 Oft-skipped podcast parts

80 Fling

81 Accessory in a Jane Fonda workout video

82 He’s a head of the pack

84 French upper house

85 Faultless

86 Faux gardener, so to speak

89 Butter substitute

93 Popular food fish or its genus name

95 Fundamental building block of DNA

97 Green often found in mixed greens

100 Revealer of “the man behind the curtain”

101 Center of mass?

102 Site with a “Clothing, Shoes & Accessories” section

103 Fairy tale villain

106 Clears of snow, say

107 Conventions: Abbr.

108 Trillion: Prefix

110 Runner on runners

112 Somewhat

114 Slobbery cartoon pet

115 Arizona’s third-largest city

116 Early education option, for short

118 Desirable formation for ducks

119 Awry

120 Elect

GUNSTON STREET



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

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE



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FACES

Beach Boys' Brian Wilson dies at 82

Band's visionary but troubled leader kept America's summer party going

BY HILLEL ITALIE
Associated Press

Brian Wilson, the Beach Boys' visionary and fragile leader whose genius for melody, arrangements and wide-eyed self-expression inspired "Good Vibrations," "California Girls" and other summertime anthems and made him one of the world's most influential recording artists, has died at 82.

Wilson's family posted news of his death to his website and social media accounts Wednesday. Further details weren't immediately available. Since May 2024, Wilson had been under a court conservatorship to oversee his personal and medical affairs, with Wilson's longtime representatives, publicist Jean Sievers and manager LeeAnn Hard, in charge.

The eldest and last surviving of three musical brothers — Brian played bass, Carl lead guitar and Dennis drums — he and his fellow Beach Boys rose in the 1960s from local California band to national hit-makers to international ambassadors of surf and sun. Wilson himself was celebrated for his gifts and pitied for his demons. He was one of rock's great Romantics, a tormented man who in his peak years embarked on an ever-steeper path to aural perfection, the one true sound.

The Beach Boys rank among the most popular groups of the rock era, with more than 30 singles in the Top 40 and worldwide sales of more than 100 million. The 1966 album "Pet Sounds" was voted No. 2 in a 2003 Rolling Stone list of the best 500 albums, losing out, as they had done before, to the Beatles' "Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band." The Beach Boys, which also featured Wilson cousin Mike Love and childhood friend Al Jardine, were voted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 1988.

Wilson feuded with Love over songwriting credits, but peers otherwise adored him beyond envy, from Elton John and Bruce Springsteen to Katy Perry and Carole King. The Who's drummer, Keith Moon, fantasized about joining the Beach Boys. Paul McCartney cited "Pet Sounds" as a direct inspiration to the Beatles and the ballad "God Only Knows" as among



Musician Brian Wilson poses in 2008 at his home in Los Angeles. Wilson died Wednesday at age 82.

his favorite songs, often bringing him to tears.

Wilson moved and fascinated fans and musicians long after he stopped having hits. In his later years, Wilson and a devoted entourage of younger musicians performed "Pet Sounds" and his restored opus, "Smile," before worshipful crowds in concert halls. Meanwhile, The Go-Go's, Lindsey Buckingham, Animal Collective and Janelle Monáe were among the artists who emulated him, whether as a master of crafting pop music or as a pioneer of pulling it apart.

The Beach Boys' music was like an ongoing party, with Wilson as host and wallflower. He was a tall, shy man, partially deaf (allegedly because of beatings by his father, Murry Wilson), with a sweet, crooked grin, and he rarely touched a surfboard unless a photographer was around. But out of the lifestyle that he observed and such musical influences as Chuck Berry and the Four Freshmen, he conjured a golden soundscape — sweet melodies, shining harmonies, vignettes of beaches, cars and girls — that resonated across time and climates.

Decades after its release, a Beach Boys song can still conjure instant summer — the wake-up guitar riff that opens "Surfin' USA"; the chants of "fun, fun, fun" or "good, good, GOOD, good vibrations"; the chorus "Round, 'round, get around, I get around."

The band's innocent appeal survived the group's increasingly troubled backstory, whether Brian Wilson's many personal trials, the feuds and lawsuits among band members or the alcoholism of Dennis Wilson, who drowned in 1983.

Brian Wilson won just two competitive Grammys, for the solo instrumental "Mrs. O'Leary's Cow" and for "The Smile Sessions" box set. Otherwise, his honors ranged from a Grammy lifetime achievement prize to a tribute at the Kennedy Center to induction into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

COMMENTARY

Musical revolutionaries Stone, Wilson leave life nearly simultaneously

BY DAVID BAUDER
Associated Press

Sometimes there are strange symmetries in death, as in life. The twin passings of Sly Stone and Brian Wilson this week brought that into sharp relief.

Both were musical geniuses who paid a high price for their gifts. They burned bright, with art they created at their peaks that became more moving and meaningful with time, only to see their creative lights extinguished suddenly through mental health and addiction issues. Both were 82 when they died — Stone on Monday and Wilson on Wednesday.

"It's such an unsettling coincidence," said Anthony DeCurtis, contributing editor at Rolling Stone. "These two figures, they were very different and massively influential, and each ran into a wall of their own problems in many ways. As much as they achieved, it's hard not to think that they could have done more."

With his late brothers Carl and Dennis, Beach Boys co-founder Wilson was the architect of the California sound that captured surfing and sun, beaches and girls.

But the band's songs were more than disposable music for teenagers. Wilson had an unparalleled melodic sense.

"He was our American Mozart," musician Sean Ono Lennon wrote on social media.

Stone's skills came in creating a musical world that others only dreamed of at the time. The Family Stone was an integrated world — Black and white, men and women — and the music they created was a potent mixture of rock, soul and funk. It made you move, it made you think.

For a period of time from 1967 to 1973, their music was inescapable — "Dance to the Music," "Everybody is a Star," "Higher," "Hot Fun in the Summertime," "Sing a Simple Song," "Family Affair," "Thank You (Falettinme Be Mice Elf Agin)."

The band's performance at Woodstock was a milestone.

"His songs weren't just about fighting injustice, they were about transforming the self to transform the world," musician and documentarian Questlove wrote this week.

From his peak, the fall was hard. Years of drug abuse took its toll.

Music is littered with stories of sudden, untimely and early deaths. Yet until now, both men lived on, somewhat improbably passing average life expectancies.

Wilson, by many measures, achieved some level of peace late in life. He had a happy marriage. He was able to see how his music was revered and appreciated and spent several years performing it again with a younger band that clearly worshiped him.

Stone emerged to write an autobiography in 2023. But less is known about his later years, whether he found peace or died without the full knowledge of what his music meant to others.

Did Stone and Wilson live lives of tragedy or triumph? It's hard to say.

"Millions of people had their lives changed by their music," DeCurtis said. "Not just enjoyed it, but had their lives transformed. That's quite an accomplishment."



Stone

Springsteen's Berlin concert echoes with history, a stark warning

From wire reports

Veteran rock star Bruce Springsteen, a high-profile critic of President Donald Trump, slammed the U.S. administration as "corrupt, incompetent and treasonous" during a concert Wednesday in Berlin.

He was addressing tens of thousands of fans at a stadium built for the 1936 Olympic Games that still bears the scars of World War II and contains relics from the country's Nazi past.

"Tonight, we ask all who believe in democracy and the best of our American experiment to rise with us, raise your voices, stand with us against authoritarianism and let freedom reign," he said.

Springsteen has made increasingly pointed and contentious public statements at recent concerts. He peppered Wednesday's performance with mentions of the American democ-

racy's system of checks and balances designed to ward against authoritarianism.

His short speeches — referencing recent headlines about immigration raids, the freezing of federal funds for universities and measles outbreaks — came between songs that were also captioned in German on large screens beside the stage. The set was flanked by an American flag on one side and a German flag on the other.

Still, the Boss remained hopeful: "The America that I've sung to you about for the past 50 years of my life is real. And regardless of its many faults, it's a great country with great people. And we will survive this moment."

Last month in Manchester, England, he denounced Trump during a concert, calling him an "unfit president" leading a "rogue government" of people who have "no concern or idea

for what it means to be deeply American."

The rocker closed Wednesday's three-hour show with "Chimes of Freedom."

Other news

■ Sabrina Carpenter announced her new album Wednesday on Instagram. "Man's Best Friend" is due Aug. 29. Carpenter released the first track, called "Manchild," last week.

■ Macy's will celebrate America's independence with a Fourth of July fireworks show hosted by Ariana DeBose and featuring the Jonas Brothers, Eric Church, Lenny Kravitz, Ava Max, Keke Palmer and Trisha Yearwood. The celebration in New York City will feature projection mapping on the Brooklyn Bridge and a 25-minute fireworks show. The show will be broadcast live on NBC and will stream on Peacock starting at 8 p.m. EDT.



MARKUS SCHREIBER/AP

Bruce Springsteen speaks to the audience Wednesday during a concert in Berlin.



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TOGETHER WE STAND STRONG

Service & Sacrifice Truly Matters

Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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

ACROSS

- 1 Physique
4 Ad agcy. client
8 Hosp. areas
12 Feathery neckpiece
13 Let fall
14 Rid of rind
15 Squirrel's kin
17 List-ending abbr.
18 Teacher's surprise
19 Immune system agent
20 Dull
22 Europe's neighbor
24 Alsace assents
25 Stock type
29 Old map letters
30 Ritzy spreads
31 LAX info
32 Golf stroke
34 Droops
35 "Phooey!"
36 High hairstyles
37 Eats in style
40 Pub potables
41 Donald Duck, to his nephews
42 Crunchy party snack
46 Idle or Bana
47 — Romeo
48 Stop — dime

- 49 Meeting, in slang
50 Ped- estal
51 Levy

- 20 Pear variety
21 Rife with foliage
22 Choir members
23 Fat
25 Thai currency
26 Actor's pic
27 "Let —" ("Move on")
28 Free ticket
30 Unpaid TV ads
33 Sermonize
34 Detail, in short
36 Arm bones
37 Union payment
38 Concerning
39 "JAG" spin-off
40 Barks
42 Taxi
43 Slangy suffix
44 Chef Garten
45 Peace (Lat.)

DOWN

- 1 Telly network
2 "What a cute puppy!"
3 Rum cocktail
4 Fess up
5 Actress Penelope
6 Anti
7 Toll rd.
8 Poison remedy
9 Blanchett who played Elizabeth I on screen
10 Russian river
11 Vend
16 Bits of wit
19 Alliances

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

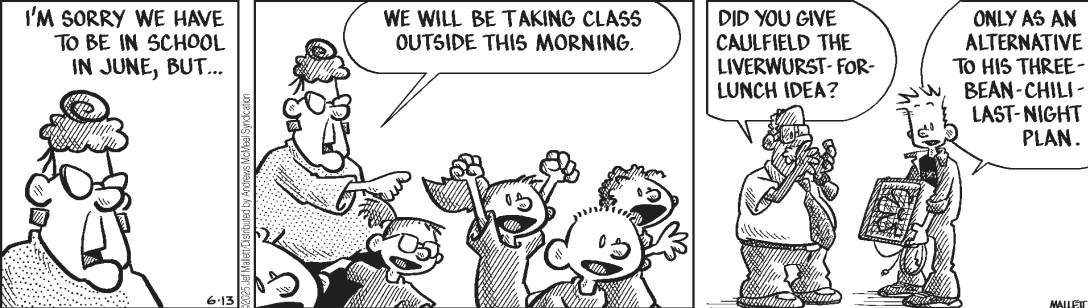
6-13

CRYPTOQUIP

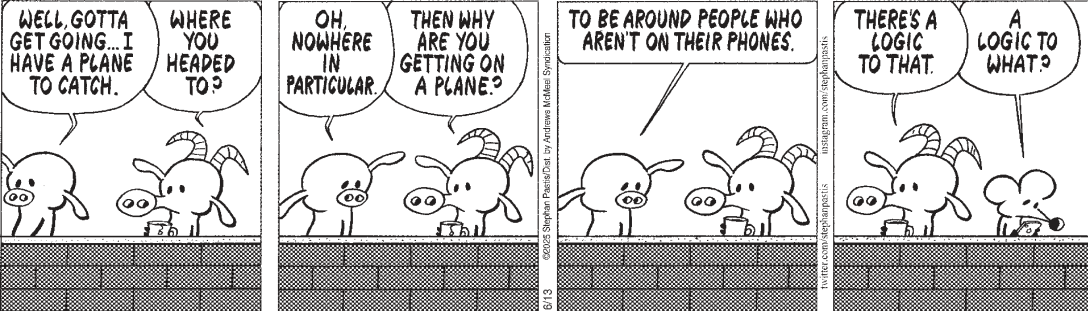
Z O B V L N E Z X K V Y K A V
E U C Y A H N V A R L V O H C V N Y
C Q E L V N Q V Z L P Y U Z A V K Q Y X V C,
E L V N Q V R B V A A - O Z C Q ?

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: HAN SOLO'S WOOKIEE CO-PILOT DOESN'T LIKE EATING THINGS THAT ARE HARD. HE PREFERS CHEWIE FOOD.
Today's Cryptoquip Clue: K equals P

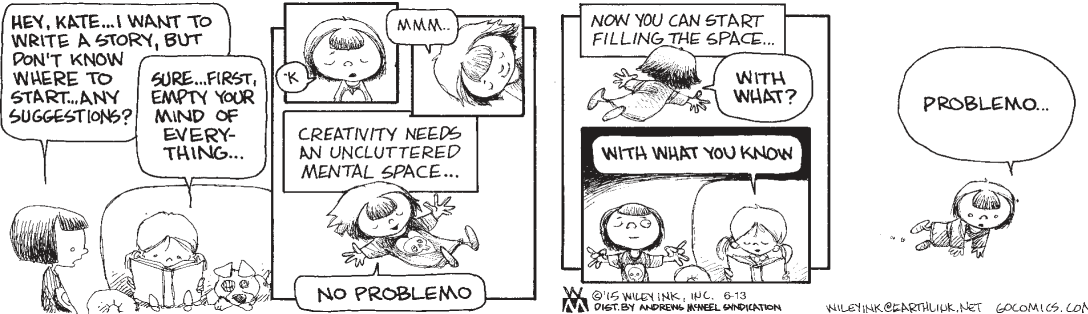
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



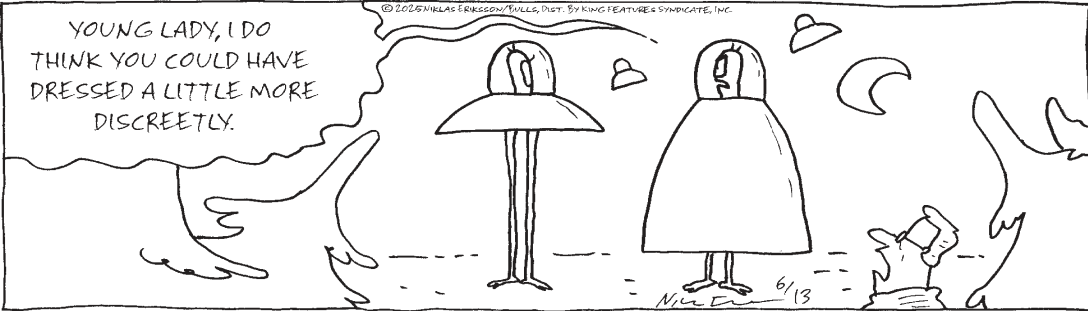
Non Sequitur



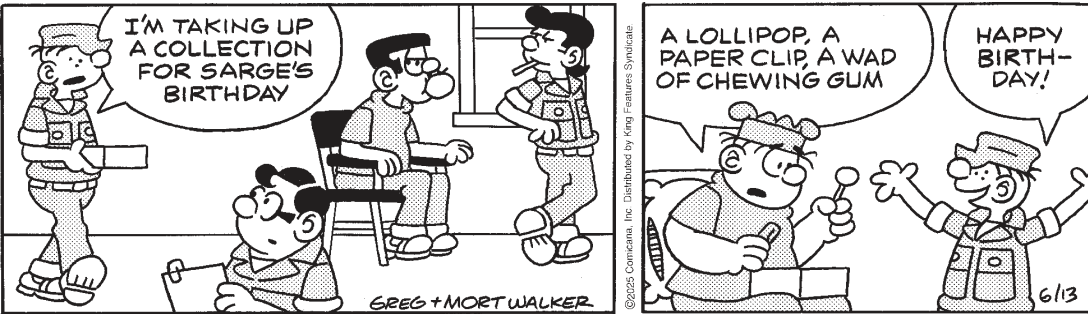
Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



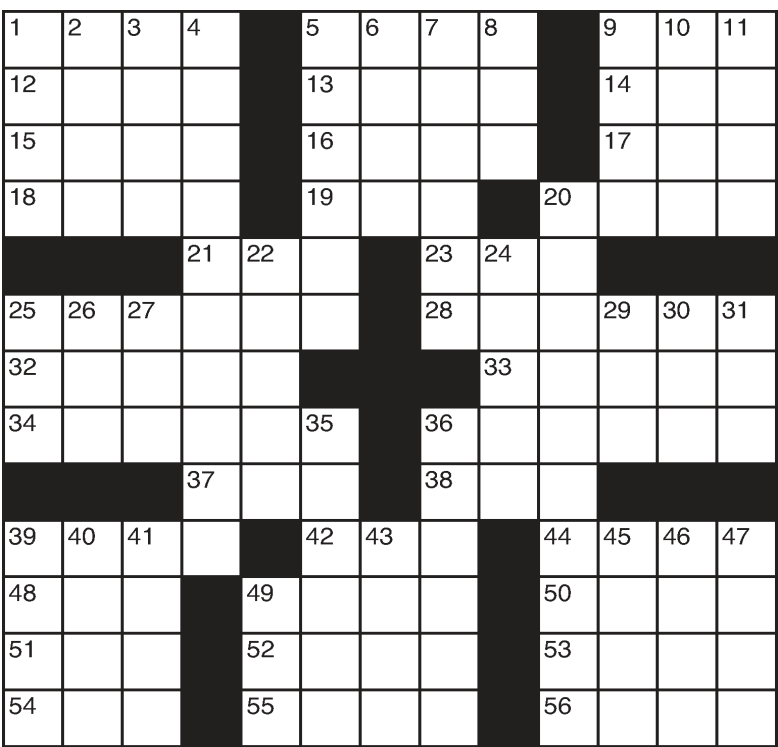
Bizarro



Loose Parts



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



- ACROSS**

 - 1 "Bearded" bloom
 - 5 — colada
 - 9 HIV-treating drug
 - 12 — Blanc
 - 13 Mideast gulf
 - 14 Unprocessed
 - 15 Pocket bread
 - 16 Damp at dawn
 - 17 Swelled head
 - 18 Mailbox feature
 - 19 "The Big Bang Theory" role
 - 20 Cheeky back talk
 - 21 Compass pt.
 - 23 Choose
 - 25 Columns of light
 - 28 Partial
 - 32 Hint at
 - 33 Make amends
 - 34 Blue hue
 - 36 Jumpy
 - 37 Logical beginning?
 - 38 Gut-punch reaction
 - 39 Florida
 - 42 "Awesome!"
 - 44 "Dream on!"
 - 48 GI-entertaining gp.
 - 49 Test tube
 - 50 Worldwide (Abbr.)
 - 51 Tatter
 - 52 Concerning
 - 53 Get up
- DOWN**

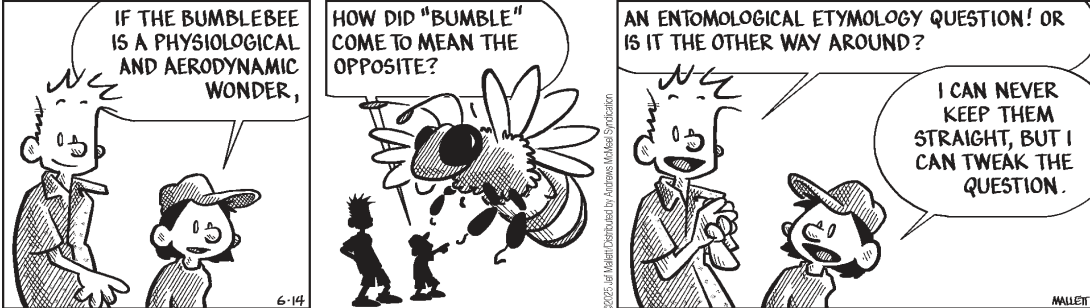
 - 22 Fashion
 - 24 Steinway product
 - 25 Bracketed word
 - 26 Med. plan option
 - 27 LAPD alert
 - 29 Lay down the lawn
 - 30 Chang's brother
 - 31 Ruby of Hollywood
 - 35 2006 Winter Olympics city
 - 36 A whole lot
 - 39 Kirkuk native
 - 40 Jacob's twin
 - 41 "Sun Salutation" discipline
 - 43 Seniors' org.
 - 45 Tizzy
 - 46 Teeny
 - 47 Bend
 - 49 Big shot
- ACROSS**

 - 54 Grammy winning Lipa
 - 55 Firecracker noises
 - 56 Charon's river

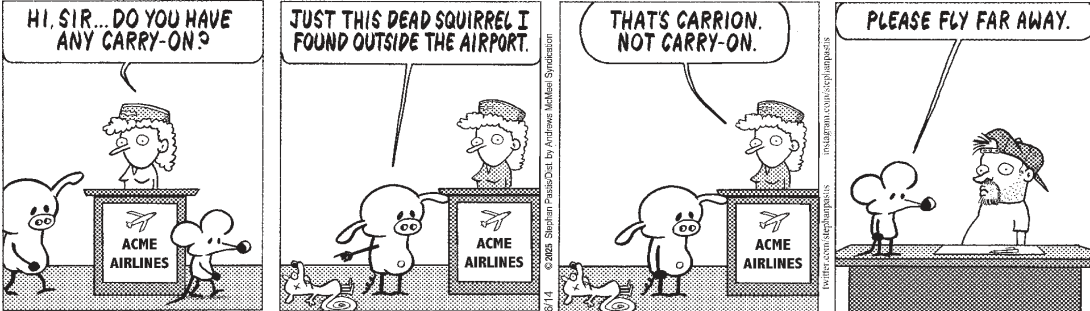
Answer to Previous Puzzle



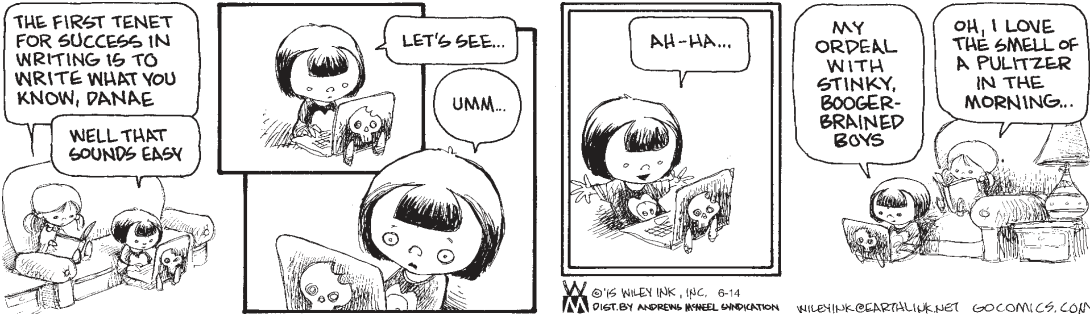
Frazz



Pearls Before Swine



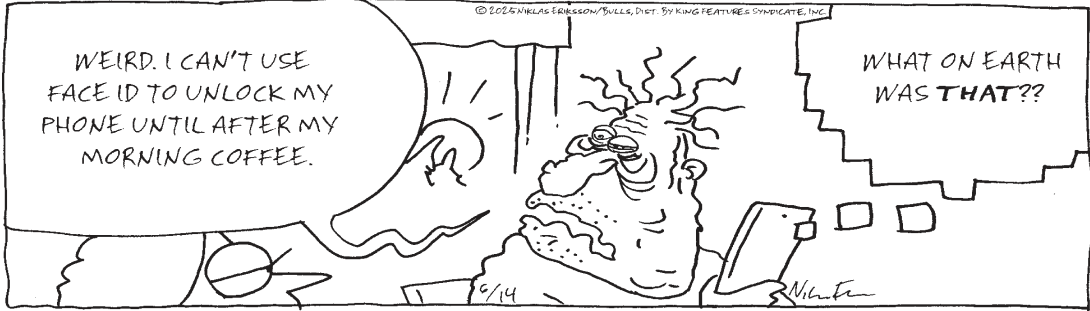
Non Sequitur



Wumo



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



6-14 CRYPTOQUIP

TIX CS V JVEY OS OIVME GFSWO

CVHYA OVS M - VM CVAGOVMD

LXQFSJL GJJ CGX JSMD? V'Q

LS GHST-QVMCYC!

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF CERTAIN PEOPLE ABSOLUTELY REFUSE TO SHARE THEIR MOBILE PHONES, ARE THEY CELL-FISH?

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: I equals H



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Lt. Col. Katie R. Fidler, Europe commander
John Rodriguez, Europe chief of staff
Lt. Col. Marci Hoffman, Pacific commander

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Jacqueline Smith

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OPINION

What real patriots should think about Trump’s parade

BY THEODORE R. JOHNSON
Special to The Washington Post
The heart of the nation’s civic calendar is the period between Memorial Day, honoring those who gave their last breath, and Independence Day, when the country drew its first.

In between, there is Juneteenth, the newest federal holiday that commemorates the end of slavery and a second founding. Flag Day is June 14, marking the anniversary of the adoption of the Stars and Stripes. That date is also the birthday of the U.S. Army, which turns 250 this year. And the day is Donald Trump’s birthday, too, which stamps the president’s uncritical and theatrical brand of patriotism at the center of a bigger conversation about pride in America.

This year, Trump will get the parade that he’s long desired. The Army’s historic milestone provides the occasion for a mile-long military procession to wind its way through the nation’s capital on Saturday. This will be the first such event in three decades, and the first not associated with a presidential inauguration or victory in war. Given this rarity and the coincidence of dates — the flag, the Army and Trump all sharing a birthday — the parade has taken on more meaning than just the celebration of an institution.

Democratic lawmakers have accused Trump of hijacking the historical anniversaries in service of his own ego and political benefit. There’s bipartisan angst about the parade’s hefty price tag of up to \$45 million, and mayoral concerns that damage to city streets could cost \$16 million. Some of Trump’s supporters anticipate a glorious spectacle, seeing the convergence of birth dates as evidence of his consecration: “Providential,” as current U.S. chief of protocol Monica Crowley describes it. “Hand of God, for sure.” All the bickering and zealotry are enough to make real patriots lose their religion — however many of them re-

main.
Patriotism is on the decline in the United States, and the word itself has become contentious. It’s perceived as partisan, and there’s a generational divide, with younger Americans having far less attachment to the label and the idea. Its most garish displays are often associated with an intolerant love-it-or-leave-it nationalism. It seems fickle in practice — voters feel more patriotic when their candidate wins the White House; it surges, not in peaceful times, but immediately after an attack. And the honorific is assigned frivolously, given alike by presidents to soldiers who died defending the Constitution and to Jan. 6 convicts who violated it by storming the Capitol. These realities have stigmatized the whole concept, undermining what it means anymore to be proud of the country.

National holidays and commemorations are inherently political; they communicate which people and moments to honor. And rituals are good for nations; they offer meaning and connection that signal our willingness to belong. But though few things spell civic pride like a parade, when politics co-opts the ritual and treats it like religion, it’s as likely to create believers as it is heathens. And the most divisive politicians tell the country who is which, fashioning themselves as saints in the process. No wonder fewer of us identify as patriots.

But does it also mean fewer of us should be proud of our country? Not in agreement with its actions or proud of its choices on any given day, but proud of its journey over time. Proud of the many people who fought for equality, and of the cultures and ideas they gave life to. And proud of its progress, even where work remains. In 1852, Frederick Douglass’ historic speech asked: “What to the slave is the Fourth of July?” What to the enslaved would Juneteenth National Independence Day mean, signed into law while a Black woman was vice president? Today wouldn’t be their heaven,

but it’s a far better nation than the one they knew, maybe even better than one they thought possible. I think they would be proud. We should be, too — no matter which party holds the White House, and no matter which brand of patriotism predominates.

They would definitely throw a parade. Newly emancipated men and women held the earliest Memorial Day observance in May 1865 in Charleston, S.C., honoring fallen Union soldiers by singing an ode to the flag, “The Star-Spangled Banner,” and marshaling a parade of 10,000 people. A few weeks later, on June 19, the Army informed the last corner of Texas of slavery’s end. Juneteenth has been filled with festivals and parades ever since.

At the heart of our calendar are people of all colors from all places who felt pride in their history despite experiencing injustice, and who found pride in America though they had reasons not to. Real patriots know there is room for both shame and pride; they meet the former with a fighting spirit and the latter with a celebratory one.

As it happens, the Army is central to all the national observances in these civic six weeks. Older than the nation by a year, its history is likewise imperfect, but its 250 years of service is more than worthy of commemoration. The flag and the country have also earned their anniversaries. And their critiques and protests, too. White House planners expect parade-goers will spontaneously serenade the president for his birthday, flags streaming and battle tanks tracking down Constitution Avenue. But president and parade and politics aside, there’s no shame in being proud of the people and institutions — in uniform and out — who have fought to make America live better, and help it see another year.

Theodore R. Johnson, a contributing columnist for The Washington Post and retired naval officer, writes on issues of race, democracy, and American identity. He’s the author of the book “If We Are Brave.”

What would music be without Wilson? God only knows.

BY ALYSSA ROSENBERG
The Washington Post

For rock connoisseurs, it’s decidedly uncool to love the Beach Boys. Why choose the corny regional sexual stereotypes of “California Girls” over the frank lust of “I Saw Her Standing There”? or the snarl of “(I Can’t Get No) Satisfaction”? What could those matching vertical striped shirts possibly have on the Beatles’ sharp suits or Bob Dylan’s untamed curls? Is there really that much lyrical potential in American muscle cars?

But if the Beach Boys lost the 1960s culture wars, the band entered the pantheon of pop immortality anyway. The reason: Brian Wilson, who has died at 82.

The Beach Boys were my first stop when I began my journey through my parents’ vinyl collection in the 1990s, and for good reason. Wilson’s songs were excellent short fiction about the inner and social lives of teenagers, companions to Beverly Cleary’s young adult novels.

The joyriding teenage girl in “Fun, Fun, Fun,” who “walks, looks and drives like an ace,” has a fascinating wild streak (as does her older counterpart, “the little old lady from Pasadena”). Wilson’s boys could be brash masters of the nascent California surfing scene in songs like “I Get Around,” but they also offered striking introspection in songs like the spare “In My Room” and frankly ex-

plored the real risks of teen-boy posturing off in “Don’t Worry Baby.”

Though I wasn’t quite aware of it at the time, Wilson was also teaching me how to listen to pop music — to all music really — as I made my way into the band’s later discography.

Take the vibrating drum effect at the beginning of “Do It Again,” which combined with the song’s variable tempo to make the track sound like a literal distortion of the sunny surf bops the song is revisiting. The slide whistle Wrecking Crew member Gene Estes played on “Heroes and Villains” plays the same unnerving role as the siren whistle on Bob Dylan’s “Highway 61 Revisited,” though I heard the Beach Boys do it first. And while it feels almost like a cliché to revisit “God Only Knows” and “Good Vibrations,” two of the greatest pop songs ever recorded, I can’t think of a better way to train your ears, or really a greater pleasure, than to put those songs on an excellent speaker system and listen closely for all the layered, unexpected elements — from sleigh bells to an electro-theremin — that makes those songs so remarkable.

Of course, the Beatles beckoned for me, a gesture reinforced by the broadcast of the documentary “The Beatles Anthology” on the BBC and ABC in 1995. And, of course, I answered, “Help!” supplanting “Surfin’ U.S.A.” and “Revolver” and “Rubber Soul” pushing aside “Pet Sounds.” Then it was on to fascina-

tions with Portland indie rock and Dirty South hip-hop.

But as the years went on, I kept coming back to Brian Wilson. In 2004, “Smile,” Wilson’s long-gestating passion project, was finally completed and released; if you’ve never heard it, the album is strange and delicate and delightful.

It’s also a testament to a tragedy: For almost two decades, Wilson suffered not just from mental illness and drug abuse but also from maltreatment and professional abuse by a wildly unethical psychologist, Eugene Landy. Unlike John Lennon, whose 1980 assassination made him a generational and cultural martyr, Wilson was alive but diminished, a kind of ghost haunting the various touring lineups of the Beach Boys that continued without him.

Wilson’s later-in-life reemergence seems to have been a blessing for him as a human being. But it was also a gift to music-lovers, a chance to revisit the sonic innovations and piercing emotional clarity Wilson brought to surf bops and grand experiments alike. Teenagers may no longer frequent malt shops and drive their parents’ station wagons to the beach. But where would American pop music be without Brian Wilson? God only knows.

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SCOREBOARD/AUTO RACING

DEALS

Wednesday’s transactions

BASEBALL
Major League Baseball American League

ATHLETICS — Sent RHP Carlos Duran outright to Las Vegas. Sent LHP Brady Baso and 3B Gio Urshela to Las Vegas (PCL) on a rehab assignment.

BALTIMORE ORIOLES — Agreed to terms with LHP Sayer Diederich on a minor league contract.

BOSTON RED SOX — Sent RHP Robert Stock outright to Worcester (IL).

DETROIT TIGERS — Sent RHP Alex Cobb to Toledo (IL) on a rehab assignment.

HOUSTON ASTROS — Agreed to terms with RHP Nate Wohlgemuth on a minor league contract.

KANSAS CITY ROYALS — Reinstated RHP Lucas Erceg from the 15-day injured list IL. Designated RHP Trevor Richards for assignment. Placed LHP Cole Ragans on the 15-day IL, retroactive to June 8. Recalled RHP Jonathan Bowlan from Omaha (IL).

MINNESOTA TWINS — Claimed LHP Joey Wentz off waivers from the Pittsburgh Pirates. Transferred RHP Pablo Lopez from the 15-day IL to the 60-day IL. Acquired INF Andy Lugo from Boston in exchange for RHP Jorge Alcala.

NEW YORK YANKEES — Sent RHP Marcus Stroman to Somerset (IL) on a rehab assignment.

TAMPA BAY RAYS — Placed RHP Manuel Rodriguez on the 15-day IL, retroactive to June 10. Recalled RHP Cole Sulser from Durham (IL).

TORONTO BLUE JAYS — Selected the contract of OF Will Robertson from Buffalo (IL). Placed OF Nathan Lukes on the 7-day IL, retroactive to June 10.

National League

CHICAGO CUBS — Sent RHP Tyson Miller outright to Iowa (IL).

PHILADELPHIA PHILLIES — Recalled RHP Michael Mercado from Lehigh Valley (IL). Designated RHP Carlos Hernandez for assignment.

PITTSBURGH PIRATES — Recalled RHP Carmen Mlodzinski from Indianapolis (IL). Sent C Joey Bart to Indianapolis on a rehab assignment. Optioned RHP Kyle Nicolas to Indianapolis.

SAN FRANCISCO GIANTS — Designated SS Osleivis Basabe for assignment. Placed C Patrick Bailey on the 10-day IL, retroactive to June 8. Selected the contract of C Logan Porter from Sacramento (PCL).

BASKETBALL
Women’s National Basketball Association

GOLDEN STATE VALKYRIES — F Janelle Salaun is leaving the team temporarily to compete for French National Team in the EuroBasket tournament that starts next week.

LAS VEGAS ACES — Signed F Joyner Holmes to a rest-of-season hardship contract. Waived F Crystal Bradford.

FOOTBALL
National Football League

DENVER BRONCOS — Signed RB J.K. Dobbins to a one-year contract. Released LS Zach Triner.

KANSAS CITY CHIEFS — Waived DT Siaki Ika. Signed TE Kevin Foelsch to a one-year contract.

LAS VEGAS RAIDERS — Signed LB Germaine Pratt to a one-year contract.

PHILADELPHIA EAGLES — Signed LB Ji-haad Campbell to a rookie contract.

WASHINGTON COMMANDERS — Signed S Jeremy Reaves to a one-year contract extension.

HOCKEY
National Hockey League

UTAH MAMMOTH — Signed LW/RW Ben McCartney to a two-year, two-way contract.

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA				
Eastern Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	9	0	1.000	—
Atlanta	6	3	.667	3
Indiana	4	5	.444	5
Washington	4	6	.400	5½
Chicago	2	6	.250	6½
Connecticut	2	7	.222	7

Western Conference				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Minnesota	9	1	.900	—
Phoenix	7	4	.636	2½
Seattle	6	4	.600	3
Las Vegas	4	4	.500	4
Golden State	4	5	.444	4½
Los Angeles	4	7	.364	5½
Dallas	1	10	.091	8½

Wednesday’s games
Phoenix 93, Dallas 80
Seattle 94, Minnesota 84
Los Angeles 97, Las Vegas 89

Thursday’s games
No games scheduled.

Friday’s games
Chicago at Atlanta
Dallas at Las Vegas

Saturday’s games
Los Angeles at Minnesota
New York at Indiana
Seattle at Golden State

PRO SOCCER

MLS						
Eastern Conference						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	10	3	4	34	32	18
Cincinnati	9	5	3	30	25	24
Inter Miami CF	8	3	5	29	36	27
Nashville	8	4	5	29	30	21
Columbus	7	3	7	28	27	24
New York	8	6	3	27	28	19
Orlando City	7	4	6	27	31	22
Charlotte FC	8	8	1	25	28	27
Chicago	7	5	4	25	35	29
NYC FC	7	6	4	25	20	20
New England	6	4	5	23	19	14
D.C. United	4	8	6	18	17	36
Atlanta	4	8	5	17	21	30
Toronto FC	3	10	4	13	18	24
CF Montréal	1	11	5	8	12	32

Western Conference						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Vancouver	10	1	5	35	30	12
San Diego FC	9	5	3	30	29	18
Minn. United	8	3	6	30	26	16
Portland	8	4	5	29	27	23
LA FC	7	4	5	26	30	23
Seattle	7	6	5	26	25	25
Austin FC	6	7	5	23	13	20
San Jose	6	7	4	22	34	28
Colorado	6	7	4	22	18	24
Houston	5	7	5	20	22	25
FC Dallas	4	6	6	18	18	26
Sporting KC	4	9	4	16	26	31
Real Salt Lake	4	10	3	15	16	25
St Louis City	3	9	5	14	14	23
LA Galaxy	1	12	4	7	15	36

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Thursday’s game
Atlanta at New York City FC

Friday’s games
Toronto FC at Los Angeles FC
San Jose at Portland

Saturday’s games
LA Galaxy at St Louis City
Vancouver at Columbus
Cincinnati at New England
Charlotte FC at Philadelphia
New York at Austin FC
Nashville at Chicago
CF Montréal at Houston
FC Dallas at Sporting Kansas City
San Diego FC at Minnesota
Orlando City at Colorado
D.C. United at Real Salt Lake

NWSL						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Kansas City	9	2	0	27	24	8
Orlando	7	3	1	22	19	8
Washington	7	3	1	22	21	17
San Diego	6	3	2	20	22	14
Seattle	5	4	2	17	11	10
Louisville	5	4	2	17	15	18
Portland	4	3	4	16	16	12
Bay FC	4	4	3	15	13	14
Angel City	4	4	3	15	19	21
Gotham FC	3	5	3	12	13	12
North Carolina	3	5	3	12	14	18
Houston	3	6	2	11	10	17
Utah Royals FC	1	8	2	5	10	22
Chicago	1	8	2	5	8	24

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Friday’s games
San Diego at Houston
Gotham FC at Utah Royals FC
Orlando at Bay FC

Saturday’s games
Seattle at Chicago
Louisville at Kansas City
North Carolina at Angel City

Sunday’s game
Washington at Portland

COLLEGE BASEBALL

College World Series
At Omaha, Neb.
Double elimination
Friday, June 13

Game 1: Coastal Carolina (53-11) vs. Arizona (44-19)
Game 2: Oregon State (47-14-1) vs. Louisville (44-22)

Saturday, June 14
Game 3: UCLA (47-16) vs. Murray St. (44-15)
Game 4: Arkansas (48-13) vs. LSU (40-22)

Sunday, June 15
Game 5: Game 1 loser vs. Game 2 loser
Game 6: Game 1 winner vs. Game 2 winner

Monday, June 16
Game 7: Game 3 loser vs. Game 4 loser
Game 8: Game 3 winner vs. Game 4 winner

NASCAR driving south, hoping to grow fan base

Cup, Xfinity racing in market with rabid motorsports fans

By JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

NASCAR’s first international Cup Series race of the modern era is all about the eyeballs, specifically new fans in the Mexico City market.

NASCAR will be on the track Friday for the first of three days of racing at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodríguez, one of the most popular stops on the Formula 1 calendar and Ben Kennedy’s newest project.

The great-grandson of NASCAR founder Bill France Sr., Kennedy has taken the family business beyond its comfortable confines before.

Kennedy in 2022 moved the preseason exhibition Clash from its longtime home at Daytona International Speedway in Florida to a temporary track built inside Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum. This year, he moved the Clash to The Madhouse — the historic Bowman Gray Stadium, which had last hosted a Cup race in 1971, in Winston-Salem, N.C.

NASCAR under Kennedy also returned to North Wilkesboro Speedway in North Carolina for the first time since 1977 when the All-Star race was moved there three years ago. He allowed dirt at Bristol Motor Speedway, a hybrid road course and oval at Charlotte Motor Speedway, alongside his biggest undertaking: NASCAR’s first street race, held in downtown Chicago.

Kennedy also had his eyes set on expanding internationally, which will come Sunday with the first points-paying international race in the Cup Series since 1958. It is only third time in 77 years that NASCAR’s top series will run an event that counts in the championship outside the United States. The last two times were in Canada; the Cup Series has also held exhibitions in Japan and Australia.

“Our biggest opportunity to grow as a sport is international,” Kennedy said when he announced Mexico City was replacing one of the two races on the schedule allocated to Richmond International Raceway.

“The U.S. is always going to be our mainstay and our next opportunity was to expand internationally,” he said. “We said we’ve wanted to do this for a long time, but also needed to make sure it was the right time, the right partners and the right location. Mexico City checked every box. To be in one of the biggest cities globally — over 20 million people that live in the city — is a massive opportunity for us to bring the sport.”

The weekend includes the second-tier Xfinity Series and the NASCAR Mexico Series. It’s a strong return to a market that devours the entire F1 weekend ticket package within an hour of them becoming available.

Mexicans have proven to be rabid motorsports fans but haven’t gotten a chance to see NASCAR’s big names since 2008, the final year of a four-year run of Xfinity races. Kyle Busch, Denny Hamlin and Martin Truex Jr. were winners during the four-year stretch.



GEORGE WALKER IV/AP

Daniel Suarez, a native of Monterrey, is the face of NASCAR’s first event in Mexico since 2008.

Daniel Suarez, the former Xfinity champion and native of Monterrey, is NASCAR’s face of the event. Suarez raced the circuit 13 times with a different layout in the NASCAR Mexico Series, and three of his starts were wins.

“I’m super excited for the event. I’m super excited to live the moment because the first time is going to only happen once,” Suarez said. “I’m really trying to be as present as possible, enjoy the moment and try to execute the best possible weekend that we can. We know that we are capable of winning the race, but that’s not the goal. The goal is the execution of the entire weekend, and hopefully the win is the result of the execution part.”

The planning that has gone into Mexico City, one of 38 events on the Cup schedule, began about a year ago. NASCAR has worked on myriad details, beginning with how to get nearly 200 trucks hauling race cars and equipment from Michigan International Speedway into Mexico City.

NASCAR official Tom Bryant has spearheaded the organizational logistics and made multiple trips to the border crossing in Laredo, Texas, to meet with customs officials from both nations.

The drive from Michigan to Mexico City is about 40 hours, not including the tedious customs crossing, where all the equipment and tools on every NASCAR hauler must be documented on an exhaustive manifest. Cup Series teams cars were scheduled for a Monday night arrival at Laredo, with crossing scheduled for Tuesday and arrival at the track Thursday.

“It’s been a ton of coordination moving lots of people and lots of stuff safely and efficiently across a great distance and an international border,” Bryant said on the “Hauler Talk” NASCAR podcast.

“There is a lot to it, but the key to it is you just have to define the problem. We’ve got to get these people and these things from this point to that point within a certain time period,” he said. “How do we do it in a way that’s going to best position us to be ready to go to work as soon as we hit the ground down there? Because this is a pretty tight window.”

Ben Kennedy
NASCAR executive

MLB

D-backs’ pitching investment failing

By DAVID BRANDT
Associated Press

PHOENIX — The normally budget-conscious Arizona Diamondbacks have been willing to spend big money over the past several years, taking chances on the notoriously volatile market of free agent starting pitching. So far, it’s a bet that has come up snake eyes.

Over the past 5½ years, Diamondbacks owner Ken Kendrick has committed roughly \$425 million to four pitchers — Corbin Burnes, Jordan Montgomery, Eduardo Rodríguez and Madison Bumgarner.

The combined return on that investment: A 30-48 record, 5.25 ERA, minus-0.4 WAR and two Tommy John surgeries.

Yikes. The latest bad news came June 1 when Burnes — who signed a \$210 million, six-year deal in January — abruptly left a game against the Washington Nationals with right elbow pain.

Now he’s set to undergo Tommy John surgery and might not return to the mound until 2027.

It’s a brutal blow for Arizona, which has managed to get back to an even 34-34 record heading into Friday’s game against the San Diego Padres.

The 30-year-old Burnes seemed like the safest bet on the market last winter when the D-backs made the signing.

The four-time All-Star and 2021 National League Cy Young Award winner had been remarkably consistent and healthy over the previous four seasons, making at least 28 starts every year.

“I might as well do another job if we’re going to be scared of bringing in a guy of this caliber on your team,” Arizona’s general manager Mike Hazen said at Burnes’ introductory news conference.

Added Kendrick: “We’re stretching the budget. It won’t be the last time.”

And for two months, Burnes was everything Hazen, Kendrick and the Diamondbacks hoped for with a 3-2 record and 2.66 ERA.

Now he’s out for the foreseeable future.

It’s the latest in a bad run of luck for Arizona’s front office. It’s also a brutal reminder of the substantial risk in handing out big money to pitchers in an era when injuries are happening at an alarming rate.

Arizona isn’t the only team facing the same problem, even in its own division. The Los Angeles Dodgers currently have 14 pitchers on the injured list — including starters Blake Snell, Tyler Glasnow, Roki Sasaki and Tony Gonsolin.

Snell has made just two starts this season because of injuries after signing a \$182 million, five-year deal in the offseason.



Arizona Diamondbacks pitcher Corbin Burnes leaves a game against the Washington Nationals in the fifth inning June 1 in Phoenix. Burnes will require Tommy John surgery that will keep him out for at least a year.

The difference is the Dodgers seem to have nearly unlimited money to keep adding talent.

The D-backs do not. The string of disappointing signings started in December 2019, when Arizona added Bumgarner with a \$85 million, five-year deal. The lefty had declined from his peak in the early-to-mid 2010s, when he led the San Francisco Giants to three World Series titles, but there was reason to believe he would be a solid middle-of-the-rotation option.

Instead, he regressed even more in the desert, going 15-32 with a 5.23 ERA over a little more than three seasons. The Diamondbacks released him in 2023 after he had a 10.26 ERA through four starts, eating more than \$30 million in the process.

Arizona made a surprise run to the World Series that year and invested in a pair of pitchers — Montgomery and Rodríguez — during the ensuing offseason. Montgomery signed a \$25 million, one-year deal with a vesting op-

tion for 2025. Rodríguez was added on an \$80 million, four-year deal.

Much like the Bumgarner signing, both seemed like good deals at the time.

Montgomery had just helped the Texas Rangers beat the D-backs in the World Series and was a solid lefty with a sub-4.00 ERA in each of the previous three seasons.

Rodríguez was coming off one of the best seasons of his career after going 13-9 with a 3.30 ERA for the Detroit Tigers.

Things haven’t worked out for either pitcher.

Montgomery was awful in 2024 with a 6.23 ERA and eventually demoted to the bullpen. But because he made 21 starts, his vesting option for \$22.5 million kicked in for 2025.

Montgomery’s bid for a bounce-back season ended before it even started. The lefty got hurt during spring training in March and needed Tommy John surgery for the second time in his

career, ending his time in the desert.

Rodríguez hurt his shoulder during spring training in 2024 and didn’t make his Arizona debut until August, contributing a 5.04 ERA as the team faded down the stretch and missed the playoffs. He’s battled injuries and ineffectiveness again this year with a 6.70 ERA through 10 starts.

There’s still time for the Rodríguez and Burnes deals to take a turn for the better. Even if Burnes doesn’t return until 2027, he’d have four more years remaining on his deal.

Diamondbacks manager Torey Lovullo chose to remain optimistic following Burnes’ injury.

“We’re all with Corbin right now,” Lovullo said. “This is a tough day to get this news. But we’ll find a way to rally around him, play hard for him all year long. ... It’s a long road, and it takes time for him to heal and recover. And he will. He’ll be great for the Arizona Diamondbacks, I’m convinced of it.”

Scoreboard

American League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	41	25	.621	—
Toronto	38	30	.559	4
Tampa Bay	36	32	.529	6
Boston	34	36	.486	9
Baltimore	27	39	.409	14
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Detroit	44	25	.638	—
Minnesota	36	31	.537	7
Cleveland	35	32	.522	8
Kansas City	34	34	.500	9½
Chicago	23	45	.338	20½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	37	30	.552	—
Los Angeles	33	34	.493	4
Seattle	33	34	.493	4
Texas	32	36	.471	5½
Athletics	26	44	.371	12½
National League				
East Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	44	24	.647	—
Philadelphia	39	29	.574	5
Washington	30	37	.448	13½
Atlanta	29	38	.433	14½
Miami	25	41	.379	18
Central Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Chicago	41	27	.603	—
St. Louis	36	32	.529	5
Milwaukee	36	33	.522	5½
Cincinnati	35	34	.507	6½
Pittsburgh	28	41	.406	13½
West Division				
	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	41	28	.594	—
San Francisco	40	28	.588	½
San Diego	38	29	.567	2
Arizona	34	34	.500	6½
Colorado	12	56	.176	28½
Wednesday's games				
Pittsburgh 5, Miami 2 Philadelphia 7, Chicago Cubs 2 Cleveland 11, Cincinnati 2 Atlanta 6, Milwaukee 2 Toronto 5, St. Louis 2 Arizona 5, Seattle 2 L.A. Angels 6, Athletics 5 L.A. Dodgers 5, San Diego 2 Baltimore 10, Detroit 1 N.Y. Mets 5, Washington 0 Boston 4, Tampa Bay 3 Minnesota 6, Texas 2 N.Y. Yankees 6, Kansas City 3 Houston 10, Chicago White Sox 2 San Francisco 10, Colorado 7				
Thursday's games				
Texas at Minnesota Washington at N.Y. Mets San Francisco at Colorado Detroit at Baltimore St. Louis at Milwaukee N.Y. Yankees at Kansas City Pittsburgh at Chicago Cubs Chicago White Sox at Houston				
Friday's games				
Pittsburgh (Skenes 4-6) at Chicago Cubs (Horton 3-1) Toronto (Gausman 5-4) at Philadelphia (Suárez 4-1) Miami (Cabrera 2-2) at Washington (Parker 4-6) L.A. Angels (Kochanowicz 3-7) at Baltimore (Morton 2-7) Cincinnati (Martinez 4-6) at Detroit (Montero 2-1) N.Y. Yankees (Yarbrough 3-1) at Boston (Crochet 6-4) Tampa Bay (Bradley 4-5) at N.Y. Mets (Holmes 7-3) Colorado (Márquez 2-8) at Atlanta (Elder 2-3) Chicago White Sox (Houser 2-1) at Texas (deGrom 6-2) Athletics (Severino 1-6) at Kansas City (Wacha 3-5) Minnesota (Paddack 2-5) at Houston (Gordon 1-1) St. Louis (Fedde 3-5) at Milwaukee (Peralta 5-4) San Diego (Kolek 3-1) at Arizona (Nelson 2-2) Cleveland (Williams 5-3) at Seattle (Castillo 4-4) San Francisco (Webb 5-5) at L.A. Dodgers (Yamamoto 6-4)				
Saturday's games				
Miami at Washington Cincinnati at Detroit Pittsburgh at Chicago Toronto at Philadelphia L.A. Angels at Baltimore Chicago White Sox at Texas Athletics at Kansas City Tampa Bay at N.Y. Mets Minnesota at Houston Colorado at Atlanta St. Louis at Milwaukee San Diego at Arizona N.Y. Yankees at Boston Cleveland at Seattle San Francisco at L.A. Dodgers				

NHL

With Florida in Final, tax debate heats up

BY STEPHEN WHYNO
Associated Press
FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. — The Florida Panthers are two wins away from becoming the fifth Stanley Cup champion in the past six years from a U.S. state with no income tax.

The run has made taxes something of a hot topic around the league. Many contenders going deep in the playoffs come from Sun Belt locales, but the financial benefit is one advantage of many for them in attracting and retaining players. Or is it?

“The tax thing is marginal at best, and I think the real reasons are that we’re trying to do figure out a way to do our best to try to win,” Florida general manager Bill Zito said, adding that team ownership and coach Paul Maurice are also key assets. “The sun doesn’t kill us. It’s a nice environment to live in. It’s a good place for families. It’s a good place for singles. It’s got a little something for everybody.”

Commissioner Gary Bettman said before the final he “hates the issue,” and that was evident Monday night on TNT when retired player-turned-analyst Paul Bissonnette suggested tax problems should be addressed in the next collective bargaining agreement. Bettman called it ridiculous and rhetorically asked if the league should subsidize teams in places like New York and Los Angeles.

The NHL tax landscape

The Panthers, Tampa Bay Lightning, Vegas Golden Knights, Dallas Stars, Nashville Predators and Seattle Kraken are the six NHL teams out of 32 in a place with no state income tax. Deputy Commissioner Bill Daly said some other franchises have raised it as a concern but added the league does not share that thinking.

“These imbalances have existed forever,” Daly said. “There are so many reasons why a player may choose to play in a particular location for a particular team for a particular coach that have nothing to do with the tax situation in that



LYNNE SLADKY/AP

Panthers fans cheer the team as they enter the ice before the first period of Game 3 of the Stanley Cup final against the Edmonton Oilers Monday, in Sunrise, Fla.

market.”

The union seems to agreed that nothing needs to be negotiated in the next CBA to mitigate varying tax levels. NHLPA assistant executive director Ron Hainsey, who played for seven teams over 17 seasons from 2003-20, cited a run of Cup winners in places like Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles and Pittsburgh over a decade-plus span as a hole in the argument.

“I’m kind of baffled at times that this is the topic it is,” Hainsey said. “To react this way out there because Florida and Tampa are having their moment here where they have the players, good teams, took less to stay — it’s the same thing that’s happened the previous 12 years with all these other things. So, when we talk about, is it really an issue, I’m not certain that it is.”

Hainsey also pointed out that this is not a top issue in the NFL and NBA. Of course, hockey still has a ways to go to catch up with football and basketball player salaries, even with the NHL cap rising over the next few years be-

“I’m kind of baffled at times that this is the topic it is.”

Ron Hainsey

NHLPA assistant executive director

cause of revenues setting records. Alan Pogroszewski, who has studied and worked with players on tax matters for more than a decade, said a flexible salary cap would account for the range of tax situations. His AFP Consulting found that since 2016, teams in places with no state income tax qualified for the playoffs at a higher rate, providing what he called “an innate-built-in tax advantage for several of these cities.”

“It’s a combination of many things,” Pogroszewski said Tuesday. “There’s more factors than just the amount of money that’s spent. It’s how it’s spent. But when

you come into an equal playing field and your dollar’s worth more, then that allows you some leeway.”

What do players think?

Brad Marchand, a Canadian who played in Boston for a decade and a half before getting traded to Florida in March, does not dismiss taxes as a factor in choosing where to play.

“The Canadian teams, most of them have an extremely high tax rate, and then the California teams, same thing: Those teams are going to have to pay more money to get certain players than others,” Marchand said. “When you look at a team like Montreal, what are they 52, 54%? Versus a team like here or Dallas or whatever. That’s a 15% difference. When you add that up, it’s a tremendous amount of money.”

Of course, money isn’t the only motivating factor. Success for Florida, Tampa Bay, Vegas and Dallas directly coincides with Zito, Julien BriseBois, Kelly

Scoreboard

Final
Florida 2, Edmonton 1
Best-of-seven; x-if necessary
Edmonton 4, Florida 3, OT
Florida 5, Edmonton 4
Florida 6, Edmonton 1
Thursday: at Florida
Saturday: at Edmonton, **AFN-Sports, 2 a.m. Sunday CET, 10 a.m. Sunday JKT**
x-Tuesday: at Florida
x-Friday, June 20: at Edmonton

McCrimmon and Jim Nill being some of the best executives around and knowing how to evaluate talent and manage the cap.

Being able to golf in the winter does not hurt either, and some players prefer smaller markets with less pressure. Others are drawn to hockey-crazy places where fans care deeply and hockey is either the top dog or the only game in town.

The Edmonton Oilers, in the final for a second consecutive year, are the perfect example of that.

“The passion obviously that this fanbase has for their team is incredible,” said Oilers forward Evander Kane, who has also played in Atlanta, Winnipeg, Buffalo and San Jose. “Once you actually get here and get to know your way around the city a little bit more, you realize there’s actually quite a bit to do and it is a good spot for families and they have great summers.”

NHL players get paid in U.S. dollars, even in Canada, taking some of the tax bite out of places like Montreal and Toronto with high tax rates because of the exchange rate. But that can also get cut into based on where guys choose to live.

“It helps while you’re there, but also the living costs in Canada are extremely high, too, because you’re taxed through the roof on everything: what you buy, what you sell, what you make,” Marchand said. “So, yes, at the time, the costs are a little bit different but not much, and then when you move back, you have 20, 30% less money, so it absolutely plays a part.”

Colorado’s Makar voted top defenseman for second time in 4 seasons

BY PAT GRAHAM
Associated Press
DENVER — Cale Makar captured the Norris Trophy as the league’s top defenseman for a second time in four seasons.

The Colorado Avalanche stand-out finished the regular season with 30 goals to become to first NHL blueliner to reach that mark since Mike Green scored 31 for Washington in 2008-09. Makar also led all defensemen this season with 62 assists and 92 points.

He received first-place votes on 176 of the 191 ballots cast by mem-

bers of the Professional Hockey Writers Association. The 26-year-old from Calgary, Alberta, has been a Norris finalist in each of the last five seasons.

Makar finds himself in elite company as he joins Bobby Orr (eight times), Denis Potvin (three), Paul Coffey, Rod Langway and Erik Karlsson as the only players to take home two or more Norris Trophies before turning 27.

Makar was surprised with the award by his family and friends. He was golfing with his buddies in a video posted on the NHL’s social

media account when they stopped midround. A big group was waiting in the yard for him and clapped as he received the trophy.

“My first thought was, honestly, that one of the boys that I was playing with won some golf trophy and it was a surprise thing,” Makar said in the video. “It definitely was not on my radar.”

His mom added: “Even though he doesn’t like surprises, his reaction today was awesome.”

Makar’s regular season included such milestone moments as scoring his 100th career NHL goal

(Jan. 18 against Dallas) and becoming the third-fastest defenseman in history to reach 400 career points (Feb. 23 at St. Louis).

He began the season by matching a career high with a 13-game point streak. He was in a tie with Mark Stone for the scoring lead at the end of October.

That was the first time a blueliner led or shared the league lead in points at the end of October since Orr was in a four-way tie on Nov. 1, 1974.

In addition, Makar helped Canada take home the title in the mid-

season 4 Nations Face-Off. He led the tournament in ice time.

Makar had a goal and four assists in a first-round playoff loss to Dallas during a series that went seven games.

His 1.08 points per game average in the postseason is the third-best among defensemen with at least 60 playoff games.

He also won the Norris in 2022, a season in which the Avalanche hoisted the Stanley Cup. Makar earned the Conn Smythe Trophy that year as the MVP of the playoffs.

WORLD CUP

Questions still unanswered on tickets, security

1 year from opener, FIFA has offered few details, and travel ban adds to uncertainty

By RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — A year from the largest World Cup ever, there has been no announcement on general ticket sales, prices for most seats, location of a draw or security arrangements as FIFA has mostly avoided disclosing details of an event set for 16 stadiums across the United States, Mexico and Canada.

There is uncertainty about whether fans from some nations will be welcome — 11 of the venues are located in the U.S., where all matches will be played from the quarterfinals on.

Security is a concern, too. At the last major soccer tournament in the U.S., the 2024 Copa America final at Miami Gardens, Fla., started 82 minutes late after spectators breached security gates.

“That was certainly a reminder and a wake-up call if anybody needed it that those types of things are going to be used in terms of the ultimate assessment of whether this World Cup is successful,” said former U.S. defender Alexi Lalas, now Fox’s lead soccer analyst.

U.S. President Donald Trump’s travel ban on citizens from 12 nations exempted athletes, coaches, staff and relatives while not mentioning fans. Vice President JD Vance made what could be interpreted as a warning on May 6.

“Of course everybody is welcome to come and see this incredible event. I know we’ll have visitors probably from close to 100 countries. We want them to come. We want them to celebrate. We want them to watch the game,” he said. “But when the time is up they’ll have to go home. Otherwise they’ll have to talk to Secretary Noem,” he added, speaking alongside Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem.

Back in US for first time in 32 years

The 1994 World Cup sparked the launch of Major League Soccer with 10 teams in 1996, and \$50 million in World Cup profits seeded the U.S. Soccer Foundation, tasked with developing the sport’s growth. MLS now has 30 teams, plays in 22 soccer-specific stadiums and has club academies to grow the sport and improve talent.

Next year’s tournament will include 104 games, up from 64 from 1998 through 2022, and the 11 U.S. stadiums are all NFL homes with lucrative luxury suites and club seating. It will also be the first World Cup run by FIFA without a local organizing committee.

“The legacy initiative of 2026 is around how we ensure that soccer is everywhere in this country,” U.S. Soccer Federation CEO JT Batson said. “How do we ensure that every American can walk, ride their bike or take public transit to a safe place to play soccer? How do we make it to where every school in America has soccer accessible to their students? And how do we make it to wherever every American can truly see themselves in the game?”

Interest in soccer has vastly increased in the U.S., with England’s Premier League averaging 510,000 viewers per match window on NBC’s networks last season and the European Champions League final drawing more than 2 million viewers in each of the past five years on CBS. However, CBS broadcast just 26 of 189 Champions League matches on TV in 2024-25 and streamed the rest.

MLS drew about 12.2 million fans last year, second to 14.7 million in 2023-24 for the Premier League’s 20 teams, but MLS has largely disappeared from broadcast TV since starting a 10-year contract with Apple TV+ in 2023. Apple spokesman Sam Citron said the company does not release viewer figures.

In a fractured television landscape, different deals were negotiated by FIFA, UEFA, MLS, the NWSL, the USSF and the five major European leagues.

“You basically have over 2,800 game windows per season aired in the United States and so that requires distribution largely on streaming platforms like Paramount+ or ESPN+, but it’s difficult for new fan adoption and it makes reach kind of challenging,” said Gerry Cardinale, managing partner of RedBird Capital Partners, which holds controlling interests in AC Milan and Toulouse and owns a non-controlling stake of Fenway Sports Group, parent of Liverpool. “Kids today



MARTA LAVANDIER/AP

Singer Marc Anthony looks up at a custom designed countdown clock during a FIFA One Year to Go event Wednesday in Miami. FIFA still has not made public several details of the tournament.

“We want them to come. We want them to celebrate. We want them to watch the game. But when the time is up, they’ll have to go home.”

JD Vance
Vice President

are getting weaned on Premier League football and Serie A football, and when you watch that as a product, it’s hard for MLS to compete.”

1994 World Cup set attendance record

The 1994 World Cup, a 24-nation tournament, drew a record 3.58 million fans for 52 matches. Ticket prices ranged from \$25-\$75 for most first round games and \$180-\$475 for the final at the Rose Bowl in Pasadena, Calif.

FIFA, which has about 800 people working at an office in Coral Gables, Fla., has said it will announce information on general tickets in the third quarter. It wouldn’t say whether prices will be fixed or variable.

Hospitality packages are available on FIFA’s website through On Location. For the eight matches at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, N.J., including the final July 19, prices range from \$25,800 to \$73,200 per person.

Variable ticket pricing possible

FIFA appears to be using variable pricing for this year’s Club World Cup, played at 12 U.S. stadi-

ums from June 14 to July 13, and some prices have been repeatedly slashed. Marriott Bonvoy, a U.S. Soccer Federation partner, has been offering free tickets to some of its elite members.

Asked about Club World Cup ticket sales and team base camp arrangements, Manolo Zubiria, the World Cup’s chief tournament officer, hung up four minutes and five questions into a telephone interview with The Associated Press. Brendan O’Connell, the publicist who arranged the interview, wrote in an email to the AP: “The guest was not prepared for those questions.”

FIFA’s media relations staff would not make FIFA president Gianni Infantino available to discuss the tournament.

Ahead of the 1994 World Cup, FIFA announced in May 1992 that the draw would take place at Las Vegas on Dec. 18 or 19, 1993. FIFA has not revealed plans for this year’s draw, but appears to be planning for Las Vegas on Dec. 5.

Regular ticket sales began in February 1993 for the U.S. soccer family and general first- and second-round sales started that June. Fans submitted lottery applications in October 1993 for games from the quarterfinals on.

Teams could train away from World Cup cities

While not detailing ticketing plans for next year’s tournament, FIFA is spreading it beyond the host cities and lists about 60 possible base camps for teams to use, paired with hotels. Some are fancy — The Greenbrier Resort in White Sulphur Springs, W.Va. — and some more Spartan — the Courtyard by Marriott Mesa at Wrigleyville West in Arizona.

Thousands of arrangements must be coordinated. Major League Baseball is drawing up its schedule to ensure that the four teams whose ballparks share parking lots with World Cup stadiums — in Arlington, Texas; Kansas City, Mo.; Philadelphia; and Seattle — won’t play home games on the dates of tournament matches.

Boris Gartner, president and partner of Relevant Sports, a commercial partner for many soccer organizations, said the 2026 World Cup should be viewed as just another step in the sport’s long-term growth in the U.S.

“If you have a clear understanding of the market and the audience, a clear understanding of the value that these properties bring to media companies, and you mix content with a commercial strategy, with the right media distribution strategy, this is something that will continue to grow over the next two decades,” he said. “If more people are watching the NWSL, more people are going to be interested in soccer that could potentially end up watching a Bundesliga game or La Liga game.”

COLLEGE

Small schools surviving without big bucks

BY MAURA CAREY
Associated Press

ORLANDO, Fla. — As schools prepare to begin sharing millions with their athletes, there is no avoiding the reality that if you're not a Power Four school, you're at a disadvantage. With major conferences running the show, St. Bonaventure and Florida International don't even have a seat at the table.

FIU and St. Bonaventure aren't necessarily worried about a head-to-head fight over top players with deeper-pocketed schools. The priority has become survival and finding a balance between athletics ambition and financial sustainability.

Adrian Wojnarowski spoke candidly about the challenges he faced during his inaugural season as the general manager of the St. Bonaventure men's basketball team. Solidifying a recruiting class that would improve the team and embrace the school culture was not easy. After July 1, when lucrative paychecks will pretty much become mandatory for blue-chip prospects, it's not going to get any easier.

With some 2,000 undergraduate students, the Bonnies are outnumbered in resources and revenue when competing even against other Atlantic 10 teams like VCU, Dayton, and Saint Louis.

Wojnarowski, ESPN's former lead NBA reporter, thinks he has identified a formula for locating the ideal prospect.

To him, St. Bonaventure is a landing spot for international players adjusting to a new culture and college life, transfers who may have fallen short at a high



RYAN SUN/AP

Former NBA reporter and current St. Bonaventure men's basketball general manager Adrian Wojnarowski, center, thinks he has identified a formula for helping the Bonnies develop a roster to compete.

major and need development, or those looking to move up to a mid-major. He admits the school upstate New York could be a pit stop on a player's journey.

"I want them to see that our environment, our coaching staff, our small school, especially for international players coming over, what I really try to sell is your adjustment to American college life," he said at the National Association of Collegiate Directors of Athletics and Affiliates Convention this week.

"I think for a lot of kids, it's easier in a school with 1,900 students than a school with 19,000. And you'll come to have two great years with us, and then you'll probably end up at schools with

19,000 or 29,000," he said. "And so you're selling, for us, we're your first step on the way to somewhere else, or the other one to me is we're the place to come when you've got to get the basketball right."

If the plan goes awry and a recruit slips away, one thing the former NBA insider refuses to do is blame the money.

"Fundraising is hard, creating new revenue streams is hard, but the one thing that I try to stay away from with us is not saying, 'Oh, we didn't get him because they offered more money,' and using that as a crutch all the time. I really examine when we lost a player," Wojnarowski said. "Are we being honest with ourselves in saying that we did everything outside the

economics to make our case to this person?"

FIU has more than 40,000 undergraduates, but the athletic department is using a similar philosophy, pinpointing advantages and opportunities to come from the settlement instead of the negatives.

Similar to St. Bonaventure, FIU doesn't expect to come close to the \$20.5 million revenue-sharing cap available over the next year. For a competitive edge, unlocking new revenue streams is fundamental.

"To compete, from a revenue standpoint, you have to think outside the box of your conventional fundraising and targeting donors," senior associate athletic director Joseph Corey said. "That's

why you're looking at concerts being held at different venues, different festivals to generate extra revenue to bring in, different revenue streams, and not just fundraising going after the same donors. You've got to go beyond that in order to be able to compete."

Being based in Miami has its perks. Proximity to celebrities is one of them. In August, FIU secured a 10-year partnership with Pitbull, the singer and rapper who coins himself "Mr. 305."

"We did the partnership with Pitbull — Pitbull Stadium. He's on tour, but part of the deal was that he would be collaborating with us and doing events for us from a fundraising standpoint," Corey said. "You've got to think outside the box. Especially in a city like Miami, it's about the experience too."

Schools unlocking creative revenue streams is something that can be expected. FIU competes in Conference USA alongside teams like Liberty, Louisiana Tech, UTEP, Kennesaw State and Jacksonville State. The football team went 3-5 in 2024, finishing sixth in the conference. The men's basketball team finished last with a 3-15 conference record. It's hard to sell donors on losing teams.

"Let's call it what it is, FIU's not going to be able to keep up with the Alabama's of the world, the Georgia's, Michigan, or Texas, but what can we do? We can be the best in our conference. That is our goal," Corey said. "Let's be the best in our conference and really compete there because once you're at the top of your conference, that means more revenue in other areas. Everyone wants to donate to a winner."

Female athletes appeal NCAA settlement, saying it violates Title IX

BY BEN NUCKOLS
Associated Press

Eight female athletes filed an appeal Wednesday of a landmark NCAA antitrust settlement, arguing that women would not receive their fair share of \$2.7 billion in back pay for athletes who were barred from making money off their name, image and likeness.

U.S. District Judge Claudia Wilken approved the settlement last week, clearing the way for direct payments from universities to athletes and the end of the NCAA's amateurism model.

The athletes who appealed the settlement competed in soccer, volleyball and track. They are Kacie Breeding of Vanderbilt; Lexi Drumm, Emma Appleman, Emmie Wannemacher, Riley Hass, Savannah Baron and Elizabeth Arnold of the College of Charleston; and Kate Johnson of Virginia. They have standing to appeal because they previously filed objec-

tions to the proposed settlement.

Ashlyn Hare, one of the attorneys representing the athletes, said in a statement that the settlement violates Title IX, the federal law that bans sex-based discrimination in education.

"We support a settlement of the case, but not an inaccurate one that violates federal law. The calculation of past damages is based on an error that ignores Title IX and deprives female athletes of \$1.1 billion," Hare said. "Paying out the money as proposed would be a massive error that would cause irreparable harm to women's sports."

The law firm representing the plaintiffs in the settlement issued a statement saying the appeal would delay payments to hundreds of thousands of athletes by a minimum of several months.

"These attorneys are pursuing an appeal based on a Title IX issue that Judge Wilken already



NOAH BERGER/AP

College soccer player Lexi Drumm leaves federal court during a hearing for a \$2.8 billion settlement impacting NCAA athletics in April. Drumm is one of eight females appealing the settlement.

disposed of correctly, quickly and multiple times," the statement said.

The House settlement figures

to financially benefit football and basketball stars at the biggest schools, who are likely to receive a big chunk of the \$20.5 million

per year that colleges are permitted to share with athletes over the next year. Some athletes in other sports that don't make money for their schools could lose their partial scholarships or see their roster spots cut.

"This is a football and basketball damages settlement with no real benefit to female athletes," Hare said. "Congress has expressly rejected efforts to exempt revenue-generating sports like football and basketball from Title IX's antidiscrimination mandate. The NCAA agreed with us. Our argument on appeal is the exact same argument the conferences and NCAA made prior to settling the case."

The appeal was filed by the law firm Hutchinson Black and Cook of Boulder, Colorado, and was first reported by Front Office Sports. It would be heard by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit.

US OPEN

Course: DeChambeau looking to become 6th in last century to repeat

FROM PAGE 48

Scheffler made his U.S. Open debut as a 19-year-old at the University of Texas. He shot 69 in the first round and then missed the cut. Now he is a three-time major champion, fresh off his five-shot victory in the PGA Championship. Perhaps more telling was a four-shot victory at the Memorial, where players felt they were getting a preview of the U.S. Open with rough so thick that just getting back to the fairway could be a challenge.

The freak injury Scheffler suffered — he tried cutting ravioli with a wine glass on Christmas Day and punctured his right hand — might have set him back at the start of the year. He is in full stride now, winning three of his last four tournaments.

Not to be overlooked is DeChambeau. For all the talk about Oakmont's toughness, Winged Foot in New York is another brute of a U.S. Open test. That's where he blasted away off the tee and powered wedges out of the rough. He set the scoring record at Winged Foot (274) and won by six.

Now DeChambeau is the defending U.S. Open champion and ready to match muscles with Oakmont. Only five players in the last 100 years have won the U.S. Open back-to-back.

"I think I'm always chasing history. Everybody is. We're all trying to accomplish feats that haven't been done in a long time, and going back-to-back would be great. Three in a row would be an even better accomplishment," DeChambeau said. "So it is in the back of my head.

"How am I preparing for it? Just like I would any other tournament. Just like I did last year with Pinehurst, focusing on executing the right shots, hitting the fairways,

not three-putting — that's going to be a big deal — and keeping it out of the rough. I try to keep it simple."

That's a recipe for a traditional U.S. Open. Avoiding three-putts is always mentioned at Augusta National. That comes into focus at Oakmont because of its reputation for fast greens. Sam Snead once famously (and jokingly) said of Oakmont, "I put a dime down to mark my ball and the dime slid away."

One only has to look back at the last time at Oakmont, in 2016, when Dustin Johnson's ball moved ever so slightly as he was stepping in for a par putt on the fifth hole. He didn't think he caused it to move. The USGA didn't tell him until the 12th tee that it was being reviewed, and he was penalized after the fourth round was over. By then, he didn't care — he won by three shots instead of four.

Johnson is bound of the World Golf Hall of Fame, and so is practically every U.S. Open champion at Oakmont, a testament to its stature.

Missing is Phil Mickelson, who takes on Oakmont for the fourth time. He missed the cut the last two times at Oakmont, and shot 297 — 18 shots behind — in 1994. The U.S. Open remains the only major keeping him from the career Grand Slam, and this will likely be his last one.

Mickelson won the 2021 PGA Championship at age 50. His five-year exemption to the U.S. Open runs out this year, and he already accepted one special exemption (which he didn't need when he won the PGA). Only once has the USGA awarded a second exemption to a player who had not won the U.S. Open. That was the late Seve Ballesteros.



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP

The rough surrounding a fairway bunker on the 18th hole gets trimmed during a practice round for the U.S. Open at Oakmont Country Club in Oakmont, Pa., on Monday.



SETH WENIG/AP

Justin Thomas walks on the eighth hole during a practice round ahead of the U.S. Open at Oakmont Country Club on Tuesday. The par-3 No. 8 is a whopping 289 yards and will play at 300 yards during one round.

Longest par 3 in major history sits at 8th hole

BY DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press

OAKMONT, Pa. — Maybe no one would complain about the eighth hole at Oakmont Country Club if the term "par" had never been created in championship golf.

But there it sits in the middle of the this tough U.S. course, the longest par 3 in major championship history, 289 yards on the scorecard and certain to top 300 yards in actual distance for one round, just as it did in 2007 at Oakmont.

"I couldn't tell you a par 3 over 250 yards that's good, architecturally," said Justin Thomas, who took a scouting trip to Oakmont two weeks before it hosts the U.S. Open for a 10th time.

"That's not my favorite hole in the world," he said. "I think you could do some other things with that. But everyone's going to have to play the same hole and going to have to execute the same shots, and I would love four 3s on it right now if I could take it."

Jack Nicklaus, who won the first of his 18 professional majors at Oakmont in the 1962 U.S. Open, was asked what he thought about the par-3 eighth.

"I haven't played it since they lengthened it to be a short par 5," Nicklaus said with a smile.

Viktor Hovland speaks for the majority when he said the best par 3s in golf are under 200 yards. But

the topic on this day was 300 yards — more or less, depending on how the USGA sets it up each round. Hovland was not a fan.

"As soon as you start to take head covers off on par 3s, I just think it gets a little silly," he said.

This is nothing new in major championship golf.

The PGA Championship at Quail Hollow last month featured the 252-yard sixth hole that required a fairway metal for some. The toughest par 3 at the Masters is the 240-yard fourth. And last summer at Royal Troon in the wind and rain, Scottie Scheffler hit his best 3-wood of the year into the par-3 17th on Saturday.

There's no doubting No. 8 is a tough hole. A bunker named "Sahara" juts out some 80 yards before the green. That's easy enough to carry, and then the ball runs onto a putting surfaces that is not as contoured as the others at Oakmont.

It's just long. And the numbers indicate it is hard. It ranked No. 8 in difficulty in 2016, with 36% of the field hitting the green in regulation. Go back to 2007 and it ranked No. 4 in difficulty, with 33% of the field finding the green.

"The psychology of par is amazing, which goes to the point of long par 3s," said Geoff Ogilvy, a U.S. Open champion and now highly regarded in golf course design.

"If it's a par 5 and you're coming in with a fairway metal, you're thinking there's a chance you can

make 3," he said. "But if it's a par 3, you hope you don't make 4 or 5. And you've got it off a tee! ... No one likes to get a wood out on a par 3. There's a bit of ego involved. But sometimes you have to."

Ogilvy presented one other observation about the par-3 eighth at Oakmont that at least should give critics pause.

"Eight at Oakmont almost is the easiest of the four par 3s, even though it's so long," he said. "It has a wide fairway and probably is the only flat green on the course so you can run it up. I think it's too much at 300 yards. But like at 250, it's a really good hole."

John Bodenhamer, the USGA officer in charge of setting up the course, has said the tee and the pin will be adjusted enough to make it play 301 yards for one round — not 300, but 301.

Given the modern game, maybe the value of a super long par 3 is for players to show they can hit a long iron or fairway metal. Ludvig Aberg was asked how often he hits a 3-iron.

"I don't carry one," the big-hitting Swede said.

He has a 4-iron and then swaps out the 3-iron with a 7-wood. But he brings his 3-iron with him in case it makes sense.

"You don't get a lot of long irons into par 4s," Aberg said. "It would be a second shot into a par 5. I've never had anything against a long par 3. I guess I'm different."

NBA FINALS

Pacers rally late to beat Thunder, take series lead

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Every time Indiana has lost a game in the last three months, it has simply come back to win the next one.

Even in the NBA Finals — against a huge favorite who the Pacers now have in some trouble.

Bennedict Mathurin scored 27 points off the bench, Tyrese Haliburton finished with 22 points, 11 assists and nine rebounds, and Indiana retook the lead in the series by beating the Oklahoma City Thunder 116-107 in Game 3 on Wednesday night.

“This is the kind of team that we are,” Pacers coach Rick Carlisle said. “We need everybody to be ready. It’s not always going to be exactly the same guys that are stepping up with scoring and stuff like that. But this is how we’ve got to do it.”

Pascal Siakam scored 21 for Indiana, which enjoyed a whopping 49-18 edge in bench points. The Pacers, who lost Game 2 in Oklahoma City, improved to 10-0 since mid-March in the game immediately following a loss.

“So many different guys chipped in,” Haliburton said.

Jalen Williams scored 26 points, Shai Gilgeous-Alexander added 24 and Chet Holmgren had 20 for

Scoreboard

Finals

Indiana 2, Oklahoma City 1
Best-of-seven; x-if necessary

Indiana 111, Oklahoma City 110
Oklahoma City 123, Indiana 107
Wednesday: Indiana 116, Oklahoma City 107

Friday: at Indiana, **AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m.**
Saturday CET, 10:30 a.m. Saturday JKT
Monday: at Oklahoma City, **AFN-Sports, 2:30 a.m. Tuesday CET, 10:30 a.m. Tuesday JKT**

x-Thursday, June 19: at Indiana
x-Sunday, June 22: at Oklahoma City

the Thunder, who led by five going into the fourth.

Game 4 is back in Indiana on Friday night.

“We had a lot of good stretches of the game,” OKC coach Mark Daigneault said. “But they had more good stretches than we did — and outplayed us over the course of 48 minutes.”

History says the Pacers are in control now. In the 41 previous NBA Finals that were tied at a game apiece, the Game 3 winner went on to hoist the trophy 33 times — an 80.5% clip.

Advantage, Indiana.

It was back-and-forth much of the way. There were 15 ties; to put that in perspective, there were 13 ties in the five-game entirety of last year’s finals between Boston and



Indiana Pacers forward Aaron Nesmith, center, celebrates a basket with the crowd during the second half of Game 3 of the NBA Finals against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Wednesday in Indianapolis.

Dallas. The last time there was a finals game with more ties: Game 1 between Cleveland and Golden State in 2018, which was knotted 17 times.

TJ McConnell finished with 10 points, five assists and five steals for the Pacers. Since all those stats started being charted, nobody had ever come off the bench and done all that in an NBA Finals game.

“We just had guys make plays

after plays,” Haliburton said. “Our bench was amazing.”

The Thunder were 61-2 when leading going into the fourth quarter in the regular season. They’re 1-2 when leading going into the fourth quarter in this series. Indiana — at home in an NBA Finals game for the first time in 25 years, with Caitlin Clark, Reggie Miller, Oscar Robertson and many other

stars in the crowd — simply owned the final 12 minutes.

The Pacers outscored Oklahoma City 32-18 in the fourth, holding the Thunder to 35% shooting with the game and control of the series on the line.

“There’s a lot of areas we can clean up,” Holmgren said. “Everybody who stepped out there can be better.”

OKC in familiar territory, trailing 2-1 once again

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Game 1, a loss on the opposition’s final shot. Game 2, an easy win. Game 3, another loss to fall behind in the series again.

This formula is not the one that would be considered optimal by Oklahoma City, especially in the NBA Finals. But if there is some consolation for the overall No. 1 seed in these playoffs, it’s this: the Thunder have been in this exact spot before and found a way to prevail.

That resiliency will be tested yet again, after the Indiana Pacers beat OKC 116-107 on Wednesday night to take a 2-1 series lead in these finals. Game 4 is in Indianapolis on Friday night.

“I thought it was an uncharacteristic night in a lot of ways for us,” Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. “We got to learn from it and then tap back into being who we are in Game 4. If we do



Indiana Pacers guard Tyrese Haliburton reacts to a foul call as Oklahoma City Thunder forward Chet Holmgren walks away during the first half of Game 3 of the NBA Finals on Wednesday in Indianapolis.

that, I think we’ll have a much better chance to win.”

It was not very Oklahoma City-

turnovers and let the Pacers’ bench run wild — outscoring the Thunder reserves 49-18.

“We’ll watch it. It wasn’t all bad,” Daigneault said. “But we definitely have to play our style and impose our will for more of the 48 minutes if we want to come on the road and get a win.”

There are uncanny similarities between the first three games of this series and the first three games of the Western Conference semifinal matchup against the Denver Nuggets:

■ In Game 1 of the West semifinals, Aaron Gordon hit a 3-pointer with about 3 seconds left to give Denver a win in OKC. In Game 1 of the NBA Finals, Tyrese Haliburton hit a jumper with 0.3 seconds left to give Indiana a win in Oklahoma City.

■ In Game 2 of the West semifinals, the Thunder evened things up with an easy win. In Game 2 of the NBA Finals, they also evened things up with an easy win.

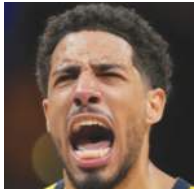
■ In Game 3 of the West semifinals, the Nuggets — at home for the first time in that series — played from behind for most of the night before fighting into overtime and eventually getting a win for a 2-1 series lead. In Game 3 of the NBA Finals, the Pacers — at home for the first time in the series — trailed for much of the first half before eventually getting a win for a 2-1 series lead.

OKC dug its way out of that hole against Denver. And now, the same task awaits — with an NBA title at stake.

“I wouldn’t say that now is the time for emotions, to be thinking about how you’re feeling, emotional this, emotional that,” Thunder forward Chet Holmgren said. “You kind of have to cut that out and look at the substance of what it is. We have a great opportunity here and the great thing is we have another game coming up, Game 4.”

SPORTS

Home sweet home
Back in Indiana, Pacers rally to take 2-1 lead over Thunder » **NBA Finals, Page 47**



GENE J. PUSKAR/AP
The Church Pews bunker between the third fairway, right, and fourth fairway, left, is one of the hallmarks of Oakmont Country Club in Oakmont, Pa., site of this week's U.S. Open.

Punishing, legendary course

Among many big names at US Open, Oakmont itself remains most important

BY DOUG FERGUSON
Associated Press
OAKMONT, Pa. — Never mind that Rory McIlroy is finally a Masters champion and the first player in 25 years to join the exclusive list of players with the career Grand Slam. Or that Scottie Scheffler won the PGA Championship and reasserted himself as golf's best player. They are the biggest stars in the game heading into the third major of the year. They might not be the main attraction. The one name that gets everyone's attention at this U.S. Open: Oakmont. The course Henry Fownes built in 1903 is tough as Pittsburgh steel. Geoff Ogilvy, a former U.S. Open champion, once said playing Oakmont "was like the hardest

hole you've ever played on every hole." The USGA doesn't have to do much to achieve what it always wants: the toughest test in golf. Oakmont is hosting the U.S. Open for the 10th time from June 12-15, more than any other course in the championship's 130-year history. There's a reason it keeps going back. "There are certain places in our game where you stand on the first tee and you look out over the landscape, and it's just meant to play the U.S. Open. Oakmont is that place," John Bodenhamer, the USGA's chief championships officer, said in an interview with Golf Channel. "It was built for a U.S. Open." Adding to the hype are players

who have gone to Oakmont in the weeks leading up to the U.S. Open and sharing tales of deep rough and greens that make it feel they are putting on linoleum. There have been videos of golf balls in the thick grass with only a few dimples visible. "I would say all of the rumors and everything are pretty on point," said Justin Thomas, who toured Oakmont before heading to the Memorial. Xander Schauffele has finished out of the top 10 only once in his eight U.S. Opens. He has yet to see Oakmont, but its reputation is enough for him to realize what to expect. "It's just a battle. It really is," Schauffele said. "It can be extremely rewarding if you are able

to stay disciplined for 72 holes. The cliché statement of golf is a marathon — it seems to be the most true feeling when you play at U.S. Opens. You just feel like you're going to war every day." Bryson DeChambeau is the defending champion, one of eight players who broke par at Pinehurst No. 2 last year. That was a stern test of a different variety, more about domed Donald Ross greens and fairways framed by sand dunes. Before that was the experiment at Los Angeles Country Club, where Schauffele and Rickie Fowler made U.S. Open history, each with a record 62 about 10 minutes apart. In the eyes of Jordan Spieth, what Oakmont provides is a

chance to reset what the U.S. Open is all about — narrow fairways, deep rough, tough greens. And at Oakmont, the famous "Church Pew" bunkers that separate the third and fourth fairways. "If you miss the fairway, it's really hard to make par. And if you hit the fairway, the job's not done," Spieth said. "I think it's a good test. The way I've always talked about Oakmont is the USGA needs one year to be able for people to forget about something they did in a different one. It sets the slate straight. "It's the easiest Open for the USGA," he said. "They don't have to do a lot to it, and it makes it really good for the tournament." **SEE COURSE ON PAGE 46**

Tax debate reignites with Panthers in Final » **NHL, Page 43**

