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ENTERTAINMENT

Digital age renders art increasingly impermanent

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Army reservists still waiting for housing money year after ruling

BY JOHN VANDIVER
Stars and Stripes

STUTTGART, Germany — The U.S. Army continues to defy an order by its highest review board to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars in denied housing benefits to a contingent of reservists, lawyers for the soldiers said, sending the 4-year-old dispute back to federal court for resolution.

"The Army willfully chose to disregard these governing provisions, thus elevating its conduct to the level of gross negligence," Patrick Hughes, an attorney representing the seven plaintiffs, wrote in U.S. Court of Federal Claims filings this month.

It's a new development in a case that one year ago appeared to have been resolved. The Army Board of Corrections determined in August 2021 that the service broke federal law in denying dual housing allowances to reservists temporarily sent to Germany.

Hughes said that his seven clients should have been paid a combined total of about \$500,000.

SEE HOUSING ON PAGE 5



TUAREAN HODGE/U.S. Army

U.S. Army Reserve soldiers stand in formation. Several reservists who deployed to Europe in recent years haven't received housing allowances, despite a finding that the Army's denial broke federal law.

The report, produced by Republican mem-



NICHOLAS GUEVARA, U.S. MARINE CORPS/AP

U.S. Marines provide assistance during an evacuation at Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul, Afghanistan. The last U.S. troops left the country on Aug. 30, 2021, following an airlift of nearly 130,000 U.S. citizens and Afghans vulnerable to retribution from the Taliban.

GOP blasts Biden

House Republicans blame White House for chaotic withdrawal in new report

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration was at fault for the chaotic withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan last year that stranded Afghan allies and forced veterans groups to assist with a haphazard evacuation effort, according to a report published late Wednesday by House Republicans.

The report, produced by Republican mem-

bers of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, accuses the White House and State Department of failing to plan for the Taliban's swift takeover of the country, ignoring the recommendations of Pentagon officials who wanted to maintain a small force on the ground and botching a rushed evacuation.

The last American troops departed Afghanistan on Aug. 30, 2021, following a tumultuous mass airlift of nearly 130,000 U.S. citizens and

Afghans vulnerable to retribution from the Taliban. Army Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and other top military advisers told lawmakers last year that they would have preferred to maintain a U.S. force of 2,500 in the country.

"Following the evacuation debacle, the committee minority believes America's standing in

SEE GOP ON PAGE 6

BUSINESS/WEATHER

EUROPE GAS PRICES

The Army and Air Force Exchange Service did not provide gas prices for facilities in Europe

PACIFIC GAS PRICES

Country	Super E10	Super unleaded	Super plus	Diesel	South Korea	\$4.019	..	\$4.849	\$4.989
Japan	..	\$4.839	..	\$4.979	Change in price	-10.0 cents	..	-10.0 cents	-8.0 cents
Change in price	..	-10.0 cents	..	-8.0 cents	Guam	\$4.009	\$4.529	\$4.849	..
Okinawa	\$3.999	..	..	\$4.979	Change in price	-10.0 cents	-10.0 cents	-10.0 cents	..
Change in price	-10.0 cents	..	..	-8.0 cents	..	..	..	..	..

*Diesel EFD **Midgrade
For the week of Aug. 19-25

EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		
Euro costs (Aug. 19)	\$0.99	South Korea (Won)
Dollar buys (Aug. 19)	0.9592	Switzerland (Franc)
British pound (Aug. 19)	\$1.17	Thailand (Baht)
Japanese yen (Aug. 19)	131.00	Turkey (NewLira)
South Korean won (Aug. 19)	1281.00	
Commercial rates		
Bahrain (Dinar)	0.3770	1127.14
Britain (Pound)	1.2007	0.9535
Canada (Dollar)	1.2917	35.66
China (Yuan)	6.7885	18.0963
Denmark (Krone)	7.3480	
Egypt (Pound)	19.1490	
Euro	0.9878	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	7.8442	
Hungary (Forint)	402.33	
Israel (Shekel)	3.2476	
Japan (Yen)	135.02	
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.3071	
Norway (Krone)	9.7091	
Philippines (Peso)	55.87	
Poland (Zloty)	4.67	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	3.7556	
Singapore (Dollar)	1.3833	

(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.)

INTEREST RATES

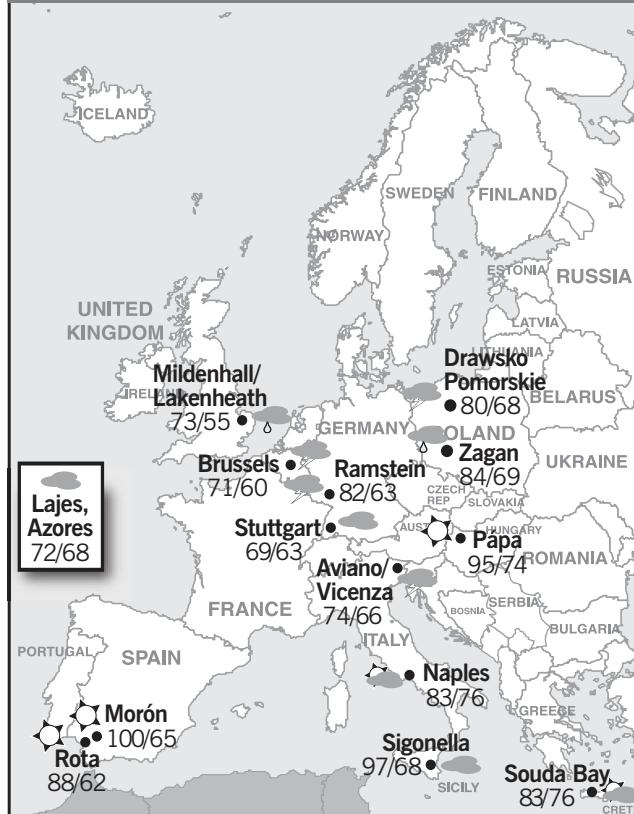
Prime rate	5.50
Interest Rates Discount rate	3.00
Federal funds market rate	2.32
3-month bill	2.64
30-year bond	3.16

WEATHER OUTLOOK

FRIDAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST



FRIDAY IN EUROPE



SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC



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

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PACIFIC

S. Korea offers observer swap with North

BY DAVID CHOI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP HUMPHREYS, South Korea — Military drills with the United States are nonnegotiable as South Korea looks for incentives to bring North Korea to the nuclear bargaining table, a South Korean cabinet minister said Wednesday.

Diplomatic overtures this week to North Korea by the South's president, Yoon Suk Yeoul, do not extend to canceling upcoming exercises involving large numbers of U.S. and South Korean troops, the first of their kind since 2017, Minister of Unification Kwon Young-se said on Korean Broadcasting Radio.

But Kwon floated the idea of exchanging a "viewer group" from the North and South to observe each other's exercises to build trust.

If North Korea and the South were transparent about their exercises, Kwon said, that may lead to "trust building" between the two countries.

"It would be alright if you could think military trust-building is that both sides conduct military drills respectively and create situations that both sides can understand that their exercises are purely defensive exercises,"

US announces trade talks with Taiwan

Associated Press

HUALIEN, Taiwan — The U.S. government will hold trade talks with Taiwan in a sign of support for the island democracy that China claims as its own territory, prompting Beijing to warn Thursday it will take action if necessary to "safeguard its sovereignty."

The announcement of trade talks comes after Beijing fired missiles into the sea to intimidate Taiwan after U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi this month became the highest-ranking American official to visit the island in 25 years.

Chinese President Xi Jinping's government criticized the planned talks as a violation of its stance that Taiwan has no right to foreign relations. It warned Washington not to encourage the island to try to make its de facto independence permanent, a step Beijing says would lead to war.

"China firmly opposes this," Ministry of Commerce spokesperson Shu Jueting said. She called on Washington to "fully respect China's core interests."

Also Thursday, Taiwan's military held a drill with missiles and cannons simulating a response to a Chinese missile attack.

Taiwan and China split in 1949



South Korean marines exit their amphibious assault vehicles during the Rim of the Pacific 2022 exercise on Marine Corps Base Hawaii on July 30.

DILLON ANDERSON/RNZAF

Kwon said.

On Tuesday, Yoon offered to boost North Korea's economy and improve the livelihood of its citizens in exchange for Pyongyang's earnest steps toward de-nuclearization. He called his plan, unveiled in his Liberation Day speech, an "audacious initiative" toward North Korea.

"We will also help enhance North Korea's agricultural pro-

ductivity, offer assistance to modernize hospitals and medical infrastructure, and implement international investment and financial support initiatives,"

Yoon said in his speech.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry frequently disparages the allies' military drills as rehearsals for an invasion of its country and demands they discontinue the provocative behavior.

"Maybe we could talk with [North Korea] about any issue in principle," Kwon said. "But there are parts we should not concede even though it is an audacious initiative, right?"

The U.S.-South Korean military exercises are defensive in nature, Kwon said, adding that North Korea conducts its own exercises.

The U.S. and South Korea plan to resume large-scale exercises after a five-year pause during which their leaders unsuccessfully negotiated with its leader, Kim Jong Un, for the North's nuclear disarmament. The annual exercises were suspended to lower tensions on the Korean Peninsula as then-President Donald Trump and then-South Korean President Moon Jae-in met with Kim several times.

Yoon, a conservative member of the People Power Party, after his inauguration in May agreed to lift the suspension and planning for the drills resumed with the United States.

Ulchi Freedom Shield, previously known as Ulchi Freedom Guardian and Combined Command Post Training, is scheduled to start Monday and end Sept. 1. Another large-scale exercise, Freedom Shield, is scheduled for

early next year.

Details of the exercises, such as troop numbers, have not been publicly released; however, previous iterations included around 50,000 South Korean and 17,500 U.S. troops. U.S. Forces Korea oversees roughly 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea.

North Korea continues to frustrate regional patience with its missile tests. The communist regime fired two cruise missiles off its western coast Wednesday morning, according to South Korea's Ministry of Defense. The missile launches were North Korea's 18th round of missile tests so far this year.

U.S. and South Korean intelligence officials also believe North Korea is ready for its first nuclear test since 2017. During a South Korean parliamentary committee meeting on Thursday, Kwon told lawmakers the North has yet to conduct its seventh test of a nuclear device.

"We think [North Korea] has been taking in all kinds of political considerations, though it is hard for us to say definitely," Kwon said.

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this report.
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Top VA official kicks off Pacific trip with stop at Hawaii medical center

BY WYATT OLSON

Stars and Stripes

SPARK M. MATSUNAGA VA MEDICAL CENTER, Hawaii — The PACT Act recently signed into law increased benefits eligibility for veterans exposed to burn pits but will vastly expand VA health care for all veterans, the deputy secretary of Department of Veterans Affairs said Wednesday.

"The PACT Act has a lot of things in it, and it's a tremendous piece of legislation that will grow the services provided by the VA, probably more than any other piece of legislation ever has," Donald Remy, deputy secretary, told reporters during a news conference at the Spark M. Matsunaga VA Medical Center on the outskirts of Honolulu.

"And not just for the toxic exposure and the conditions that were the result of those toxic exposures, but more broadly," he said.

Remy spent Wednesday meeting with staff, patients and leaders of veterans' organizations at the medical center, which adjoins Tripler Army Medical Center.

Through the end of this month, Remy is touring clinics under the VA Pacific Islands Health Care

System, a trip that will take him to VA clinics in Guam, Saipan, American Samoa and the Philippines, as well as the Big Island of Hawaii.

The region is home to more than 100,000 veterans, Remy said.

President Joe Biden signed the Promise to Address Comprehensive Toxics Act, or PACT Act, into law on Aug. 10, and among its provisions is authorization for an additional 31 major medical health clinics and research facilities in 19 states.

Those added facilities, however, will be used more broadly than just treatment of veterans suffering from toxic exposure, Remy said.

"We're in the process of looking at that authority, determining where new leases can and should be let, and making sure that we have the facilities to provide the services to the population that exists in those areas," said Remy, an Army veteran whose father was awarded the Bronze Star for ac-

tions during the Vietnam War.

The PACT Act's leasing authority is "something we'll use here and elsewhere" to ensure that the VA health system has the facilities it needs, he said.

"We did market assessments across the country previously and examined where we needed facilities, where we needed to beef up our infrastructure," he said. "That'll serve as a basis for us to examine what we need to do moving forward. So, yes, it's too soon to say we'll lease this facility or that facility."

Remy said he had pressed the staff at the Honolulu medical center to do more in the area of women's health "because that's the largest growing cohort of veterans that we have."

The coronavirus pandemic proved to be a boon innovation in the area of telemedicine, a health care option that is "here to stay," he said.

"We learned a lot over the course of the last couple of years — not that we're entirely out of the pandemic," he said. "But we learned that we can reach veterans where they are."

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MILITARY

Air Force Special Ops halts Osprey flights

BY JOSEPH DITZLER

Stars and Stripes

The Air Force Special Operations Command has grounded its fleet of CV-22 Ospreys over a mechanical problem that first surfaced in 2017, according to a command spokeswoman.

Special operations commander Lt. Gen. Jim Slife ordered a safety stand-down Tuesday, citing four in-flight incidents, including two in the past six weeks, according to a statement emailed Thursday to Stars and Stripes by Lt. Col. Rebecca Heyse.

The command identified a problem with "hard clutch engagement during flight," according to Heyse's statement.

"In the coming days, the AFSOC staff will work with the Joint Program Office and industry partners

to fully understand this issue and develop risk control measures to mitigate the likelihood of catastrophic outcomes," her statement reads. "Ultimately, the goal is to determine a viable long term materiel solution."

Heyse did not say how long the stand-down may last.

The clutch inside a gearbox that connects one of the CV-22's two Rolls-Royce Liberty AE1107C engines to the propeller rotor is slipping for an unknown reason, Heyse told Breaking Defense, which first reported the stand-down on Wednesday.

Although the Osprey design allows it to instantaneously compensate for the power disparity if one engine fails, the aircrew must land the tilt-rotor immediately.

The problem has caused no inju-

ries or deaths due to the special operators' airmanship, Heyse told Breaking Defense.

Concerns over the aircraft's safety and noise, which takes off like a helicopter and cruises like a plane, sparked protests when the Air Force deployed a special operations squadron to Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo in 2018.

In March, four Marines died when a Marine Corps MV-22 Osprey crashed in Norway during a military exercise. The Marines' investigation attributed that crash to pilot error. On June 8, five more Marines died when an Osprey crashed in Southern California. That crash is still under investigation.

Stars and Stripes reporter Seth Robson contributed to this report.
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XAVIER LOCKLEY/U.S. Air Force

A 71st Special Operations Squadron CV-22 Osprey receives fuel from a Combat Shadow II aircraft over New Mexico in January 2012.

Fort Bragg to stagger relocation of soldiers from barracks

BY ROSE L. THAYER

Stars and Stripes

Roughly 1,200 soldiers are now preparing to move in phases from barracks that Fort Bragg leaders have deemed unsafe because of poor living conditions, the Army base in North Carolina said Tuesday.

The soldiers are living in barracks buildings built in the 1970s in an area of Fort Bragg known as Smoke Bomb Hill. Base officials decided Aug. 4 that the barracks "no longer meet today's heating, ventilation and air conditioning standards."

"Continuous repairs and changes to air flow created higher than normal moisture levels and quality-of-life concerns," the base said.

Soldiers at the base have reported issues with mold in barracks rooms, and those living at Smoke Bomb Hill will move to other barracks on the base. A soldier who is living in unaffected barracks at Fort Bragg and spoke on the condi-

tion of anonymity said soldiers in his unit are moving to make space for those being relocated from Smoke Bomb Hill.

For some, it's the third or fourth time that they have been forced to move in the past year, and it sometimes means losing their weekend to do so, the soldier said.

"That was a big issue with the soldiers," the soldier said.

Army officials did not say Tuesday how long the phased approach could take or when the unsafe barracks will be completely empty. Officials said the approach will allow them to keep units close together when possible.

Last week, a Fort Bragg spokesperson said the affected barracks buildings make up about 12% of all single soldier living space at Fort Bragg but that the move will not compromise the amount of space and privacy soldiers are required to have under Army regulations.

For the move, the spokesperson said Fort Bragg has hired a profes-

sional moving company to handle soldiers' personal items. If soldiers have items damaged from water or mold in the building, they can fill out forms to seek reimbursement, base officials said.

The Army has publicly struggled in the past four years with health and safety concerns in its housing for soldiers and families, following a 2018 Reuters report about the sometimes dangerous conditions in homes. Residents of family housing and barracks have reported problems with mold, pest infestations and slow or ineffective response to maintenance requests.

Privatized companies are responsible for the conditions within the majority of family housing at military bases in the U.S., but the Army is responsible for its barracks. The maintenance in barracks is typically overseen by the base's Department of Public Works.

Congress has issued a series of

family housing reforms that have made improvements, and Army leaders pledged in 2020 to invest nearly \$10 billion for 10 years. Officials at Fort Bragg did not immediately respond to questions about how much of that money is dedicated to the barracks at Smoke Bomb Hill and what impact emptying them would have on any projected construction funding.

The 2022 National Defense Authorization Act, which sets annual spending for the military, did not include any military construction money for barracks at Fort Bragg.

Some soldiers will be offered basic allowance for housing to move off base, but that decision is dependent on each soldier's rank and promotion status, Fort Bragg said. The availability of off-base housing could delay those moves. The amount of the allowance would depend on the soldier's rank, but would likely be about \$1,200 a month, according to the Defense Travel Management Office web-

site.

"Fort Bragg will provide relocation services and support to ensure a smooth transition for all soldiers," base officials said.

Once the barracks are empty, the majority of the buildings will be demolished and rebuilt, and five will be renovated. About 10-12 buildings are involved, a spokesperson said last week.

Base officials said the work would be completed between fiscal years 2025 and 2027, which is longer than officials previously said. Last week, the spokesperson said the renovations would only take about one year.

"Our enduring obligation at Fort Bragg and as Army leaders is to take care of our people — our soldiers and their families. Their health and welfare are of the utmost importance to our Army readiness," Fort Bragg said.

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Brother of a Marine killed in Afghanistan withdrawal dies by suicide

BY SVETLANA SHKOLNIKOVA

Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — The brother of a Marine killed during the U.S. evacuation from Afghanistan last year has died by suicide near a Southern California town memorial honoring his fallen younger sibling, their mother said.

Dakota Halverson, 28, took his own life on Aug. 9, nearly a year after his brother, Lance Cpl. Kareem Nikoui, 20, died in a suicide bomber attack at the Kabul airport alongside 12 other U.S. troops. The attack on crowds attempting to flee the Taliban also killed some 170 Afghans and injured at least 150 others, including 18 service members.

"The ripple effect! I lost two sons in less than one year, both of them in the month of August," Shana Chappell, the mother, wrote on Facebook.

Halverson's body was found at Pikes Peak Park in Norco, Calif., according to the Riverside County Sheriff's Department, which confirmed the suicide to CNN. The park is close to a community-built memorial flower garden dedicated to the "Fallen 13." Nikoui's name is inscribed on a stone tablet on the site.

Nikoui was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division at Camp Pendleton, Calif.

Chappell said Halverson struggled to cope with his brother's death and would frequently sneak into the cemetery where Nikoui is buried to sleep on his grave. Before his suicide, Halverson often spoke of how much he missed his brother, she said.

"Dakota had been expressing some of the things that had been bothering him and one of those things was the loss of his brother Kareem and how he just wanted to be with him again," Chappell wrote. "He was still having a hard time believing he was actually gone."

She said Halverson loved people unconditionally and had a forgiv-

ing heart.

"He would do anything for anyone," Chappell wrote. "He was always happy for everyone and always showed and expressed how proud he was of someone's success. He just wanted to feel loved and wanted."

Rep. Mike Waltz, R-Fla., shared his condolences Saturday on Twitter.

"Please pray for his family. There MUST be accountability for this continued carnage," the congressman wrote.

Waltz urged veterans of the 20-year war in Afghanistan as well as family members who are "going to a dark place" to either call a friend

or the 988 crisis line — the suicide prevention hotline launched in July to give service members and veterans quicker access to mental health services. It is part of a national strategy to address a surge of suicides in the military in recent years.

An online fundraiser collecting donations for Halverson's funeral has raised nearly \$44,000 as of Wednesday.

"He wanted to be buried next to his brother Kareem," wrote Chappell. "His family and I want to honor his wishes."

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MILITARY

Housing: Reservists still waiting for payments

FROM PAGE 1

At issue is a contention by Army finance officials that reservists who mobilize from the U.S. for assignments abroad aren't entitled to a basic housing allowance for their American residence and an overseas housing allowance if the Army fails to provide on-post accommodations.

Reservists typically must take an extended leave of absence from their civilian jobs to deploy overseas, but their rent and mortgage bills back home don't get stopped.

The review board deemed the Army's argument an erroneous interpretation of the law that led to "unjust actions" against reservists. They were subjected to criminal fraud probes, denied promotions and put into debt as the service sought to recoup hundreds of thousands of dollars in allowances that had been paid.

The board ordered the Army to repay the seven soldiers no later than October 2021. It also imposed other corrective steps, such as deletion of all negative findings, letters of reprimand and files stored in Army criminal databases related to the cases.

But Hughes said in the new

court filings that only one of the seven reservists in the case has received reimbursement.

In addition, the Army hasn't confirmed in writing that his clients' records were wiped clean of negative findings, Hughes said.

Since the review board's ruling, several other reservists have filed suit, and the various claims were consolidated into one case.

Hundreds or possibly thousands of reservists have been denied proper housing benefits because of the Army's faulty interpretation of the federal Joint Travel Regulation, according to Hughes.

Furthermore, government attorneys changed their argument from the original contention that dual allowances are prohibited. Now, the Army concedes that it may pay unmarried reservists a dual allowance but isn't required to do so.

Government attorneys also contend that the Defense Finance and Accounting Service ruled that the Army can't pay dual allowances for reservists with family members.

For years, reservists were paid the dual allowances, but in 2016, Army finance officials in Europe

abruptly changed their interpretation of the Joint Travel Regulation.

As a result, reservists were permitted only one allowance from that point on. And the change was applied retroactively, so Army finance officials began targeting those who had received dual payments.

The affected soldiers contend that the effort was an illegal scheme by Army finance officials aimed at finding savings at the expense of reservists.

The Defense Finance and Accounting Service has asserted that it may only pay reserve members with dependents in the same fashion as active-duty members, through a family separation basic allowance for housing overseas.

That separation allowance, however, can't be paid if a reservist's family member spends more than 90 days in the same area where the reservist has been mobilized, government attorneys argue.

DFAS determined six of the plaintiffs with dependents could be eligible for relief as intended by the Army board's decision under the family separation allowance, government attorneys said.

But to do that, DFAS would need to know where family members were during the reservists' mobilization, which the Army board did not address.

The reservists counter that the government's argument conflates rules that apply to active-duty personnel with those for reservists.

While active-duty soldiers are sent on permanent duty station assignments with household goods moves, reservists are generally mobilized on temporary assignments that don't allow for the relocation of property and family members.

The Army has "unlawfully mischaracterized the orders ... as a permanent change of station," a plaintiffs' court filing states. The Army can't deny them "an entitlement to cover the two households they were forced to maintain," they argue.

Now, it is up to the federal court to render a decision or set a date for oral arguments to be heard.

The Army in July declined to comment on the matter since it is still in litigation.

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Fort Drum holds forum

By CRAIG FOX

Watertown Daily Times, N.Y.

WATERTOWN, N.Y. —

Maj. Gen. Milford H. Beagle Jr., commander of the 10th Mountain Division and Fort Drum, says that Fort Drum needs to be relevant as it prepares for Army 2030.

And the community can help Fort Drum get there, he told about 100 community leaders from the north country during an executive forum on Wednesday.

"Fort Drum is good for the north country, and the north country is good for Fort Drum," he said.

While Fort Drum is investing in better technology and infrastructure, Beagle stressed that the north country needs to help the military post continue to work toward advancing its strengths and opportunities by 2030 and 2040.

"The effort is get us all together to see what's coming forward," he said, stressing the importance of retaining the special relationship between Fort Drum and the north country.

It's the first time that anyone can remember that Fort Drum leaders brought such a large contingent of community partners together to talk about where the military installation is headed.

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AFGHANISTAN

GOP: Report says poor choices led to airport blast deaths

FROM PAGE 1

the world has been degraded, the U.S. is less safe than it was before, and those Afghans most at-risk of Taliban reprisals remain trapped in Afghanistan," the report states.

Republicans said they interviewed people who were on the ground in Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul, reviewed hundreds of situational reports and internal memos, and took fact-finding trips to Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar to prepare their findings.

They said they were unable to complete a thorough investigation due to stonewalling from the State Department and named 34 current and former officials who are likely to be subpoenaed if Republicans win control of the House in the midterm elections in November.

Ned Price, the State Department's spokesman, said Monday that Congress members and staff received more than 150 briefings on the withdrawal, the status of Afghan women and girls, relocation operations, counterterrorism, talks with the Taliban and other issues.

"We consistently stayed until we had exhausted all of their questions from both Republicans and Democrats on the committee," he said.

Price said the report overlooked, ignored, misrepresented and got several facts wrong, namely that the administration of President Joe Biden could have reneged on the 2020 Doha peace agreement between the U.S. and the Taliban.

"When this administration came into office, we inherited an agreement that the last administration had negotiated just about a year [earlier]," Price said. "As we said at the time, it wasn't an agreement that we precisely would have negotiated, but it's one that we inherited."

The report offers a detailed account of the end of a 20-year offensive in Afghanistan that killed 2,300 U.S. military personnel, wounded another 20,000 and cost almost \$1 trillion, according to Defense Department estimates. More than 775,000 American troops served in the war.

The report also blames poor decision-making for the war's last casualties, the 13 service mem-



CHRIS HERBERT, U.S. AIR FORCE/AP

Afghan citizens pack inside a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III, as they are transported from Hamid Karzai International Airport in Afghanistan, on Aug. 15, 2021.

bers and 170 Afghans killed in a suicide bombing at Kabul's airport during the last days of evacuation. Republicans contend those lives could have been spared if the U.S. agreed to manage security of Kabul as the Taliban had proposed.

"The chaos at the gates and the Taliban's inability to control the perimeter meant that U.S. military personnel were closely packed together as they sought to screen would-be evacuees, placing them in a more vulnerable situation that was exploited by the bomber, contributing to the high number of casualties," the report states.

Marine Gen. Kenneth McKenzie, then-commander of U.S. Central Command, has repeatedly dismissed the Taliban's offer as insincere and said the U.S. did not have the resources to undertake such a mission.

Securing the Kabul airport alone proved to be a struggle as thousands flocked to U.S. aircraft to escape the Taliban, some clinging to landing gear and falling to their deaths. Republicans criticized U.S. officials for urging desperate Afghans to make their way to the airport even though it was at

full capacity and entry gates were closed.

The report states only 36 consular officers from the State Department were on the ground to screen more than 124,000 evacuees, amounting to "roughly one consular officer for every 3,444 evacuees."

The slow processing led staffers and advisers for senior officials such as Vice President Kamala Harris, first lady Jill Biden, and an unnamed member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to reach out to outside veterans groups for help, according to the report. Jake Sullivan, the national security adviser, and other officials directly contacted military officers in Kabul to request aid for specific at-risk Afghans, one military officer told Republican committee members.

"The fact that high-level members of the administration felt the need to go to a volunteer organization and tactical-level commanders on the ground as opposed to utilizing the State Department's or other government entities' formal internal processes and chains of command underscores how critical outside groups became to the evacuation effort, even with thousands of U.S. military personnel

on the ground," the report states.

Republicans said veterans groups and other volunteers developed their own procedures to speed up the evacuation, creating special signs with distinct symbols and phrases, code words and other visual signals to allow American service members to pluck select evacuees out of the teeming crowds. The evacuees largely consisted of personnel from elite Afghan military and intelligence units.

The volunteer groups also stepped in to clothe, feed and shelter tens of thousands of Afghans left behind. Many of the volunteers were veterans who drained their 401k retirement plans, quit or took leave from their jobs to fund the operation of a safe house network, according to the report.

Most of those who were able to leave Afghanistan were men. Kelley Currie, the former ambassador-at-large for the State Department's Office of Global Women's Issues, wrote in the report that only 25% of evacuees were women and girls. State Department officials have said it was over 40%.

The State Department evacuated more than 800 American citizens from Afghanistan after the pullout of U.S. troops and continues to process immigration requests. As many as 160,000 Afghans and their family members are eligible to come to the U.S. through a Special Immigrant Visa, according to the State Department. Processing those applications could stretch well beyond the end of Biden's first term in January 2025.

Republicans said they are particularly concerned about a "significant" number of Afghan commandos and other special forces who remained behind and are in danger of being recruited by foreign adversaries. They charged the Biden administration has yet to put a plan in place to prioritize their evacuation and said some have crossed into Iran as a result.

"These commandos are trained, highly trained, on how we do signals intelligence, how we do human intelligence, how we operate," Rep. Michael Waltz, R-Fla., said in the report. "We know that the Taliban are hunting them down. They are seeking to force them through coercion to hand over that information so that they

can use it and they can understand how we operate."

House Republicans also took aim at the Biden administration's "over the horizon" counterterrorism strategy, which relies on drone strikes and special forces operations. The report asserts Afghanistan has once again become a safe haven for terrorists and points to the killing in July of al-Qaida's top leader, Ayman al-Zawahri, in Kabul as proof.

Military officials, including Army Gen. Bryan Fenton, commander of Joint Special Operations Command, have defended the strategy to lawmakers. During his Senate confirmation hearing in July, Fenton said battling terrorism from afar is difficult but "absolutely doable" in Afghanistan.

However, a separate report issued Tuesday by the Defense Department's Office of the Inspector General said the U.S. has been "significantly challenged" by the lack of a physical presence in the country as well as "scant intelligence and a lack of access to nearby military bases."

Republicans in their report chastised the Biden administration for failing to secure bases for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance operations in any of Afghanistan's neighboring countries.

The Defense Department inspector general reported the Taliban seized about \$7.1 billion of military equipment that the U.S. left behind in Afghanistan, including \$923.3 million in aircraft and about \$4.1 billion in military vehicles. Some of the equipment had been made inoperable during the evacuation.

"The Afghan forces were heavily reliant on U.S. contractor support to maintain both their aircraft and vehicle fleets," the report said. "Without this continued support, the long-term operability of these assets would be limited."

The amount also included roughly \$294.6 million in aircraft munitions and \$511.8 million in weapons such as rifles, grenade launchers and howitzers, though it is unknown how many remain operational, according to the report.

Stars and Stripes reporter Caitlin Doornbos contributed to this report.
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Mosque bombed in Afghan capital during evening prayers

Associated Press

KABUL, Afghanistan — A bombing at a mosque in the Afghan capital of Kabul during evening prayers killed at least 21 people, including a prominent cleric, and wounded at least 33 others, eyewitnesses and police said Thursday.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack Wednesday night, the latest to strike the country in the year since the Taliban seized power. Several children were reported to be among the wounded.

The Islamic State group's local affiliate has stepped up attacks tar-

geting the Taliban and civilians since the former insurgents' takeover last August as U.S. and NATO troops were in the final stages of their withdrawal from the country. Last week, the extremists claimed responsibility for killing a prominent Taliban cleric at his religious center in Kabul.

Khalid Zadran, the spokesman for Kabul's Taliban police chief, gave the figures to The Associated Press for the bombing at the Siddiquiya mosque in the city's Kher Khanna neighborhood. An eyewitness told the AP the explosion was carried out by a suicide bomber.

The slain cleric was Mullah

Amir Mohammad Kabuli, the eyewitness said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid condemned the explosion and vowed that the "perpetrators of such crimes will soon be brought to justice and will be punished."

MILITARY

New commander to lead Navy arm in Indo-Pacific

BY ALEX WILSON

Stars and Stripes

YOKOSUKA NAVAL BASE, Japan — Gusts of wind and rain lashed the aft deck of the destroyer USS Benfold as command of the Navy's largest destroyer squadron passed Thursday to its deputy commodore.

Capt. Walter Mainor relieved Capt. Chase Sargeant as commanding officer of Destroyer Squadron 15 during a ceremony aboard the Benfold.

As Task Force 71, the squadron is the 7th Fleet's main battle arm. As part of the Ronald Reagan Carrier Strike Group, the warships provide the USS Ronald Reagan with seagoing escorts.

As squadron commander, Mainor has at his direction eight destroyers armed with the guided-missile Aegis Combat System.

The individual ships make frequent freedom-of-navigation pa-

trols around contested island chains in the South China Sea and transits of the Taiwan Strait. Both operations show U.S. resistance to maritime claims in the area, particularly by China.

China concluded a week of naval and air force exercises around Taiwan on Aug. 11, a response to a U.S. congressional visit to Taiwan. Beijing also reasserted in an Aug. 10 white paper its willingness to reclaim Taiwan by force.

With tempers on both sides of the strait still warm, 7th Fleet commander Vice Adm. Karl Thomas laid out for Mainor his responsibility.

"I think it's safe to say that our rules-based international order is now significantly threatened," Thomas said during the ceremony. "What you do now matters, you can give our president the ability to deter the aggressors and ensure a free and open world — never for-

get that."

Thomas also mentioned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and its complications in the Indo-Pacific region.

The squadron command element has 58 officers and sailors; the eight ships have approximately 300 crew members. Mainor will be responsible for all surface operations between the International Date Line and the central Indian Ocean.

Sargeant, of Lakeland, Fla., took command in February 2021. Under his leadership, ships in the squadron made more than 20 freedom-of-navigation operations and 25 passes through the Taiwan Strait.

"Over the last 18 months, no staff has had more impact, conducted more high-interest missions or moved the needle of freedom in the seas more than this staff," he said during the ceremony. "I would put



AKIFUMI ISHIKAWA/Stars and Stripes

Capt. Walter Mainor took command of Destroyer Squadron 15 at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, on Thursday.

this small, motley crew of dedicated service warriors up against any staff, anywhere in any navy."

Mainor, a native of Alabama, was deputy commodore, the squadron second-in-command, just as Sargeant was before he took command.

Mainor served first as an enlisted sonar technician, attended the Navy's Broadened Opportunity for Officer Selection and Training program and graduated from Morehouse College with a bachelor's degree in finance. He later graduated with a master's in business administration from the Naval Post-graduate School.

In Japan, Mainor also com-

manded the mine countermeasures ship USS Patriot and the destroyer USS William P. Lawrence.

During the ceremony, Mainor thanked Sargeant for his services as his commanding officer.

"Chase, your leadership and passion for this [area of responsibility] is unparalleled and this theater is better for it," he said. "Not only did you further enhance the capabilities and tactics of DESRON 15, but you've also built and led a new task force. It's been a pleasure to work alongside you."

Sargeant's next assignment will take him to the Chief of Naval Operations' plans and policies office in Washington, D.C.

Navy wife convicted of defrauding VA of \$170K with fake paperwork

BY ALEXANDER RIEDEL

Stars and Stripes

A Maryland woman who joined a family scheme that defrauded the Department of Veterans Affairs of at least \$1 million was convicted of federal charges and now faces up to 15 years in prison.

Mary Francis Biggs, 65, was found guilty Monday of conspiracy to commit fraud and theft of government property. The jury concluded that Biggs had colluded with her daughter Angela Farr, a Navy veteran, to obtain \$170,000 in disability benefits in her husband's name.

Biggs and Farr fabricated dozens of documents and submitted fraudulent medical claims to the VA requesting disability benefits on behalf of the Navy veteran, who is Farr's father.

Farr pleaded guilty in March to organizing the conspiracy with her ex-husband, Army veteran Michael Vincent Pace. All told, Farr bilked the government out of more than \$475,000.

As part of the conspiracy, Biggs and Farr claimed that the unidentified Navy veteran was "homebound and required full-time assistance for basic tasks such as eating, bathing, and dressing," according to court documents.

For at least part of the scam, the mother-daughter team kept him unaware of the phony claims in his name, according to a statement Wednesday by the U.S. Attorney's Office in Maryland. It's unclear when or how much he ended up learning about the fraud.

Based on the fake paperwork, the VA assessed a 100% service-connected disability and allotted Biggs' husband a special monthly stipend. Meanwhile, he was employed as a Navy civilian supervising a logistics unit of 25 people.

Biggs first swindled the VA into declaring her as her husband's financial fiduciary in 2017 after submitting fraudulent evidence to show that he couldn't manage his own finances because of the severity of his alleged disabilities, ac-

cording to the U.S. Attorney's Office statement.

As his trustee, Biggs then collected his VA payments and spent the money on daily living expenses, cruise vacations and a kitchen renovation, according to prosecutors.

Also involved in the conspiracy was Pace, Farr's ex-husband, who

conned the VA into providing a monthly caregiver assistance stipend and full disability benefits, the Justice Department statement said.

He pleaded guilty to stealing over \$370,000, according to a Justice Department statement issued Wednesday. Like Farr's father, Pace was healthy and lived an ordinary life, according to prosecutors.

"Angela Farr took advantage of a program whose goal was to help others, but did the exact opposite in her efforts to fraudulently obtain VA disability benefits," said U.S. Attorney Erek Barron in a statement in March.

Sentencing is pending for all three people convicted in the case.

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EUROPE

Ukraine's Zelenskyy talks with Erdogan and UN chief

Associated Press

LVIV, Ukraine — Turkey's president and the U.N. chief met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Thursday in a high-stakes bid to ratchet down a war raging for nearly six months, discuss desperately needed grain exports and address the safety of Europe's biggest nuclear power plant amid the fighting.

The gathering, held far from the front lines in the western Ukrainian city of Lviv, near the Polish border, marked the first visit to Ukraine by Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan since the outbreak of the war, and the second by U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres.

Erdogan has positioned himself as a go-between in efforts to stop the fighting that erupted when Russia invaded Ukraine. While Turkey is a NATO member, its wobbly economy is reliant on Russia for trade, and the country has tried to steer a middle course.

On the battlefield, meanwhile, at least 11 people were killed and 40 wounded in heavy Russian missile strikes on Ukraine's Kharkiv

region on Wednesday night and Thursday morning, Ukrainian authorities said.

Russia's military claimed that it struck a base for foreign mercenaries in Kharkiv, killing 90. There was no immediate comment from the Ukrainian side.

Heightening international tensions, Russia deployed warplanes carrying state-of-the-art hypersonic missiles to the country's Kaliningrad region, an enclave surrounded by two NATO nations.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the three leaders would



UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY, right, shakes hands with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan during their meeting in Lviv, Ukraine, on Thursday.

discuss the Russian-controlled Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant in southern Ukraine. Moscow and Kyiv have accused each other of shelling the complex, and the fighting has raised fears of a nuclear catastrophe.

In his nightly video address

Wednesday, Zelensky reaffirmed his demand for the Russian military to leave the plant, emphasizing that "only absolute transparency and control of the situation" by, among others, the U.N.'s International Atomic Energy Agency, could guarantee nuclear safety.

Westerners sponsor slogans on bombs aimed at Russians

By JOHN HUDSON
AND KOSTIANTYN KHUDOV
The Washington Post

KYIV, Ukraine — At a military position near the front line, members of a Ukrainian military unit snickered as a soldier with tattooed arms scrawled a phallic symbol on an artillery shell designed for an M777 howitzer cannon.

At a separate position, a Ukrainian soldier loaded a shell that read "Hello from Texas" into a medium-range cannon. Seconds before it fired with a loud boom, the operator announced "from Texas" in a gleeful Slavic accent.

The emergence of slogans and symbols emblazoned on U.S.-made artillery — originally a creative outlet for Ukrainian soldiers serving in the country's east — has become a growing and lucrative fundraising tactic for Ukrainians in the nearly seven-month war.

Local crowdfunding websites have raised tens of thousands of dollars for the war effort since Russia invaded on Feb. 24. They offer people anywhere in the world the chance to commission a message on a growing menu of bombs and missiles before they are fired at advancing Russian forces.

The most prominent crowdfunding group — Sign My Rocket — started by selling messages on Soviet-made 82 mm caliber mortar rounds for \$30 each. But eventually co-founder Anton Sokolenko realized if it sold messages on more powerful weapons, benefactors from the United States, Britain, Germany, Canada, Switzerland



A Soviet-designed Buk surface-to-air missile with the inscription "Not for Use on Malaysian Airlines."

and elsewhere would pay even more.

"We got bigger and bigger shells," Sokolenko said in an interview from his home in Cherkasy, a city in central Ukraine. "Ninety-five percent of the orders are in English and most are from the United States."

Sokolenko's organization has now moved beyond mortar shells and is selling inscriptions on antitank mines, bomb-laden

drones, VOG 17 hand grenades, 220 mm rockets, 2S7 Pion heavy artillery and scores of other explosives. He says it has raised more than \$150,000 for the Ukrainian military and facilitated scores of messages including "From NATO with Love," "London Says Hi" and "Remember the Alamo."

The group recently branded a Buk surface-to-air missile with the message "Not

for Use on Malaysian Airlines" — a reference to the downing of a commercial airliner in 2014 by pro-Russian separatists armed with the same missile system, which killed 298 people.

The fundraising effort is not officially sanctioned by the Ukrainian military. Sokolenko's organization relies on his informal connections to Ukrainian military units in the field. The proceeds go toward buying equipment for Ukraine's military units, including camouflaged vehicles and auto parts.

After a donation is collected, a Ukrainian soldier scrawls the requested message on the munition and takes a picture of it. The picture is then sent to the donor.

"I've already donated \$3,000," said Colin Smith, a director at an e-commerce company in Dallas who has dedicated artillery shells to friends and relatives for birthdays, anniversaries and a job promotion.

Smith first discovered Sign My Rocket on a Reddit page earlier this year. He recently gave his wife a picture of an artillery shell for their anniversary, inscribed with their initials and wedding date: "C & Y. Est. 2021."

"She loved it," he said, "though she's now kind of tired of me telling her about the war."

The most expensive item on the website is the naming rights to a Russian-made T-72 tank for \$3,000 — a topic of contention in the Smith household.

"I'm trying to get my family to go in on the tank," said Smith, "but my wife said I've already spent too much."

Ship that Ukraine alleges has stolen grain is likely off coast of Syria

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — A Russian cargo ship that Ukraine alleges holds stolen grain from territory seized by Moscow appears to have reached the Syrian port of Tartus, according to satellite images analyzed Thursday by The Associated Press.

The arrival of the SV Konstantin marks just the latest shipment of

Ukrainian grain — whether legally purchased or allegedly looted — to reach Syria. Another, the Razoni, recently docked full of legally purchased Ukrainian corn as part of a United Nations-led effort to get the country's food out of the war zone to a hungry world.

The Konstantin's arrival also shows the level Damascus has relied on Russia to keep its embattled

President Bashar Assad in power amid his own nation's yearslong war, particularly at this Mediterranean Sea port that hosts Russian warships and has crucial Russian-run grain silos.

The Konstantin traveled from the Russian-occupied Crimean Peninsula in the Black Sea from around July 6, according to ship-tracking data from MarineTraffic.com ana-

lyzed by the AP.

The ship had loaded Ukrainian grain at Sevastopol, said Ihor Ostash, Ukraine's ambassador to Lebanon, during an interview with Espresso TV. That port city in Crimea has seen Russian forces previously bring grain by truck from occupied territories, Ukrainian officials say.

The Konstantin traveled through the Bosphorus and reached the

Turkish city of Izmir on the Aegean Sea. The ship then headed into the Mediterranean along the coast of Cyprus before switching off its Automatic Identification System tracker on Sunday. Ships are supposed to keep their AIS trackers on, but vessels wanting to hide their movements often turn theirs off. Those heading to Syrian ports routinely do so.

NATION



Rudy Giuliani is pushed in a wheelchair at New York's JFK airport after returning from Atlanta on Wednesday.

Giuliani says he 'satisfied' his obligation with Ga. grand jury

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Rudy Giuliani said Wednesday that he had "satisfied his obligation" after facing hours of questioning Wednesday before a special grand jury in Atlanta as a target of an investigation into attempts by former President Donald Trump and others to overturn his 2020 election defeat in Georgia.

In an interview with The Associated Press, Giuliani said Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis ended his appearance by saying he had "satisfied his obligation under the subpoena."

"So I was very happy that I satisfied my obligation," he said.

Speaking upon his return to New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport, Giuliani didn't provide any additional details about his appearance or testimony, including the type of questions he was asked. He was pushed through the terminal in a wheelchair alongside his lawyer, Bob Costello.

Giuliani's attorneys tried to de-

lay his appearance before the special grand jury, saying he was unable to fly due to heart stent surgery in early July. On Wednesday, Giuliani said "my plane ride was OK," noting that it was his first since the procedure.

Costello said the session, which lasted from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. with a half-hour lunch, "went very well. No disputes." Costello did not immediately address whether Giuliani answered questions or declined.

"Everyone was a lady or gentleman. Professional," he wrote in a text message, adding that Willis came out to greet Giuliani and his lawyers at the end.

The investigation by the Democratic prosecutor has brought heightened scrutiny to the desperate and ultimately failed efforts to overturn Joe Biden's 2020 election win. It's one of several investigations into Trump's actions in office as he lays the groundwork for another run at the White House in 2024.

Willis opened her investigation

after the disclosure of a remarkable Jan. 2, 2021, phone call between Trump and Georgia's secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger. On the call, Trump suggested that Raffensperger could "find" the exact number of votes that would be needed to flip the election results in Georgia.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing. He has described the call as "perfect."

Willis last month filed petitions to compel testimony from seven Trump associates and advisers. She has also said she's considering calling Trump himself to testify, and the former president has hired a legal team in Atlanta that includes a prominent criminal defense attorney.

Other Trump allies swept up in the inquiry include U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. His attorneys filed a legal motion Wednesday asking a federal judge to put Graham's special grand jury appearance set for Aug. 23 on hold while he appeals an order compelling him to testify.

Fewer filed for jobless benefits last week

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Slightly fewer Americans filed for unemployment benefits last week as the labor market continues to stand out as one of the strongest segments of the U.S. economy.

Applications for jobless aid for the week ending August 13 fell by 2,000 to 250,000, the Labor Department reported Thursday. Last week's number, which raised some eyebrows, was revised down by 10,000.

The four-week average for claims, which evens out some of

the week-to-week volatility, fell by 2,750 to 246,750.

The number of Americans collecting traditional unemployment benefits increased by 7,000 the week that ended August 6, to 1.43 million. That's the most since early April.

Hiring in the United States in 2022 has been remarkably resilient in the face of rising interest rates and weak economic growth.

The Labor Department reported earlier this month that U.S. employers added 528,000 jobs in July, more than double what fore-

casters had expected. The unemployment rate dipped to 3.5%, tying a 50-year low reached just before coronavirus pandemic slammed the U.S. economy in early 2020.

That's not to say the U.S. economy doesn't face challenges. Consumer prices have been surging, rising 8.5% in July from a year earlier — down slightly from June's 40-year high 9.1%. To combat inflation, the Federal Reserve has raised its benchmark short-term interest rate four times this year.

Trump Organization CFO pleads guilty in tax evasion case

By MICHAEL R. SISAK

Associated Press

NEW YORK — A top executive at former President Donald Trump's family business pleaded guilty Thursday to evading taxes in a deal that could potentially make him a star witness against the company at a trial this fall.

Trump Organization CFO Allen Weisselberg pleaded guilty to all 15 of the charges he faced in the case.

In a low, somewhat hoarse voice, he admitted taking in over \$1.7 million worth of untaxed perks — including school tuition for his grandchildren, free rent for a Manhattan apartment and lease payments for a luxury car — and explicitly keeping some of the plums off the books.

Judge Juan Manuel Merchan agreed to sentence Weisselberg to five months in New York City's Rikers Island jail complex, although he will be eligible for release much earlier if he behaves well behind bars. The judge said Weisselberg will have to pay nearly \$2 million in taxes, penalties and interest and complete five years of probation.

The plea bargain also requires Weisselberg to testify truthfully as a prosecution witness when the Trump Organization goes on trial in October on related charges. The

company is accused of helping Weisselberg and other executives avoid income taxes by failing to report their full compensation accurately to the government. Trump himself is not charged in the case.

Weisselberg said nothing as he left court, offering no reply when a journalist asked whether he had any message for Trump.

Weisselberg's lawyer Nicholas Gravante Jr. said his client pleaded guilty "to put an end to this case and the yearlong legal and personal nightmares it has caused for him and his family."

"We are glad to have this behind him," the lawyer added.

Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg said in a statement that Weisselberg's plea "directly implicates the Trump Organization in a wide range of criminal activity and requires Weisselberg to provide invaluable testimony in the upcoming trial against the corporation."

"We look forward to proving our case in court against the Trump Organization," he added.

Weisselberg's sentencing won't happen until after the trial of the Trump Organization, which is facing tax fraud charges punishable by a fine of double the amount of unpaid taxes, or \$250,000, whichever is larger.

Witnesses: Duo was eager to kidnap Mich. governor

Associated Press

men involved.

Two men charged with conspiring to kidnap Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in 2020 were very eager to move forward and fully onboard with the plan, two key witnesses testified Wednesday.

The witnesses, Ty Garbin and Kaleb Franks, are vital for the government's case because they, too, were arrested but pleaded guilty and agreed to cooperate.

Garbin and Franks downplayed the influence of two FBI informants who trained with the group. They didn't know their real roles at the time but said they couldn't recall the operatives proposing that Whitmer should be kidnapped.

"Not that I saw, no," Garbin told jurors in federal court in Grand Rapids, Mich.

Adam Fox and Barry Croft Jr. are on trial for a second time on conspiracy charges. A jury in April was unable to reach a unanimous verdict but acquitted two other

"This isn't dragging on," Blanchard said at the end of the trial's seventh day.

"The court has been interjecting in the defense case," he added. "It has not been interjecting in the government's case. And it's creating a perception, I think, among the jurors that the court has a preference for how this case ends."

U.S. District Judge Robert Jonker defended his decision, saying there was no need for certain questions to be "teed up over and over again." He complained about the trial's pace last week.

NATION

CDC announces shake-up, citing COVID mistakes

By MIKE STOBBE
Associated Press

NEW YORK — The head of the nation's top public health agency on Wednesday announced a shake-up of the organization, saying it fell short responding to COVID-19 and needs to become more nimble.

The planned changes at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention — CDC leaders call it a "reset" — come amid criticism of the agency's response to COVID-19, monkeypox and other public health threats.

The CDC's director, Dr. Rochelle Walensky, told the agency's staff about the changes on Wednesday. It's a CDC initiative, and was not directed by the White House or other administration officials, she said.

"I feel like it's my responsibility to lead this agency to a better place after a really challenging three years," Walensky told The Associated Press.

Her reorganization proposal must be approved by the Department of Health and Human Services secretary. CDC officials say they hope to have a full package of changes finalized, approved and underway by early next year.

Some changes still are being formulated, but steps announced Wednesday include:

- Increasing use of preprint scientific reports to get out actionable data, instead of waiting for research to go through peer review and publication by the CDC journal *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*.

- Restructuring the agency's

communications office and further revamping CDC websites to make the agency's guidance for the public more clear and easier to find.

- Altering the length of time agency leaders are devoted to outbreak responses to a minimum of six months — an effort to address a turnover problem that at times caused knowledge gaps and affected the agency's communications.

- Creation of a new executive council to help Walensky set strategy and priorities.

- Appointing Mary Wakefield as senior counselor to implement the changes. Wakefield headed the Health Resources and Services Administration during the Obama administration and also served as the No. 2 administrator at HHS.

- Altering the agency's organization chart to undo some changes made during the Trump administration.

- Establishing an office of inter-governmental affairs to smooth partnerships with other agencies, as well as a higher-level office on health equity.

Walensky also said she intends to "get rid of some of the reporting layers that exist, and I'd like to work to break down some of the silos." She did not say exactly what that may entail, but emphasized that the overall changes are less about re-drawing the organization chart than re-thinking how the CDC does business and motivates staff.

"This will not be simply moving boxes" on the organization chart, she said.

CDC: 'Fast-moving' E. coli outbreak in Michigan, Ohio

The Washington Post

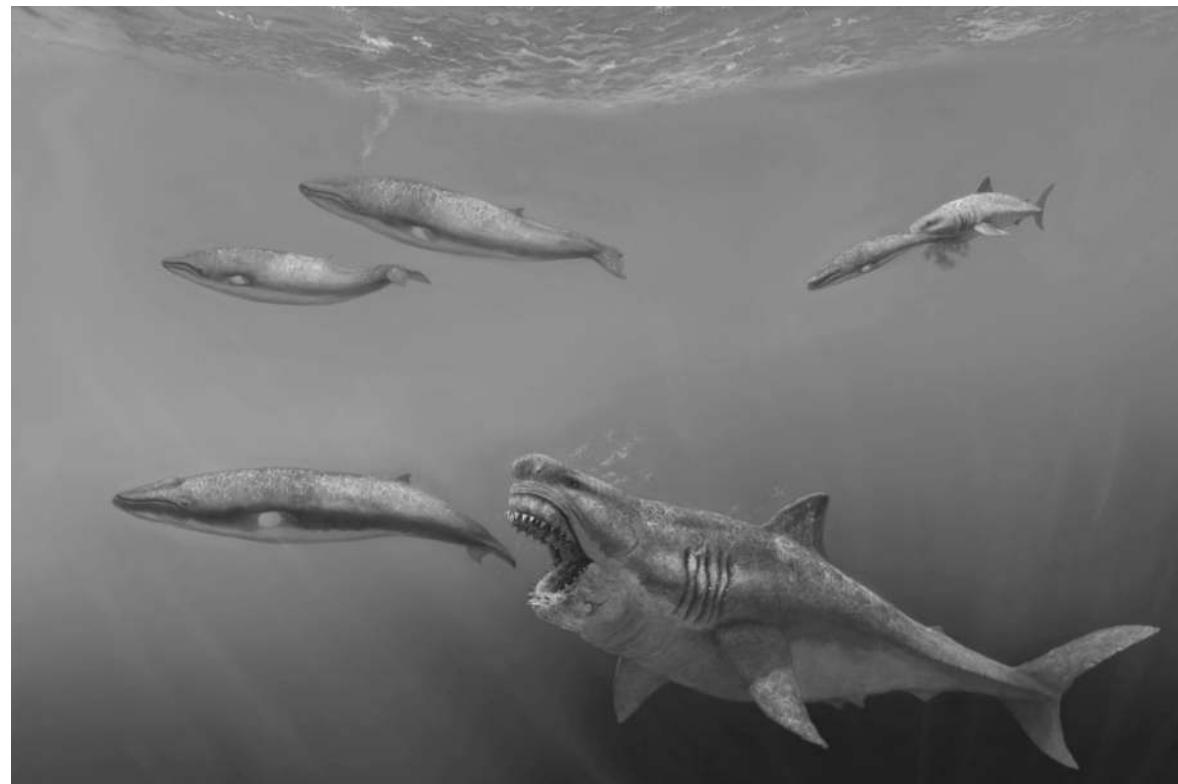
A "fast-moving" E. coli outbreak in Michigan and Ohio has left 29 people ill and nine of them hospitalized, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Wednesday.

In an urgent public announcement aimed at finding the source of the outbreak, the CDC said no deaths had occurred. No food source has been identified, the CDC said, meaning the number of people falling sick could increase. So far, 15 people in Michigan and 14 people in Ohio have been infected, the CDC said.

In a separate news release, Michigan's health department said

it had received 98 reports of E. coli cases this month — up from 20 in August last year. Natasha Bagdasarian, the chief medical executive at the department, said the "significant jump in cases is alarming." The Ohio Department of Health did not immediately reply to a request for comment.

Symptoms of E. coli can include diarrhea, fever, excessive vomiting and dehydration, according to the CDC. "If you have symptoms of E. coli, help us solve this outbreak: Write down what you ate in the week before you got sick" and report your case to health authorities, the CDC said in its notice.



J. J. GIRALDO/AP

This illustration depicts a 52-foot *Otodus megalodon* shark preying on a 26-foot *Balaenoptera* whale in the Pliocene epoch between 5.4 to 2.4 million years ago.

Research reveals 3D model, new facts about ancient giant sharks

By MADDIE BURAKOFF
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Today's sharks have nothing on their ancient cousins. A giant shark that roamed the oceans millions of years ago could have devoured a creature the size of a killer whale in just five bites, new research suggests.

For their study published Wednesday, researchers used fossil evidence to create a 3D model of the megalodon — one of the biggest predatory fish of all time — and find clues about its life.

At around 50 feet from nose to tail, the megalodon was bigger than a school bus, according to the study in the journal *Science Advances*. That's about two to three times the size of today's great white shark. The megalodon's gaping jaw allowed it to feed on other big creatures. Once it filled its massive stomach, it could roam the oceans for months at a

time, the researchers suggest.

The megalodon was a strong swimmer, too: Its average cruising speed was faster than sharks today and it could have migrated across multiple oceans with ease, they calculated.

"It would be a superpredator just dominating its ecosystem," said co-author John Hutchinson, who studies the evolution of animal movement at England's Royal Veterinary College. "There is nothing really matching it."

It's been tough for scientists to get a clear picture of the megalodon, said study author Catalina Pimiento, a paleobiologist with the University of Zurich and Swansea University in Wales.

The skeleton is made of soft cartilage that doesn't fossilize well, Pimiento said. So the scientists used what few fossils are available, including a rare collection of vertebrae that's been at a Belgium museum since the 1860s.

Researchers also brought in a jaw's worth of megalodon teeth, each as big as a human fist, Hutchinson said. Scans of modern great white sharks helped flesh out the rest.

Based on their digital creation, researchers calculated that the megalodon would have weighed around 70 tons, or as much as 10 elephants.

Even other high-level predators may have been lunch meat for the megalodon, which could open its jaw to almost 6 feet wide, Pimiento said.

Megalodons lived an estimated 23 million to 2.6 million years ago.

Since megalodon fossils are rare, these kinds of models require a "leap of imagination," said Michael Gottfried, a paleontologist at Michigan State University who was not involved in the study. But he said the study's findings are reasonable based on what is known about the giant shark.

Bank of America overdraft revenue down

Associated Press

NEW YORK — Bank of America said the revenue it gets from overdrafts has dropped 90% from a year ago, after the bank reduced overdraft fees to \$10 from \$35 and eliminated fees for bounced checks.

The nation's largest banks are moving away from the practice of charging exorbitant fees on what are mostly small-dollar purchases after years of public pressure. Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan told The Associated Press that he expects whatever residual

income the bank earns from overdraft fees will come from small businesses using overdraft fees as a convenience.

BofA's new overdraft fee policy was implemented starting in June. Moynihan said in the policy's first two months, overdraft fee revenue declined 90% and the bank was seeing fewer instances of the fees being collected. He did not share specifics on the number of instances.

"The remaining (people that get charged overdraft fees) are business owners who are moving mon-

ey around," Moynihan said. "It's not individuals anymore, frankly."

Starting the middle of 2021, regional banks such as PNC and Capital One, as well as the online bank Ally, announced plans to eliminate overdraft fees or find ways to curtail them dramatically. Most of the banks said the fees largely impacted the poor and racial minorities, or that the pandemic had shown the banks they could earn big profits without charging fees on their customers, in explaining their decision.

WORLD

Putin revives Soviet award for women who have 10 kids

BY ADELA SULIMAN

The Washington Post

Faced with a worrisome decline in Russia's population, President Vladimir Putin this week revived a Soviet-era award launched in 1944, to encourage Russians to supersize their families.

The "Mother Heroine" award published in a decree on Monday goes to women who bear 10 or more children, offering financial incentives and social kudos in a bid to spur population growth.

The honorary medal was first established by Joseph Stalin in the Soviet Union and given to around 400,000 citizens, according to Russian media. The revived award will offer Russian citizens a one-time payment of \$16,500 after their 10th child turns 1 year old — and only if the other nine children have all survived.

No mention of the war in Ukraine was linked to the medal.

The Stalin-era accolade was originally launched as part of a wider social package of "pronatalist" measures taken toward the end of World War II, Kristin Roth-Ey, associate professor at University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies, told The Washington Post on Wednesday.

"It was about service to the motherland," she said. Its revival is "obviously a conscious echo of the Stalinist past."

Roth-Ey said the award was created when the Soviet Union was trying to "plan for postwar reconstruction" and support families as "the core institution of Soviet society." Other measures included better health care for women, financial aid and making it harder for married couples to get divorced, she added.

New Zealand family finds bodies of children hidden in abandoned bags

Associated Press

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — A New Zealand family who bought some abandoned goods from a storage unit got home with their purchases to discover the bodies of two children hidden in two suitcases, police said Thursday.

The children were between 5 and 10 years old, had been dead for a number of years and the suitcases had been in storage for at least three or four years, Detective Inspector Tofilau Faamanuia Vaaelua said.

Vaaelua said the investigation was in its early stages but would be rigorous. "This includes establish-

"The war led to high anxiety about population loss. ... It has resonances obviously with what is going on right now," she added, referring to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which the Kremlin has called a special military operation.

Last month, CIA Director William Burns estimated that about 15,000 Russian soldiers have been killed in the Ukraine war and up to 45,000 more wounded. He cited the latest U.S. intelligence on Russian losses.

Nearly eight decades after Stalin's decree, having lots of children is still viewed as "part of being a good Russian citizen," said Roth-Ey, and it is common in other "authoritarian ... nationalist movements that we see in places like Hungry and other parts of Central and Eastern Europe."

In Russia, as elsewhere in Europe, World War II remains a large part of the national psyche. The defeat of Nazi Germany is celebrated each year on May 9, Victory Day, a Russian holiday of national remembrance marked by much pomp and patriotic fervor.

The revival of the motherhood medal is part of a "patriotic campaign" that has ramped up in Russia since it annexed Crimea in 2014, Roth-Ey added.

The original Soviet medal was a gold star superimposed on a silver pentagon and decorated in red enamel reading "Mother Heroine" in Russian.

Putin, 69, is one of three children, but both of his brothers died in infancy before he was born. He first lent his support to reviving the award on June 1, Children's Day.

"As a rule, you can really rely on those who were brought up in a large family," he said in a speech marking the occasion. "They will

not let down a friend or colleagues, or their motherland."

Since 2008, the Kremlin has also awarded the "Order of Parental Glory" to parents who have more than seven children. They receive \$825 and a certificate when their seventh child reaches 3 years old.

Dina Fainberg, author of "Cold War Correspondents" and an associate professor of modern history, agrees that the revival of the Mother Heroine award is part of similar postwar "drive toward state-led patriotism" by Putin.

But she said the reasoning is not necessarily the conflict in Ukraine.

"Ukraine is still not called a war," she told The Post of the nearly six-month invasion. "Putin and his team took great care not to depict it as a war. If you start calling it a war, you undermine stability and make people panic."

More than just "nostalgia" for the old Soviet empire, a bigger issue in Putin's mind may be demographic decline, she said.

The Russians "have an issue with population decline, obviously, and a demographic crisis," Fainberg said. But there is a "growing return of the patriarchal state," she added, with Putin viewing himself as the symbolic male head of the Russian family, around which everyone can rally, and the ultimate "protector of the elderly, women and children" from Russia's enemies.

For Roth-Ey, whether modern Russian women will take up the incentive of the motherhood award remains to be seen.

"I don't see contemporary young Russian women really responding to the call," she said. "They have other things on their mind."



An excavator tries to clear mud from an area after flooding in Datong county in western China's Qinghai province on Thursday. Chinese characters on screen read "National level 3 disaster relief activated."

At least 16 dead, 18 missing in western China flash flood

Associated Press

BEIJING — A sudden rainstorm in western China triggered a landslide that diverted a river and caused flash flooding in populated areas, killing at least 16 people and leaving 18 others missing, Chinese state media said Thursday.

Rescuers, who earlier reported 36 people missing, had found 18 of them by early afternoon, state broadcaster CCTV said in an online update. The Wednesday night disaster affected more than 6,000 people in six villages in Qinghai province, CCTV said.

China is facing both heavy rains and flooding in some parts of the country this summer, and extreme heat and drought in other

regions. State media have described the prolonged heat and drought as the worst since record keeping started 60 years ago.

Emergency authorities described the flash flooding in Qinghai's Datong county as a "mountain torrent." Such torrents generally result from heavy squalls in mountainous areas. Water running down the mountain can turn gullies or streams into raging rivers, catching people by surprise.

Video posted by the Beijing News website showed muddy water rushing down a wide street at night and debris-strewn areas with uprooted trees, partially washed-away roads and overturned cars after the waters had receded.



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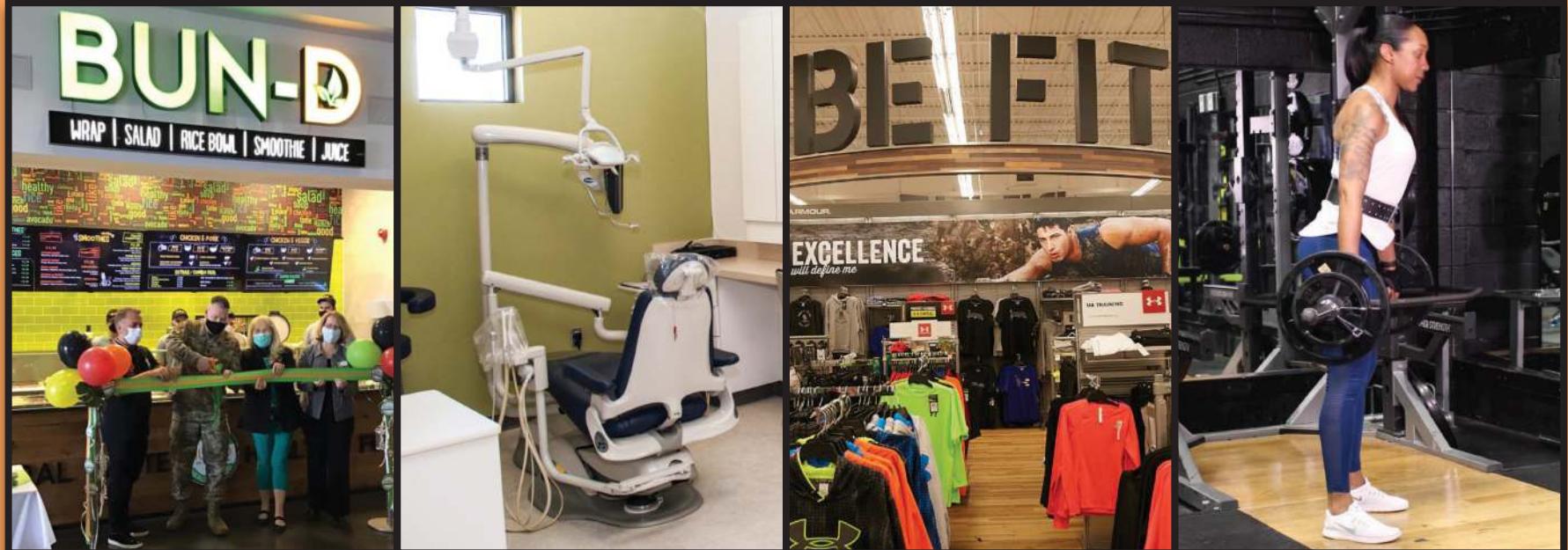
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WELLNESS OFFERINGS: The Exchange plans to open chiropractic offices at select installations in the United States beginning this year. This new and convenient healthcare offering will be consistent from location to location to help ensure continuity of care as PCSs occur.

FITNESS GEAR: In-store and online, the Exchange carries the latest apparel and shoes, fitness trackers and workout equipment at tax free military-exclusive pricing. Name-brand athletic apparel and footwear is being incorporated into shops that look and feel like major sporting goods stores.

BE FIT LIVE WORKOUTS: Tune in to the Exchange's Facebook page every Monday as its Assistant Director, Public Health and Food Safety Program Senior Master Sgt. Sonja Berry and BE FIT Ambassador Roy Montez host live interactive workouts with tips on exercises, equipment and nutrition.

Find out more about the Exchange's better-for-you offerings—including restaurant-specific video nutrition guides; highlights from the Exchange's Healthier Choices, Healthier Lifestyle selection and more—at the BE FIT Community Hub!



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WEEKEND

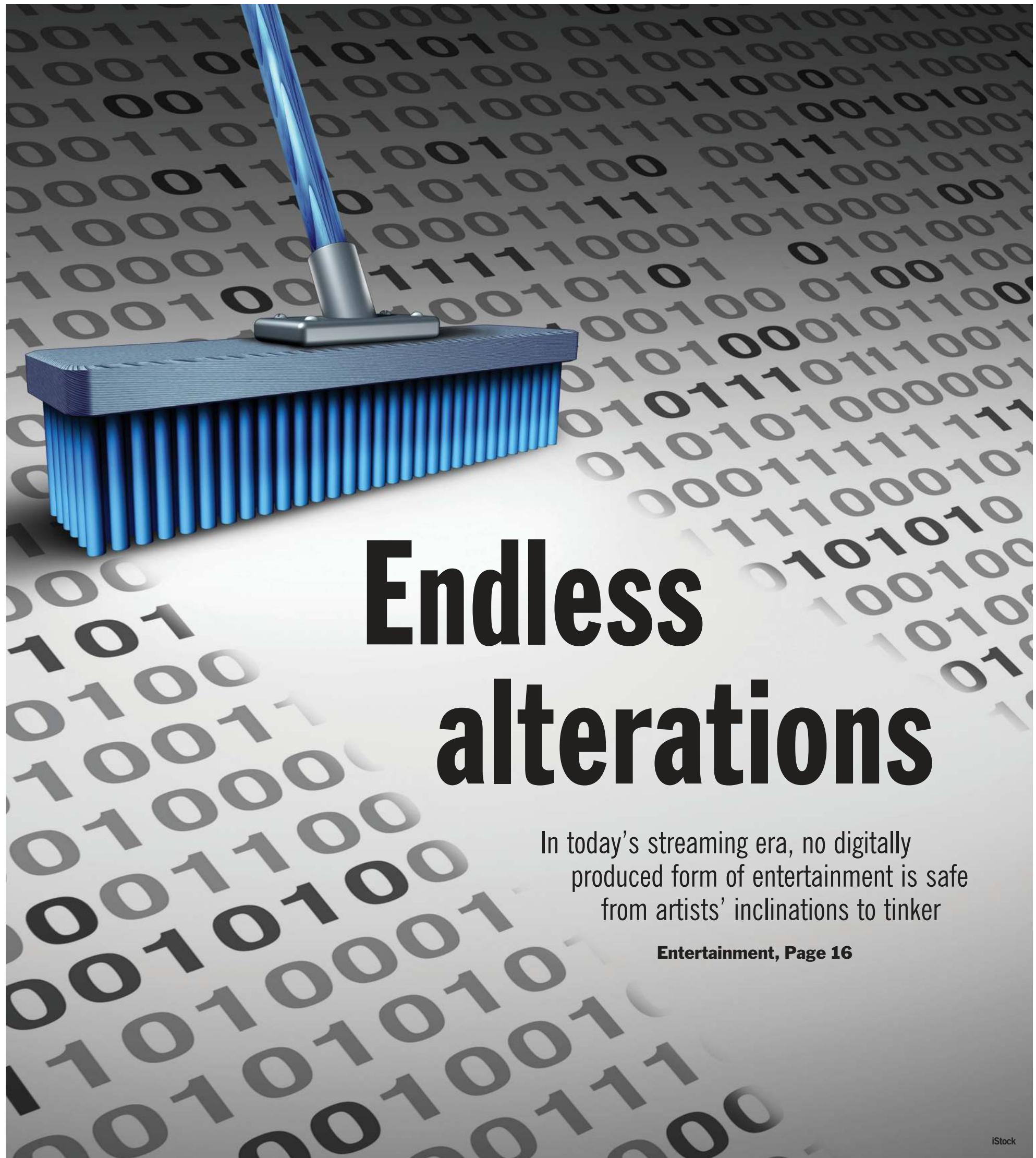


Marvel's 'She-Hulk'
gets her own show
Television, Page 30

Endless alterations

In today's streaming era, no digitally produced form of entertainment is safe from artists' inclinations to tinker

Entertainment, Page 16



iStock

WEEKEND: GADGETS & TECHNOLOGY



The Astro Slide 5G isn't perfect, but its surprisingly big keyboard could make it ideal for busy note-takers.

Phones get weird again

After years of little to no change, these models are delightfully different

By CHRIS VELAZCO

The Washington Post

Samsung unveiled a pair of new smartphones last week — the clamshell-inspired Galaxy Z Flip 4 and another phone-tablet hybrid called the Galaxy Z Fold 4 — in another bid to push foldable devices into the mainstream.

So far, the South Korean smartphone maker seems to be inching toward that goal.

About 7 million foldable smartphones were shipped in 2021, according to data from market research firm IDC, up from 1.9 million in 2020.

That might not seem like a massive shift when you consider well over a billion traditional smartphones were shipped in 2021, but it suggests that some people out there want devices that do more than the usual. Good thing Samsung isn't the only company rethinking the ways our phones should look and work.

It can be hard keeping up with a constant crush of new devices, especially when some fascinating options fly well under the radar. Here are two recent examples of ways phone makers are trying to do things differently.

Further into the fold

What it's called: Samsung Galaxy Z Fold 4

What's different about it: It's a more polished kind of tablet/phone hybrid

How much it costs: \$1,799 to start

In the three years since its grand experiment began, Samsung's foldable phones have gone from public punchline to competent companions.

The new Z Fold 4 weighs a little less than the model it replaces, and its external screen — the one you're meant to use when the device is closed — is a bit wider than before. We haven't gotten to try out Samsung's latest devices yet, but with any luck, those few millimeters make the Fold feel a little less cumbersome to use in its smartphone form.

But remember: this phone transforms into a tablet. When open, Samsung says the internal 7.6-inch screen is also more durable than in previous years. Considering how often you're likely to unfold, prod at and refold that screen over the phone's life, that's a very welcome improvement.

Beyond that, though, we're left with the usual annual upgrades. The processor — in this case, the Snapdragon 8 Plus Gen 1 from Qualcomm — should give this device a little more horsepower than this year's Galaxy S22 phones. And while earlier versions of the Fold had cameras that were mostly just OK for the price, Samsung went with an improved 50-megapixel sensor to help the Z Fold 4's main camera capture more detail in photos and video.

I've used a version of this device for about two years now, and the novelty of having a big screen that (mostly) disappears when I don't need it hasn't worn off yet. Still, that price is unreasonable for many; at \$999, Samsung's smaller Galaxy Z Flip 4 is still the more practical choice.

A keyboard for pros

What it's called: Astro Slide 5G

What's different about it: It has a huge (by phone standards) physical keyboard

How much it costs: About \$900

London-based Planet Computers has successfully built three mobile devices, the latest of which is this funky smartphone/laptop mash-up.

The main draw is a spacious physical keyboard hidden under the screen — it's a bit cramped compared to a laptop's keyboard, but the keys themselves aren't that much smaller. That, according to Planet CEO Dr. Janko Mrsic-Flogel, makes it ideal for taking lengthy notes and sending detailed emails on the run.

So, what's it like to use? The keyboard takes a little getting used to because of its unusual layout, derived from a defunct, fan-favorite PDA brand in the U.K. Once I wrapped my head around it, though, I found myself typing at nearly full speed.

The Astro Slide runs on Google's Android operating system, and when the device is closed, it acts just like a regular — if seriously chunky — smartphone. What caught me by surprise is how natural it felt to use as a pseudo-laptop sitting on a table; you can open a taskbar of sorts by hitting a button on the keyboard, and scroll through webpages using arrow keys. It even handles Excel spreadsheets.

There's no question that this phone excels at note-taking. But I wouldn't recommend it for everyone — unless you write novella-length emails.

Dewalt cordless vacuum has impressive versatility

By GREGG ELLMAN

Tribune News Service

Dewalt recently added the 20V Max Cordless Dry Hand Vacuum to its famous 20V Max cordless tool line.

The handheld vacuum works off the 65 air watt Dewalt 5.0Ah DCB205 rechargeable battery pack (sold separately), good for about 20 minutes of vacuuming, and 15 tank fills. A bright LED light on the top of the unit assists by lighting the debris that needs to be cleaned.

Six included cleaning attachments help tackle small messes even in hard-to-reach locations. All attach to the front end of the device and include a 2-foot flexible hose, which stretches to 6 feet. An extension tube is great for reaching hard-to-access areas, such as under car seats.

The other accessories are a round brush, gulper brush, crevice nozzle and floor nozzle. A drawstring mess accessory bag for storing the accessories is included.

A transparent container shows the contents of what the vacuum captures. When it's ready to be emptied, hold it over a trash can and use the dust bowl release button to open it. The filter assembly removes with a twist. Inside is a HEPA filter, which follows OSHA Table 1 Compliance.

Dewalt recommends cleaning the filter with warm, soapy water before reinstalling it. Wait about 12 hours to ensure it's completely dry before subsequent use.

The versatility of the 20V systems allows for multiple tools to run off the same battery and battery charger. The 250-plus tools in the Dewalt handheld tool category include saws, drills, hedge clippers, trimmers, impact drivers, wrenches and sanders.

Online: dewalt.com; Dewalt MAX Cordless Dry Hand Vacuum \$149, Dewalt 5.0Ah DCB205 battery \$73.95, DEWALT Replacement HEPA Filter, \$29.97



The Dewalt 20V Max Cordless Dry Hand Vacuum works off the 65 air watt Dewalt 5.0Ah DCB205 rechargeable battery pack.

Beyerdynamic's Free Byrd is the first-ever true wireless earbuds product from the company.

The Free Byrds deliver precise, crisp and natural sound and the right amount of bass. The sound is produced from the latest aptXTM adaptive and AAC codecs. Tap controls turn on active noise cancellation, and if you want to hear a little of the outside world, transparency mode is an effective option.

With the MIY app (iOS and Android), the sound can be personalized with Mimi Sound personalization and equalizer profiles. The app also has settings to adjust the touchpad's level of sensitivity and statistics to track usage. After a two-minute listening test, the app creates a profile to download to the earbuds.

Android owners can use Google Fast Pair, and iOS users can connect with Bluetooth 5.2. The battery life is rated for up to 11 hours of use without the ANC, eight hours with it on, before getting a recharge from the USB-C and Qi wireless charging storage case for 30 hours total. A quick charge of 10 minutes yields 70 minutes of playtime.

After Android users go through pairing with Google Services and Google Fast Pair, the Free Byrd earbuds will be registered. At that point, when they're misplaced, you can ring the earbuds and find their last location.

On hands-free calls, I was told that my voice came through clearly. Voice assistants are also accessible with the Free Byrd.

The Free Byrds are rated IPX4 for splash and sweat resistance.

One of the other essential features of true earbuds is whether they will stay in place, which the Free Byrds do. It's easy to get the right fit with the included five pairs of silicone ear-tips (XS, S, M, L, XL) and three pairs of foam ear tips (S, M, L).

Online: north-america.beyerdynamic.com; \$249, in choices of black or gray

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Finding new ways to engage with the past

Video games based on or inspired by history reveal a persistent demand for education through entertainment

BY JULIO CAPÓ JR.

Special to The Washington Post

The success of this year's "Uncharted," a film starring Tom Holland and Mark Wahlberg and based on characters and themes from the popular video games series, has brought new attention to how historical themes and concepts can reach broad audiences. Like many other video games, Uncharted uses fragments of history to advance its user-interactive storyline. The Uncharted video game franchise, which now has seven iterations, began in 2007 with a plotline centered on a man named Nathan "Nate" Drake who claims to be a descendant of privateer Sir Francis Drake. While on his quest to find the lost treasure of El Dorado, he finds himself embroiled with Nazis who sought the same treasure during World War II.

Video game designers and players have long been fascinated and inspired by historical narratives and figures. Delving into the history of how video games have utilized — and distorted — stories of the past reveals a persistent demand for historical education through entertainment, a reminder that people are constantly searching for new ways to engage and find meaning in the past.

Efforts to educate through video games began with computers. In 1973, for example, the Minnesota Educational Computing Consortium, which worked with the state university system and Minnesota's Department of Education, started using computer technologies to improve student learning. A decade later, Minnesota boasted of having 10,000 computers in its public schools, with a ratio of 73 students per computer — reported to be the highest ratio in the country at the time.

The consortium also led the way in creating computer-based courseware, including its most famous release: The Oregon Trail. Originally a text-based game for school use, The Oregon Trail was released to students and teachers throughout Minnesota in 1975. The game, which later saw release through Apple, Microsoft and others, is a strategy video game where the user embodies a wagon leader shepherding settlers across the frontier during the 1840s. The player is tasked with making important decisions along the way, including choosing the best path, when to hunt and how to avoid illnesses such as dysentery. Designed to encourage skills such as plan-

ning, strategy and memory, the game was a success.

Such nostalgia sold well in the 1970s, when in anticipation of the country's bicentennial and social, economic and political unrest, many Americans looked to the past in new, engaging ways. As Małgorzata Rymsza-Pawlowska has argued, it was in the 1970s that history "became as much about feeling as about thinking, about being inside the past instead of looking upon it." Immersive video games helped history come alive in the 1970s, much like new period-piece TV shows, historical reenactments, oral history projects and museum exhibitions did.

While Atari and its groundbreaking 1975 game Pong, a virtual simulation of a game of table tennis, showed the potential market for home video games, commercial sales were checkered over the next decade. Then, in 1985, Japan's Nintendo released its Nintendo Entertainment System in the United States. That release soon marked the success of now-classic games such as Super Mario Brothers (1985) and The Legend of Zelda (1987). By 1990, Nintendo represented 90% of the U.S.' \$3 billion spending on video gaming, with a survey suggesting that its lead character Mario had become more recognizable to U.S. children than Mickey Mouse. These commercial successes also meant that educational gaming would, no doubt, take a back seat to entertainment.

As new consoles entered American homes, including 1989's Sega Genesis, many games emerged, some of which sought



Activision

Call of Duty games often use historical scenarios as a backdrop rather than a central, educational element.



Sony Interactive Entertainment

The Uncharted video games focus on Nathan Drake, who finds himself embroiled with Nazis while looking for the lost treasure of El Dorado.

to link historical themes of conquest and empire-building to modern-day skills of success and work ethic. For example, Nintendo released the military strategy game Genghis Khan in 1990. The game allowed up to four players to create a conquest strategy on behalf of England, the Byzantine Empire, the Mongol Empire or Japan — all while facing challenges along the way. As a 1989 review of the game's computer release noted, "Conquerors need to be calculating, charismatic, and cunning, as well as courageous," and this video game promised its players such lessons.

Similarly, players of 1991's Civilization (originally on Microsoft Disk Operating System but then released through several other platforms and consoles) were asked to build and grow an empire across thousands of years, seeing the civilization through military engagements, urban growth and settlement.

Players-turned-imperialists were sometimes met with oppositional civilizations they might have read about in their history textbooks, from Alexander the Great to Napoleon Bonaparte. These games rewarded players for their persistence and determination to conquer and colonize.

By the 1990s, another video game genre was also firmly established: World War II. In the U.S. and elsewhere, such attention to war further entrenched a nationalist memory of the battlefield that emphasized the role of individual combat and violence. Frequently, this occurred through the lens of the first-person shooter, who is often divorced from the broader strategy of warfare. For many of these games, the history was often more of a backdrop or setting than a source of education. The focus on entertainment was similarly reflected in the original releases of the successful games The Medal of Honor (1999) and

Call of Duty (2003) and their many sequels and imitations.

In short, video games reveal much about our culture — whether educational initiatives or political agendas. They also have become a way for gamers to engage with important questions about public history and a shared past — albeit, one created for the game itself. Game designers and programmers often use a generic or fictional museum or heritage site, for example, to allow the player an opportunity to learn a particular past necessary to advance the character's storyline. In this way, while primarily a form of escapism, these features can function much like a museum in the non-virtual world where visitors take away fragments of the past to shape ideas of who they are as a people.

Whether fictional or not, the inclusion of museums and historical and archaeological sites in video games can also tell us something important about changing attitudes toward the accessibility and the gatekeeping of history. While museums have become spaces of reverence and exclusion, their virtual manifestations have provided players a different experience. Countless video games, including 2019's World War Z about fighting zombies, require standoffs at museums or cemeteries that even lead to the destruction of those virtual settings.

Many museums today have taken a page from video games' successes to better engage their audiences, especially younger crowds, with interactive and sensory experiences. In 2016, the American Museum of Natural History unveiled MicroRangers, an app game that interfaces with the museum's exhibitions to help children learn.

Video games may make history more accessible, but there is a downside because these historical experiences are often presented without a critical or analytical lens or guidance. Just the same, we might question whether the consumption of alternate and imaginary pasts in the virtual world may serve — even inadvertently — as a decoy or distraction to facing and reckoning with the horrors and inequities cemented in our histories.

Some data suggests something more optimistic, however. A 2020 survey revealed that 93% of historical video game players had felt inspired to learn more about a particular event or person in history while 90% thought that video games had the power to change people's perspectives on a historical event.

WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT



iStock/Stars and Stripes illustration

Art has been subject to alteration for centuries, but it's easier than ever in the digital age. Online pressure from fans, the perfectionist tendencies of anxious artists or potential legal issues leave art always on the precipice of being "fixed" or "updated." Pictured: Beyoncé, background; Samuel L. Jackson, left, and Lizzo in foreground.

Never-ending stories

In the digital age, art is impermanent and any song, movie or show is subject to being altered or erased

BY TRAVIS M. ANDREWS
The Washington Post

So far as we know, Eddie Vedder has never darkened anyone's doorstep and demanded they give back their copy of Pearl Jam's debut album "Ten" so he could continue tinkering with it.

When Rob Harvilla, music critic and host of the podcast "60 Songs That Explain the '90s," recently pictured that exact scenario, he couldn't help but laugh. "It's just wild to me to try to wrap my head around the idea of Pearl Jam bursting into my bedroom and being like, 'Give me that. We're taking "Jeremy" off the record,'" he said.

But in a way, he added, the digital equivalent of it is already happening as streaming services become our dominant means of listening to music and watching TV and movies.

Beyoncé made two changes to her long-anticipated album "Renaissance" after it was released on July 29: She removed a sample of "Milkshake" from "Energy,"

after Kelis called the use of her song "theft"; Beyoncé also agreed to remove the word "spaz" from "Heated," after fan outcry accused her of using ableist language. A few weeks earlier, Lizzo had responded to online protest and removed the same word from her song "Grrrls" — this too came after it was released.

Warner Bros. Discovery, meanwhile, spiked "Batgirl" — a movie already in postproduction, sending creatives into an existential panic as the studio also quietly removed at least six movies it was exclusively streaming on HBO Max, including Seth Rogen's "An American Pickle."

"The Batgirl/HBO Max situation is why I spent my last day on set of Dickinson calling an exec at apple and *begging* for a physical recording of my show ... they actually gave me one, I have the ONLY copy," tweeted Alena Smith, the creator of "Dickinson," an Apple TV+ period dramedy. "People said I was crazy but dude, that's ten years of my life."

If all content is digital, then it is subject to being edited — or even erased — at the

whim of anyone with controlling access to it. We live in an age of revision, in which art is impermanent, ever shifting, always on the precipice of being "fixed" or "updated." The motivations for such changes can vary: online pressure from fans, or the perfectionist tendencies of an anxious artist, or a potential legal issue. It can all send creators and producers back to the originals to correct a perceived wrong. A network or studio or record label can update or delete its library to avoid offending consumers. The reasons are potentially unlimited. No art is ever considered final in the digital age.

"I always tell my students, if you really love something, buy it in hard copy, own it, have a DVD of it, a Blu-ray of a CD of it," said Paul Booth, the associate dean of DePaul University's College of Communication who has extensively studied fandom. "Because if you only have a digital version, you don't have a finite finished product. You're renting a product from whatever service that you have."

Art has long been subject to alteration

for endless reasons. In the 16th century, the Catholic Church began adding fig leaves on the genitalia of statues to avoid inciting lust in the masses. Four hundred years later, give or take, George Lucas infamously angered fans by continuously rereleasing both the original "Star Wars" trilogy and its prequels with significant changes, such as the addition of new characters and dialogue — simply because he wanted to and leaving an endlessly and contentiously unsettled debate about whether Han Solo or Greedo shot first.

Similarly, Steven Spielberg digitally altered "E.T." for its 20th anniversary to replace the FBI agents' guns with walkie-talkies, a decision he's since said he's "lived to regret." "It was OK for a while, but I realized what I had done was I had robbed people who loved 'E.T.' of their memories of 'E.T.'" he said of the change. He restored the guns for the 30th anniversary cut.

The list goes on. When Disney rere-

SEE ART ON PAGE 17

WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT

Art: Technology, social media make revisions more likely

FROM PAGE 16

leased the original animated version of "The Lion King" in Imax eight years after the film's original release, it replaced some scenes and reanimated others. Disney+ has routinely edited shows and films on its service. Sometimes, it's (ostensibly) accidental, such as when Netflix unknowingly streamed a non-U.S. version of "Back to the Future Part II" that edited out the cover of a skin mag discovered by Marty McFly, according to screenwriter Bob Gale.

Plus, it's only getting easier as deepfake technology grows more powerful. What was previously used to make fake — but shockingly believable — videos of celebrities like Tom Cruise is now being employed by major movie studios. Rather than reshoot the movie, Lionsgate recently hired an artificial intelligence company to remove the F-words from its new action-thriller "Fall" to avoid an R rating.

Brent Cowley, a University of Oregon Ph.D. candidate in media studies who focuses on media manipulation, said that editing media, particularly movies, is nothing new, pointing to sanitized versions made for airlines and network TV. "They've always manipulated language and so forth, but it was obvious," he said.

"What's changing now is the use of digital alterations where people would not know" that anything had been changed, Cowley added. "The cat's out of the bag. It is cheaper to do it than ever before, and on top of that, it's more accepted than ever before. People know what deepfake technology is. They're kind of used to it."

As news of Beyoncé and Lizzo changing their songs circulated, another story was unfolding: "Stranger Things" co-creators Matt and Ross Duffer claimed in a June interview with Variety to have edited earlier episodes of the Netflix sci-fi drama.

"We have George Lucas-ed things, also, that people don't know about," Matt Duffer said. "But it'd be hard for anyone to figure it out."

"You do have the physical copies, though. The Blu-Rays and stuff. You'd have to compare, but the beauty of Netflix is we can just drop [it in]," his brother Ross added. "Maybe I shouldn't be saying this, but if you watched Season 4 the night it came out versus if you watched it one day

later, Friday, it's different. Some of the visual effects."

The show's writers later issued a denial, tweeting, "PSA: no scenes from previous seasons have ever been cut or reedited. And they never will be."

So did they actually edit the show or not? Netflix has done it before, removing a graphic suicide scene from the teen drama "13 Reasons Why" in response to backlash. But in this case, nobody knows, and that's the key. It's not only easy to make changes to art in the digital age, it can be done without anyone noticing and perhaps with no definitive record of what originally existed. As Ross Duffer himself said, "I do like that we can just sneak stuff in."

The fan factor

Fans also play a complicated role in all this. They've always been a key part of artistic and commercial success, but social media has equipped them with a powerful and unified say in the product.

Before the social media age, fans "didn't necessarily have a way to reach out to other fans who might be in other countries, but now you can," said Booth, the DePaul professor. "So you've seen fans be able to mobilize the same way we've seen political groups mobilize. It's not that fans didn't want to change things, didn't want to adjust things, didn't want to have things different. There just wasn't a mechanism for making those claims or those desires known."

The whole saga raises a key question: Should there be a statute of limitations on what an artist can edit?

Consider the infamous saga of "Snakes on a Plane," the 2006 Samuel L. Jackson B-movie about, well, you know. New Line Cinema originally planned a PG-13 cut of the action thriller, but, thanks to that title, fanfare for the movie exploded long before it was set to hit theaters. Fans had one particular request: Have Jackson yell a certain explicit catchphrase in a very certain way. In what was then a fairly shocking move, the studio spent five days shooting new scenes after principal photography wrapped to accommodate the fans with a hard-R flick.



"Stranger Things" co-creators Matt and Ross Duffer claim to have edited earlier episodes of the Netflix sci-fi drama. Pictured: "Stranger Things" actors Gaten Matarazzo and Caleb McLaughlin.



Ye, then known as Kanye West, continued to tinker with his 2016 album "The Life of Pablo" well after its release.

"When the movie finally came out, it felt like it had been crowdsourced by the internet," said Harvilla, the "60 Songs" podcast host.

"The future is likely to include more impermanence, not less. The work is out there, but it's never fully formed or finished because it could always be edited with some degree of ease, if it only exists in some digital form," said Seth Lewis, director of the journalism program at the University of Oregon. He added that the initial release of a piece of art



Gertie (Drew Barrymore) says goodbye in "E.T." In the 20th anniversary version of the film, Steven Spielberg replaced FBI agents' guns with walkie-talkies but restored them for the 30th anniversary.

different versions of songs and changing the track list — prompting a mixture of awe and anger from fans and critics.

"At what point is a record 'over,' and who gets to make the call? Kanye West is seeing how far he can stretch the point right now, in a way no pop star has ever quite tried: in real-time," critic Jayson Greene wrote in Pitchfork at the time, adding, "West is testing the shifting state of the 'album cycle' to see if he can break it entirely, making his album like another piece of software on your phone that sends you push updates."

"I think that was the moment that planted this idea in everyone's head that this specific record is a living, breathing, mutating document," said Harvilla. "That really did change something fundamentally about the way people thought about and listened to music. ... Now I think we are grasping more fully the reality that there is no stopping this from happening. There's no stopping anyone from doing this."

As with any emerging technology, the ability to easily revisit art and erase blemishes, sand out the edges — to "fix" it — can be something of a Pandora's box. After Beyoncé agreed to edit "Heated," Monica Lewinsky tweeted that the singer should also edit the 2013 song "Partition," which uses Lewinsky's name to describe a sexual act.

The whole saga raises a key question: Should there be a statute of limitations on what an artist can edit? "Beyoncé isn't flawless. She makes mistakes, and we should be reminded of that," music critic and author Steven Hyden said.

"What if Eminem had a change of heart and was like, 'I want to take out all of the anti-gay language I used in my early records?' You can look at that as a positive thing, because he was using homophobic slurs. Who's gonna defend that?" Hyden added. "On the other hand, that was part of the package who made him who he was in the moment, good or bad. So yeah, you're taking out offensive language, but you're also rewriting history. It would feel like sanitizing history."

He suggested it's worthwhile to be able to revisit an album filled with offensive content, such as Eminem's "The Marshall Mathers LP" and "use that record as a prism to understand why this record was so popular in 2000. What was it about it that [the culture] embraced it so much? You need the vile stuff in there to help understand that."

Then again, he added, "If you've grown up in a world where it's always been digital, maybe this conversation doesn't really make sense. Maybe this is an analog perspective, because that's something I was raised with."

WEEKEND: MOVIES



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

“Beast” star Idris Elba and the movie’s producer, Will Packer, are old friends and longtime collaborators. Packer said Elba “sparked” to the film before the script was completed. He said they have “a shorthand and a great camaraderie.”

Where the wild things are

‘Beast’ producer Packer: Film was shot in South Africa but with computer-generated lions

By RODNEY Ho

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

Idris Elba is going to test his box-office appeal as a lead in a big, brawny thriller with the film “Beast,” in which he plays a dad protecting his two teenage daughters from a rampaging lion in South Africa.

It's also a major test for Atlanta producer Will Packer, best known for comedies like “Ride Along” and “Girls Trip” and a recent stint as the producer of the Oscars. He has never done a project like “Beast” before, but he said he's happy with the results.

“It's different for me in terms of genre, scope and location,” Packer said. “We wanted to create a film that felt big. And South Africa felt like an authentic backdrop for the story.”

They shot the movie on a real animal sanctuary. The plot line is simple and moves quickly.

Elba plays Dr. Nate Samuels, a widower whose wife died five years earlier of cancer. He takes his two daughters to South Africa to rebuild their frayed relationships and revisit the past. They visit a South African game reserve managed by Martin Battles, an old family friend and wildlife biologist. But poachers have killed off a family of lions, save for the patriarch, who loses his mind and starts attacking every human in sight. Elba's character soon finds his family in mortal danger.

For Packer, Elba is an old friend and longtime collaborator in multiple Packer films like “The Gospel” (2005), “This Christmas” (2007) and “No Good Deed” (2014).

“We have a shorthand and a great camaraderie,” Packer said. “I called him and



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

Leah Jeffries, left, and Elba in a scene from “Beast.” Jeffries plays Elba’s daughter.

I only call him when it's something he can win at. He sparked to it before we even had a completed script.”

The film stylistically uses extended one-shot takes, which Packer said were inspired by Alfonso Cuarón's 2006 film “Children of Men,” and draw viewers into the action.

And the backdrops are all real. The only thing that was fake, he said, were the lions. They are all computer-generated creations but look convincingly real. The actors instead had to react to lion puppets or a stuntman in a gray lion suit.

The film crew and actors spent three months almost entirely outdoors.

“It was a tough shoot,” Packer said. “Everything out there crawls, slithers and growls. We stayed in tents with thatched roofs. In the middle of the night you could

see eyes peering at you. They're bush babies, which are like raccoons. They were everywhere. It was unnerving.”

During a day off, Packer and his wife, Heather, went animal tracking on the reserve and met up with some elephants. A young elephant in heat charged them. To neutralize it, the guide in the open-roof jeep had to charge back.

“If you retreat, they will chase you down,” Packer said. “It was the scariest thing I ever experienced.”

“Beast” is tailor made for movie theaters, he said, and he hopes people will go, even if it's not a film featuring a superhero or Tom Cruise in an aviator suit.

“The response so far has been incredible,” he said. “People at the screening were screaming and cheering. It was really really impressive and validating.”

‘Beast’ a rote but genuinely pulse-pounding creature feature

By MICHAEL O’SULLIVAN

The Washington Post

The marauding-animal thriller is a horror staple, reliably cropping up in late summer, as evidenced by “Piranha” (Aug. 3, 1978), “Cujo” (Aug. 12, 1983), “Arachnophobia” (July 18, 1990), “Burning Bright” (Aug. 17, 2010), “The Meg” (Aug. 10, 2018) and a host of other fauna-centric titles before, since and in between, representing a virtual Noah's ark of scare-inducing species.

In that lineage falls “Beast,” the latest entry in the dog days canon of cautionary tales pitting man vs. Mother Nature's less well-behaved progeny. If the film is elevated by the great Idris Elba — playing an American widower on safari in South Africa with his two daughters who must face down a rogue lion bent on, for lack of a better word, revenge — it nevertheless falls squarely in the camp of formula.

Meaning that “Beast” obeys certain rules, and does so effectively yet predictably, under the stewardship of director Baltasar Kormakur.

“Beast” is a legitimately scary movie, opening with a prologue in which we watch a group of poachers massacre several lions, then get massacred themselves, one by one, by the film's titular critter: a convincing CGI cat that then goes on a human-killing rampage, not eating his prey — random villagers, surviving poachers, etc. — as an ordinary lion might, but in a sense stalking and killing them out of some anthropomorphic sense of justice. Into that unlikely scenario wanders Elba's Nate and daughters Meredith and Norah (Iyana Halley and Leah Jeffries), who are on a mission of reconciliation after their African-born mother has died while estranged from Nate, leaving the film's hero with some healing to do.

It's not just reconciliation he seeks, but redemption for being absent from his family during their time of need. And as everyone knows, redemption, at least in Hollywood, requires sacrifice. All this falls into place, like a morality play, against a scenic backdrop, with solid performances rendered by the aforementioned actors and Sharlto Copley, who plays a friend of the family and tour guide to the wildlife preserve in which the action takes place.

Action-packed it is, even if much of the story unspools inside a disabled Land Rover containing the main characters, with said lion on the warpath and not much in the human arsenal except a tranquilizer gun, a few bottles of water, handheld radios, a medical kit and their wits.

The jump scares are genuinely jumpy, but the film plays out more like a theme park ride than a family drama with teeth. It's pulse-pounding, in other words, from a cardiac perspective, but not especially engaging as a narrative, despite the earnest efforts of the cast to breathe life into a personal story arc that feels pasted onto another one: one that is, in essence, the tale of a deeply disagreeable beast.

“Beast” is rated R for violence, bloody images and some coarse language. Running time: 93 minutes. Now playing at select AAFES theaters.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Masterpieces make Milan a tourist magnet

ilan can't compare with Rome and Florence artistically, but Italy's second city hosts two noteworthy masterpieces: Michelangelo's last pietà sculpture and Leonardo's Last Supper.

On this visit to Milan's Sforza Castle I get a rare opportunity to enjoy a Michelangelo statue with no crowds. Michelangelo died while still working on the Pietà Rondanini, his last pietà—a representation of a dead Christ with a sorrowful Virgin Mary. While unfinished, it's a thought-provoking work by a nearly 90-year-old genius. The symbolism is of life and of death: Jesus returning to his mother, as two bodies seem to become one. Christ's head is cut out of Mary's right shoulder, and an earlier arm is still just hanging there. Above Mary's right ear, you can see the remains of a previous face (eye, brow and hairline).

Michelangelo's more famous pietà at the Vatican, carved when he was in his 20s, features a beautiful, young and astonished Mary. Here, Mary is older and wiser. Perhaps Mary is now better able to accept death as part of life ... as is Michelangelo. The pietà at the Vatican is simple and clear, showing the mother

holding her dead son. Contemplating the Pietà Rondanini, I wonder who's supporting whom.

The big highlight of any Milan visit is seeing Leonardo da Vinci's Last Supper in the Church of Santa Maria delle Grazie. Deco-

rating a former dining hall, this remarkable, exquisitely crafted fresco is one of the ultimate works of the Renaissance.

Deterioration began within six years of The Last Supper's comple-

tion — Leonardo painted on the wall in layers, as he would on a canvas, instead of applying pigment to wet plaster according to the usual fresco technique. The church was bombed in World War II, but — miraculously, it seems — the wall holding The Last Supper remained standing. A 21-year restoration project, completed in 1999, peeled away 500 years of touch-ups, leaving Leonardo's masterpiece fainter and yet more vibrant.

To preserve the artwork as much as possible, the humidity in the room is strictly regulated, and only 30 people are allowed in every 15 minutes. As my group's appointed time nears, we're

herded between several rooms to dehumidify. The rooms' doors close behind us, then open slowly in front of us. I've studied up, but I review my notes as I wait to enter, like cramming for a test. I want to get the most out of every second in the presence of Leonardo's masterpiece.

Then the last door opens and we enter. There it is — filling the far wall in a big, vacant, white-washed room: faded pastels, not a crisp edge in sight, with much

of the fresco looking like an old film negative.

the turmoil he must feel over the ultimate sacrifice he must make.

The scene is a fitting one for a monks' dining hall. The Last Supper was the first Eucharist — a ritual monks would have observed daily. The disciples sit with Jesus in the center. Jesus seems to know he'll die — his face is sad, all-knowing, accepting. His feet are crossed one atop the other, as if ready for the nail.

Again and again, my eyes return to Christ. He's calm despite

RICK STEVES/Rick Steves' Europe

Leonardo da Vinci's faded but still masterful The Last Supper painting enthralls visitors to Milan.

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Again and again, my eyes return to Christ. He's calm despite

the turmoil he must feel over the ultimate sacrifice he must make.

All too soon, two doors burst open — abruptly ending my musings. My group and I are sternly ushered out and a new group enters. On a bench in front of the church, I sit down for a moment to settle back into the 21st century.

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

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Multicultural festivals capture faraway flavors and sounds

When host nation culture begins to feel nearly as comfortable as the one left behind, it might be time to shake things up a bit. Should far-flung travel destinations remain tantalizingly out of reach, attending a festival spotlighting a foreign culture might be the next best thing to a globe-trotting adventure. Here are some coming events:

Wiesbaden, Germany: Latin American Weekend is an itinerant summer event aimed at showcasing the vibrant and varied cultures of Central and South America. Through Aug. 21, a traveling band of entertainers and vendors bring the scents, scenes and sounds of countries from Chile to Colombia to cities throughout Germany. The culture of 15 Latin American countries will be on colorful display at the Schlachthof through the weekend.

The event features a central stage on which bands play, folklore groups dance and children's entertainers capture the imaginations of young visitors. A marketplace offers handicrafts of wood, silver, ceramics and textiles, and food stalls serve up grilled meat and spicy sides.

The fiesta's on from 5 p.m.-10 p.m. on Friday, noon-10 p.m. on Saturday and noon-8 p.m. on Sunday. Adult admission costs 6 euros until 6 p.m., (or 10 euros after 6 p.m. Sat.) and is free for those up to age 12. Other Latin American weekend events are slated to take place in Munich (Aug. 26-28); Karlsruhe (Sept. 2-4); Düsseldorf (Sept. 9-11) and Mannheim (Sept. 16-18). Online: lateinamerikanischeswochenende.de

Frankfurt, Germany: The city known for its skyscrapers has an equally dazzling treasure trove of museums, the pillars of a multifaceted festival that plays out on the last weekend of August each year. For three days, arts, music, dance, performance and more spill across the banks of the Main River as part of the brilliant Museumufer Fest, slated for Aug. 26-28 in 2022.



Frankfurt hosts its wide-ranging museum festival, Museumufer Fest, Aug. 26-28 this year.

In previous years, up to three million visitors have turned out for the entertainment offered across numerous stages, from eclectic bands to displays of non-mainstream sports, along with the chance to sample cuisines of the world. The "Spain on the Main" stage will feature folk dance from Galicia, flamenco from Andalusia and the whistled language of Gomera Island. The Sontaino stage showcases Latin American flair, where merengue and salsa workshops and a carnival show from the Dominican Republic are among the offerings.

Entry to the festival is free, while the purchase of a button for 7 euros gets one through the doors of more than 20 museums. Online: museumuferfest.de

Zeebrugge, Belgium: The Bomboclat Festival brings energetic Caribbean vibes to a resort town on the North Sea. For two days, the sounds of Dancehall and Afrobeat will make it hard for bodies to stand still. The DJs and live acts taking the stage are a combination of international artists and those local to Belgium. Three stages prom-

ise distinct vibes: Nah Mean has the Jamaican beats; Bombastic Party will be the home of Afrobeats; and Mo Mamba is the place to hear club and afro electronics. A dance battle will have participants compete in the genres of hip-hop, African House or Afro Dancehall.

The Culture Crossing space offers performance art, readings and more, and a market sells handmade clothing, jewelry and art. Kids can enjoy a corner with games, jumpy castles and percussion workshops. The Food Village serves Jamaican jerk chicken, poké bowls and other tasty fare. The on-site festival camping area will offer sanitary facilities, a shop and a bar. Those without their own camping gear can rent a pre-pitched tent.

Bomboclat takes place Aug. 26-27. A two-day festival pass including camping goes for 85 euros. A pass for Friday costs 39 euros, and a Saturday pass is 45 euros. Other packages are available. Online: bomboclat.be

The Hague, Netherlands: The taste and flair of Southeast Asia greets visitors to the Tong Tong Fair, billed as the biggest Eurasian fair in the world. This celebration of traditions, cultures and cuisines feels right at home in The Hague, known for its multi-ethnic population, many of whom emigrated from the Indonesian archipelago.

Fairgoers can watch musicians, dancers and other entertainers and take in fashion shows and cooking demos. The "Grand Pasar" marketplace offers hundreds of stands offering Eastern textiles, handicrafts and other goods, while the food court is filled with restaurants and stalls selling simple, home-style dishes.

The Tong Tong Fair and Festival runs Sept. 1-11 at the Malieveld in the city center, a five-minute walk from The Hague's central station. Gates open at noon and close at 10 p.m. daily except on Sunday, when they shut an hour earlier. Adult all-day tickets go for 15 euros and can be purchased online or at the gate. Children ages 4-14 pay 4.50 euros. Adult evening tickets for entry after 6 p.m. go for 9.50 euros. Online: tongtongfair.nl



Karen Bradbury

The event features a central stage on which bands play, folklore groups dance and children's entertainers capture the imaginations of young visitors. A marketplace offers handicrafts of wood, silver, ceramics and textiles, and food stalls serve up grilled meat and spicy sides.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

A spritz of Aperol

Drink this iconic cocktail, the 6th most popular worldwide, like a true Italian at these bars and restaurants in Milan

By ROB LEDONNE

Special to The Washington Post

Ah, the magic of Northern Italy. Well-dressed crowds stroll down ancient streets bathed in the glow of the warm Italian sun. The heady combination of pizza, espresso and cologne wafts around you. And on nearly every corner here, a refreshing carbonated cocktail awaits.

When you think of Italy, landmarks and history may come to mind first. Aside from Rome's Colosseum or the Leaning Tower of Pisa, however, there is a drinkable icon that has become just as much of a global name: the Aperol spritz.

Made up of two parts of its namesake bitter, three parts Prosecco and a splash of seltzer, the cocktail is known for its approachability, refreshingly low alcohol-by-volume and an eye-catching color that resembles the blazing sun. In other words: It's the perfect antidote to record-breaking summer heat.

While the aperitif was invented in Padua, near Venice, in 1919 by brothers Luigi and Silvio Barbieri, the exact origin of the cocktail is unknown. Campari, the parent company for Aperol, says it began to make appearances in the 1950s.

The Aperol spritz may be best enjoyed in Milan, where it is ubiquitous from the bustling historic center to the Navigli neighborhood that overflows with bars and restaurants. Aside from being the heart of Italian fashion and finance, the metropolis is also the headquarters for Campari.

"The Aperol spritz is the quintessential expression of Italian culture," said Julka Villa, a spokeswoman for Campari Group. According to Villa, the cocktail is specifically engineered for "aperitivo culture," a ritual in which Italians gather for drinks and appetizers before dinner. Hence why it was originally dubbed "Aperol."

Villa said Aperol "was originally a local phenomenon" that Campari pushed to grow into a global favorite after acquiring the brand in 2003. According to the New York Times, those marketing efforts included installing Aperol spritz booths at summer events in the city and wrapping an ad around a bus that travels the Hamptons. According to Drinks International's 2022 Brand Report, it's now considered the sixth-most popular classic cocktail in the world. (The Campari-fueled Negroni is No. 1).

From chic hotel bars to iconic restaurants — even an officially licensed Aperol bar — here's where to spend a summer day in Milan drinking like an Italian.

Terrazza Aperol

Consider it a shrine to the spritz. In the shadow of the city's crown jewel, the Duomo di Milano, the orange drink reigns supreme at Terrazza, one of the only officially licensed Aperol bars. Its outdoor seating splays out onto the cathedral's bustling piazza. Its interior is accented by orange decor — what other color were you expecting?

Ordering a spritz here is the equivalent of getting a steak at Peter Luger in Brooklyn, only a lot more refreshing.

According to Stefan Jensen, the Terrazza's managing director at its home location in Venice, Aperol's official bars serve more than 1,000 traditional spritzes per day: "Aperol, Prosecco DOC Frattina, which holds an important role in the recipe, and selz [soda water] that is produced directly in our traditional selz machine," Jensen said.

At the Terrazza, bartenders have painstaking attention to detail on everything, including the amount of ice: "Obviously, what makes the difference is the art of our bartenders who achieve what we call the 'perfect serve' of our beloved cocktail."

Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, 20121 Milan

Principe Bar at Hotel Principe di Savoia

Since the Hotel Principe di Savoia opened 95 years ago, queens, presidents and Milan's fashion crowd have all kicked up their fancy feet. The property's impressive namesake bar speaks to the high-end

experience. A massive chandelier composed of 5,000 sparkling crystals looms over revelers who sip spritzes and nibble on pizzas topped with prawns and truffle.

Bar manager Daniele Confalonieri has had a front-row seat to the drink's rise.

"I can recall when I was younger, much younger, the Aperol spritz was served at the bars of every town in Italy," he said, but it was mainly ordered by Italians. Now he doles them out to the Principe's deep-pocketed guests from around the globe.

Piazza della Repubblica, 17, 20124 Milan

Terrazza Gallia at the Excelsior Hotel Gallia

Remove yourself from the street-level crowds and take a peaceful perch seven stories up, where you can look over the city with a spritz in hand. At the Excelsior Hotel Gallia, a Milan staple since 1932, tourists and locals are known to flock to Terrazza Gallia for aperitivo hour, which traditionally kicks off at 6 p.m. and lasts two hours. Views include the Pirelli Tower and the Milano Centrale train station.

While the Aperol spritz is no doubt a summertime favorite, they're ordered all year long in Italy.

"It's our most popular drink, probably the best seller on our (entire) menu," said Andrea Griggion, the assistant bar manager.

Piazza Duca d'Aosta, 9, 20124 Milan

A Santa Lucia

A Santa Lucia, a Milan favorite that opened in 1929, features walls completely



PHOTOS BY DAVIDE BERTUCCIO/For The Washington Post

The Aperol spritz served at the rooftop bar at the Excelsior Hotel Gallia in Milan.



Inside Milan's Camparino in Galleria bar, workers make a Campari spritz as a Milanese alternative to the more famous Aperol spritz.

covered with headshots of Italian icons, from Marcello Mastroianni to Frank Sinatra. But it's under the restaurant's ink and blue neon sign outside where one should pull up a seat, whether for aperitivo hour or a full-blown meal of Milanese and Neapolitan classics, including a perfectly-fried veal cutlet and stuffed peppers with olives and capers.

"Our brand essence, for me, is very real," Villa said. "When I sip an Aperol spritz it's typically with those I cherish most, enjoying each other's company, a great scene and amazing food. Those are the moments that bring me great memories and great joy."

Via S. Pietro All'Orto, 3, 20121 Milan

The Navigli neighborhood

Stretched out on both sides of a canal in the southwest of the city, this neighborhood is widely known for its happening nightlife and quirky shopping. The Mag Cafè concocts spritzes of all stripes for discerning drinkers. Rita is an esteemed, experimental cocktail bar. And for evenings that stretch late, the dim digs and cold drinks inside Ugo make for a perfect nightcap. Who says an Aperol spritz has to be ordered before sundown?

Mag Cafè, Ripa di Porta Ticinese, 43, 20143 Milan

Rita, Via Angelo Fumagalli, 1, 20143 Milan

Ugo, Via Corsico, 12, 20144 Milan

WEEKEND: TRAVEL



PHOTOS BY LERON KORNREICH/For The Washington Post

The Fanal Forest, where one can find fog and twisted tree branches with layers of moss. On rainy days, the mist creates an otherworldly tableau engulfing the trees.

No trip to island of Madeira complete without venturing beyond capital of Funchal

BY LERON KORNREICH

Special to The Washington Post

In fits of hysterical laughter, punctuated by shrieks of fear and delight, my daughter and I slid down the steep, narrow streets of Monte in a straw basket pushed by two men wearing traditional straw hats. The wicker toboggan twisted and turned as we gained speed, with the “runners” purposely navigating within inches of walls or turning the basket so we slid sideways. The louder we laughed and screamed, the faster they accelerated.

Street tobogganing is just one of many memorable activities families can experience on the Portuguese island of Madeira, part of an archipelago of the same name that includes three other islands.

Madeira Island marks the emerged top of a huge volcano. Its rich volcanic soil creates a botanical wonderland bursting with diverse flora, and its mountainous terrain provides ample opportunities for commanding views. With natural lava pools, hikes along levadas (Portuguese aqueducts), lush green landscapes and surfing and sailing opportunities, the mix of nature and adventure makes the 35-mile-long island a great getaway when you’re looking to entertain a range of ages.

Madeira is off the coast of Africa, west of Morocco. Getting to Madeira used to be a trek from the United States that required a stop in Lisbon. But in late November, Inovtravel launched direct flights to the island from New York’s John F. Kennedy airport in partnership with SATA Azores Airlines, reducing travel time to a mere 6 hours and 15 minutes. We were coming from Madrid, but the direct flight from New York provides the perfect excuse to visit Madeira with the family.



The Porto Moniz Natural Swimming Pools are formed by volcanic lava and filled with crystal-clear seawater. Porto Moniz is on the island’s northwestern tip.

Like most tourists, we started in the capital city, Funchal, on the southern coast of the island. With a population of about 100,000 and a lido, or beachfront boardwalk, lined with casual-to-Michelin restaurants, Funchal radiates energy. The bulk of tourists stay in the São Martinho area, and we enjoyed sumptuous meals twice at Konsai Sushi near the marina, where \$131 bought us dinner for five, including wine.

Funchal is known for the Madeira Botanical Garden, which has sweeping views of the city and ocean. The cable car to the hilltop area of Monte is conveniently adjacent, and we floated above mountains thickly covered with trees, spotting waterfalls and hikers on trails below, to another garden site. The terraced Monte Palace Tropical Garden is different from Funchal’s garden. Starting on the top of the trail and walking down, we explored a sculpture exhibit of African art, posed by koi ponds and pagodas in the Japanese gardens and walked under waterfalls. The toboggans are a short walk away.

But what really made our trip was getting out of Funchal. We spent several nights on the island’s northwestern tip in

Porto Moniz, a small town known for its natural lava pools. I fell in love the moment I set foot in the lobby of the original Aqua Natura hotel and saw the waves crashing against lava formations that serve as breakers to natural saltwater pools. My kids splashed and floated as I took in the view.

Every morning and evening, we’d stand on the porch, entranced by the scene. On our last, stormy day, we were hypnotized by massive waves cresting against the rock formations and spilling over into the pools where our kids had swum just a few days before. (The hotel offered more than a mesmerizing view; our favorite meals were at its Sea View restaurant, with its menu of elegantly served risottos, fish, meats and vegetarian dishes.)

Adventure on the northern tip of the island entails difficult drives up steep, curvy mountains to see breathtaking vistas of tree-covered mountains dotted with small villages, as well as the bay and its clear Atlantic waters.

I nervously pressed the imaginary brake pedal as my husband navigated the hairpin turns to reach Rabaçal and the

trailhead to Levada das 25 Fontes and Risco Waterfall.

The approximately 5.7-mile round-trip hike is known for its “25 fountains” levada. (There are 25 springs that are the sources of the levada.) You walk alongside an intricate levada system that’s a designated UNESCO World Heritage site. Since the 15th century, aqueducts have carried water for kilometers across the island’s mountains and rugged terrain.

For three hours, we hiked in the shade of arching tree branches that created a tunnel effect. The segments along levadas were so narrow at times that we had to climb onto the rim of the irrigation canals to let people coming from the opposing direction pass. When we reached the famous waterfall with 25 fountains, we were rewarded with a lovely resting spot in an atmosphere reminiscent of a rainforest, and we were refreshed by the mist coming off the plunge pool.

On the northern coast, there are numerous viewpoints (“miradouros”), and in Santana you can find traditional A-frame Madeiran homes. They’re picturesque with their thatched roofs, red doors and shutters, but many have been converted into souvenir stores. By chance, we came across a home a few blocks from the tourist traps that was recently opened to visitors and that felt authentic. The now-owner’s grandfather used to live there, and everything is preserved as it was when he was alive.

Although Santana provides Instagram-worthy moments, the island’s magic, such as the ethereal scene at the Fanal Forest in northwest Madeira, is often found off the beaten track. On rainy days, the mist creates an otherworldly tableau engulfing the trees as horned cows rest under their twisted branches.

With travel time to Madeira dramatically shortened, it has become a better vacation option. But make sure to stray from the bustle of Funchal to uncover its deeper enchantment.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Get your R&R on the right track

Enjoy the tranquility of a pedal-powered trolley ride on an old German railroad

By ALEXANDER RIEDEL
Stars and Stripes

When I told my wife what I had planned for a recent Sunday outing, she didn't quite know what to expect: We were scheduled for a "draisine" tour.

Like me, she had never heard of a draisine before. Sometimes called a handcar, it's a nearly obsolete vehicle that once transported rail service workers and tools along inaccessible portions of railroad tracks.

You may be familiar with them from old Hollywood films and cartoons. The often comedic scenes show a heavy cart with a hand lever in the middle being propelled along the tracks with great physical exertion.

But the draisine tour in Germany's Glan Valley does not require lifting and lowering the hand lever like a Wild West miner in a gold-rush hurry. Instead, like a bicycle, the trolley is powered by pedals and runs on four wheels on the track.

The term draisine is derived from German engineer Karl Friedrich Drais, who in 1817 applied for a patent for a "walking machine," a precursor to today's bicycle that was later modified for rail use.

We started our journey in the small town of Altenglan, located in the Palatinate hills roughly 20 minutes east of Baumholder. A jovial attendant with thickly accented English introduced us to a few safety, braking and road-crossing procedures, and we were on our way.

The ride follows the route of the old Glan Valley line, which once took train passengers to each of the little village stops. Built in the late 19th century, the rail line had strategic meaning during the two world wars.

Starting in the 1960s, however, many stations closed for passenger traffic because of population decreases in the eight remaining rural towns on the way.

Since the early 2000s, the draisines have ruled much of the abandoned line. They rumble past the old train stations, sandstone reminders of the towns' railroad history.

Riding side by side, my wife and I pedaled slowly, without having to worry about traffic or

sines are significantly heavier than bicycles, weighing nearly 250 pounds each, they can be relatively easily lifted off the rails one axle at a time, allowing others to pass.

Pro tip: Bring a bicycle chain. Some stops feature anchor points to secure the cart while you explore a village or have a bite.

There is plenty of space behind the seat for coolers or bicycles, so the trip can also be combined with a cycling detour or picnic. While much of the track is shaded by large trees and hedges, other portions go over open fields. Sunscreen, hats and plenty of fluids are a must.

We took a break in the small hamlet of St. Julian, where Larry & Isas All American Diner is located right alongside the tracks and beckons with homemade lemonade, beers, burgers and tacos.

The town is home to one of the last functioning oil mills in Europe. Built in 1730, the mill once produced plant oils and today is a unique industrial artifact that is protected by the German government. Unfortunately, we hadn't registered for a tour ahead of time.

Draisine rental stations can be found in the villages of Altenglan, Lauterecken and Staudernheim. Since the excursion is on a single rail line, on odd calendar days, the rides start at Altenglan and travel north. On even calendar days, they go the other way, starting in Staudernheim instead.

Going in one direction, there is really only one other choice to make: how long you want to ride. Traveling the full length of the route can take almost five hours without breaks, according to staff.

Considering that we had arrived in the afternoon and were not looking for an athletic challenge, we completed our relaxed ride in Lauterecken, about 12 miles from each starting point, after nearly three-and-a-half hours.

The draisine tour at first can feel a bit silly, but the little kid in me couldn't help but enjoy the ride.

Since 2021, the company also offers electric draisines, which make the journey even more relaxed, and a barrier-free draisine with a hand crank that allows people in wheelchairs to join the ride.

Looking for the extra historical touch? A hand-lever draisine is indeed available, along with a covered wagon trolley for larger groups.

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ASHLEY RIEDEL/For Stars and Stripes

A rider sits on a bicycle draisine near Altenglan, Germany, on Aug. 7. The rail vehicle offers seating for four adults and ample space for bicycles or luggage. Rental is 39 euros per weekday and 49 on the weekend.

On the QT

Address: Of the three stations, we recommend starting at Altenglan, which is closest to both Baumholder and Kaiserslautern. Using trains from Kaiserslautern, take the S1 to Homburg (Saar) Hbf. Change trains at Landstuhl, taking RB67 to Kusel, with stop at Altenglan.

Hours: Draisines are available from March to October, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Costs: Bike draisines are 39 euros per day Monday through Friday, and 49 euros on weekends. Each draisine fits up to four adults. Group trolleys start at 69 euros. Plan on an additional 5-10 euros for a return bus fare to your starting location if arriving by car.

Food: A comprehensive listing of sites and rest stops can be found in an online map at draisinetour.de.

Information: The booking website draisinetour.de is available in English and German.



ASHLEY RIEDEL/For Stars and Stripes

Visitors to the draisine tour between Altenglan and Staudernheim, Germany, ride the abandoned railroad track on their own and can explore towns along the way.



Hans-Joachim Emrich

May 1, 1904: Opening Day of the Glan Valley Line in Bad Muenster, Germany. The line had strategic meaning during the two world wars. Today, large portions of the railway serve as a recreational area.

time. The rusty rail passed underneath with the familiar and soothing clickety-clack rumbling of the metal wheels.

We rolled by brooks and under the cool shade of old railroad bridges, past wooded hills and sun-drenched golden wheat fields.

At 49 euros per cart on the weekend, the ride isn't cheap. But the price applies for the whole day regardless of the length of the route you choose. You have plenty of time to explore at your own pace.

Riders are allowed, even encouraged, to stop in the villages for breaks. Although the drai-

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

A change for the better



PHOTOS BY J.P. LAWRENCE/Stars and Stripes

Pho Viet offers Vietnamese specialties such as bun thit bo xao — a dish of rice noodles with fried beef, chili, herbs, bean sprouts and fish sauce. The restaurant is located near the Kaiserbrunnen fountain in downtown Kaiserslautern, Germany. The family-owned restaurant switched cuisine concepts in November 2021 to focus on Vietnamese food.

After cuisine shift, delectable dishes, ambiance at Kaiserslautern's Pho Viet beg to be sampled

By J.P. LAWRENCE
Stars and Stripes

The tasty food and beautiful decor at Pho Viet in downtown Kaiserslautern, Germany, seem to have largely escaped the public's notice.

Occupying the space that once housed the China-Restaurant Pavilion and its highly popular buffet, the family-owned restaurant switched cuisine concepts in November 2021.

"We want to go back to our roots and mainly offer Vietnamese food and focus on our world-famous noodle soup, hence our new name," Pho Viet's website announced at the time.

It's unfortunate to see that the foot traffic hasn't been the same since the change.

"Some people still think there is Chinese food," I was told during a recent visit by owner Tran Cong Nhan, who on most days is the sole server and used to own Restaurant Saigon near the Kaiserslautern train station.

His previous restaurant was short on space for its dedicated clientele. The new location, near the Kaiserbrunnen fountain downtown, has room for 180 guests.

The restaurant's pho, which is properly pronounced more like "fuh," features soft, tender beef that is not overcooked, in contrast to what's been served to me at some other Vietnamese restau-



**AFTER HOURS
GERMANY**

Pho Viet

Location: Steinstrasse 50, Kaiserslautern
Hours: Open every day except Monday. Lunch hours are 11:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Dinner hours are 5:30-10 p.m.
Prices: Lunch specials are 10 to 13 euros and come with a main dish, an appetizer and a dessert. Starters and soups are 5 to 6 euros and main dishes are 12 to 15 euros.
Menu: English and German.
Information: Online: phoviet-kl.de; (+49) 0631 67780

rants. The soup also includes enough fresh bean sprouts, mint, lemongrass and coriander to add crunch.



The signature noodle soup at Pho Viet in Kaiserslautern, Germany. The beef in the pho was very tender.

The fresh spring rolls — with shrimp, rice noodles, cilantro and mint wrapped in see-through rice paper — were crunchy, and the flavors of each ingredient were balanced.

The dish that impressed me most was the thit ga xao cari, a chicken curry with potatoes, carrots and coconut milk. Again, each flavor was well-balanced, with the spices giving the dish a warm buzz on the tongue.

I also tried the bun thit bo xao, a dish consisting of rice noodles with fried beef, chili, herbs, bean sprouts and fish sauce.

The tender marinated beef was complemented by the crunch of the vegetables, although I wish there had been some carrots. The fish sauce provided some sourness and kick that I found pleasing.



Thit ga xao cari is a chicken curry served with potatoes, carrots and coconut milk. It has a balanced blend of spices and is served in a stylish clay pot.

The service is a bit slow, but it's obvious the food is being made from scratch. The prices are comparable to those at most other Vietnamese restaurants in the area, except for Lila, which is much cheaper.

Pho Viet serves Saigon beer, a Vietnamese lager, for those who like to sample beverages from around the world. There are also traditional German beers as well as bar staples such as vodka and schnapps.

Customers can pick up their food at Pho Viet or place orders for delivery through Lieferando if they live within range. For those who choose the in-house experience, there is limited street parking in front of the restaurant as well as a nearby parking garage.

Inside, there's a table in the corner with a Lazy Susan where I



Soups at Pho Viet, like the canh chua tom, a sour and spicy shrimp soup, make good starters and cost about 5 to 6 euros.

like to savor espresso and pho as well as the view onto a small courtyard on one side and a large Chinese boat made of stone on the other side.

The decor is charming and classy, although it still looks like a Chinese buffet. Usually, business is slow enough that I can chat with the owner.

Tran Cong told me on a recent visit that he thinks the COVID-19 surge brought on by the omicron variant last year affected traffic during the change from Chinese cuisine to Vietnamese.

He acknowledged that his heart wasn't in cooking Chinese food, which is why he made the shift. He said he might add a Vietnamese buffet in the winter.

He also spoke about his life. He was one of the "boat people" who fled Vietnam in rickety watercraft after the collapse of the U.S.-backed government in Saigon in 1975. He spent a year in a refugee camp in Malaysia, eventually moving to Germany in 1988 with his brother.

As I waited for my order, a man walked in and asked Tran Cong whether the buffet was open. He said no, and the man got back into his car and drove away.

I'm sure he would have enjoyed a lovely meal had he stayed.

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WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS



PHOTOS BY JUAN KING/Stars and Stripes

Nagoya Castle, completed in 1615, is located in the center of the Japanese city. Its interior is currently closed for renovations until 2028.

Shelter in royal style

Japan's Nagoya Castle a historic gem, or at least a refuge from the rain

BY JUAN KING
Stars and Stripes

On a cloudy day of sporadic downpours, we found shelter inside one of Japan's foremost national treasures, Nagoya Castle, in Nagoya, Japan.

Established by Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder of the 2½-century-long Tokugawa shogunate, and completed in 1615, the structure lies in the center of the city.

A wide pathway with roped lanes outside the entrance bespeaks a popular tourist destination, but the castle was nearly empty as my family headed to the information window to purchase tickets.

Visitors enter at the Nishinomaru Enokida Gate, which is the seimon, or main gate to the castle.

Japanese is mainly spoken here, but we had no trouble getting around the castle grounds without a guide. Informational maps in English and other languages are available at the gate. Masks are also required inside.

As we made our way in, a snack shop was located on our right where there were also places to sit and eat. We trudged on through mushy gravel, when we were caught in a sudden deluge. Umbrellas held some of it off.

An inside view of the main keep of the castle was not an option. The aged keep is closed for reconstruction until 2028.

We instead headed to the Omote Ni-no-mon, or second front gate, at the center of the castle. There we found Honmaru Palace, which was destroyed by fire during World War II, but reconstructed in 2018 and open for a walk-through.

To get inside, you first view a video on proper conduct there. Leaving our umbrellas locked outside, we removed our shoes in the entrance hall and donned house slippers. An attendant directed us to key lockers, where we stowed our shoes and other belongings.

The palace, with its ornate Edo-era art and elaborate designs, was spacious. From tatami flooring to the exquisite foundations of cypress found throughout its cozy, cordoned-off rooms, it was a photographer's haven.

Each room had the crest of the lord or samurai who once lived there. The Honmaru Palace was the residence of the Owari Tokugawa clan and used for offi-



Shinobi, or ninja, and samurai actors in traditional garb roam the grounds of Nagoya Castle in Nagoya, Japan, and are open to posing for photographs.

cial business for high-ranking lords.

Screen-painted tigers, dragons, cranes and other art graced the golden wooden walls with vibrant colors. The palace has 13 buildings, with more than 30 rooms, including Yudono Shoin, the bathing room of the shogun, Tokugawa Iemitsu. The ceiling architecture was also inspiring to gaze upon.

Back outside the palace was an opportunity to get a professional photo with the main keep in the backdrop, but a long line kept us at bay. Shinobi, or ninja, and samurai actors in garb also roamed the grounds and were open to posing for photographs.

More exploration included walking along the Nanban, or "European" Wall; it extended a good distance from east to west and was near the Ninomaru Garden that we also explored.

Upon leaving the peaceful but soaked castle grounds, we checked out one of the souvenir and snack shops there. Everything from cookies and cakes with the castle embossed on them to wooden swords and finely decorated cups were for sale as take-home memories.

There is a lot of history to take in at the castle, and because it is listed as a Japanese national treasure, it is meticulously maintained as such.

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The Honmaru Palace in Nagoya was the residence of the Owari Tokugawa clan and used for official business for high-ranking lords.



Screen-painted tigers and other art decorate Honmaru Palace.

On the QT

Location: 1-1 Honmaru, Naka Ward, Nagoya, Aichi 460-0031

Directions: A 10-minute taxi ride from Nagoya Station.

Hours: 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. Closed Dec. 29 through Jan. 1.

Costs: 500 yen, or about \$3.70; free for junior high students and younger.

Food: There are small stores on the castle grounds offering snacks, ice cream and other goods.

Information: www.nagoyajo.city.nagoya.jp/en. There are free English-speaking tours offered by Aichi Goodwill Guides Network. Email guide-desk@aggn.jp or call 0561-75-6977 for more information.

Juan King

WEEKEND: FOOD

Dunk your noodles in green tea

Unorthodox cooking method adds refreshing, complex flavors that will never bore

By G. DANIELA GALARZA
The Washington Post

I studied food history and anthropology in college, and I remember that in one of my first classes, the professor asked everyone to write a short essay on a food that was "pure flavor." I can't remember what I picked, but it got me only a passing grade. The student who wrote an essay on tea received the highest score.

There are thousands of varieties of tea, and its complexity is like that of wine. It's the second-most popular drink in the world, after water, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

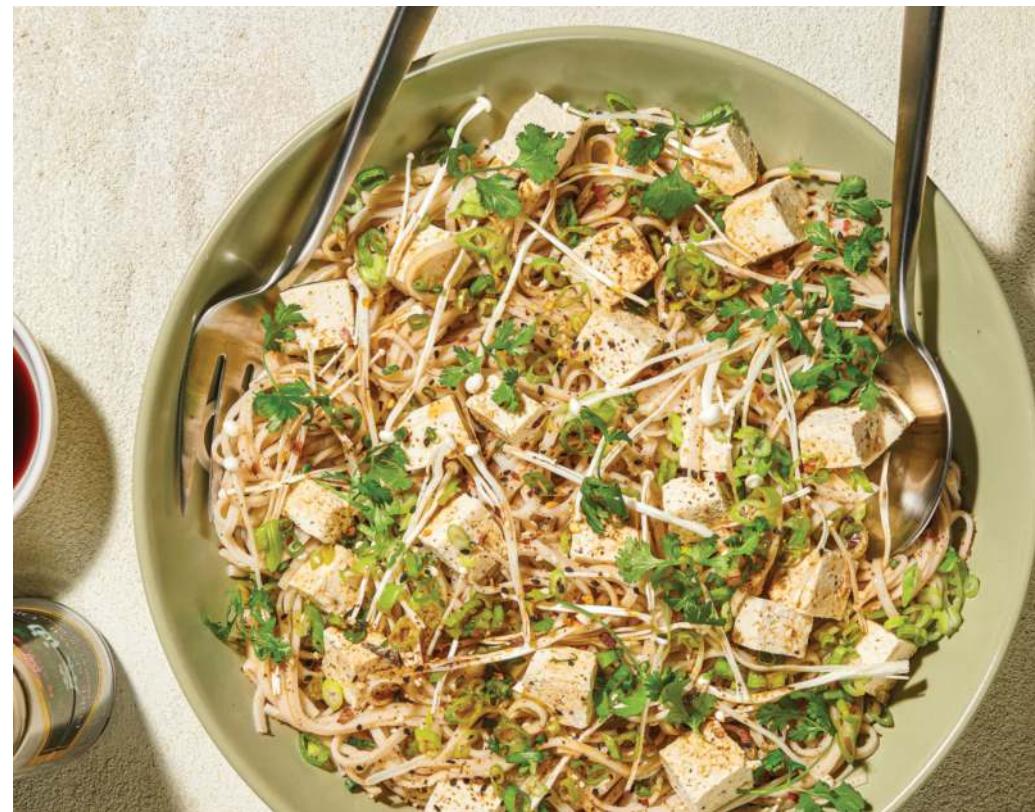
Tea is also a social drink, and it's how I met my friend Robert Wemischner. We met, if I remember correctly, at a tea tasting class in Los Angeles. Wemischner is a culinary school instructor, tea expert and the author, with Diana Rosen, of "Cooking With Tea: Techniques and Recipes for Appetizers, Entrees, Desserts, and More." Today's recipe, for Cold Tea Noodles, is from their book, and it's an astonishingly flavorful, simple summer meal.

It starts with green tea, which you'll brew and then use to cook udon noodles. Wemischner says genmaicha, a grassy green tea with bits of toasted sticky rice, is his favorite tea to use here. (See the recipe for other tea type recommendations.)

"Forward, grassy, verdant and fresh, it even has a bit of a marine or saline thing going on," is how he described genmaicha. "I like that because I think there's umami there, and that flavor makes us want the next bite. You're not going to be bored with a full serving of this flavor. There's nothing mononote or monotone about it."

After you brew the tea and cook the noodles — they take just a few minutes to become tender — your cooking work is done. Wemischner recommends doing this the night before, so the noodles are ready for lunch or dinner the next day.

"You can use lots of different types of tea here," Wemischner says, "but I love the haunting, memorable flavor of green teas with udon and tofu."



PHOTOS BY REY LOPEZ/For The Washington Post

Cold Tea Noodles are astonishingly flavorful and remarkably simple to make.

Cold Tea Noodles

Udon noodles cooked in freshly brewed genmaicha tea, and then chilled, are the base of this hot-weather meal. It's an ideal make-ahead lunch or dinner. As the noodles steep in the tea while they cool, they pick up its grassy flavor, which goes especially well with tofu, mushrooms, scallions and cilantro. Season each bowl with light soy sauce — which is different from low-sodium soy sauce — sesame oil and togarashi (preferably shichimi, though ichimi also works) or other pepper flakes before serving.

If you don't have green tea, you can use English breakfast, Assam or a Chinese or Indian black tea. You can also use broth (mushroom or spring onion might be nice) or water, though the flavor of the noodles will not be the same.

No udon? Linguine works in a pinch.

Not a tofu eater? Consider bits of chicken or dark turkey meat, roasted mushrooms or fresh soybeans or lima beans.

Ingredients

1 quart water
 2 teaspoons (8 grams) green tea leaves, preferably genmaicha
 8 ounces dried udon noodles
 1/2 package (6 ounces) firm tofu, well drained
 2 ounces fresh enoki mushrooms (may substitute fresh shiitakes, sliced)
 4 scallions, very thinly sliced
 Light soy sauce, for serving
 Sesame oil, for serving
 Fresh cilantro leaves and tender sprigs, for serving
 Shichimi togarashi or freshly ground black pepper, for serving



After you brew the tea and cook the noodles — they take just a few minutes to become tender — your cooking work is done.

Directions

In a small pot over medium-high heat, bring the water to a low simmer. Remove from heat, add the tea and steep for 3 minutes. Strain the tea through a fine-mesh sieve into a medium pot. Discard the tea leaves.

Set the pot over high heat and bring the tea to a boil. Add the noodles and cook until still somewhat firm, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and let the noodles completely cool in the tea. Strain the noodles, place in a lidded bowl and refrigerate for at least 1 hour.

Press the tofu or wrap it in a clean tea towel and microwave in 30-second intervals until it releases most of its moisture. Carefully slice it into 1-inch cubes.

To serve, divide the noodles between two bowls. Scatter the tofu cubes, mushrooms and scallions over each bowl. Dress, to taste, with soy sauce, sesame oil, cilantro leaves and shichimi togarashi or freshly ground black pepper before serving.

Active time: 15 minutes. Total time: 30 minutes, plus chilling time
 Makes 2 servings.

Ready to roll: Great school lunch wraps

BY KATIE WORKMAN
Associated Press

There is little debate that the sandwich is the mainstay of most kids' lunches; two slices of bread with anything they might consume layered in between. Wraps, however, have also taken their place in the pantheon of sandwich possibilities, and sometimes the mere novelty of a rolled-up sandwich instead of a square one might entice a kid to try something different inside it.

Plain old flour tortillas are fine, or look for packages labeled "wraps," which are thinner and more pliable (less apt to crack).

Pick a spread or condiment that will go with your main filling. Mayo, mustards, chutneys, relishes or jams, hummus, barbecue sauce, hoisin sauce, plain Greek yogurt, salsa, pestos of all flavors — even leftover dip.

Get creative with fillings including sliced meats (turkey, ham, salami, etc.), cheeses (cheddar, provolone, American, Monterey Jack, Pepper Jack, brie, etc.), smoked salmon, refried or cooked beans, or tuna fish. Any leftovers are fair game.

The extras: shredded lettuce or cabbage, chopped tomatoes, sliced olives and pickles, jalapeños, fresh herbs, slivered onions or bell peppers, roasted peppers, avocado, sprouts, thinly sliced cucumbers, mushrooms.

In some cases, fruit is also welcome, such as thinly sliced or chopped apples or pears, or maybe some chopped dried fruit. Shelled sunflower seeds, pumpkin seeds, nuts and granola can add some crunch. (Pay attention to school rules about allergens.)

Don't overfill your wrap or it won't close. Just layer up everything on about 3/4 of the wrap, leaving 1/4 empty, and also leave a little space around the edges.

On the edge of the 1/4 area with no filling, put a smear of condiment, like mustard or mayo, and then as you start rolling, begin with the filled side closest to you, rolling toward the empty edge. The filling will slide into the empty space a bit, ideally leaving you with enough room so the condiment at the edge will help seal it as you finish rolling.

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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

BY HUGO MARTIN

Los Angeles Times

Over the past 15 years or so, airlines have found a new way to drive up revenue: squeezing more seats into each plane.

The result has been frustration and pushback from passengers who now endure narrower airline seats with less legroom.

But relief may be in sight: After years of delays, federal regulators have begun taking public comments on a proposal to impose minimum standards on airline seat width and legroom to put a halt to the many years of seat shrinkage.

The standards are needed, say passenger rights advocates, to ensure that passengers are not in agony during long flights and are able to escape a plane quickly in the case of an emergency. Airlines are opposed to any standards, saying studies have shown that seat sizes don't affect how fast passengers get out of an airplane in a catastrophe.

The U.S. Department of Transportation does not impose any standards for seat legroom, width or comfort. Instead, the federal government allows airlines to cram any number of seats into a cabin, in whatever size, as long as passengers can evacuate in an emergency within 90 seconds. It's a standard that has been in place since the 1990s.

Over the past decade, airlines have reduced legroom — what the airline industry refers to as "pitch" — to accommodate more seats per cabin. Since 2011, the average seat pitch — the distance between the back of one seat and the back of the next — has dropped from 35 inches to 31 inches, according to a passenger rights group. Ultra-low-cost carriers, such as Spirit Airlines, have reduced the pitch on many seats to 28 inches.

The process has allowed airlines to collect more passenger revenue, making up for fuel prices that began to soar starting in 2008.

But health studies have shown that since the late 1980s, the average American man over age 20 has gained about 15 pounds and his waist size has increased by more than 2 inches. The average American woman over age 20 has gained about 16 pounds and increased her waist size by more than 3 inches.

Passenger advocates say the realities in an airplane are different today from in the 1980s. More American passengers have disabilities, and passengers tend to carry multiple electronic devices on planes — including earplugs



KENT NISHIMURA, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

Flight attendants serve refreshments on a Delta Airlines flight from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta on Aug. 1. Airlines have been squeezing more seats into each plane to drive up revenue.

Too close for comfort

After years of delays, the FAA finally accepting public comments on a proposal to impose minimum standards on airline seat width, legroom

and power cables — and more carry-on luggage to avoid checked baggage fees. These changes, passenger advocates say, make evacuating a plane with cramped seats more difficult.

"We are focused on making sure the minimum seat size reflects the reality of flying today," said John Breyault, vice president of the National Consumer League, one of several consumer groups pushing for the new standards.

Paul Hudson, president of Flyers Rights, a nonprofit airline passenger rights group, said he plans to file a proposal for airline seat standards in the next few weeks because most Americans can't fit into typical airline seats without squeezing up against an adjacent passenger or hanging into the middle aisle.

The nation's flight attendants are calling for the Federal Aviation Administration to set seat standards.

"Flight attendants are left to manage the frustrations of passengers jammed into ever-shrinking space," said Sara Nel-

son, president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, representing nearly 50,000 flight attendants at 19 airlines. "This is not an issue the market will fix."

Representatives for the airline industry say there is nothing wrong with the airline seat status quo.

Hannah Walden, a spokesperson for Airlines for America, a trade group for the nation's largest carriers, said the FAA has "affirmed that all U.S. carriers meet or exceed federal safety standards regarding seat size, and the FAA continues to approve seat configurations before they go into service."

France-based Airbus suggested a few years ago that the industry should at least adopt a comfortable standard for the seat width. The plane manufacturer released a study that says a minimum seat width of 18 inches improves passengers' sleep quality by 53%, compared with that of 17-inch-wide seats.

If the FAA imposes standards that force airlines to give passengers more elbow and leg room, some airlines — partic-

ularly low-cost carriers — may be forced to raise prices or charge higher baggage fees to make up for the loss of revenue from having fewer passengers crammed into each cabin, said Henry Harteveldt, an aviation analyst with Atmosphere Research Group.

The FAA will continue to accept public comment until Nov. 1, either online or via mail sent to Docket Operations, M-30; U.S. Department of Transportation, 1200 New Jersey Ave. SE, Room W12-140, West Building Ground Floor, Washington, D.C. 20590-0001.

So far, the federal agency has received nearly 5,000 comments, mostly from fliers with gripes about the size of seats and legroom offered on airlines.

"I feel like I'm not all that large. I wear a size 8 jeans, size 10 dress and I feel like if I got the littlest bit bigger I wouldn't fit," wrote one commenter from San Jose, Calif. "And I hate how my bigger friends are treated when they try to fly. If left to the airlines they would have us standing up in order to park more

people onto the plane."

An airline traveler from Arcadia, Calif., also suggested in a submission that the FAA needs to impose seat standards "before the airlines have us all standing like cattle on a transport!"

"Profits over comfort at all costs is now beyond ridiculous!" the commenter wrote.

Seat size and legroom is a concern for fliers with disabilities, said Eric Lipp, executive director of the Open Doors Organization, a nonprofit that promotes the rights of travelers with disabilities. Cramped seats make it harder for travelers who are larger because of a disability or who travel with a service dog to fly on a commercial plane, he said.

The debate over standard seat size has been brewing for years, with airlines pushing hard to keep the government from regulating the size of seats and the legroom between them. Under pressure from frustrated passengers and consumer advocates, Congress instructed the FAA in a 2018 financing bill to consider adopting seat standards.

In response to the directions from Congress, the FAA conducted a series of evacuation tests, using 775 volunteers in several simulated airline cabins at a test facility in Oklahoma. The volunteers varied in size, age and weight, but most of them were heavier than the average American traveler because "the Oklahoma population is typically larger, heavier, and can be assumed to be slower than the average U.S. population," according to the FAA study.

In some evacuation tests, the volunteers were offered extra money as motivation to be among the first to evacuate during the simulated evacuations.

Some of the tests used seats with a 28-inch pitch, among the narrowest found in the industry. The results "indicate that evacuations at a narrow seat pitch are safe for virtually all (99%) of the able-bodied population," according to the study.

The FAA study added this caveat: "The study results do not consider passenger comfort (or the lack thereof), which impacts a passenger's sense of well-being during a flight."

Passenger advocates like Breyault question the ability of such studies to accurately gauge what would happen in a real-life scenario.

"Physics tells you the more people you pack into a plane, the longer it will take to evacuate," he said. "It's hard to believe the current seat sizes are safe."

"Physics tells you the more people you pack into a plane, the longer it will take to evacuate. It's hard to believe the current seat sizes are safe."

John Breyault
vice president of the National Consumer League

WEEKEND: BOOKS

Questioning the wisdom of the war

Ackerman's latest, 'The Fifth Act,' a reflection on what the US evacuation from Afghanistan means for veterans

BY CARTER MALKASIAN
For The Washington Post

Elliott Ackerman served for nearly 10 years in America's wars. He was first a Marine lieutenant in the Battle of Fallujah, then a Marine Special Operations captain in Afghanistan and finally a CIA officer on the Afghan-Pakistan border. After leaving public service, he wrote several acclaimed books, including the novels "Green on Blue" and "Dark at the Crossing" and the memoir "Places and Names: On War, Revolution, and Returning." There is much to admire in his achievements over a mere 20 years. An unplanned life has virtues.

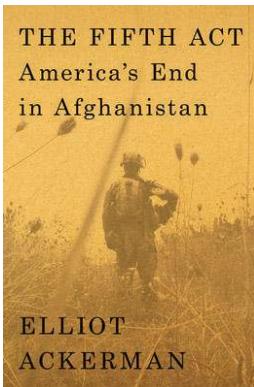
"The Fifth Act: America's End in Afghanistan" is Ackerman's newest book. The quality of the writing stands out. "Muzzle flashes winked from the windows. Light and medium machine guns knotted the air, swirling up whippets of dust with their recoil. An RPG slammed into the bed of the Ford Ranger in front of us."

From the opening lines, clean, clipped sentences have the quality of simplicity: "The war has always been there, even though I don't go to it anymore. It is older than my children, who sleep in the room next door. I learned to love it before I learned to love my wife, who fits her body beside mine in the bed. The war is ending — has been ending for some time. And it is disastrous."

"The Fifth Act" describes that ending from Ackerman's perspective as he lived through it. The book is less a history of the final evacuation than a meditation on the meaning of the end for America's fighting men and women.

It is part of a distinguished and growing literature by American veterans trying to understand the experience of those who served. Should the war be a source of pride or shame? Are our leaders wise or fools? Should they have tried harder to win or left earlier? Should we hate the Afghans or love the Afghans? Should we long for the warrior life that the war enshrined?

The book is broken into five acts. The chapters within each act (called scenes) shift between Italy, flashbacks of Ackerman's deployments to Afghanistan, analysis of why the war was lost and its impact on America. The consistent thread is Ackerman's exhausting remote effort to eva-



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Elliot Ackerman



LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

U.S. soldiers in Sultan Khel, Afghanistan, on April 29, 2013. The U.S. left Afghanistan in August 2021.

uate Afghans while vacationing in Italy with his family. The juxtaposition of his Italian vacation against the chaotic scenes of the Kabul evacuation is jarring — and familiar to hundreds of Americans who spent time in Afghanistan and then tried to do something to help during the evacuation. A clash occurred between family life and conflict zone, two worlds that weren't supposed to meet.

In exploring the meaning of the war, Ackerman circles around what could have been done differently by himself and his colleagues on the battlefield and by our leaders in Washington, or as he says, the "should've and could'ves." He is critical of Washington — indeed irate that the evacuation of endangered Afghans fell so much into the hands of concerned civilians. But he is not hunting for scapegoats. As the book progresses, his reflections imply unavoidable tragedy that he and the military had to endure. The concluding quote of the book is from Virgil, in "The Aeneid": "Not Helen's face, nor Paris was in fault; But by the gods was this destruction brought."

A connected theme is the worthiness of the Americans and Afghans who experienced the war. Ackerman paints both in a warm light; they are fallible humans, not treacherous criminals. With one excep-

tion, every American helps Ackerman. One after the other, the succession of Afghan convoys and families he is trying to evacuate cannot get through the crowds or are turned aside. Time after time, an American inside the airport tries to lend a hand. An Afghan whom Ackerman successfully helps to enter the wire says over his cellphone: "For such a help, for such a mercy, for such a service, I have no idea how to thank. But I'm thankful of everyone, of every single person of US America, because we never dreamed such a thing. Their love. Their mercy. Thank you. Thank you for everything." Through this message from an Afghan to all Americans, Ackerman suggests that good occurred, even if the wisdom of the war stands in question.

Ackerman's encounters with Adm. Mike Mullen, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 2007 to 2011, are especially moving. Ackerman introduces him, clad in his dress uniform, watching the Arlington funeral of a Marine from afar. Mullen later invites Ackerman to his office. The two do not know each other. Mullen's sole purpose, among all his other duties, is to ask Ackerman: "Are you all right? It sounds like you've been through a lot these past years and are still deploying quite a bit. I asked you here because it's

helpful for me to have a sense of how you and those like you are doing. How are all of you holding up?"

Mullen is one of several generals and admirals who were part of the controversial 2009 decision to send more U.S. forces to Afghanistan. His presence forces the reader to consider how the choices of U.S. leaders, right or wrong, were not divorced from compassion and kindness. Just like the war itself.

"The Fifth Act's" contribution to understanding the war lies foremost in passages of reflection and well-chosen quotes, such as the "should've and could'ves" or the line from "The Aeneid." They give pause and offer a window into deeper thought.

The line that I value most is in Act III at the end of Scene III. Following a difficult combat engagement in which a member of a fellow team was killed, Ackerman tells Marine Capt. Garrett "Tubes" Lawton, "The longer this war goes on, the more I trust my judgment but the more I doubt my courage." The passage bears on the war and its end.

Over time, America's judgment about the war came into conflict with the courage to stick it out. Today we are still wondering if our courage faltered, or our judgment improved.

WEEKEND: MUSIC



Alexa King Stone

Singer-songwriter Mary Gauthier has used her art to heal herself and to heal others who have suffered, such as war veterans and front-line health care workers.

Mary Gauthier uses songwriting to help people through trauma

BY DAVID BAUDER
Associated Press

Having used songwriting to navigate her own trauma, Mary Gauthier is putting those skills to work helping others do the same.

The Nashville-based musician has collaborated with war veterans to write about what they've been through, even producing a disc of the music, and more recently sat with health care workers who were on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Gauthier still writes for herself, and her most recent album, "Dark Enough to See the Stars," reflects the love found with partner and fellow musician Jaimee Harris, and the sadness of losing friends like John Prine and Nanci Griffith.

Yet through her workshops and the book she wrote, "Saved by a Song: The Art and Healing Power of Songwriting," Gauthier has become increasingly interested in how music can mean more than something to listen to.

"I couldn't make sense of a lot of things in my life, and I use art to help me," Gauthier said. "And

I just had a sense that it was something that songwriters can do to help people with their own trauma."

Music is a second career for Gauthier (pronounced go-SHAY), who's 60. She was a talented chef in Boston three decades ago. She was also a drunk. A DWI one summer night 32 years ago scared her sober.

Summoning the nerve to sing, then to write songs, led her to the stage of the Newport Folk Festival, and eventually to Nashville.

"My sense was that you were born to do this — people were chosen or something and I didn't feel chosen," she said. "I didn't know how to get to the place where I felt like I could do it. Sober, I was able to do it."

Her 2005 song, "I Drink," was a seminal moment. In it, she imagines what her life would have been like if she hadn't quit booze. The chorus is blunt: "Fish swim, birds fly. Daddies yell, mamas cry. Old men sit and think. I drink."

When she performs the song, it's a barometer of the night's audience. Some will hoot and holler, because who writes drink-

ing songs that aren't supposed to be fun? Those who are really listening know it's not an anthem. It's a sad song.

"The narrator in the song is saying 'I know what I am, but I don't give a damn,'" she said. Some of her listeners, particularly those in recovery, "know that this is a red flag. Because people who scream 'I don't give a damn,' generally are screaming it because they do."

Similarly, her song "March 11, 1962" — her birthday — is devastating. Gauthier, who was given up for adoption as an infant, sings about her real experience of tracking down her birth mother, calling her, and being rejected. Mary was a secret in her life, and she wanted it to remain so.

There was no happy ending. Gauthier talked one other time to her birth mother, seeking the identity of her father. The woman said she couldn't remember.

The important thing for Gauthier was being brave enough to make the call.

"It was an articulation of how hard it is as an adoptee to go back in there and request information and try to get your

story," she said. "It's so scary. The fear is primal, like it could kill you. It's terrifying. You get regressed into this infant again that was relinquished."

"For me, the story is just a reminder of how far I've come," she said, "because it's not terrifying anymore. I climbed Fear Mountain and I lived. It didn't kill me, and it actually helped me heal."

Gauthier is determined to share those feelings, of conquering fear and healing.

She began meeting with veterans groups with the help of singer-songwriter Darden Smith, who has done similar work. She'll sit with her guitar amid a group and ask them to tell their experiences. Reluctantly at first, the stories come out. Gauthier keys on a phrase or experience, and together they write a song.

"I think it changed Mary's life," Smith said. "I think that Mary found a certain calling. Her first calling was to write songs and deliver her own story. Her second calling was to play it for people. Her third calling was using these skill sets to help people tell their stories."



"Dark Enough to See the Stars," Gauthier's 11th album, was released in June.

People are often reluctant to talk about trauma because they associate it with failure, Gauthier said. When she works with a group, she can sense the relief in people who recognize that what they're feeling is not unique.

"It's not me pulling it out of them," she said. "It's the song. I'm just the midwife. The song is the maestro. The song is the CEO. We make an agreement: Let's just be honest and see where it goes."

It's enormously gratifying to be of service, she said.

"I know that it is helping them in a way I can't fully articulate but I can see it in their faces," she said. "Who wouldn't want to do that?"

WEEKEND: MUSIC REVIEWS

Jeff Beck & Johnny Depp

18 (Atco Records)

Electric guitar master Jeff Beck has deftly accomplished myriad feats of six-string magic over the years, as befits a dazzling musical wizard whose fans have ranged from onetime recording partner John McLaughlin to the young Jimi Hendrix.

Alas, even Beck isn't capable of making Johnny Depp disappear. Such an accomplishment would immeasurably improve "18," this unlikely duo's first (and, one hopes, last) joint album.

Beck, a two-time Rock & Roll Hall of Fame inductee, met three-time Oscar-nominated actor Depp — an avocational guitarist and vocalist — in Japan in 2016. The two began recording what became "18" in 2019.

Given Depp's marginal musical skills as an at-best average rhythm guitarist and even less able vocalist, it is easy to see why he would be eager to team up with the legendary Beck. What Depp's allure might be to Beck is difficult to determine, although Beck offered a key non-musical reason in a recent press release, stating: "Every time we're together, it's nonstop laughter."

Nonstop laughter does not, unfortunately, make for memorable music.

Beck, as he has demonstrated since rising to prominence with The Yardbirds in England in the mid-1960s, has a sound and style all his own. His impeccable tone, exquisite phrasing and deeply felt playing are matched by his imagination, exacting command of dynamics and oh-so-nimble touch.

Depp — who dominated headlines and the internet earlier this year during his contentious libel case against his former wife, Amber Heard — has none of Beck's attributes. His rhythm guitar playing is passable at best, although not especially audible here (which may be a good thing). His vocals, which are pompously recited almost as often as they are sung, are negligible.

— George Varga
The San Diego Union-Tribune

Calvin Harris

Funk Wav Bounces Vol. 2 (Columbia)

Calvin Harris' last star-studded funk album in 2017 sported several hits but left listeners wanting more. Now, the DJ from the UK has delivered a second volume, titled "Funk Wav Bounces Vol. 2," featuring even more tracks and big names, but bigger doesn't always mean better.

The album emanates laid-back summer vibes similar to the first volume, this time with a little more disco — it's making a comeback! Soaring string interludes accompany punchy basslines, putting this album at the crossroads of the '70s dance genre and funk.

Most of the tracks are smooth celebrations of youth perfect for playing on a summer drive around town with the top down. Most of them, that is, with maybe a few exceptions.

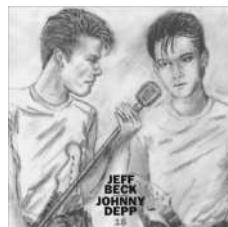
The dud of the album is the first track after the intro, "New Money," with its underwhelming instrumentals underneath rapper 21 Savage, which didn't do the rapper's equally underwhelming lyrics — "Gucci garments, kush smell like armpits," for example — any favors.

"Stay With Me" also lacks as an awkward combination of three very different artists — Justin Timberlake, Halsey and Pharrell Williams, whose contributions to this song fall short of cohesive.

After a few flops, however, there are some truly enjoyable collaborations on the album. "Obsessed," featuring Charlie Puth and Shenseea, has a city pop feel with a Caribbean twist, and Swae Lee shines on "Lean On Me." "Ready Or Not," featuring Busta Rhymes, stands out from the chill theme of the rest of the album, but the hype and flow of the track is entertaining nevertheless.

This album may not have much more to offer than "Funk Wav Bounces Vol. 1" did, so if you're on the lookout for vibey tunes to enjoy for the rest of summer, you might be better off sticking with Harris' hits from 2017.

— Kiana Doyle
Associated Press



Post Malone film falls flat

BY MARK KENNEDY

Associated Press

There's a moment in Post Malone's new concert film when its star confesses to how surreal his life has become: "Sometimes I feel like I'm not a real person."

Fans will get no clarity on that astounding statement after watching Amazon's "Post Malone: Runaway," a limp, uninspiring 60 minutes of flash with no substance. It's unreal.

Not only does the bestselling, genre-mixing hitmaker himself not come across as a real person, the film never tries to help him. Fans won't learn anything new, and the curious may even be turned off.

The documentary captures Post Malone's first U.S. arena tour in 2019 — a 37-date tour through North America with stops in Los Angeles, Dallas and New York, among others.

The filmmakers — director Hector Dockrill and writers Sam Bridger and Casey Engelhardt — got backstage access without doing anything meaningful with it, ending up more like hype men than independent observers.

"Post Malone: Runaway" is in many ways like an hourlong music video, with 10 songs — "Take What You Want," "Wow" and "Rockstar," among them — captured with shaky, distorted camera angles, interspersed with backstage glad-handing and tons of beer pong. Oh, so much beer pong. It humanizes Posty but also makes him look like an overage bro holding onto childish things.

There are few moments in the film that show our hero not cradling a cigarette or a Solo cup, a tortured genius who seems perennially tipsy, screaming out his lyrics in a sort of

The Brother Brothers

Cover to Cover (Compass Records)

Identical twins Adam and David Moss are easy to tell apart on their charming album of cover tunes.

That's usually David singing the high part, his gentle harmonies with Adam doing a distinctive dance that can only result from plenty of practice and shared genes. It's as if the Illinois natives were separated at birth by thirds.

"Cover to Cover" is a celebration of the folk duo's influences and an imaginative mix of material from such songwriting Hall of Famers as Hoagy Carmichael, Tom T. Hall and Jackson Browne. The Brother Brothers avoid obvious choices and instead shine a light on worthy deep cuts, among them Richard Thompson's "Waltzing's for Dreamers," James Taylor's "You Can Close Your Eyes" and Tom Waits' "Flower's Grave."

Sparse but tasteful and varied instrumental accompaniment includes the brothers' fiddle and cello.

The brothers forge a crystalline vocal blend even on songs considered solo vehicles, including an a cappella performance of Carmichael's "I Get Along Without You Very Well (Except Sometimes)," which is augmented by lovely vocals from sisters Rachael and Emily Price.

And the Mosses perform the Beatles' "I Will" as if they've been singing it together since they were 6, which they have. Such is the beauty of sibling harmony.



AMAZON FREEVEE/AP

Post Malone is shown in a scene from the concert-tour documentary "Post Malone: Runaway." The film covers the hitmaker's 2019 U.S. arena tour.

existential crouch onstage and getting angry about beer pong rule violations after shows. Introspection is not his strong suit. "It's either you're with it or you ain't," he says. "The songs, I guess, are what they are and I am who I am."

The mood of the documentary is sort of a grievance tour. There's a defensiveness to Malone and his team that's laughably unfounded. He's portrayed as fighting the impression that he's a lightweight and not the youngest artist to have three diamond-certified singles or to have broken the record for most simultaneous top 20 Hot 100 Billboard hits.

His team points out that unlike Elvis or Michael Jackson or Madonna, Malone lives in a time of social media, which sometimes has haters writing that he's not as good as he imagines. He's deep in his 20s now. Is he really discovering Twitter is an awful place?

The non-Posty interviews consist

of superstar guests who stop by backstage — Alicia Keys and Timbaland, among them, and a truly uncomfortable-looking Billie Joe Armstrong. "That was awesome," the Green Day songwriter says, not entirely convincingly.

One of the most awkward moments is the appearance of Ozzy Osbourne for "Take What You Want." Malone seems unable to integrate one of rock's greatest gods — or even talk to him — and Ozzy is left on stage marooned and manically grinning, just raising his arms up. The torch has not been passed, shall we say.

But there is a figure who does emerge as an intriguing star — and that's not Malone. It's Swae Lee, with an ear for melody that stuns even Malone. As for the documentary about the man of the hour, do as the title suggests: Run away.

"Post Malone: Runaway," an Amazon Studios release, is rated 18+ for drug use and language. Running time: 65 minutes.

Bella Poarch

Dolls (Warner Records)

In theory this should work. With her massive TikTok following, Bella Poarch clearly needed to strike while the iron is hot and release a studio EP. "Dolls" is that album.

Now comes the tricky part. Will enough of Poarch's 91 million TikTok followers and pop music fans appreciate her six-track effort, or merely see it as a fame grab piggybacking on her curious ascent to the top of the social media heap?

"Dolls" is heavy on production, with Poarch offering little more than breathy coos above a mundane pop backdrop. Songs like "Build A Bitch" and "Dolls" have a decent message about self-identity, but they are delivered in fleeting and furtive fashion, with Poarch rushing clutches of lyrics past us instead of, well, singing.

The exception is "Living Hell," a solid song about relationship power and control. Poarch excels on this track because she's given room to push the boundaries of her voice.

The strategic unveiling of Poarch as recording artist is no surprise. She's popular in one white-hot forum, so why not try another? "Dolls" is carefully lush, mistake-free pop.

Social media made Bella Poarch famous, and only time will tell if her music will keep her there.



— Ron Harris
Associated Press

WEEKEND: TELEVISION



Disney+

The Hulk/Bruce Banner (Mark Ruffalo) and She-Hulk/Jennifer Walters (Tatiana Maslany) appear in a scene from "She-Hulk: Attorney at Law," Marvel's first proper half-hour sitcom.

Meet Marvel's newest green giant

'Orphan Black' star Maslany makes her debut as 'She-Hulk' in the new Disney+ series, which is also focused on identity

BY TRACY BROWN
Los Angeles Times

Long before "She-Hulk," Tatiana Maslany had an affinity for mean, green fighting machines. The Emmy Award-winning actor was a serious "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" fan as a kid, and to this day she happily admits her fondness for the quartet of pizza-loving superheroes in a half-shell. She's quick to name 1991's "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze" as her favorite of the franchise, even though it's "the one that everybody kind of doesn't like."

More perfectly, Maslany's favorite out of the brothers is the sai-wielding, short-tempered Raphael. Her affection runs so deep that when 1993's "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles III" comes up in conversation, she easily recalls a moment in the film when Raph shows his softer side while connecting with a kid that she found moving.

"I thought he was so hot for some reason," Maslany admits with a laugh during a recent video call, "which I feel like says terrible things about the people I'm attracted to."

This love for the Ninja Turtles may explain why she decided to make her superhero debut as Jennifer Walters in the upcoming Disney+ series "She-Hulk: Attorney at Law" from Marvel Studios. There's a clear affinity there.

Hailed as the Marvel Cinematic Universe's first proper half-hour sitcom — "WandaVision" being more of a meta-sitcom, if we're being honest — "She-Hulk," created for television by Jessica Gao, follows Walters after she gains the ability to transform into a green, super-powered, 6-foot-7 version of herself following an accident. Whereas the Ninja Turtles' origin story involves their exposure to radioactive ooze, Walters' life is changed after coming into contact with her cousin Bruce Banner's gamma radiation-infused blood.

Banner, portrayed by Mark Ruffalo, is better known as the Hulk, an MCU mainstay and a member of the Avengers whose anger triggers his transformation into a super-powered giant with green flesh and, initially, a separate personality that he cannot control.

It was the idea of unpacking what this physical transformation meant for Walters that convinced Maslany she had to audition for the role.

"There's so much conversation around women's bodies and bodies in general," says Maslany, pointing toward the response to the show's trailer as an example. "That's the juiciest thing that this show can talk about. The percep-

tion and what it is to occupy a different body and to be received, societally, differently. The expectations we have on women's bodies, and what they mean about how we can treat them."

"I really think that a big part of identity is not only what you think and how you feel and how you move in the world, but also how the world receives you and what the world is giving back to you," Gao says. "Both of those things shape a person's sense of self, and [She-Hulk] is an extreme physical version of that. ... Even if she's the same person on the inside, it does change how she acts and how she thinks because of how the outside world treats her, and that's a lot that she's going to have to grapple with emotionally."

Gao's comedic approach to these themes, which is "very human and relatable," was something Maslany had not expected from a superhero series. So, despite her

"I really think that a big part of identity is not only what you think and how you feel and how you move in the world, but also how the world receives you and what the world is giving back to you."

Jessica Gao
creator of "She-Hulk" for TV

general reticence about auditioning for something with the scale of a Marvel project, she knew she had to try out for the role.

Maslany is best known for starring in "Orphan Black," playing more than a dozen characters over the course of the series' five-season run — and rarely just one at a time. The superhuman feat won her an Emmy Award in 2016, two more nominations, multiple Critics' Choice Awards and more. Despite that breakthrough, though, she admits she has never felt drawn to the bigger projects and that she finds as much excitement in smaller, independent short films as she does in productions of a grander scale.

Maslany started acting as a child while growing up in Regina, in Saskatchewan, Canada; she says she joined "every improv team ... and every community theater

young people's group that [she] could be a part of." She suspects it was the thrill of being in front of an audience that really spoke to her and kept her acting in her youth.

Despite working consistently since age 9, Maslany says that she didn't start understanding and studying acting as a craft in earnest until she was an adult, and points to John Cassavetes' "A Woman Under The Influence" as the catalyst.

"It offered up to me the possibilities of what this art form can be," she says. "That it can have freedom in it and this abandon and loss of holding that is so electric to witness. And so much about connection and humanity. I think now, for me, it's really about connecting with people in a moment on screen that I find so exciting."

Maslany admits she has more fun in interviews when she gets to nerd out about her work, and our conversation easily flows through discussions about the way the themes of "Orphan Black" — a series about autonomy and identity and exploring the multiple possibilities contained within one person — relate to "She-Hulk's" exploration of bodies and perception. And how trans musician Sophie, with her layered sounds and the experimental nature of her work, was an inspiration as she played She-Hulk. And even how the gray motion-capture suit she had to wear for scenes in which Walters is She-Hulk helped inform her portrayal of someone who feels a bit like an outsider in her larger green form.

For all of the accolades, though — from the Television Academy, from TV critics, from "Orphan Black's" Clone Club of fans and her "She-Hulk" colleagues, who often preface their praise by admitting it might be too effusive to be believed — Maslany is as nice a person as you would hope. Those who have worked with her are quick to point out her interpersonal strengths: her kindness, her empathy and her ability to connect with people and to be present as both an actor and friend.

"Her craft is so fine-tuned," says Anu Valia, who directed three episodes of "She-Hulk." "You can see her listening all the time. There was never one take where I felt she was phoning it in, or I felt she wasn't listening, even in a silly, funny, quick little scene, which is marvelous. I don't know who has the stamina to do that."

Valia adds that as a friend, "she [also] brings that ability to be incredibly present into her personal life. So when you talk to her, you feel like you're the only person in the world. And she gets so deep with you and listens to you."

Ginger Gonzaga, who plays Walters' friend Nikki in the

SEE SHE-HULK ON PAGE 31

WEEKEND: TELEVISION

She-Hulk: Actor committed to doing good like lawyer alter ego

FROM PAGE 30

series, describes Maslany as "very much the real deal" and "the type of person I like working with as an actor ... because she's instantly vulnerable and very limitless.

"She's an honest, soulful, vulnerable, intelligent, caring actor and person," says Gonzaga, who is thrilled that Nikki and Walters share a genuinely caring adult friendship on the show. "I feel like she's doing exactly what she's supposed to do in her life and she also uses that platform wisely."

That platform has allowed Maslany the ability to speak frankly about allegations of poor working conditions for visual effects artists working on Disney projects like "She-Hulk," which itself has come under criticism of its VFX. In this, she's been joined in expressing solidarity by executive producers Gao and Kat Coiro.

"I think that there are incredibly difficult working conditions, and if you don't have the protection of a union, then you can be taken advantage of," says Maslany, who adds that it is thanks to visual effects artistry that her performance can be translated through layers of computer-generated imagery. "I'm just so in awe of what they're able to do with very little support in that sense. I know that my union, as an actor, is incredibly important to me. ... I think it's really important to have those systems in place that protect people and that ascribe their skills value and respect."

There is also a promotional "She-Hulk" featurette in which Maslany is seen wearing a shirt that reads, "Support Trans Futures." She saw it as an opportunity to reach an audience and show the community that she stands with them as an ally. Better still if being clear in her beliefs can contribute even in a small way to help make change.

"I'm aware of what reach images like that have and I'm aware that there have been bills passed in Florida that Disney has been connected to in terms of providing money to [politicians that passed] anti-LGBTQ bills," Maslany says. "I know how little it costs me to do something like that. I'm incredibly privileged and I'm very fortunate to have the platform I do. And I'm very supportive of people who are fighting on the ground for LGBTQ rights. That community means a lot to me and if there's any way that I can continue to voice my allyship, then I'll do it."

Maslany's thoughts on doing good in the ways that she can reflect the questions Walters will likely have to confront over the course of "She-Hulk." Walters, a lawyer dedicated to justice in a court of law, doesn't believe she should have to give up that commitment just because of her superpowers. But as with fame, that doesn't mean it will always go smoothly.

"She has a life that she really cares about," Maslany says. "She doesn't want to have to do this other thing that feels very foreign to her and, like, it doesn't fit."



Amazon Prime Video photos

In Amazon's streaming series "A League of Their Own," Black players have to find another route to success by working in a factory.

Beyond baseball

Executive producers say 'A League of Their Own's' parallel stories about race, sexuality part of an effort to be authentic

BY BRUCE R. MILLER

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

When producers looked at the history of women in baseball, they realized "A League of Their Own" only scratched the surface.

Underneath, there were stories about the players' personal lives and the challenges they faced in a less-than-friendly sports world. Working off that 1940s history, creators Abbi Jacobson and Will Graham found material that could fill multiple seasons of television.

One scene in Penny Marshall's 1992 film, for example, prompted a secondary plot in their new Amazon Studios series, now streaming on Prime Video. A foul ball is picked up by a Black player and tossed back to Geena Davis.

"That's supposed to let the audience know that she's good, but she can't be on the benches," says Jacobson, who also stars as one of the players. "We wanted to show the All-American Girls (Professional Baseball League teams) were an incredible opportunity for white women and white paths, but they did not allow Black women to even try out."

In a parallel story, the new series shows how a Black athlete like Max (played by Chante Adams) has to find a different route to success. "Their journeys are really important to tell side by side," Jacobson says.

And, because her character works in a factory, Adams also got training in welding. "I had my Rosie the Riveter moment," Adams says. Like the other actors, she was sent to boot camp to make sure her baseball skills were camera-ready.

"I'm telling you, we could go pro today," Roberta Colindrez, who plays Lupe, says.

"We trained for a month before we shot the pilot and then another month before we started the series," says Kelly McCormack, who plays Jess. "By the end of it, we were more like baseball players than actors."

Other stories to tell

Executive producers Will Graham and Desta Tedros Reff say talking with actual players from the era revealed just how determined they were to play the game.

"It's been life-changing," says Graham. "It taught us we should be less cautious and less careful about going for the things that we want."

The new series also looks into the women's personal lives and touches on LGBTQ themes.

"So often when you tell stories about that, whether (they're stories about) women or queer stories or people of color, they're always rooted in trauma and pain," Reff adds. "That's not to say that that doesn't exist. But there was a joy (here) about their lives and their experiences and chasing their dreams. We really wanted that to translate to the show."

Sexuality isn't the point of "League," Graham says. "It's that that they want to play baseball and they have to overcome obstacles on the road to doing that. We're just getting an opportunity to tell their story authentically."

Bonding moments

Those off-the-field moments gave the actors a chance to show what other interests the women had. "It was so cool to see all the different layers," says D'Arcy Carden, who plays Greta.

Meanwhile, Adams' parallel story delves into Civil Rights, religion and fam-



To make sure their baseball skills were camera-ready, the actors went to boot camp and trained for two months.

ily responsibilities.

When Saidah Arrika Ekulona, who plays Max's mother, saw the baseball scenes, she realized just how amazing the series was.

"As an actor, you have this myopic view of your storyline and the things you're a part of," she says. "And then you watch the whole story and realize how unbelievable the series is."

Early into the training process, the actors found themselves bonding, more so than they would on another film or series. "We became a team," Carden explains.

Adds Melanie Mayfield, who plays Jo: "We were friends when we started filming, which almost never happens. And we got to play characters who were really three-dimensional."

All work, little play

When they hit the field, the actors looked like players.

"We're kind of pinching ourselves because we wanted to tell the story authentically. We might only get to do this once and we couldn't leave anything on the table," Graham says. "It was a challenge, but also an enormous privilege."

McCormack says there was little downtime for those playing Rockford Peaches. "If we weren't at bat, we were all running around in the background. So we were actors in the show, but also we were sweaty extras."

That depth, McCormack adds, "made the whole ensemble feel like each one of us was very much an important part of the show."

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS

BY STACEY COLINO

The Washington Post

It's not a fitness myth: There really is such a thing as muscle memory, although it may not mean exactly what you think it does.

Although people colloquially refer to never forgetting how to ride a bike, throw a baseball or serve a tennis ball as examples of "muscle memory," those come-back skills actually stem from a motor learning process. In other words, they are "motor memory." When you learn how to perform these movements well and can do them automatically without conscious thought, that information becomes encoded in the brain, so in the future, "you still have the fundamental coordination that you learned," explained David Behm, a university research professor in the School of Human Kinetics and Recreation at the Memorial University of Newfoundland in Canada.

When exercise physiologists talk about muscle memory, on the other hand, they're referring to the phenomenon whereby previously trained muscles acquire strength and volume after a period of disuse much more quickly than never-trained muscles do when starting from scratch.

In the past 15 years, research has shown that the changes actually persist in the muscles themselves. In one study of mice, for example, the results suggest that after nuclei in muscle cells proliferate in response to an overload of training, those extra nuclei aren't lost during subsequent periods of inactivity. They're retained in distinct muscle fibers, essentially waiting to be reactivated with retraining.

When you exercise, it's normal for muscle fibers to experience minor damage; this is part of the way a muscle gets stronger. Dormant cells called satellite cells move to the site of the injury and insert more nuclei — the brains of the cells — into the muscle fibers, which allows the muscle to grow, explained exercise physiologist Fabio Comana, a lecturer in exercise and nutritional sciences at San Diego State University. Even if you stop exercising for a significant period of time, he said, "the nuclei stay [in place] and accelerate the return to muscle growth" with retraining.

Another area of research into muscle memory relates to changes to the ways your genes work in response to your environment and behavior, according to Kevin Murach, an assistant professor of health, human performance and recreation at the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville.

"In the muscle cells, genes get turned on and off in response to exercise in order to make certain proteins in the cell, which ultimately facilitates muscle growth and strength," he said. According



Making a muscle memory

Experts explain what the concept actually means, offer tips to rekindle it

to this theory, long-term changes to these genes could be what drives muscle memory.

One way or another, this much is clear: The more you exercise, the more (muscle memory) savings you'll accrue.

"Once you've got those additional nuclei, they're in reserve. You're banking that capacity," said Lawrence Schwartz, a professor of biology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. "You essentially have an instrumental manual for making muscle, so you can get enhanced growth much faster the second time around."

And researchers believe muscle memory is long lasting, maybe even permanent.

"There's never an age where it stops," Behm said. In fact, a recent study involving men in their 50s to 70s investigated the

effects of completing a resistance training regimen, followed by a detraining period, then a retraining period, each consisting of 12 weeks. As expected, resistance training increased knee extension strength and power by 10 to 36%. Detraining resulted in a 5 to 15% loss of strength and power. The big reveal: "Less than eight weeks of retraining were needed to reach the post-training level of ... maximum strength," according to the researchers.

But how quickly you regain your former fitness depends on how fit you were initially, how long the layoff was, how old you are and how long you'd been exercising to establish your muscle memory, according to Cedric Bryant, president and chief science officer of the American Council on Exercise.

"The more fit you are and the

longer you established that muscle memory," he said, "the more the odds tilt in your favor."

All this news about muscle memory should be encouraging for those who fell off the fitness wagon during the pandemic. It means you're not starting from square one; you have a distinct advantage when it comes to regaining your former level of fitness. And the principles apply to both resistance training and endurance training, according to Cory Dungan, an assistant professor in exercise physiology at Baylor University.

With strength training, Comana recommends using this principle for weight progression to avoid injuring yourself when you resume weight training: If you're doing three sets of 10 reps for two or three weeks, once you get to the point where you feel as if you

"The more fit you are and the longer you established that muscle memory, the more the odds tilt in your favor."

Cedric Bryant

president and chief science officer,
American Council on Exercise

could do two more reps until you reach the point of failure, then it's time to add a little more weight.

With aerobic exercise, the best way to rekindle your muscle memory is to ease into your workouts again.

"Start at a level below what you were accustomed to doing, then gradually increase in terms of duration, frequency, then intensity," Bryant said. "Do the minimum effective dose. Moderately challenging should be enough to set you on a course of regaining fitness. Don't try to go from zero to 60 in terms of ramping up too soon."

Instead, it's generally safe to increase these elements by 5% every week or two as you feel comfortable, Bryant said. This means that if your goal is to do 150 minutes of aerobic exercise per week, which amounts to five 30-minute sessions, you could start with 15-to-20-minute sessions at an intensity where you can speak but not sing, he said. "Then add five minutes per week until you get to where you were." Then you can increase the intensity of your workouts, perhaps by adding higher-intensity intervals to your baseline pace.

To hone your skills with a particular sport, such as tennis, soccer or golf, focus more on how you can take advantage of the motor-neuron process.

"You can use mental imagery to send messages to those neurons that will turn on when you want to do that movement," Behm said. It may also help to watch videos where other people are playing that sport, because this will activate the mirror neurons in your brain, he added. (When you watch sports, specific neurons in your brain will fire as if you were playing the sport yourself.)

Ultimately, it helps to think of muscle memory as a payoff for all the past work you put into learning a sport, boosting your aerobic capacity or endurance, or building muscle and strength. The best way to tap into muscle memory is to "get back on the horse," Murach said. "You will never know how much muscle memory you may have until you start training again."

WEEKEND: FAMILY

Back to (ANYTHING BUT) normal



iStock

5 ways parents can help children regain their footing as school year starts

By PHYLLIS FAGELL

The Washington Post

Yet again, principal Cindy Conley was surprised by something her post-lockdown students were doing. At an end-of-year celebration in June for eighth graders at Irving Middle School in Springfield, Va., a group of boys began playing “duck, duck, goose.” Soon, more than 50 boys were playing the game, one that is usually enjoyed by much younger kids. “That never happened pre-pandemic,” Conley said. “But some of these kids left in sixth grade and came back as instant eighth graders, and I don’t think I anticipated how much the elementary part was still in them.”

The 2021-22 school year upended conventional notions about what students can or “should” be able to do by a certain age or grade. Teachers, principals and parents were all caught off guard by some of the trickle-down impacts they saw on children returning to in-person school.

But this is a new year and parents and educators are going into it with more realistic expectations and a better understanding of what kids need to be successful. As children start a new school year in a time still characterized by uncertainty and deep division, here are five ways caregivers can help them learn, connect with others and maintain a strong sense of self.

Let go of the notion of ‘normal’

Some children thought things would be “normal” last year and were blindsided when they struggled in unexpected ways, whether they didn’t complete assignments or felt more sensitive to criticism.

To help kids stay positive when things go awry, “interrupt the concept of normal,” said Christopher Emdin, a professor of education at the University of Southern California and the author of “Ratchetedemic.” “Plant the idea that the pandemic is a restart, an opportunity to dream about how you want things to be. ‘When you went through school before, did you like it all? No. Based on what things were before, how do you want it to be now?’”

Take their emotional pulse

Ask your child questions like: “What are your biggest worries about going back to school?” and “What are you most looking forward to doing this year?” Explicitly acknowledge that the past few years have been tough, said Jason Ablin, a school consultant in Los Angeles and the author of “The Gender Equation in Schools.” “Say: ‘We want you to feel great about going to school every day, and if you feel like things are going off the rails, we’re here for you.’”

It’s helpful to know a child’s baseline stress level, said Michelle Hoffman, a licensed counselor at Granite Academy, a therapeutic school in Braintree, Mass. If they tell you they’re worried about a test or a fight with a friend, ask them to rate the stress on a scale of one to five. The number itself is less important than what it tells you about their perception of the situation and their capacity to cope with it.

“Once you have a basis for comparison, you can

have a conversation about what might lower their stress,” Hoffman said. Validate their concerns even if they seem overblown, she added. “You might feel the pandemic is over and your kid should be able to handle more pressure, but stress is additive. Kids are resilient, but they’ve used up their reserves.”

Write down, reflect on goals

Children can feel powerless because they have little control over things like when they eat lunch at school or whether they take math in sixth grade, but parents can give them back a sense of agency by having them set and work toward personal goals. Encourage them to commit their goals to paper, because research shows that people are more likely to reach their goals if they write them down and monitor their progress.

Setting goals also can ease kids’ anxiety related to events in the news. To help them, shift the focus away from the state of the world and back to their own lives.

“If you zoom out to space and everything on earth looks tiny, then it can seem like there’s no meaning to any of it, and that can feel really overwhelming,” Emily Kircher-Morris, a counselor in Missouri and the author of “Raising Twice-Exceptional Children,” explained. “But if you zoom back in, you get to decide what your meaning and purpose is.” That could be a goal like wanting to do better in a class or make a new friend.

Offer more ‘structured fun’

After years of turmoil, many children are focused on friendships, but their skills are rusty.

Research shows that connecting with others can improve mental health and kids need the practice, but they may need an assist. If they’re too anxious to host a friend at home, suggest a structured activity like bowling or basketball at the park. Encourage them to sign up for at least one after-school club that reflects their interests, too. The idea is to find low-pressure opportunities where kids can practice making eye contact and resolving conflict, Larry Haynes, the principal of Oak Mountain Middle School in Birmingham, Ala., said.

Affirm that they’ll be fine

“We talk about kids almost in monthly terms — academically they should be here, their social emotional development should be here,” Ablin said. “But when things are as disrupted as they have been, we need to see kids where they actually are, be calm, loving and thoughtful about that, and really believe that eventually the child will be just fine.”

That means letting go of the idea that kids have “fallen behind.” As Ablin noted, “It diminishes children and kills the joy in learning. When we say, ‘You’re not where you’re supposed to be,’ we’re also saying, ‘You’re not who you’re supposed to be.’”

Instead, emphasize that growing up in an unprecedented time is why they will be change-makers. “I tell kids: ‘Fifty years from now, who will be the legacy builders, the young people who pushed back when the world went crazy? It will be you,’ Emdin said.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Finding community near the deep fryer

I arrived at 8:30 a.m., just as four other volunteers were setting up a shade canopy over the deep fat fryer. It was our town’s annual “Fool’s Rules Regatta,” and it was going to be a scorcher.

Leaning my bike against a telephone pole, I noticed that I was the only one wearing my Rotary Club T-shirt and hat, which I’d assumed were required for volunteers. As a newbie in the club, I was prone to making rookie mistakes.

The others were struggling to understand how the pop-up canopy worked. This was my opportunity to gain a modicum of respect among the veteran Rotarians. After two decades of managing three kids’ sports team obligations, I’d earned an honorary doctorate in shade canopy and folding chair engineering. I jumped into the fray, expertly sliding a corner bracket into its slot as if I’d invented the contraption.

With the canopy in place, the fryer oil heating and more volunteers arriving, I looked for my next task.

Our Rotary Club was running its annual “Dough Boy” concession stand, so there was dough stretching, cooking, sugaring, serving and selling to do. Known elsewhere as fry dough, elephant ears, malasadas, zeppolis, sopapillas, flippers, beignets, beaver tails, buñuelos and frying saucers, I’d learned that Rhode Islanders love dough boys almost as much as they love clams.

I climbed into the wooden concession shack next to the canopy to join Pat, the club treasurer’s wife. David the fryer handed me a vat of fresh-fried dough. As instructed, I rolled them in sugar and cinnamon and transferred them to a counter where runners whisked them away for selling. Our group became a well-oiled — and well-sugared — machine.

Soon, “Dough boys, get yer dough boys here!” could be heard wafting along the beach, where Rotarians sold to boat-builders and spectators alike. Back at the shack, the aroma of frying dough and cinnamon snaked its way down the sidewalk while we entertained ourselves in the rising heat.

“Sugar-free, fat-free and guilt-free!” Win bellowed to passersby, garnering chuckles. “Best one I’ve ever eaten,” one woman testified, holding her half-eaten dough boy aloft. “Just stand here and say that a thousand times,” Ted joked.

From my sugar-perch in the shack, I observed the charming scene, longing for the camaraderie locals took for granted in tight-knit communities like this.

As a Navy spouse moving with our family every few years, I’d learned that being part of a community didn’t happen automatically. Although it sometimes felt like jumping from the frying pan into the fire (or deep fat fryer, as it were), I knew I had to put myself out in the community if I hoped to belong to it. Volunteering gave me a sense of purpose and provided the camaraderie I craved.

“You’re getting so good at this,” I ribbed Dave the fryer. “Make the next one look like Mickey Mouse.” “Crunchy on the outside! Floppy on the inside!” Win barked to curious people crowding the sidewalks. We frowned at his awkward adjectives, so he edited his sales pitch: “Crispy on the outside, fluffy on the inside!” “Dough boys aren’t gluten-free. We charge for our gluten!” wailed the club president, Jeff, while Win, Ted and Jamie roared with laughter.

Soon, a horn blared, announcing the regatta’s first heat. Silly, makeshift boats of all shapes and sizes lined up in the sparkling Narragansett Bay. Townspeople and tourists, licking sugar and cinnamon from their fingertips, wandered seaside sidewalks holding children’s hands and dog leashes.

By the time my volunteer shift ended, my Rotary Club T-shirt was thoroughly soiled with sweat and sugar. In the end, our club made \$900 and I came home with a bicycle basket filled with warm dough boys.

But the real profit I gained was knowing that I belong.

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

LETTERPLAY

BY TINA LABADIE / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Tina Labadie lives in London, Ontario. This is her first New York Times crossword. It has one of my favorite kinds of themes — one offering many different “aha” moments. The example at 118-Across, at the bottom of the puzzle, is a little different from the others, like the kicker of a joke. As a construction fillip, every letter in the alphabet is used at least once in the completed grid. — W. S.

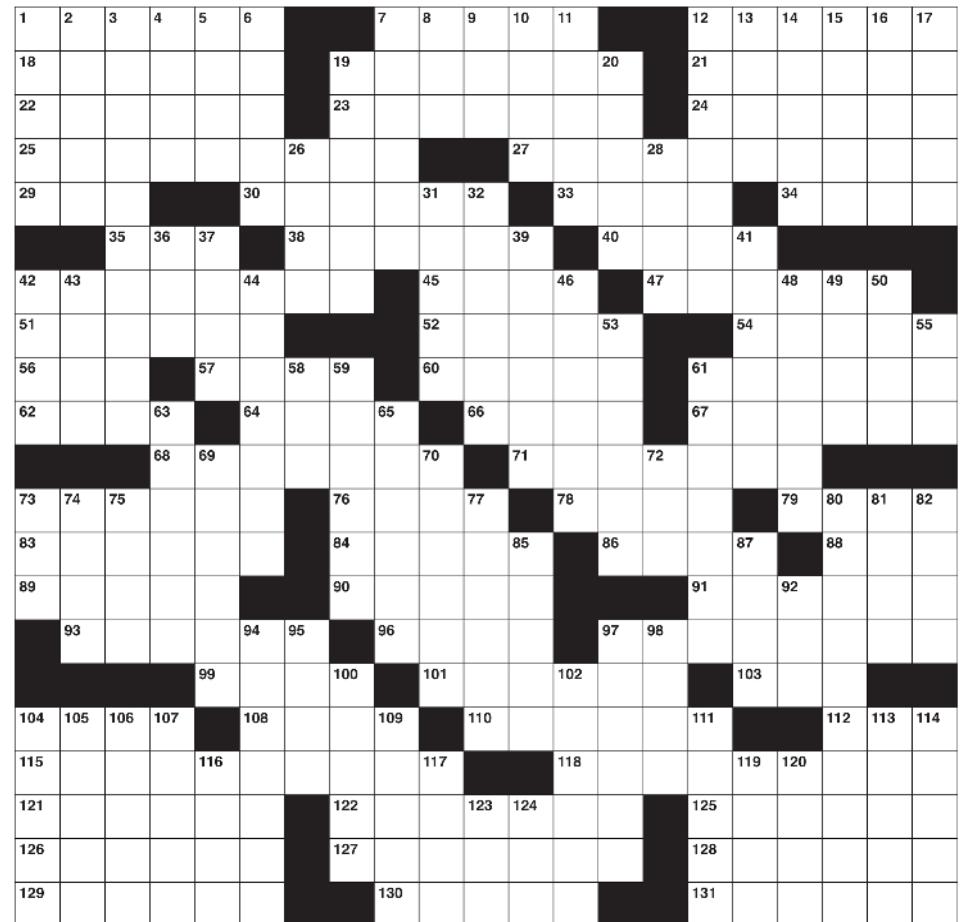
ACROSS

- 1 Homes that may have butlers
- 7 Singer Dylan of the Wallflowers
- 12 Supporting beams
- 18 Bear or boar
- 19 Bees, e.g.
- 21 Gleaming
- 22 The “C” of AMC Theatres
- 23 The whole package, colloquially
- 24 Sevastopol is its largest city
- 25 Not true?
- 27 Visitor to a website, in analytics lingo
- 29 “Time ____ . . .”
- 30 Concedes
- 33 Santa ___, Calif.
- 34 m, to Einstein
- 35 B.C. neighbor: Abbr.
- 38 Think creatively
- 40 XL or 11C
- 42 Beer named for a founding father
- 45 W-2, for one
- 47 W.W. I helmet, informally
- 51 2004 Will Smith sci-fi film
- 52 D.S.T. starting time . . . or a hint to 42-Across
- 54 Weightlessness . . . or a hint to 118-Across
- 56 ___ Compton, first woman to cover the White House for a TV network
- 57 Rating unit
- 60 Libya’s Gulf of ____
- 61 Reporter’s credit
- 62 TV tavern
- 64 Mimic
- 66 “Royal” bird
- 67 In
- 68 Top credit rating . . . or a hint to 25-Across
- 71 23rd in a series . . . or a hint to 27-Across
- 73 Trust in
- 76 Fails to be
- 78 Keen
- 79 Google ____
- 83 Holds in high regard
- 84 Old lab burners
- 86 Water bird with a haunting call
- 88 Bit of HI gear?
- 89 Cops . . . or a hint to 115-Across
- 90 Club for farm kids . . . or a hint to 97-Across
- 91 Pouch on a string
- 93 Game with L- and T-shaped pieces
- 96 Locale for a West Coast wine tour
- 97 Secretive
- 99 R.&R. settings
- 101 Crystal-clear
- 103 “O, ____ fortune’s fool!”: Romeo
- 42-Across

- 104 Singer King with the 2014 hit “Ex’s & Oh’s”
- 108 Body feature of a mammoth
- 110 Holy ____
- 112 It might be taken to the airport
- 115 Spelling aid?
- 118 Baseball announcer’s call on a home run
- 121 Nigerian city of 3.5+ million
- 122 Set on the ground
- 125 “Jeopardy!” fodder
- 126 This evenin’
- 127 Video-call glitch
- 128 “I kid you not!”
- 129 Rate
- 130 Like the Xbox One X vis-à-vis the Xbox One
- 131 Makes some Z’s

DOWN

- 1 Colorful parrot
- 2 Santa ____
- 3 Jazz singer born Eunice Kathleen Waymon
- 4 Warning sign
- 5 Commercial follower of “-o-”
- 6 A-game or b-ball, e.g.
- 7 The “you” of the song lyric “I’m begging of you, please don’t take my man”
- 8 Part of the knee, for short
- 19 D.I.Y. buy
- 20 “Magnum, P.I.” setting
- 21 Sauvignon ____
- 22 Where one might turn on the jets
- 23 D&D monster
- 24 Pelvis bone
- 25 Gregor ___, Kafka protagonist
- 26 Some genealogical work
- 27 Pioneering mail-order company
- 28 Ctrl + Q
- 29 First couple of the early 1910s
- 30 “Shut your trap!”
- 31 Introductory courses
- 32 Mixes together
- 33 Not looking good
- 34 Ctrl + Q
- 35 Set on the ground
- 36 “Jeopardy!” fodder
- 37 Like the Xbox One X vis-à-vis the Xbox One
- 38 “Shut your trap!”
- 39 Personal story, informally
- 40 “Oh, I see!”
- 41 First couple of the early 1910s
- 42 Thailand, once
- 43 River through Tuscany
- 44 Reaches
- 45 Bone filler
- 46 No. 2 on a table
- 47 Bone-dry
- 48 A great deal
- 49 How-to go-to
- 50 Obtain
- 51 YouTube or Gmail
- 52 Certain fossil preserve
- 53 The art of music?



- 52 Sauvignon ____
- 53 Gregor ___, Kafka protagonist
- 54 Some genealogical work
- 55 Set on the ground
- 56 Pioneering mail-order company
- 57 Like the Xbox One X vis-à-vis the Xbox One
- 58 “Shut your trap!”
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GUNSTON STREET



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

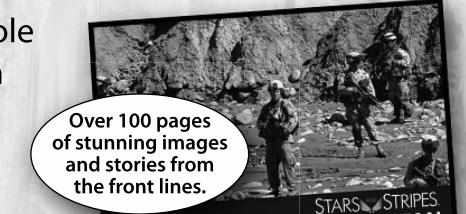
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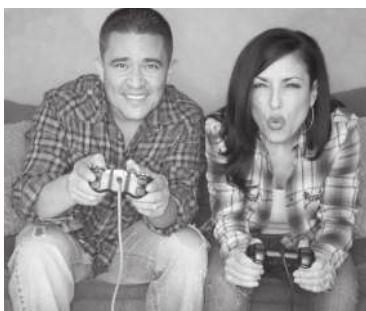
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OPINION**The dueling perceptions of the Trump age**

BY KATHLEEN PARKER

The Washington Post

For pure shock value, last week's FBI search of Donald Trump's Palm Beach home was nearly as jarring as the Jan. 6 assault on the U.S. Capitol.

Different actors, different purposes — but similarly unsettling to American sensibilities.

The riot on Jan. 6, 2021, an investigation of which has consumed our interest for the past two months, left many Americans, including me, slack-jawed. Our Bush-era war motto of "shock and awe" came to mind as Trump backers wearing animal skins and horned headgear toppled the barricades and stormed our version of the Bastille.

The violence and malevolent spirit of that day — a hangman's noose for Vice President Mike Pence and the mocking taunts of angry men hunting House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — were profoundly disturbing, even horrifying. Most people, I think, would agree.

Now, switch channels to witness 30 to 40 federal agents arriving at Mar-a-Lago to search the premises for classified papers Trump allegedly had taken from the White House. The agents removed 11 sets of classified documents, some of them marked "top secret/sensitive compartmented information," one of the highest levels of classification.

We weren't privy to the search in real time; and Trump was in New York City that day preparing for his deposition in a state investigation of his sprawling business empire. Except for a few men in suits, most of the federal agents wore T-shirts, cargo pants, masks and gloves.

Having federal agents descend on your property is shocking under any circumstances. Unless, of course, you're a criminal, in

which case you surely wouldn't have been a president of the United States, right? Trump might have been both. But what if he isn't a criminal guilty of espionage, as has been suggested? Isn't it equally possible that he's merely stubborn, prideful and dangerously irresponsible? Intent would seem to be crucial to the answer.

I've wrestled with both events, trying to gauge their effect on our politics in a time of deep division and distrust and asking why my own feelings are mixed. The two historic moments are not the same, obviously, but they both signal profound disruptions in our values. Neither should happen in America. And yet both did, and, inarguably, Trump is to blame for both.

Part of me thinks the Mar-a-Lago search couldn't have happened to a nicer guy. I wouldn't trust Trump with my dry-cleaning stubs, much less boxes of documents containing classified information that could pose a risk to national security.

The other part of me, informed by history's examples of government overreach, finds the search of a former president's home as unsettling as the destruction of public property by U.S. citizens. Perhaps this is the legacy of the World War II generation that taught its children to be ever wary of government's power. Or maybe it's just the reporter in me.

Again, these two episodes are hardly mirror images — one was lawful, and the other plainly was not — but they do reflect the dueling perceptions of our times.

If you see Trump as the worst excuse for a president in our nation's history, then the search bordered on the mounted cavalry riding to the rescue. If he indeed possessed nuclear-related classified documents, as has been reported, then he should be held accountable.

If this was the government's Al Capone strategy — the feds couldn't pin racketeering charges on Capone, so they jailed him for tax evasion — then, fine, please get on with it.

However, if you happen to like Trump, then the search was yet another piece of a larger picture in which the FBI, the media and Democrats are in cahoots to deprive Trump and his voters of their share of power.

This belief, of course, ignores the fact that another supposedly "deep state" conspirator on that crowd's "most wanted" list, former FBI Director James Comey, deserves much credit for throwing the 2016 election to Trump.

It was Comey's letter to Congress just days before the election, saying the FBI had "learned of the existence of emails that appear to be pertinent to the investigation" into Hillary Clinton's private email server, that is widely believed to have handed Trump his victory. If there were any fence-sitters left, they quickly tumbled into Trump's camp, especially in states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Florida.

The FBI search, similarly, was a Comey-esque *deus ex machina* for Trump, whose popularity has supposedly swelled among his party faithful.

The search might have been justifiable — and obviously met the probable-cause standard for a court-ordered search warrant — but the image of federal agents trampling the sacred grounds of their hero's castle has emboldened Trump supporters as little else could.

If the Justice Department intends to indict Trump, then it needs to act quickly so he is prevented from ever holding public office again. Otherwise, in the battle of dueling perspectives, Trump might have the lead.

Biden's immigration policy should be a scandal

BY HENRY OLSEN

Special to The Washington Post

Illegal border crossings remain near record highs despite the searing summer heat, yet the crisis has barely broken through the media's focus on the recently passed climate and health care package and other purported "wins" for President Joe Biden. That lack of attention is bad — both for the country and for Biden.

What's going on along the border with Mexico is scandalous. Thousands of migrants illegally cross it every day, often with no interaction with the overworked Border Patrol. That agency nonetheless reports massive numbers of apprehensions each month. Nearly 163,000 people were encountered at the border in July.

To put this into perspective, consider that the Border Patrol reports it has encountered more than 1.8 million illegally crossing migrants so far this fiscal year, which ends Sept. 30. That's more than all of the last fiscal year and more than double that of any single year during President Donald Trump's term. Border encounters for this fiscal year are on track to exceed the total for Trump's full term.

Government data show that roughly 903,000 of these migrants were immediately deported under Title 42, based on an executive order issued by the Trump administration during the pandemic that allows border agents to immediately deport apprehended migrants who pose a risk to public health. (The Biden administration attempted to lift the order but has been blocked in court.)

The rest have been processed under Title 8,

which allows migrants to seek asylum in the United States. The Bipartisan Policy Center reports that more than 80% of Title 8 detainees are allowed to remain in the country while waiting for their asylum cases to be decided, most of them living freely in our cities and neighborhoods.

This means hundreds of thousands of people have been allowed to reside in the United States even though they arrived here illegally. Most will have to appear for court hearings to assess their right to remain, but our immigration court system is hopelessly overloaded. It could be years before these cases are heard. Many migrants — 10% to 20% — will skip their hearing, secure in the knowledge that the system will have likely lost track of them.

We've been hearing a lot about the "rule of law" lately. Biden's look-the-other-way immigration policy is in effect an ingenious way to avoid that rule. That mocks the principle he proudly says he supports.

This is bad for the country for a host of reasons. It's bad because it does a nation no good to disrespect its own borders. It's bad because as the country recovers from the pandemic, allowing massive numbers of people to join the economy means legal residents will have to compete with them for jobs. And it's bad because it divides our country by flagrantly ignoring the sentiments of the half or so of voters who want illegal immigration to be controlled. So much for "healing the nation."

It's also bad for Biden and the Democrats politically. Polls regularly show that the public overwhelmingly disapproves of Biden's im-

migration policy. Disapproval is especially high among Hispanics, who disproportionately live along the border and in the communities where the migrants settle. Conservative media cover the ongoing crisis, ensuring that it is kept in the forefront for Republican voters. This is one issue where conservatives and independents agree, meaning it will almost certainly be a major issue in the fall campaign.

That's why border-state Democrats such as Sen. Mark Kelly, of Arizona, want this addressed before Election Day. The Biden administration recently threw Kelly a bone by providing funding to complete gaps in Trump's border wall in Kelly's state. Yet Arizona Gov. Doug Ducey, a Republican, highlighted how quickly the problem could have been solved had the administration really wanted to address it by sealing parts of the gaps himself with cargo containers. Meanwhile, much of the rest of the border continues to be porous with no plans in sight to bring it under control.

Maybe Biden thinks he can force Republicans into a deal on comprehensive immigration reform by allowing so many undocumented people into the country. Perhaps, but it's likelier Republicans will push back even more to control the border.

The huge numbers of migrants crossing the border make it clear: Biden's immigration policy has failed. Expect to see the political fallout of this in November.

Henry Olsen is a Washington Post columnist and a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

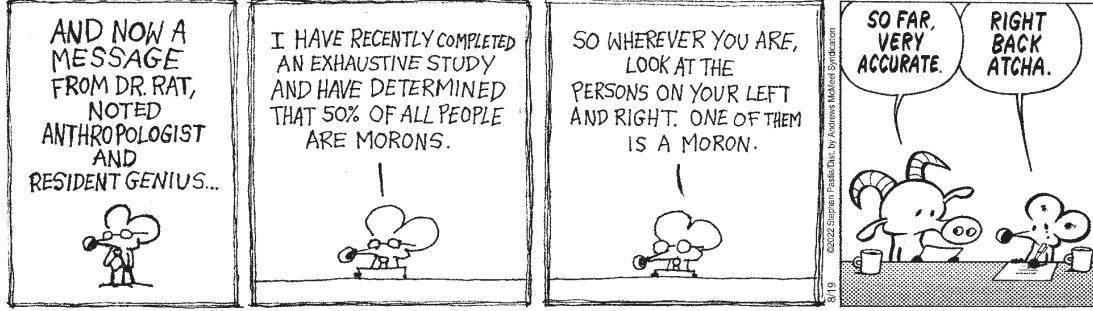
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Dilbert



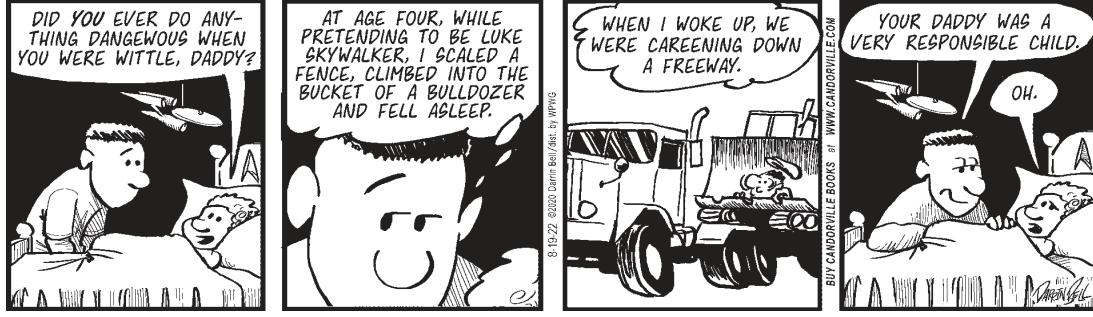
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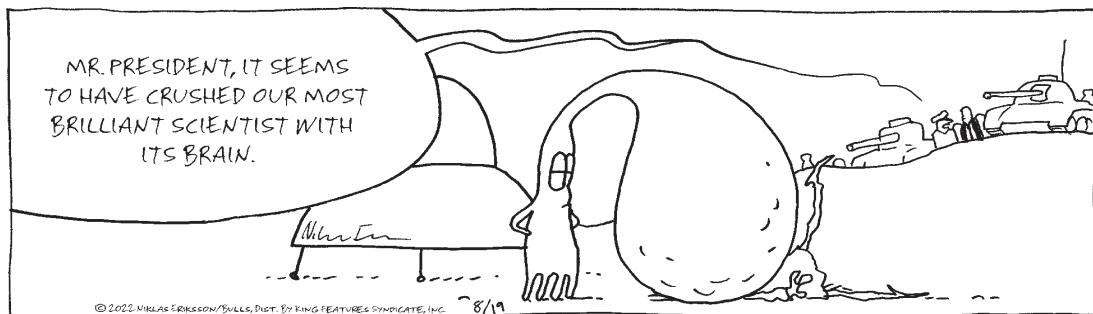
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Carpe Diem



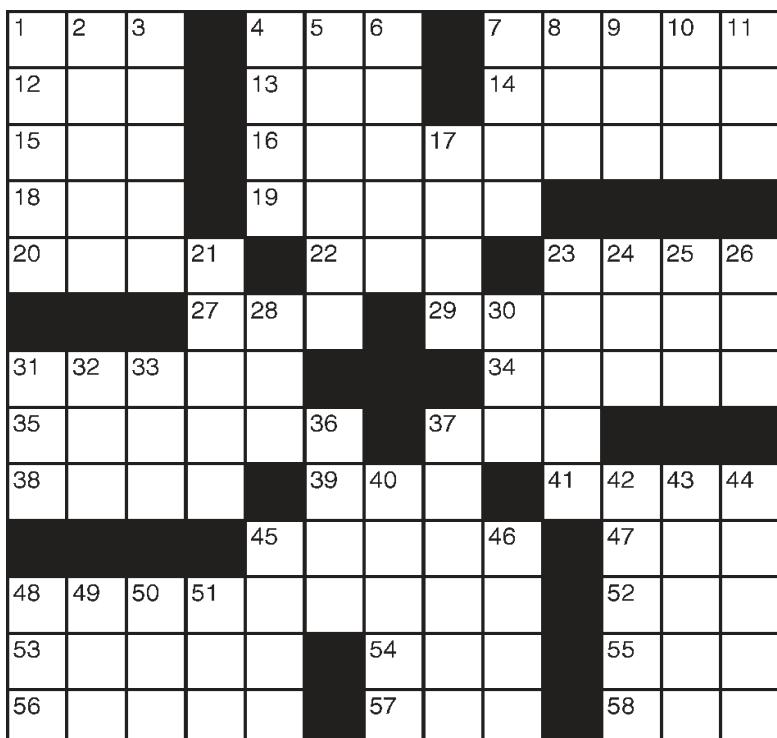
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

58 French salt 26 Season opener?

28 Dept. store inventory 30 Luau souvenir

31 Transcript no. 32 "Awesome!"

33 "Entourage" role 36 Olympian queen

37 Freight train unit 40 Homebuyer's option

41 Star in Orion's foot 45 "Close one!"

42 Singer Nick 46 Holler

43 Home 48 "Terrif!"

44 Star in Orion's 50 Heavy weight

45 "Close one!" 51 — -Magnon

DOWN

1 Solo of "Star Wars" 1 Wizard Potter

4 Dandy guy 2 Sports venue

7 Sir's counterpart 3 Tennis star

12 Coach 4 Parseghian

13 Lab eggs 5 Go too far

14 Mountain crest 6 Macadamized

15 Roulette bet 7 Earth's neighbor

16 "Absolutely not!" 8 Common verb

18 Genetic letters 9 "Lion" actor Patel

19 Long journeys 20 Informal pronoun

22 JFK's 21 Bolshevik

predecessor 22 Leader

23 Slightly wet 23 Formal decrees

27 Id counterpart 24 Fuss

29 Small burger 25 Singer Tormé

31 Majestic 37 Iota

33 Paris school 38 Tennis score

35 Diocese part 39 Author Umberto

37 Iota 41 Slightly open

45 Stand-in 47 Japanese sash

48 "Absolutely not!" 52 Eggy quaff

53 Love, Italian-style 54 Indian lentil dish

55 Citric beverage 56 Already

57 Magic, on 57 Scoreboards

Answer to Previous Puzzle

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

8-19

CRYPTOQUIP

P X F J W M A Y Z W Q K A Y V A P

X Z W F X W S V W X S Z X S Q R E X Z L

X S B A J V W Z X M F U B A F A K R : "Z L U

B F W R L A P Z L U Z X Z X W S R . "

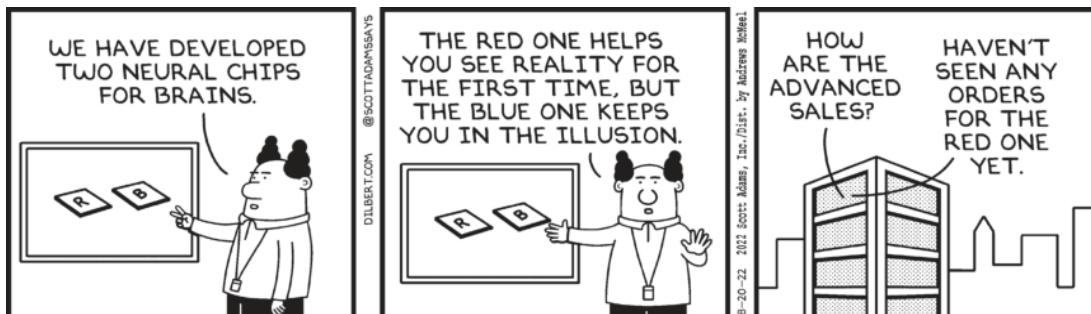
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: IF TENNIS PLAYER STEFFI OPENS UP AN EATERY CHAIN, SHE REALLY OUGHT TO CALL IT "GRAF-ETERIA."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: X equals I

Frazz



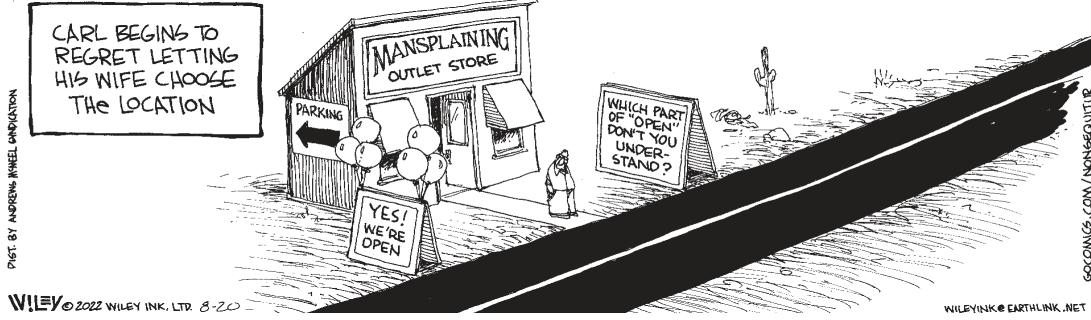
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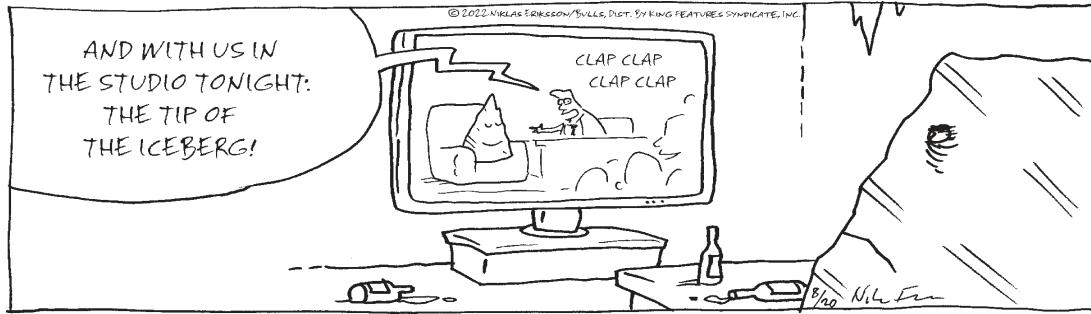
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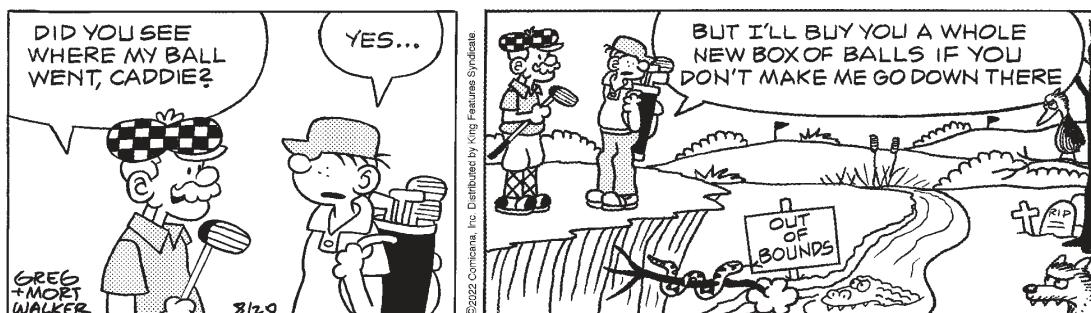
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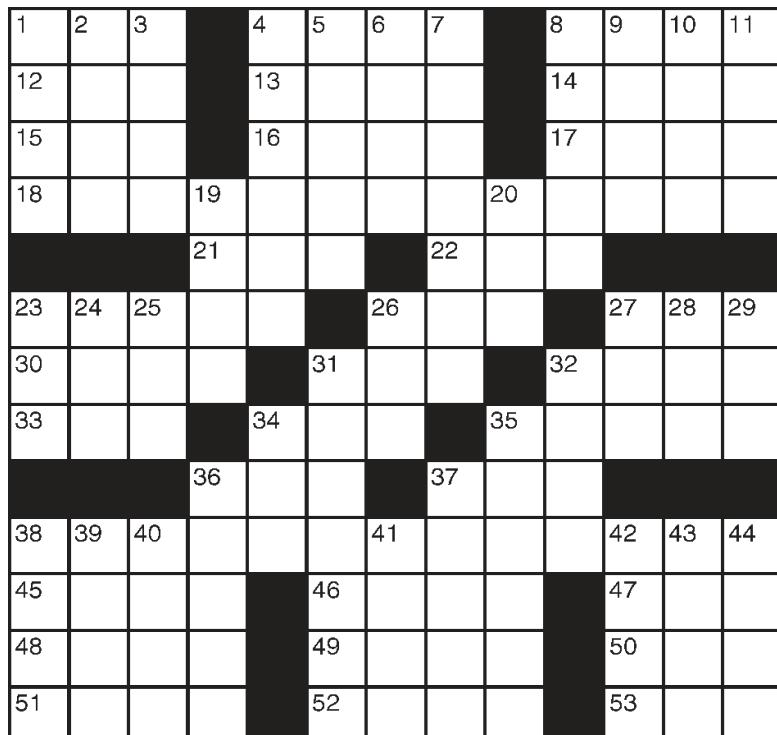
Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



ACROSS

1 Huck's raftmate
4 Peeve
8 "Phooey!"
12 Docs' bloc
13 List-ending abbr.
14 Bassoon's kin
15 Dyeing vessel
16 Video-streaming brand
17 Radiate
18 Vulnerable spots
21 Physique
22 Youngster
23 "Taste!"
26 Chaps
27 Brit. sports cars
30 Stretches (out)
31 Polite address
32 Hawaiian coast
33 Speck
34 Aunt, in Mexico
35 Nodded off
36 Cyndi Lauper's "— Bop"
37 Tennis feat
38 Spinning disks used by ceramic artists
45 Latin love
46 Authentic
47 Tic-tac-toe loser
48 Hindu royal
49 Bern's river
50 — carte
51 Journey

52 Dance move
53 Tourist's chart

25 Still
26 Soccer's Hamm
27 "The Simpsons" barkeep

28 Econ. statistic
29 Plopped down
31 Western ranges
32 Swiss artist Paul
34 "That'll be — day!"
35 Drag
36 Vegas area
37 Cognizant
38 Fraction
39 Sharif of film
40 Author Morrison
41 Pants part
42 Physical
43 Classic Kinks song
44 Bath bar

Answer to Previous Puzzle

H	A	N	F	O	P	M	A	D	A	M
A	R	A	O	V	A	A	R	E	T	E
R	E	D	N	E	V	E	R	E	V	E
R	N	A	T	R	E	K	S			
Y	A	L	D	D	E	D	A	M	P	
E	G	O	S	L	I	D	E	R		
G	R	A	N	D		E	C	O	L	E
P	A	R	I	S	H	B	I	T		
A	D	I	N	E	C	O	A	J	A	R
F	A	T	C	H	A	N	C	E	N	O
A	M	O	R	E	D	A	L	A	D	E
B	Y	N	O	W	O	R	L	S	E	L

8-20

CRYPTOQUIP

SWKZ EWK SBRVZ SKZE EB

EWK SKDYAEK VDBPE WAHWSVJ

VXXKYY YEIPXEPIKY, YWK SVY

BZ EWK IVRM MVHK.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: FILM ABOUT A GROUP OF ITALIAN PAINTINGS WITH INCOMPATIBLE COLORS: "THE CLASH OF THE TITIANS."

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: S equals W

SCOREBOARD/WNBA PLAYOFFS

PRO SOCCER

MLS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Philadelphia	13	4	9	48	45	20
CF Montréal	13	8	4	43	43	41
NYCFC	12	7	6	42	46	30
New York	11	8	7	40	40	32
Columbus	8	6	10	34	32	27
New England	8	7	10	34	38	36
Orlando City	9	10	6	33	28	36
Inter Miami CF	9	10	6	33	32	41
Cincinnati	8	8	9	33	42	45
Charlotte FC	10	14	2	32	33	40
Toronto FC	8	12	6	30	39	45
Chicago	8	11	6	30	28	34
Atlanta	7	10	8	29	34	38
D.C. United	6	15	4	22	28	49

WESTERN CONFERENCE

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
LAFC	18	4	3	57	54	24
Austin FC	14	5	6	48	54	34
FC Dallas	11	7	9	42	39	28
Minnesota	11	9	5	38	40	35
Real Salt Lake	10	8	7	37	33	34
LA Galaxy	10	11	3	33	37	34
Vancouver	9	11	6	33	31	45
Nashville	8	9	9	33	34	36
Portland	7	7	12	33	42	40
Seattle	10	13	2	32	32	31
Colorado	8	10	7	31	36	39
Houston	7	14	4	25	31	42
San Jose	5	11	9	24	40	53
Sporting KC	6	15	5	23	26	48

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Tuesday's game

Los Angeles FC 1, D.C. United 0

Wednesday's games

New York 2, Atlanta 1
New England 2, Toronto FC 2, tie
Charlotte FC 3, New York City FC 1
FC Dallas 1, Philadelphia 0
Vancouver 2, Colorado 1

Friday's games

Seattle at LA Galaxy

Saturday's games

Cincinnati at New York
Philadelphia at D.C. United
New England at CF Montréal
Toronto FC at Miami
Austin FC at Minnesota
Houston at Colorado
Vancouver at Real Salt Lake
Los Angeles FC at San Jose

Sunday's games

Atlanta at Columbus
New York City FC at Chicago
Orlando City at Charlotte FC
Portland at Sporting Kansas City
FC Dallas at Nashville

NWSL

	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
Portland	7	1	7	28	36	15
Houston	8	4	4	28	28	18
Kansas City	7	4	4	25	20	20
San Diego	7	5	4	25	21	14
OL Reign	6	4	6	24	20	15
Chicago	6	4	5	23	22	18
Angel City	6	5	3	21	15	16
Orlando	4	5	6	18	17	30
Louisville	2	6	8	14	16	22
Gotham FC	4	10	0	12	11	30
Washington	1	6	9	12	16	21
North Carolina	2	6	4	10	23	26

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

Wednesday's game

Houston 2, Gotham FC 1

Friday's game

Angel City at Kansas City

Saturday's games

Orlando at Gotham FC
Chicago at North Carolina
Houston at San Diego

Wednesday, Aug. 24

Portland at North Carolina

PRO BASKETBALL

WNBA playoffs

(x-if necessary)

First Round

(Best-of-three)

No. 1 Las Vegas vs. No. 8 Phoenix

Wednesday: Las Vegas 79, Phoenix 63

Saturday: at Las Vegas

x-Tuesday, August 23: at Phoenix

New York 1, Chicago 0

Wednesday: New York 98, Chicago 91

Saturday: at Chicago

x-Tuesday, August 23: at New York

No. 3 Connecticut vs. No. 6 Dallas

Thursday: at Connecticut

Sunday: at Connecticut

x-Wednesday, August 24: at Dallas

No. 4 Seattle vs. No. 5 Washington

Thursday: at Seattle

Sunday: at Seattle

x-Wednesday, August 24: at Washington

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

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x-Wednesday, August 24: at Washington

Note: Three points for victory, one point for tie.

TENNIS

Odlum Brown VanOpen

Wednesday

At Hollyburn Country Club

Vancouver

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor

Women's Singles

Round of 16

Valentini Grammatikopoulou, Greece, def. Cadence Brace, Canada, 7-5, 6-2.

Victoria Jimenez Kasintseva, Andorra, def. Jodie Anna Burrage, Britain, 7-5, 6-7 (5).

Chloe Paquet, France, def. Heather Watson, Britain, 6-4, 6-2.

Rebecca Peterson (5), Sweden, def. Catherine Harrison, United States, walkover.

Women's Doubles

Round of 16

CoCo Vandeweghe, United States, and Astra Sharma, Australia, def. Olivia Tjan-dramulia, Australia, and Arianne Hartono, Netherlands, 6-4, 6-2.

Rebecca Marino, Canada, and Heather Watson, Britain, def. Emily Webley-Smith, Britain, and Ingrid Gamarra Martins, Brazil, 6-4, 6-1.

Timea Babos, Hungary, and Angela Kulikov (4), United States, def. Valentini Grammatikopoulou, Greece, and Victoria Jimenez Kasintseva, Andorra, 6-3, 7-6 (6).

Quarterfinals

Lizette Cabrera and Priscilla Hon, Australia, def. Renata Voracova, Czech Republic, and Julia Lohoff, Germany, 6-3, 6-2.

Western & Southern Open

Wednesday

At Lindner Family Tennis Center

Cincinnati

Surface: Hardcourt outdoor

Men's Singles

Round of 32

Felix Auger-Aliassime (7), Canada, def. Alex de Minaur, Australia, 6-3, 6-2.

Andrey Rublev (6), Russia, def. Fabio Fognini, Italy, 6-7 (7), 7-6 (3), 6-2.

Cameron Norrie (9), Britain, def. Andy Murray, Britain, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4.

Jannik Sinner (10), Italy, def. Miomir Kecmanovic, Serbia, 7-5, 3-1, ret.

John Isner, United States, def. Hubert Hurkacz (8), Poland, 7-6 (5), 6-7 (5), 6-2.

Denis Shapovalov, Canada, def. Tommy Paul, United States, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3.

Ben Shelton, United States, def. Casper Ruud (5), Norway, 6-3, 6-3.

Taylor Fritz (11), United States, def. Nick Kyrgios, Australia, 6-3, 6-2.

Stefanos Tsitsipas (4), Greece, def. Filip Krajinovic, Serbia, 6-3, 6-4.

Roberto Bautista Agut (15), Spain, def. Marcos Giron, United States, 6-3, 6-3.

Borna Coric, Croatia, def. Rafael Nadal (2), Spain, 7-6 (9), 4-6, 6-3.

Sebastian Korda, United States, def. Frances Tiafoe, United States, 4-6, 6-1, 6-4.

Women's Singles

Round of 32

Shelby Rogers, United States, def. Amanda Anisimova, United States, walkover.

Alison Riske-Amritraj, United States,

DEALS

RHP Jason Alexander to Nashville.

NEW YORK METS — Selected the contract of 3B Brett Baty from Syracuse (IL).

Recalled LHP Sam Clay from Syracuse.

Placed INF Eduardo Esc

MLB

Scoreboard

American League

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	73	45	.619	—
Tampa Bay	62	54	.534	10
Toronto	62	54	.534	10
Baltimore	61	56	.521	11½
Boston	59	59	.500	14

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Cleveland	63	55	.534	—
Minnesota	61	55	.526	1
Chicago	61	57	.517	2
Kansas City	48	71	.403	15½
Detroit	45	75	.375	19

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Houston	76	43	.639	—
Seattle	65	54	.546	11
Texas	52	65	.444	23
Los Angeles	51	67	.432	24½
Oakland	43	75	.364	32½

National League

	W	L	Pct	GB
New York	76	42	.644	—
Atlanta	72	47	.605	4½
Philadelphia	65	52	.556	10½
Miami	52	66	.441	24
Washington	39	80	.328	37½

Central Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
St. Louis	65	51	.560	—
Milwaukee	62	54	.534	3
Chicago	49	67	.422	16
Cincinnati	46	70	.397	19
Pittsburgh	45	72	.385	20½

West Division

	W	L	Pct	GB
Los Angeles	81	35	.698	—
San Diego	66	54	.550	17
San Francisco	59	58	.504	22½
Arizona	54	63	.462	27½
Colorado	51	68	.429	31½

Wednesday's games

Minnesota 4, Kansas City 0
Toronto 6, Baltimore 1
Seattle 11, L.A. Angels 7
Boston 8, Pittsburgh 3
Cleveland 8, Detroit 4
N.Y. Yankees 8, Tampa Bay 7, 10 innings
Oakland 7, Texas 2
Houston 3, Chicago White Sox 2
Cincinnati 1, Philadelphia 0
Chicago Cubs 3, Washington 2
San Diego 10, Miami 3
N.Y. Mets 9, Atlanta 7
St. Louis 5, Colorado 1
L.A. Dodgers 2, Milwaukee 1
Arizona 3, San Francisco 2

Thursday's games

Oakland at Texas
Houston at Chicago White Sox
Chicago Cubs at Baltimore
Boston at Pittsburgh
Toronto at N.Y. Yankees
Kansas City at Tampa Bay
Colorado at St. Louis
L.A. Dodgers at Milwaukee
Arizona at San Francisco
N.Y. Mets at Atlanta
Washington at San Diego

Friday's games

Boston (Crawford 3-4) at Baltimore (Lyles 9-9)
Toronto (Gausman 8-9) at N.Y. Yankees (Taillon 11-3)
Chicago White Sox (Lynn 3-5) at Cleveland (McKenzie 8-9)
Kansas City (Singer 6-4) at Tampa Bay (McClanahan 11-5)
L.A. Angels (Sandoval 3-8) at Detroit (Manning 0-0)
Houston (McCullers Jr. 1-0) at Atlanta (TBD)
Texas (Pérez 9-3) at Minnesota (Bundy 6-5)
Seattle (Gonzales 7-12) at Oakland (Irvin 6-10)
Milwaukee (Ashby 2-10) at Chicago Cubs (Thompson 9-5)
Cincinnati (Ashcraft 5-3) at Pittsburgh (Beede 1-2)
N.Y. Mets (Bassitt 10-7) at Philadelphia (Nola 8-9)
San Francisco (Wood 8-9) at Colorado (Ureña 1-4)
St. Louis (Mikolas 9-9) at Arizona (Henry 2-1)
Washington (Espino 0-5) at San Diego (Snell 5-6)
Miami (Luzardo 3-5) at L.A. Dodgers (Anderson 13-2)

Calendar

Aug. 21 — Boston vs. Baltimore at Williamsport, Pa.
Aug. 31 — Last day to be contracted to an organization and be eligible for postseason roster.

Braves built for long-term success

Atlanta locks up five key players in lineup through '27 season

By PAUL NEWBERRY

Associated Press

ATLANTA — Hey, Braves fans, hope you like the core of your team. You're gonna be cheering them on for a while.

The reigning World Series champions have moved aggressively to lock up their most vital players to long-term contracts.

Rookie sensation Michael Harris II is the latest to plant his roots in Atlanta, agreeing to an eight-year deal worth at least \$72 million just 71 games into his big league career.

Harris, only 21 and the youngest player in the majors, could make \$102 million over the next decade if the Braves pick up a pair of option years in 2031 and '32.

"I've never thought about the year 2030," Harris said Wednesday, chuckling a bit. "That's far."

Not too far for Atlanta, which has taken an aggressive approach when it comes to locking down players with lengthy deals long before they're eligible for free agency.

All-Star third baseman Austin Riley, who was already under team control for three more years, agreed to a \$212 million, 10-year contract that could keep him with the Braves through 2032.

That became the richest deal in team history, surpassing the \$168 million, eight-year pact that Matt Olson signed in March after the



Daniels out as Rangers president after 17 years

By STEPHEN HAWKINS

Associated Press

ARLINGTON, Texas — Jon Daniels was the general manager of the Texas Rangers for their only two World Series appearances more than a decade ago. His 17 years leading the club ended with a string of bad seasons.

Daniels was relieved of his duties as president of baseball operations Wednesday, when team owner Ray Davis informed him that his contract wouldn't be renewed at the end of this season. Davis said he had been contemplating the move for several months.

"Bottom line is we're not good,



PHOTOS BY JOHN BAZEMORE/AP

Above: Atlanta Braves shortstop Ronald Acuña Jr. is in the midst of a \$100 million, eight-year deal with the Braves. **Below:** Rookie Braves center fielder Michael Harris II agreed to an eight-year deal worth at least \$72 million just 71 games into his big league career.

team cut ties with Freddie Freeman and pulled off a blockbuster trade with the Oakland A's to acquire another slugging first baseman.

Atlanta already secured All-Star outfielder Ronald Acuña Jr. and second baseman Ozzie Albies, currently on the injured list with a broken foot, to deals that now look like absolute bargains in today's marketplace.

Albies is committed to the Braves for another five years — at just \$7 million per season — if the team picks up a pair of option years in a deal he agreed to in 2019, before he was even eligible for arbitration.

Acuña followed a similar path less than two weeks after Albies' contract was signed, signing a \$100 million, eight-year deal after a brilliant debut campaign that earned him NL Rookie of the Year honors. The Braves have a pair of team options attached to that contract, as well, which could keep Acuña in Atlanta through 2028 for an additional

\$34 million.

To recap, that means five key members of Atlanta's lineup are all under contract through at least 2027.

Virtually the entire roster has a contract for next season or is under team control, setting the team up for the sort of consistent success that marked their record run of 14 straight division titles in the 1990s and early 2000s.

This generation of Braves has claimed four straight NL East titles and is trying to chase down the division-leading New York Mets.

General manager Alex Anthopoulos took a bit of a jab at the Atlanta Falcons, while discussing his franchise's philosophy.

"The No. 1 thing I worry about is being sustainable," Anthopoulos said. "When I first got to Atlanta, I listened to talk radio and tried to get a feel for the city, the market. I remember seeing Mercedes-Benz (Stadium, the home of the Falcons) half-empty midway through a sea-

son and the Atlanta Falcons were playing in the Super Bowl two years earlier. It was eye-opening to me."

The only potential stumbling block to the Braves' stability is shortstop Dansby Swanson, who can become a free agent after the season.

Speaking of deals, the team has clearly flourished since receiving hundreds of millions in public funds for a new suburban stadium that opened in 2017, along with an adjoining, team-owned development of condos, offices, hotels, bars and restaurants known as The Battery.

Team owner Liberty Media reported revenue of \$260 million in the second quarter, an increase of more than 20% over the same period a year earlier. The team's first World Series title since 1995 also has provided a significant financial boost, with the Braves on pace to surpass 3 million in attendance for the first time since 2000.



Daniels was the youngest GM in the majors when he got the job with the Rangers at age 28 in October 2005. He added the title of president of baseball operations in 2013, and held both roles until Chris Young was brought in as the team's general manager in December 2020.

"Somewhere along the way, this baseball fan from Queens got an opportunity to help lead a Major League Baseball franchise in Texas," Daniels said in a statement released Wednesday night. "It's been an unbelievable experience."

Young now assumes oversight of all aspects of the team's baseball

operations department. The former big league pitcher was a senior vice president for Major League Baseball before joining the Texas front office.

"I think Chris will come in with a new vigor and new enthusiasm and be able to build an organization that we can be consistent for many years," Davis said.

The Rangers went to the World Series in 2010 and 2011, then won AL West titles again in 2015 and 2016. They have since slipped into a rebuilding phase and the longest streak of consecutive losing seasons since moving to Texas a half-century ago.

AUTO RACING



STEVE HELBER/AP

Kevin Harvick, with his win last week at Richmond, is the only back-to-back winner this year in the NASCAR Cup Series. The 60th Cup victory of his career tied Harvick with Kyle Busch for ninth all-time in NASCAR.

IN THE PITS

Harvick seizes momentum ahead of NASCAR playoffs

BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Well hello, Happy. Welcome to NASCAR's championship race.

Just when it seemed time to write off Kevin Harvick, at least for this season, the 46-year-old has figured out how to win again. He has two victories in eight days — after snapping a 65-race losing streak dating to 2020 — and all the momentum headed into the playoffs.

If you counted Harvick out, he's now demanding a correction.

"It's kind of like when they put those small boxes in the newspaper where they have to correct their story and you can't hardly read them. I feel like a lot of you should put those at the bottom of your story. I get great gratification out of that," Harvick said after winning Sunday at Richmond Raceway.

His resurgence has saved his season.

After winning a career-high nine races in 2020, Harvick disappeared. He went winless last season for the first time since 2009 and only the fourth time in 22 Cup seasons.

This year, he seemed slow to grasp NASCAR's new Next Gen car as a slew of new faces raced their way to victory lane. The Cup Series so far has five first-time winners this season, the playoff grid filling fast with fresh new names, and Harvick found himself in a vulnerable spot headed into the final month to qualify for one of the 16 playoff berths.

His much-needed first win came Aug. 7 at Michigan, followed by Sunday's win at Richmond, making Harvick the only back-to-back race winner this season.

"At this point, a win's a win, right? I think we were 0-for-65 and we've done nothing different and here we are two weeks in a row. That's racin', right?" Harvick grinned.

The 60th Cup victory of his career tied Harvick with Kyle Busch for ninth all-time in NASCAR. Next up on the list? The late Dale Earnhardt in eighth at 76 career victories.

To have Earnhardt in reach brings Harvick full cir-

cle: He replaced Earnhardt following Earnhardt's fatal 2001 crash in the Daytona 500.

"As you start your career, it's easy to say, 'I want to win 70-some races' and then you start doing this on a week-to-week basis," Harvick said. "It's just a lot harder because everyone in this garage is just a killer, from the crew chief to the drivers to the guys changing the tires. It's the best of the best, and it's not easy to keep your team and everybody within your organization competitive, keep yourself competitive."

Now that he's proven to still be competitive, Harvick is a serious threat for a second Cup championship.

Harvick is one of the few throwbacks remaining in the Cup garage. A former West Coast racer nicknamed "Happy" when he got to NASCAR, the stress of replacing Earnhardt turned Harvick's nickname into unintentional satire.

It was fitting, though, as he scrapped on and off the track and proved over two decades he would not be pushed around. It's a younger man's game now — the average age of this season's first-time winners is 27 — and the tricks Harvick mastered seemingly no longer applied with the Next Gen car.

But the No. 4 team at Stewart-Haas Racing began to figure out the car long before the wins finally came. A crash at Gateway in June dropped Harvick to 13th in the standings and on the bubble of not making the playoffs.

Crew chief Rodney Childers kept the team calm knowing that a win was within reach.

"Two months ago it was like, 'We ran better and this is better and this was better and this was better.' The two months before that we would have those meetings and it was like, 'Well, this was worse, this was worse, this was worse, this was worse,'" Childers said. "It started two months ago, and you could just see — the communication and the confidence and the cars we were building, all that stuff just got better."

The late push forces the competition to take note of Harvick's potential. And the first round favors Harvick, who has a combined nine career victories at Darlington, Kansas and Bristol, the first three tracks in the playoffs.

Raikkonen pauses retirement to drive NASCAR road race

BY JENNA FRYER
Associated Press

CHARLOTTE, N.C. — Kimi Raikkonen retired to Switzerland at the end of last year's Formula One season and has blissfully spent the last eight months with his young family.

Did he miss racing?

"Not really, no," the 2007 F1 champion said.

Yet here he is, not even a full year into retirement, and Raikkonen will race again.

Raikkonen will race Sunday at Watkins Glen International in upstate New York in — and this isn't a typo — a NASCAR event. The driver known as "The Iceman" for his unintentionally droll demeanor was persuaded to get back behind the wheel by TrackHouse Racing and its ambitious, purpose-driven Project91 program.

Project91 was created to raise NASCAR's worldwide profile with top drivers from other series by Justin Marks, the 41-year-old former driver and now co-owner of NASCAR's hot, new winning team. He was prepared to personally fund the debut race at Watkins Glen, a road course where TrackHouse should compete for the win.

Tops on Marks' list of prospects was Raikkonen, who had previously competed in both an Xfinity Series and Truck Series race at Charlotte Motor Speedway during one weekend in 2011, the season Raikkonen took a one-year sabbatical in his 19-year F1 career. There was some bemusement over Raikkonen's mere presence in NASCAR's hotbed, but the most memorable part of his brief NASCAR career was that he was sponsored by Perky Jerky.

Even so, Raikkonen was interested when first presented this NASCAR offer. Marks then sealed the deal in February by traveling to Raikkonen's home in Switzerland to make his pitch in person to

"I had to find somebody that would give immediate legitimacy to it."

Project 91 co-owner Justin Marks
On hiring Raikkonen to the team

the Finnish driver.

"I had to find somebody that would give immediate legitimacy to it and be interested in doing it. And to me, really quickly, it was Kimi," Marks said. "The genesis of Project91 was just my desire as a race fan to see cool things happen in racing. A Formula One driver coming to NASCAR and being competitive at the Cup level is a cool thing and if we were going to launch this thing, obviously we needed somebody relevant globally to set it off."

In an interview with The Associated Press, the 42-year-old Raikkonen admitted he casually follows NASCAR and has been intrigued by the stock car series for more than a decade. He had hoped to also run a Cup Series race back in 2011, but it never happened and he returned to F1, where he won the final three of his 21 career victories over the following decade.

Raikkonen was intrigued by both NASCAR and its new Next Gen spec car, which debuted this year and equalized the competition among the elite top teams including the upstart TrackHouse Racing.

"I think any time there's an equal chance to win in a series it is nice, I think it's good, and what I heard when I talked to people about the new car is that it is pretty even with everybody," Raikkonen said. "It's still a learning phase for all teams with the new car."



MIKE McCARN/AP

Ex-Formula One driver Kimi Raikkonen of Finland will take a break from retirement to drive in Sunday's NASCAR race at Watkins Glen.

NBA/GOLF



ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

According to his agent, LeBron James' contract extension makes him the highest-paid player in NBA history.

LeBron, Lakers agree to 2-year, \$97.1M extension

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — LeBron James has agreed to a two-year, \$97.1 million contract extension through the 2024-25 season with the Los Angeles Lakers, his agent announced Wednesday.

Klutch Sports CEO Rich Paul said the league-maximum deal makes James the highest-paid player in NBA history. His new deal includes a player option that would keep the second-leading scorer in NBA history with the Lakers past his 40th birthday in December 2024.

James, 37, is headed into the final year of his most recent contract with the Lakers, who signed the four-time NBA MVP and four-time league champion in July 2018. The new deal means the 18-time All-Star will make \$46.7 million this season.

James and the Lakers hope to be in contention for another title if James and Anthony Davis can return at full health after an injury-plagued 2021-22 ended without a playoff appearance.

James' new deal syncs with Davis' most recent extension, allowing both to leave the Lakers or negotiate new deals in 2024. Both are represented by Klutch.

James' recommitment to the Lakers also silences persistent talk of his possible departure. James hasn't appeared to be going anywhere on social media or in his public appearances, and he

CLOSING IN ON KAREEM

Barring injury, James is likely to surpass Kareem Abdul-Jabbar as the NBA's career scoring king this winter. Abdul-Jabbar scored 38,387 points in his 20-year career. James, entering his 20th season, has 37,062. He averaged 30.3 a game last season.

SOURCES: AP; NBA.com

praised the hiring of new Lakers coach Darvin Ham.

James has missed significant time due to injury in three of his four years with the Lakers. He was largely healthy in the elongated 2019-20 season when the Lakers won the franchise's 17th NBA title in the Florida bubble, and he has been every bit the dominant player of his prime when at full strength in the ensuing two years.

Although his contract status inspired plenty of offseason chatter, James seemed unlikely to relocate after spending the past four seasons of his 19-year career with the storied Lakers. His family is settled in Los Angeles, where his eldest son, Bronny, is a 17-year-old senior and college basketball prospect playing at Sierra Canyon High School in Chatsworth.

James has occasionally said he intends to play on the same team with Bronny when his son reaches the NBA. Plenty of obstacles remain between the younger James and the NBA, but he could be draft-eligible in summer 2024.

Report: LIV's draft contract has restrictions, major bonus

BY DOUG FERGUSON

Associated Press

WILMINGTON, Del. — A draft contract to play for Saudi-funded LIV Golf includes clauses that require players be available to recruit other players to the league and to get permission before granting exclusive interviews, The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday.

The Journal said it reviewed a draft contract that LIV Golf has offered players, noting it was unclear if terms in the draft are in all contracts or can be negotiated.

Among other provisions in the draft contract was approval for most of the logos they wear and branded products they use at events.

Meanwhile, LIV Golf CEO Greg Norman sent a letter to players and agents outlining why the league should get Official World Golf Ranking points.

"This is not only in the best interests of LIV Golf, but importantly also necessary for the integrity, accuracy and fairness of the rankings to be upheld," Norman wrote.

Noting the application was filed July 6, and that new tours have to show they have complied with OWGR guidelines for one year, he is urging the OWGR to "gain comfort" with LIV Golf's status. Norman said neither LIV Golf nor the Asian Tour has heard from the ranking officials.

The draft contract reviewed by the Journal did not include any signing bonuses, though the newspaper said one detail was a \$1 million bonus for winning a major championship.

"LIV Golf, as a start-up, is proud to offer our golfers competitive contracts," an LIV spokesman



SETH WENIG/AP

Of the players to leave the PGA Tour for Saudi-funded LIV Golf, Dustin Johnson has the highest world ranking at No. 21.

said in a statement to the Journal. "Our future is bright and we continue to be excited by the player and fan response."

The rival league, run by Norman and backed by the Saudi Arabian sovereign wealth fund, has played three events this year. The next one is scheduled for Sept. 2-4 outside Boston.

LIV Golf already has attracted 10 players among the top 50 in the world rankings, with Dustin Johnson the highest at No. 21. The PGA Tour has suspended them — some players resigned — upon playing an event for not having a conflicting event release.

Last week, a federal judge in California denied the request from three LIV Golf players who sought a temporary restraining

order to complete in the tour's lucrative postseason.

U.S. District Judge Beth Labson Freeman had copies of the LIV contracts signed by Talor Gooch, Hudson Swafford and Matt Jones. Only outside attorneys and the judge — not PGA Tour attorneys — were allowed to see them, and the PGA Tour's outside attorney had to be careful in his arguments not to reveal any financials.

But at one point in the hearing, when the topic was conflicting events and media rights releases, Freeman remarked about LIV Golf, "But from what I understand of these contracts, these are — these contracts lock up these players in ways that the PGA Tour never imagined. They are so restrictive."

The attorney for LIV Golf replied, "I think that's unfair, your honor."

The Journal said apparel requirements were noted "multiple times" in the draft contract it reviewed and that players are to only wear appropriate "Team Apparel" during any LIV activity or "any other covered golf activity."

One component of LIV Golf Invitational events are 12 four-man teams that compete for \$5 million, in addition to the \$20 million prize fund for individual scores.

"The Player agrees to wear LIV Golf branding (or other branding supplied by the League Operator) at each Tournament and each other golf tournament you participate in anywhere in the world," it states.

The Journal cited a person familiar with LIV thinking as saying that clause was geared toward next year when the 12 teams will be set for the year.

Players meeting was about better PGA Tour

WILMINGTON, Del. — Tiger Woods showed up for a private meeting of top PGA Tour players dressed in jeans and a long-sleeved plaid shirt. By the sound of his impact, he might as well have been wearing a Sunday red shirt.

"I think it's pretty apparent that whenever we all get in the room, there's an alpha in there," Rory McIlroy said Wednesday. "And it's not me."

Exactly what came out of the Tuesday night meeting at Hotel Du Pont is more of a mystery, even down to the number of players in attendance.

The purpose was to unify, not only against the threat of a rival league funded by Saudi money, but shoring up any weaknesses in the tour.

Chief among the topics was a future of bigger money and a formula that gets the best players on tour competing against each other more often.



McIlroy

Otherwise, details were scarce. They emerged from the players-only meeting with another form of unity: tight lips.

"I think I'd be pretty unhappy if I saw one of those guys from last night just babbling to you guys what we talked about," Xander Schauffele said. "That would be really frowned upon, and you probably wouldn't get invited back to the meeting. There's a little bit of a code there, I'd say."

The meeting was an extension of an impromptu gathering at the J.P. McManus Pro-Am at Adare Manor in Ireland the week of the Scottish Open, which featured a field of golf's best, young and old, even those who had signed with LIV Golf.

It was important enough for Woods, who has played only three times this year because of injuries to his leg from a February 2021 car crash, to fly up in his private jet and bring along Rickie Fowler, who did not qualify for the BMW Championship.

— Doug Ferguson

COLLEGE FOOTBALL

B1G deal: Big Ten lands \$7 billion TV contract

Conference signs rights agreements with FOX, CBS and NBC

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

The Big Ten's new \$7 billion media rights deal will string the conference's top football games across three major networks each week, creating an NFL-style television schedule on Saturdays.

The Big Ten announced Thursday it has reached seven-year agreements with Fox, CBS and NBC to share the rights to the conference's football and basketball games.

The deals go into effect in 2023, expire in 2030 and eventually will allow the conference's soon-to-be 16 member universities to share more than \$1 billion per year, a person familiar with the terms told The Associated Press.

The person spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because Big Ten and network officials were not disclosing financial details publicly, but the deal is believed to be the richest ever on an annual basis for a college sports property. The large increase in revenue to the conference won't kick in until

the third year of the deal and gradually will increase over the final five years.

"I think what it does, it affords us the opportunity to make sure that we can continually do the things we need to do to take care of our student-athletes, to fortify our institutions, to build our programs," Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren told the AP.

The Big Ten currently has 14 members, stretching from Rutgers and Maryland on the East Coast to Nebraska across the Midwest, and covering some of the biggest media markets in the country, including New York, Philadelphia and Chicago.

In 2024, Southern California and UCLA are scheduled to join the Big Ten, adding the Los Angeles market to its footprint.

With ESPN out of the equation for Big Ten football after a 40-year relationship, the league is set to lock down three prominent time slots with its network partners.

Fox, which has shared the rights to the Big Ten with ESPN since

2017 and owns a majority stake in the Big Ten Network, will continue to feature noon Eastern time as its primary game of the day.

Fox and its cable network FS1 will have the rights to more than two dozen football games, at least 45 men's basketball games and women's basketball games.

CBS, starting in 2024, will replace the Southeastern Conference game of the week at 3:30 p.m. Eastern—that is moving to ABC—with a Big Ten game.

CBS will carry 14-15 Big Ten football games a season from 2024-29, including a Black Friday game. Unlike with its longtime SEC deal, CBS will not be guaranteed the first selection of football games each week with the Big Ten. Fox, CBS and NBC will hold a draft for games, allowing each network some opportunities for first selection in a given week.

In 2023, CBS will carry seven Big Ten games while it still has the SEC on CBS at 3:30 p.m. Eastern. The network will continue to be the home of Big Ten men's basketball,



DARRON CUMMINGS/AP

Big Ten Commissioner Kevin Warren said the conference's new TV contract will allow its schools to build their programs and take care of their student-athletes. School will share more than \$1 billion per year.

including the conference tournament semifinals and finals, and it will begin airing the women's basketball tournament championship.

Starting in 2023, NBC will launch "Big Ten Saturday Night" in prime time and broadcast 15-16 games per season. The agreement with NBC also includes eight football games and dozens of men's and women's basketball games per season to be exclusively streamed

on Peacock, the network's online subscription service. NBC also has a separate, longstanding broadcast deal with Notre Dame, which remains unaffiliated with a conference.

Each network will air the Big Ten's championship football game at least once during the length of the deals, with Fox securing the rights to four (2023, '25, '27 and '29).

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PHOTOS BY ASHLEY LANDIS/AP

Above: Los Angeles Chargers safety Derwin James Jr. participates in drills during a combined practice with the Dallas Cowboys at the Los Angeles Rams' practice facility in Costa Mesa, Calif., on Wednesday. **Below:** James signs autographs for fans during practice Wednesday. He signed a four-year, \$76.5 million extension with the team on Wednesday, which makes him the league's highest-paid safety.

Chargers sign James to a 4-year, \$76.5M extension

BY JOE REEDY
Associated Press

COSTA MESA, Calif.—Los Angeles Chargers fans on Wednesday finally got to see what they had been hoping for three weeks into training camp—a smiling Derwin James running out to the field in his powder blue jersey, helmet and shoulder pads.

James took part in his first practice after signing a four-year, \$76.5 million contract extension, making him the NFL's highest-paid safety.

"This wasn't like every other big contract that gets signed, because you know what he had to go through in order to make it to this point in his career," coach Brandon Staley said. "He overcame a lot to earn this contract, and he earned every cent of it. He was a big, big leader for us today out there."

The deal includes \$42 million in guaranteed salary. James did not participate in the first three weeks of practice and took part only in walkthroughs as the two sides worked on an extension.

"I'm feeling amazing," said James after the Chargers completed the first day of joint practices with the Dallas Cowboys. There was never a doubt in my mind (the deal would get done). I just tried to do what I could as a player to come out here every day and get better in the ways that I could."

James' deal eclipses the four-year, \$72.98 million extension Pittsburgh's Minkah Fitzpatrick signed in June. That included \$36 million in guaranteed salary.

James took part in individual drills but none of the 7-on-7 or full-team drills against the Cowboys. Staley said James wouldn't take part in team work until next week.

Los Angeles has spent nearly \$112 million in guaranteed salaries since the end of last season to improve a defense that was 23rd overall and near the bottom in key categories, including run defense, third-down conversions and points allowed after halftime.

James—the defensive signal-caller in the huddle—will be counted on as the leader of a unit that made significant upgrades over the offseason. The Char-



gers signed cornerback J.C. Jackson, defensive linemen Sebastian Jones-Day, Austin Johnson and Morgan Fox and edge rusher Kyle Van Noy, along with trading for linebacker Khalil Mack.

Staley on Tuesday stressed the importance of James, saying he is more than a safety and is a complete defensive back. Staley also called James "the heartbeat of our defense."

James—the 17th overall pick in the 2018 draft—didn't participate in full-speed drills during the off-season program after having shoulder surgery once last season ended. He is cleared to go now that the contract issues are resolved.

James was an All-Pro selection as a rookie before being derailed the next two seasons because of injuries during training camp. A broken foot limited him to five games in 2019, and he suffered a season-ending knee injury in 2020.

Last season James bounced back and reclaimed his spot as one of the top safeties in the league. He was the eighth defensive player and first defensive back since 2000 to have more than 100 tackles (118) after being sidelined the previous year.

James also had two interceptions, a pair of sacks and three forced fumbles.

Miss: League appealed initial 6-game suspension

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in a statement. "Now that a decision on discipline has been reached, we understand this is a real opportunity to create meaningful change and we are committed to investing in programs in Northeast Ohio that will educate our youth regarding awareness, understanding, and most importantly, prevention of sexual misconduct and the many underlying causes of such behavior."

On Aug. 1, the three-time Pro Bowler was suspended six games by Sue L. Robinson, a former federal judge jointly appointed by the league and union to act as an independent disciplinary officer.

Robinson found the 26-year-old Watson violated the league's personal conduct policy after reviewing an investigation into his actions and called his behavior "egregious" and "predatory."

Believing the suspension was too light, the league appealed and pushed Watson's case back to Goodell, who had handled all player discipline in the past. The league previously pushed for an indefinite suspension and hefty fine.

Goodell appointed former New Jersey Attorney General Peter C. Harvey to hear the appeal. Harvey is an attorney who was previously involved in the NFL's decision to suspend Cowboys running back Ezekiel Elliott for six games during the 2017 season for domestic violence allegations.

Per the 2020 collective bargaining agreement, Harvey's decision would have constituted "full, final and complete disposition of the dispute."

At the owners' meetings this month, Goodell said the league's pursuit of a yearlong ban was warranted following its investigation and Robinson's findings.

"She reinforced the evidence," Goodell said. "There were multiple violations that were egregious, and it was predatory behavior."

In her conclusion, Robinson cited Watson's lack of remorse as a

factor in her decision. Watson apologized for the first time "to all the women that I have impacted" before making his Browns debut in an exhibition in Jacksonville.

Watson was accused of being sexually inappropriate with the women during massage therapy sessions from March 2020 to March 2021 in Texas. In civil lawsuits filed in Texas, the women accused Watson of exposing himself, touching them with his penis or kissing them against their will. One woman alleged Watson forced her to perform oral sex.

Two separate grand juries in Texas declined to indict Watson, who has denied any wrongdoing. He recently settled 23 of 24 lawsuits.

For now, the suspension ends months of speculation about whether Watson would play in 2022 for the Browns, who outbid several other teams, traded three first-round draft picks to the Texans in March and signed the QB to a five-year, \$230 million contract.

Watson's case sparked strong opinions while raising questions about the league's handling of player discipline and its spotty record of supporting women.

The Browns believe Watson could make them a Super Bowl contender. Without him, they could struggle to simply contend in the AFC North against defending conference champion Cincinnati along with Baltimore and Pittsburgh.

The suspension also means Watson will be idle longer. One of pro football's elite QBs, he sat out last season in Houston after demanding a trade and before the sexual allegations surfaced.

Watson has continued to practice while his case made its way through the league's process.

All along, the Browns' plan was to turn their offense over to veteran Jacoby Brissett, who has made 37 career starts, during Watson's suspension. But it's now possible Cleveland will explore other options at quarterback.



Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson, left, and linebacker Jeremiah Owusu-Koramoah leave the field after the first half of a preseason game against the Jaguars last week in Jacksonville, Fla.

SPORTS

Staying in Los Angeles
 James, Lakers agree to 2-year, \$97.1M contract extension » **NBA, Page 45**



NFL

Watson to miss 11 games



PHELAN M. EBENHACK, ABOVE, AND REBECCA BLACKWELL, RIGHT/AP

Above: Cleveland Browns quarterback Deshaun Watson scrambles for yardage during the first half of a preseason game against the Jaguars last week in Jacksonville, Fla. Right: NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell said the league's pursuit of a yearlong ban of Watson was warranted following its investigation.

Browns QB will also pay \$5M fine in settlement with league

BY ROB MAADDI
 AND TOM WITHERS
Associated Press

BEREA, Ohio — Deshaun Watson has reached a settlement with the NFL and will serve an 11-game unpaid suspension and pay a \$5 million fine rather than risk missing his first season as quarterback of the Cleveland Browns following accusations of sexual misconduct.

Watson was accused of sexual assault and harassment by two dozen women while he played for the Houston Texans. The league had sought to ban him for at least one year for violating its personal conduct policy.

As part of the settlement, which concludes the disciplinary process, Watson will also undergo a professional evaluation by behavioral experts and will follow their treatment program, the NFL said in a statement.

"I'm grateful that the disciplinary process has ended and extremely appreciative of the tremendous support I have received throughout my short time with the Browns organization. I apologize once again for any pain this situation has caused. I take accountability for the decisions I made," Watson said in a statement re-

ADDITIONAL ACTION

As part of the settlement, which concludes the disciplinary process, Watson will also undergo a professional evaluation by behavioral experts and will follow their treatment program.

SOURCE: Associated Press

leased through the team. "My focus going forward is on working to become the best version of myself on and off the field and supporting my teammates however possible while I'm away from the team."

Asked later if he thinks the settlement is fair, Watson said: "I'm going to keep my opinion to myself."

The settlement ends months of posturing between Watson's legal team, the NFL and NFL Players Association.

As part of the settlement, Watson may return for the Browns' game on Dec. 4 in Houston.

"As we have previously conveyed, Deshaun and his representatives have abided by the NFL and NFLPA structure awaiting a final decision and we have respected the process," team owners Dee and Jimmy Haslam said

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