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& PACIFIC
WEEKEND
EDITION

MOVIES

New 'Invisible Man' ramps up the horror by focusing on the victim rather than the villain

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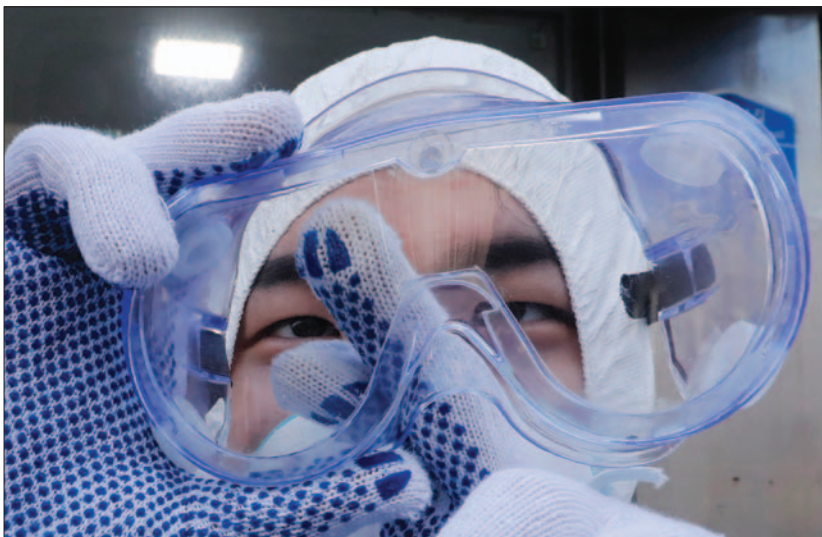
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CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK



Ahn Young-joon/AP

A worker cleans his goggles as he prepares to spray disinfectant as a precaution against the coronavirus in a Seoul, South Korea, shopping district Thursday. Countries around the world are taking tougher measures as the number of sick and dead rises.

Countries take tough steps

World leaders attempt to keep citizens, economies safe as illness spreads

BY MATT SEDENSKY
AND JON GAMBRELL
Associated Press

BANGKOK — Saudi Arabia cut travel to Islam's holiest sites, South Korea toughened penalties for those breaking quarantines and airports across Latin America looked for signs of sick passengers Thursday as the new virus troubled a mushrooming swath of the globe.

With the illness pushing its way onto a sixth continent and the number of sick and dead rising, the crisis gave way to political and diplomatic rows, concern

Trump urges calm; new case is discovered in California

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US, South Korea delay drills; Japan bases hold town halls

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In Italy, US Army preparing for prolonged precautions

[Page 9](#)

that bordered on panic in some quarters, and a sense that no part of the world was immune to the disease's spread.

"Viruses don't know borders and they don't stop at them," said Roberto Speranza, the health minister in Italy, where northern towns were on army-guarded lockdowns and supermarket shelves were bare.

As growing parts of Europe and the Middle East saw infections and a first case was found in South America, air routes were halted and border control

[SEE STEPS ON PAGE 7](#)

Afghans get look at peace during pause in fighting

BY SUSANNAH GEORGE
The Washington Post

MARJAH, Afghanistan — The Afghan army sergeant pulled down his shirt collar to reveal a thick, jagged scar across his neck. Five years ago, he said, the Taliban kidnapped him, slit his throat and left him for dead.

But that's the past, Sgt. Abul Rashid Karwan said. Now, he's ready for peace.

And so, in one of Afghanistan's most volatile provinces, cautiously optimistic about a peace deal set to be signed between the U.S. and the Taliban on Saturday, Karwan and his men did something that would have been unthinkable even a week ago: They invited Taliban fighters to lunch.

"We'll bring a good chicken for you!" one of his soldiers shouted across the rocky farmland of Helmand province, toward a fighter on a motorcycle, rifle slung over his shoulder.

The lunch offer came on the fourth day of a seven-day period of reduced violence between U.S.-backed Afghan forces and the Taliban. The Taliban controls or contests more than half of Helmand's districts, and this once-active front line, like half a dozen others around the province, had fallen almost completely silent.

[SEE PAUSE ON PAGE 6](#)



LORENZO TUGNOLI/For The Washington Post

Afghan police officers guard the Ali Nazar outpost just outside of Lashkar Gah, Afghanistan, the provincial capital of Helmand province, on Feb. 22.

SATURDAY IN THE PACIFIC

CHINA

RUSSIA

N. KOREA

S. KOREA

JAPAN

Pacific Ocean

Sea of Japan

Philippine Sea

Seoul 47/39

Busan 53/47

Sasebo 53/47

Okinawa 71/68

Iwakuni 49/43

Tokyo 47/37

Misawa 34/29

Guam 79/76

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MILITARY

Pentagon alters child care priority policy

By CATLIN M. KENNEY
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — A Pentagon policy change will ensure more military families have priority access at base child care centers as high demand for spots has created long waitlists.

Due to frequent moves and only a few years at each installation, many military families face challenges finding consistent child care, according to Nicole Russell, the deputy director of government relations at the National Military Family Association, a private nonprofit advocacy group based in Alexandria, Va.

"When you're moving from one duty station to the next, a service member needs to make sure that their family is taken care of and their children zero to 12 [years old] have the child care that they need," she said.

The high demand for care has caused increased waits for spots at the facilities, which offer more hours of care to meet military schedules, Russell said. She also said a friend of hers in Hawaii is a military spouse who has been told the waitlist for her child is six to nine months.

To address the growing problem, Defense Secretary Mark Esper on Friday signed a memorandum that changes the policy that determines who is selected for child care first, making more military spouses a greater priority.

Active-duty service members are listed in the top priority bracket as are military spouses with jobs, Russell said. However, included in the top priority are also Defense Department civilians, who now receive a higher



A Smith Child Development Center caregiver interacts with children in Baumholder, Germany. A policy change from the Pentagon now makes military families a greater priority for child care services.

MARY DAVIS/U.S. Army

priority than military spouses who are seeking work or attending school. The change elevates the status of these military spouses. The unemployment rate for military spouses is 24%, she said, much higher than the civilian population.

"The DOD's system of child care was established to assist service members as they face the unique challenges associated with the demands of military service," Esper wrote in his memo. "Over time, child care access expanded to serve the total force, but we must not lose sight of the service member and mission requirements."

During a House Armed Services Committee hearing Wednesday about the Defense Department's fiscal year 2021 proposed budget, Army Gen. Mark Milley, chair-

man of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, supported Esper's policy change and said prioritizing children of service members over others who do not have a parent in uniform will "make a big difference. I think, in terms of these waitlists."

"There's probably nothing more important than taking care of our families in order for the soldier, the sailor, the airman and Marine to focus on their job and maintain the high levels of readiness," he said.

There are now four waitlist priorities for a child to be placed in care first — Priority 1, 2, 3 and space available — covering military individuals, their families, as well as DOD civilians and retirees. Each must meet certain criteria to be prioritized at a specific level.

Families under in Priority 1 are picked first when a slot for child care becomes available at a military child development center. Priority 1 is further broken up into seven individual categories, with child care staff members, single-parent service members and parents who are both service members at the top. Service members whose spouse works are also in Priority 1 as are parents who are Defense Department civilian employees.

Military spouses who are looking for work and need child care are now in Priority 2. In order to keep their spot active, they must verify that they are seeking employment every 90 days. If a spouse is enrolled in classes, they are in Priority 3 and must verify they are enrolled in classes every 90 days. If a spouse does

not verify his or her status, he or she could lose his or her spot on a child care center's waitlist.

The last priority is "space available" that includes spouses of active-duty service members who are not working but need child care, Defense Department contractors and military retirees.

Starting June 1, spouses who are seeking work or are in school full time will now be put in Priority 1 for waitlists. They will still have to verify their status every 90 days or their child will be removed from care, however installation commanders can authorize an extension. This new priority will help families and spouses have more opportunities, Russell said.

"I think by placing them in a higher priority bracket that kind of hits two birds with one stone, in a sense too. You're helping put these families in child care quicker and hopefully, indirectly, allowing military spouses the opportunities to seek employment that they might not otherwise have," she said.

Esper's memo not only prioritizes spouses in school and seeking work, it also simplifies the individual categories within Priority 1 down to four. "The number of priorities has also changed from four to three, with Priority 1 for service members and military spouses, Priority 2 for Defense Department civilians, and space available is now Priority 3."

Defense Department civilians have moved down from Priority 1 to Priority 2 and Gold Star spouses are now in Priority 3, down from the last individual category in Priority 1.

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DOD OKs tenant bill of rights for military families

By ROSE L. THAYER
Stars and Stripes

The Defense Department's top officials signed a tenant bill of rights Tuesday that includes 15 of the 18 rights Congress mandated all military families have while living in privatized base housing, according to a news release.

The document takes effect May 1 and offers rights for the roughly 10% of military service members and their families who live in base housing managed by private companies. Those rights ensure they have access to "safe, quality and well-maintained homes and communities on DOD installations," according to the two-page document signed by Defense Secretary Mark Esper and the three service branch secretaries.

The need for the bill of rights, which reiterates many safety issues and lease requirements already required of rental housing through federal and state laws, comes after reports of poor conditions of some military housing, including mold and pest infestations, lead paint and inadequate maintenance systems.

In December, Congress approved the largest reform of military housing since it was privatized in 1996 and mandated the

creation of a tenant bill of rights, among other oversight improvements.

Rep. Kendra Horn, D-Okla., a member of the House Armed Services Committee, said while she's happy to see the bill of rights rolled out for military families, there is much more work to do.

"It's a critically important issue for families and it's impacting our nation's readiness in so many ways," she said Wednesday. "It is moving us in the right direction, but, to me, we aren't finished."

In many cases, the service member and spouse will move separately — so some of the rights target specific challenges faced by military families.

Those include the right to a "plain-language" briefing from the housing office before signing a lease and 30 days after move-in that outlines processes for utilities, work orders and dispute resolution, the right to report housing concerns to the landlord, chain of command and base housing office without fear of reprisal, the right to a tenant advocate or legal assistance attorney to prepare for dispute resolution, and the right to common forms and procedures across all military bases.

Other rights focus on the basic rights any tenant, military or otherwise, should be able to expect from their landlord, such

as the right to prompt maintenance repairs, an electronic maintenance system to track work orders, reasonable notice of the landlord's entry to the home, convenient methods of communication with the landlord and courteous, responsive customer service.

"The tenant bill of rights isn't perfect, but it is progress," Shannon Razasind, executive director of the Military Family Advisory Network, said in a statement. "This is a step toward accountability and rebuilding the trust that has eroded around this issue. We are honored to have been a part of this effort, but we are most grateful for the families who bravely shared their stories."

Three rights mandated by Congress were not included in the bill of rights signed Tuesday, but the document states that "the department will continue to work with the [private management] companies and, as necessary, Congress to ensure the benefits of these rights are fully available."

They are the rights to access maintenance history, a process for dispute resolution and withholding of rent until disputes are resolved.

"While the department develops standardized, formal processes for these rights, service members and their families will be

able to leverage the support available from their respective military departments to address and resolve relevant housing issues. Tenants seeking assistance should continue to engage their housing office, installation leadership, or chain of command," according to the document.

During a House Armed Services Committee hearing Wednesday to discuss the 2021 defense budget, Esper faced questions about the bill of rights from Horn. Esper said legal contracts between the department and private housing companies are delaying these items.

"We have a pathway on some of these to move forward to find a mutually agreeable way to meet the intent and the spirit, if not the letter, of the law. But I think we are going to have to come back and work with you all as well to assist us," he said. "What I don't want to do is promise a right that I can't deliver on."

Horn said after the hearing she is still concerned about why these three rights need more time and also the "lack of responsiveness which we have continued to see, quite frankly, from some of these companies."

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MILITARY

Marines to ban Confederate paraphernalia

By CHAD GARLAND
Stars and Stripes

The Marine Corps' top officer has directed the removal of "all Confederate-related paraphernalia" from the service's installations, a document posted online revealed.

E.A. Friedman, a military analyst specializing in amphibious warfare, tweeted a photo Wednesday showing part of the document. It shows a directive that was tasked to headquarters staff but isn't yet a published order.

A Marine Corps spokesman confirmed that Commandant Gen. David Berger issued the guidance but offered few details. "Last week, the Commandant of the Marine Corps directed specific tasks to be reviewed or addressed by Headquarters Ma-

rine Corps staff," service spokesman Capt. Christopher Harrison said in an email. "Many of the tasks were published on Twitter Friday (Feb. 21). Other tasks not published are mostly administrative matters."

Berger's spokesman first confirmed the directive Wednesday in a report by Task and Purpose.

It remains unclear whether the ban would apply to barracks rooms or if it would require removing any existing features on bases.

Berger had outlined his "most important matters for immediate execution" in a series of posts, including moves to advance gender integration into fields previously closed to women, expand and update parental leave policies and raise the intelligence standard

for infantry Marines.

Confederate symbols, such as the battle flag used by states that seceded during the Civil War, have long been displayed by Southerners who view the banner as an emblem of their heritage. Others view the flag, which has been used by white supremacist groups, as racist or treasonous.

Issues related to white supremacy have led to high-profile court cases involving Marines in recent years.

Two Marines were separated from the service for their ties to white supremacist or extremist organizations, after they were charged with trespassing for hanging a white nationalist banner during a Confederate Memorial Day rally in Graham, N.C., in May 2017. Staff Sgt. Joseph W.

Manning was discharged in late 2017 and Sgt. Michael J. Chesny was separated in April 2018.

Also in 2018, the Marine Corps court-martialed Vasillios "Billy" Pistolis, 19, a lance corporal with media outlets ProPublica and Frontline linked to the neo-Nazi groups Atomwaffen Division and Traditionalist Worker Party.

Pistolis was convicted of disobeying orders and making false statements. He was reduced to a private first class and sentenced to a month in prison two years ago in June.

Earlier this month, House lawmakers held a hearing on white supremacy and extremism in the ranks, at which some representatives questioned whether the military services were taking the issue seriously enough.

Some in recent years have also called for removal of Confederate monuments on public property and advocated renaming Army bases and Navy ships that honor Confederate leaders or battlefield victories.

The Army has 10 installations named after Confederate leaders but no other services have any, a 2017 Congressional Research Service report said.

The document Friedman shared did not appear to give a deadline or scope of the Confederate-related paraphernalia removal order.

"Any official policy decisions, changes or implementation plans will be published via appropriate orders and messages," Harrison said.

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Astronaut takes questions from students while in space

By CHRISTOPHER DENNIS
Stars and Stripes

RAF ALCONBURY, England — Students on base had an out-of-this-world experience Thursday after talking live with an astronaut floating above them in the International Space Station.

NASA astronaut and Army Col. Andrew Morgan answered questions as about 260 students watched him on a big screen at Alconbury Middle/High School.

Some of the students asked questions ranging from how he packed for space (lightly, in two shoebox-size containers) to how he sleeps (a bag holds him in position).

Morgan demonstrated life in zero-gravity by squeezing a large ball of water out of a bag. The water floated to the middle of the camera, and then he floated up to it and gulped it all down.

Morgan chose to connect with the school in part because of his memories at RAF Woodbridge, where he attended school from



CHRISTOPHER DENNIS/Stars and Stripes

Students gather to ask NASA astronaut and Army Col. Andrew Morgan questions while on a live feed with the International Space Station at RAF Alconbury Middle/High School on Thursday.

8th to 10th grade from 1989 to 1992.

He said in an email to Stars and Stripes that his time as an over-

seas military dependent has been an asset throughout his career and was "filled with great memories," including a trip to Berlin

during the fall of the Berlin Wall.

"Talking to kids from military families in the (Department of Defense Educational Activity) school system is important to me because I can relate very closely to their situation," Morgan said in the email. "Growing up in a military family is a unique lifestyle with challenges, but also enormous benefits like building resilience, experiencing other cultures, and making friends around the world."

Morgan took 23 prescreened questions from students in the elementary, middle and high school grades at Alconbury, a U.K. base where the U.S. 501st Combat Sustainment Wing is stationed.

Students generally said they came away from the experience impressed.

"I'm not a huge space person, but it's still a super cool opportunity, because of all the science behind it, and I'm a very STEM-oriented person," said Kayla Reyna, a 16-year-old high school junior.

Morgan talked with the students a day after swearing in 800 new Army recruits, marking the first time the oath has been administered from the space station.

Morgan has been serving aboard the space station since July as a flight engineer and is scheduled to return to Earth in April.

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Lawmaker critical of VA cuts to safety net programs

By NIKKI WENTLING
Stars and Stripes

WASHINGTON — While the Department of Veterans Affairs is one of only two agencies set to get a financial boost under President Donald Trump's fiscal 2021 budget proposal, Democrats on the House Committee on Veterans' Affairs criticized his administration Thursday for cutting safety net programs that affect veterans, as well as the wider American population.

Rep. Mark Takano, D-Calif., the committee chairman, argued that the proposed VA budget, which includes a 13% increase in medical services, comes at the expense of significant cuts to do-

mestic programs. He referenced cuts to Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, also known as food stamps, that are part of Trump's \$4.8 trillion overall budget plan. Millions of veterans benefit from those programs, Takano said.

"Despite a requested increase for VA's budget, I am deeply concerned this request ignores a much worse reality," Takano said. "This budget could lead to less food on the plates of struggling veteran families... and millions of veterans cut off from key support programs."

Republican lawmakers struck a much different tone Thursday. Rep. Phil Roe, R-Tenn., the rank-

ing Republican on the committee, hailed the overall budget as a "wise investment in our future."

"We view this budget through a very different lens," Roe told Takano.

Republicans hailed Trump's efforts at the VA, arguing it was more well-funded and well-staffed than ever. Republican aides placed large posters behind the lawmakers Thursday, listing nearly 30 accomplishments they said Trump has made at the VA. The list was also widely shared by Republican members on social media.

If enacted by Congress, Trump's budget would make the VA the second-largest federal agency in terms of discretionary

budget and number of employees. The president proposed \$109.5 billion in discretionary funding for the VA, including \$90 billion for medical care. Additionally, the VA has about \$134 billion in mandatory funding to be spent on veterans' benefits.

The budget plan is Trump's fourth — and the fourth time he's suggested an increase for the VA, continuing a pattern set by previous administrations. The agency's budget has increased consistently since the beginning of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. In 2009, it operated on a \$90 billion budget; it surpassed \$200 billion in fiscal 2019 for the first time.

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PACIFIC

Japan sets rules for pollutants found near US bases

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
AND AYA ICHIHASHI
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — Japan plans to join other nations in officially setting its own water quality safety guidelines for pollutants that have been found around U.S. military bases near Tokyo and on Okinawa.

The country's Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare announced Feb. 19 a combined safety threshold of 0.05 micrograms per liter for synthetic, fully fluorinated organic acids commonly known as PFOS and PFOA, a ministry spokesman said last week. They are typically found in cleaning products, firefighting foam, aircraft grease, water-repellant materials and fluorine chemicals, and have been known to cause tumors, increases in blood and organ weight and death in animals.

Japan previously had no guidelines on how much of the acids are safe in its drinking water and relied upon the United States' threshold of 0.07 micrograms per liter as a baseline.

The quality assurance controls go into effect April 1.

"By setting a number, it will help the [prefectural] water bureaus plan and take necessary action to ensure water quality," the ministry spokesman told Stars and Stripes on Tuesday. It's customary for some government officials in Japan to speak on condition of anonymity.

The ministry's water quality board began discussing guidelines at a meeting in July, the spokesman said. The board collected information about the acids and studied the guidelines in other countries in coming to its decision.

It decided to set its threshold lower than the U.S. because a certain amount of the acids is ingested through other sources, like food.

"I think the number ... is pretty reasonable," said Okinawa Prefectural Enterprise Bureau spokesman Kenji Kojima. The bureau oversees the island's water supply and its quality.

"We will make sure that our water meets the nation's quality standard measurement and we will keep monitoring it," he said.

No punitive steps will be taken should drinking water levels ex-

ceed the new guideline, the ministry spokesman said.

Last month U.S. Secretary of Defense Mark Esper and Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kono discussed how "the U.S. and Japan can cooperate in responding to issues such as PFOS and PFOA and to comprehensively advance the discussions," according to a defense ministry news release summarizing the meeting.

Tokyo officials detected the chemicals in two wells near Yokota Air Base during a survey from December 2018 to January 2019, according to the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's Bureau of Social Welfare and Public Health. They were detected at levels above 19 times above the safe standard set by a U.S. drinking water health advisory, the Asahi newspaper reported Jan. 6.

An official with the Tokyo Metropolitan Government last week said that no evidence was found to directly link the pollutants with a source on the U.S. air base.

The Chatan Water Purification Center on Okinawa, which supplies water to the local population as well as Camp Kinser, Marine Corps Air Station Futenma and



Stars and Stripes

A sign posted by town officials to warn people not to drink nearby polluted spring water is pictured in Kadena, Okinawa, on May 10.

parts of Kadena Air Base and Camp Foster, reported highs of 0.043 micrograms per liter of the acids last year and 0.063 in 2018, an enterprise bureau statement said.

Some Okinawa officials blamed the base for the contamination,

but U.S. Forces Japan spokesman Marine Capt. Michael Hopkins last year said that the pollution could have come from alternative sources.

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DODEA principal lambasted over dress code gets reassigned

By MATTHEW M. BURKE
Stars and Stripes

CAMP FOSTER, Okinawa — The principal of a middle school on Okinawa has been temporarily removed from her post while the Department of Defense Education Activity investigates some unspecified allegations.

Ryukyu Middle School principal Lee Ann Mik was assigned to "an alternate work location" while DODEA determines "the facts of the matter," department spokesman Will Griffin wrote in an emailed statement to Stars and Stripes on Wednesday. He did not say when the reassignment took place. Parents filed a complaint Jan. 10 with the Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights that alleged the Kadena Air Base school imposed an outdated dress code and discriminated against female students.

Griffin's statement did not confirm whether the investigation pertained to the dress code.

"We are aware of allegations concerning the Ryukyu principal, and there is an investigation underway to determine the facts of the matter," he wrote.

Crista Kraics, the Philadelphia-area attorney who represented six parents in the Department of Education complaint, said new allegations of bullying and gender discrimination have been leveled against the administrator and that an investigation is being done by DODEA's Pacific leadership.

Griffin's statement did not address Kraics' claims.

Mik, who previously served as Ryukyu's vice principal, took

over for the 2019-20 school year and instituted a dress code policy called "Dress for Success," according to the parents' complaint. Mik and staff, under her direction, removed girls from class for attire their parents felt was appropriate, it said.

Girls were singled out for wearing loose athletic pants with no zipper while boys were permitted to wear basketball shorts, according to the complaint. Girls were also criticized for shirts that weren't long enough and for showing "collar bone."

The girls were judged by a variety of administrators and teachers, subjected to comments from Mik and others and were sometimes forced to change into oversized lost-and-found items, all without parental notification, the complaint said. Some of the girls said that they were afraid to go to school because they feared being targeted by Mik.

Parents also complained that then-vice principal Mik, at a 2018 meeting with female students, said that if the female children did not want boys to sexually harass them, then they should not dress like they did.

DODEA officials said that they investigated the initial complaint in September and substantiated nearly all of the parents' allegations, according to a copy of their investigative report. They then established an interim gender-neutral dress code while a working group studies further reforms.

The Department of Education complaint was filed after parents said Mik was left to continue to en-

force her standards and that she retaliated against complainants.

DODEA spokesman Frank O'Gara said Jan. 16 that the al-

legations were taken seriously and that infractions would be addressed.

Mik did not respond to emailed

requests seeking comment Wednesday.

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WAR ON TERRORISM

Pause: Locals on edge but thankful for reduced violence among Taliban, Afghan forces

FROM FRONT PAGE

As of Thursday, Helmand did not see a "significant" break of the violence reduction agreement, according to Lt. Gen. Wali Mohammed Ahmadzai, the top Afghan army commander in the province. He called it a turning point in the conflict.

"This war is just destroying everything," he said. "We are tired, and the Taliban is tired."

The same was true across much of the country. Afghanistan's Interior Ministry has measured an 80% decrease in violence since the agreement went into effect Saturday, a senior ministry official said, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to talk to the media.

From farming villages to remote outposts on the edges of tightly held Taliban districts, fighters and civilians here said they were relieved by the pause in violence. But many said they fear more bloodshed after the signing of the U.S.-Taliban peace deal, which hinges on violence remaining low through Friday.

U.S. negotiators in Doha, Qatar, insisted on the period of reduced violence as a measure intended to build confidence between Taliban and Afghan government forces. But unlike the cease-fire in 2018, when Taliban fighters freely crossed government lines into provincial capitals and Kabul, this period of relative calm has not afforded fighters complete freedom of movement.

"There is not 100% trust on both sides because this is not a 100% reduction in violence," said Karwan, the commander at the outpost on the edge of Marjah.

When Karwan's soldiers offered the chicken meal, the Taliban fighter on the motorbike responded that meeting government soldiers would "create problems" for him and sped away.

Earlier that day, a group of armed Taliban fighters who approached the outpost said they

were under strict orders not to enter Afghan military bases or take selfies with soldiers. Instead, they came just to talk to the men they would normally have been shooting at. Karwan said the Taliban fighters were curious and after 18 years and both sides are ready for peace.

But Karwan and more than a dozen other Afghan soldiers stationed across Helmand said no matter how long the reduction in violence lasts, it would never encourage them to trust the Taliban.

At the Marjah outpost, soldiers didn't stray far from their fortifications and Karwan said fear of an attack prevented them from walking to the Taliban base just down the road.

They did cross a narrow stream on a half-finished bridge that roughly marked the dividing line between government and Taliban territory, steps that would have prompted a volley of Taliban fire just days before. The men hung around a motorcycle repair shop as traffic whizzed by on the main road.

"We've never seen peace for this long in the last 20 years," said Hekmatullah, a 23-year-old shop owner who, like many Afghans, uses only one name. "This feels relaxed," he said.

But beneath the laid-back atmosphere was an undercurrent of unease.

At another remote outpost just 15 miles away that marked the beginning of the end of government control outside Gereschk, Second Lt. Aghagul Afghan said he doesn't believe the Taliban fighters in his area will keep their word. He instructed his men to continue conducting patrols outside the base.

"We didn't receive very detailed orders, just a call on the radio. My commander told me we are not allowed to attack the Taliban, otherwise, we will be prosecuted. All they told me is, 'Don't make problems for us,'" he said.



LORENZO TUCOLI/The Washington Post

Afghan soldiers shout across an open field at a group of Taliban fighters during the period of reduced violence.

Less than an hour later, a handful of shots rang out outside the base's walls. The men inside barely reacted. Afghan said the Taliban fired the first shot and he doubted it constituted a violation, but acknowledged, "I don't know what this term 'reduction in violence' means."

Just outside his base's walls, pro-government militias and civilians were mingling along the edge of a canal dividing government and Taliban territory, a scenic stretch of road that would have been a deadly place to stand just days before.

"Now you can see people standing here and on the other side; it means they are not afraid," said Nasibullah Popal, a 20-year-old private, gesturing to Taliban territory just a few yards away. Behind him a young pro-government militia fighter ambled along the water's edge, playing Bollywood music on a portable speaker or within direct sight of Taliban bases.

Scenes like the one could have important symbolic value for any future reduction in violence, said Andrew Watkins, the senior Afghanistan analyst for the International Crisis Group.

"At different points, all sides of this war — the Taliban, Western military forces and the Afghan

state — have viewed Helmand as a focal point, a deadly centerpiece of their war effort," he said. "If these Afghans can live through a week's respite of fighting, that might begin to change wider perceptions of whether or not a lasting peace is possible."

In neighboring Nad Ali district, 21-year-old shop owner Gulwali Balouch said he doesn't know what peace feels like. He doesn't remember what Afghanistan was like before the war, and he lives on one of Helmand's many fault lines, where violence has forced him to flee several times over just the past few years. Once, the clashes erupted so quickly, he was forced to abandon the entire contents of his store.

But, he said, the past few days have allowed him to "imagine what a peaceful life would be."

Away from the main roads, checkpoints and outposts, a family sipping tea was similarly thankful for the lull in violence but less hopeful about the future. Two brothers and their children sat in the middle of neat fields growing wheat and opium poppy.

"We live between two front lines," said Sayed Ahmed, a farmer in his 30s. He said his family was accustomed to the daily sound of gunfire, rockets and fighter jets, but once the

noise stopped, the atmosphere felt "sweeter."

The brothers appeared to sympathize with the Taliban but did not indicate whether they were part of the militant group. They said the situation in Marjah improved when the Taliban began to retake the area in 2015. Five years earlier, a monthslong U.S. offensive to clear out the militants left farming villages here badly battered, stoking frustration with the Afghan government and foreign troops.

Ahmed said his father, who stayed behind to protect the house and animals when the rest of the family fled, was killed in a U.S. airstrike days after the 2010 offensive began.

Ahmed and his younger brother shrugged wearily when asked if they thought the recent calm was a sign of lasting peace to come. "I'm concerned the foreigners will break their promise," Ahmed said, referring to the provision in the peace deal for the withdrawal of thousands of American troops.

"Tell the foreigners, just sign the agreement," said Ahmed's younger brother, Abdulbaki Atrai. "Because if they don't, we are ready to fight for 25 more years."

US general, Afghan official take selfies in demonstration of peace effort



DAN LAMOTHE/The Washington Post

BY DAN LAMOTHE
The Washington Post

KABUL, Afghanistan — The top U.S. general in Afghanistan strolled through crowded streets and visited shops in the capital Wednesday in an effort to highlight relative peace amid a seven-day agreement between the Taliban and the United States aimed at potentially ending the 18-year-old war.

Army Gen. Scott Miller greeted shopkeepers, children and Afghan security forces, taking scores of selfies over the span of a couple hours without wearing a helmet or body armor. He was accompanied by Afghanistan's acting defense minister, Asadullah Khalid,

who hugged fellow Afghans and posed for photographs.

In a rare move, the two men hopped out of armored sport utility vehicles in several locations, including an indoor shopping mall and an outdoor strip of stores surrounded by tall buildings, with several U.S. Special Operations soldiers on Miller's security team.

"When you see the minister of defense out walking, that actually matters," Miller said in a brief interview on a city street. "I think that's really the key piece."

The shops they visited sold rugs, shampoo, gold jewelry and perfumes. Civilians gathered around them after each stop, often jostling for position to intro-

duce themselves as Miller's security forces watched closely.

Miller, who carried a holstered pistol, pointed out that it was "not a huge protection detail" accompanying him and the defense minister.

"I think that's important for the people to see," Miller said.

Both he and Asadullah have been targeted in Afghanistan before, including an October 2018 attack in Kandahar province in which Miller escaped unscathed, but three senior Afghan officials were killed and three Americans were wounded. Asadullah survived a suicide attack in 2012 that required hospitalization in the United States.

Army Gen. Scott Miller meets with civilians in the streets of Kabul, Afghanistan, Wednesday, amid a seven-day reduction in violence agreement between the United States and the Taliban.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

New US case reported after Trump urges calm

BY LAURAN NEERGAARD
AND RICARDO
ALONSO-ZALDIVAR
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump declared that a widespread U.S. outbreak of the new respiratory virus sweeping the globe isn't inevitable even as top health authorities at his side warned Americans that more infections are coming.

Shortly after Trump spoke Wednesday, the government announced a worrisome development: Another person in the U.S. is infected — someone in California who doesn't appear to have the usual risk factors of having traveled abroad or being exposed to another patient.

At a White House news conference, Trump sought to minimize fears as he insisted the U.S. is “very, very ready” for whatever the COVID-19 outbreak brings. Under fire about the government's efforts, he put Vice President Mike Pence in charge of coordinating the efforts.

“This will end,” Trump said of the outbreak. “You don't want to see panic because there's no reason to be panicked.”

But standing next to him, the very health officials Trump praised for fighting the new coronavirus stressed that schools, businesses and individuals need to get ready.

“We do expect more cases,” said Dr. Anne Schuchat of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If the CDC confirms that the latest U.S. case doesn't involve travel or contact with an infected person, it would be a first in this country and a sign that efforts to contain the virus' spread haven't been enough.

“It's possible this could be an instance of community spread of COVID-19,” the CDC said in a statement.

More than 81,000 cases of COVID-19, an illness characterized by fever and coughing and in serious cases shortness of breath or pneumonia, have occurred since the new virus emerged in China.

The newest case from California brings the total number infected in the U.S. to 60, most of them evacuated from outbreak zones.

Trump credited border restrictions that have blocked people coming into the U.S. from China for keeping infections low. But now countries around the world — from South Korea and Japan to Italy and Iran — are experiencing growing numbers of cases. Asked if it was time to either lift the China restrictions or take steps

If the CDC confirms that the latest U.S. case doesn't involve travel or contact with an infected person, it would be a first in this country and a sign that efforts to contain the virus haven't been enough.

for travelers from elsewhere, he said: “At a right time we may do that. Right now, it's not the time.”

Trump spent close to an hour discussing the virus threat, after a week of sharp stock market losses over the health crisis and concern within the administration that a growing outbreak could affect his reelection.

He blamed the Democrats for the stock market slide, saying, “I think the financial markets are very upset when they look at the Democrat candidates standing on that stage making fools out of themselves.” And he shifted to defend his overall record and predict a win in November.

A key question is whether the Trump administration is spending enough money to get the country prepared — especially as the CDC has struggled to expand the number of states that can test people for the virus. Other key concerns are stockpiling masks and other protective equipment for health workers, and developing a vaccine or treatment.

Health officials have exhausted an initial \$105 million in emergency funding and have been looking elsewhere for dollars. Earlier this week, Trump requested \$2.5 billion from Congress to fight the virus. Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York countered with a proposal for \$8.5 billion.

Trump told reporters that he was open to spending “whatever's appropriate.”

Trump compared the new virus repeatedly to the flu, which kills tens of thousands of people each year. The new coronavirus has killed more than 2,700 people — most in China and none in the U.S. — but scientists still don't understand who's most at risk or what the death rate is.

Without a vaccine, the CDC's Schuchat advised people to follow “tried and true, not very exciting” but important precautions: Wash your hands, cover your coughs and stay home when you're sick.

The National Institutes of Health's top infectious disease chief warned that a vaccine won't be ready for broad use for a year or more.



LEE MOO-RYUL, NEWSIS/AP

South Korean army soldiers wearing protective suits spray disinfectant to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus Thursday on a street in Daegu, South Korea.

Steps: Travel restrictions, laws, school closures among response to coronavirus

FROM FRONT PAGE

toughened. But for an illness transmitted so easily, with its tentacles reaching into so many parts of the world, leaders puzzled over how to keep the virus from proliferating seemed willing to try anything to keep their people — and economies — safe.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called for schools across the country to close for weeks, a decision that impacted 12.8 million students.

“The most important thing is to prevent infections,” said Norinobu Sawada, vice principal of Koizumi primary school, “so there aren't many other options.”

In South Korea, the hardest-hit country outside China, four Busan markets known for colorful silks and a dizzying array of other wares were shuttered while the country's military sent hundreds of its doctors and soldiers to aid in treatment and quarantines.

In Iran, the front line of Middle East infections, officials loosened rules barring the import of many foreign-made items to allow in sanitizers, face masks and other necessities, and removed overhead handrails on Tehran's subway to eliminate another source of germs.

Peru put specialists on round-the-clock shifts at its biggest airport, Argentina took the temperature of some new arrivals and El Salvador added bans for travelers from Italy and South Korea.

The holy city of Mecca, which able-bodied Muslims are called to visit at least once in their lives, and the Prophet Muhammad's mosque in Medina were cut off to potentially millions of pilgrims, with Saudi Arabia making the extraordinary decision to stop the spread of the virus.

With the monarchy offering no firm date for the lifting of the restrictions, it posed the possibility of affecting those planning to make their hajj, a ritual beginning in the end of July this year. “We ask God Almighty to spare



EBRAHIM NOROOZI/AP

A worker disinfects a public bus against coronavirus Wednesday in Tehran, Iran, which has seen more than 100 cases of infection.

all humanity from all harm,” the country said in announcing the decision.

Disease has been a constant concern surrounding the hajj, with cholera outbreaks in the 19th century killing tens of thousands making the trip.

More recently, another coronavirus that caused Middle East respiratory syndrome, or MERS, prompted increased public health measures, but no outbreak resulted.

COVID-19's westward creep

has some countries warning their people to obey measures intended to keep a single case from blossoming into a cluster that could paralyze a community.

A man originally from Wuhan, the Chinese city at the center of the global outbreak, who contracted the virus was charged alongside his wife in Singapore for allegedly lying about their whereabouts as officials tried to stem further infections.

In Colombia, which has yet to report any cases, officials reminded residents that they could be jailed for up to eight years if they violate containment measures.

And in South Korea, the National Assembly passed a law strengthening the punishment for those violating self-isolation,

more than tripling the fine and adding the possibility of a year in prison.

“It came later than it should have,” said Lee Hae-shik, spokesman for the ruling Democratic Party, calling for further nonpartisan cooperation to address the outbreak.

Countries' efforts to contain the virus opened up diplomatic scuffles. South Korea fought prohibitions keeping its citizens out of 40 countries, calling them excessive and unnecessary. China warned Russia to stop discriminatory measures against its people, including monitoring on public transit. Iran used the crisis to rail against the U.S., which it accused of “a conspiracy” that was sowing fear.

The global count of those sickened by the virus hovered around 82,000, with 433 new cases reported Thursday in China and another 505 in South Korea. Iran's caseload surged by more than 100 cases.

Even the furthest reaches of the globe were touched by the epidemic, with a woman testing positive in Tromsø, the fjord-dotted Norwegian city with panoramas of snow-capped mountains.

Health officials said that the woman had traveled to China.

VIRUS OUTBREAK

US and S. Korea delay drills due to virus worries

By Kim Gamel
Stars and Stripes

SEOUL, South Korea — The United States and South Korea postponed joint military exercises that had been slated to start next week due to the coronavirus crisis, the allies said Thursday.

The U.S. military also reported that a South Korean employee had tested positive for COVID-19 in the southeastern city of Daegu — its third confirmed case. Only one American soldier has been infected so far. The widow of a military retiree who had base access also contracted the pneumonia-like illness, U.S. Forces Korea said earlier this week.

Meanwhile, the State Department urged Americans to reconsider travel to South Korea, and the Indo-Pacific military command barred all nonessential service members and Defense Department-affiliated civilians from traveling to South Korea as officials struggled to contain the respiratory virus.

South Korea raised its alert level to severe as the number of confirmed cases nationwide jumped to 1,766 on Thursday, with 13 deaths. Most of the infections — including the first American service member to test positive — have been in Daegu and surrounding areas.

The Daegu Army garrison re-

leased details on Thursday after analyzing the on-post locations recently visited by the 23-year-old infected soldier, who was stationed at Camp Carroll. He was taken to Camp Humphreys by ambulance and placed in an isolation unit after he was confirmed as positive on Wednesday.

He was at the Materiel Support Command-Korea headquarters on Camp Carroll on Feb. 18, 20, 22 and 24. The soldier, who lived with his family off-post, also was in the parking lot of the Army clinic on Camp Walker on Feb. 24.

Finally, he used the bathroom at the gym on Camp Carroll and went to the Troop Medical Clinic on Camp Walker on Feb. 25.

The garrison did a similar breakdown of base facilities visited by the widow of a military retiree who tested positive for the virus earlier this week.

"We have contacted those people who are at risk of exposure, and they have been quarantined," the garrison said on its Facebook page, reassuring the 9,000-strong local military community that affected facilities had been cleaned before reopening.

The South Korean employee who tested positive worked at Camp Carroll but had not had any contact with the military community since Feb. 20, U.S. Forces Korea spokesman Col. Lee Peters



KOREA POOL, YONHAP/AP

U.S. Army's Col. Lee Peters, director of Public Affairs of United States Forces Korea, and Col. Kim Jun-rak, of South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, brief about their postponed joint military drills at Defense Ministry in Seoul, South Korea, on Thursday.

said.

South Korean health authorities determined that no trace history was required because the man had been self-quarantined at home since his wife had tested positive, Peters said.

The announcement about the computer-simulated command post exercise had been expected after Defense Secretary Mark Esper said earlier this week that the allies were considering scaling them back.

The two countries already have reduced the scope of the exercises, a linchpin of the decades-old alliance, as part of diplomatic efforts to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons.

The allies "made the decision to postpone the combined command post training ... until further notice," according to a statement released by the U.S.-led Combined Forces Command.

It stressed the need to prioritize the safety of U.S. and South Korean service members. The U.S. military has implemented

restrictions on movements and base access in a bid to contain the pneumonia-like illness.

"The decision to postpone the combined training was not taken lightly," the statement said. "The [South Korean]-U.S. alliance remains committed to providing a credible military deterrence and maintaining a robust combined defense posture to protect [South Korea] against any threat."

South Korea Gen. Park Hunki, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, initially raised the idea, and USFK commander Gen. Robert Abrams agreed "based on the severity of the present COVID-19 situation within South Korea," according to the statement.

Most of the infections have been in the southeastern part of the country as the outbreak is believed to have begun with an infected woman who attended services at a church run by a secretive religious movement.

Some 28,500 American troops are stationed in South Korea, which remains technically at war

with the North after their 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice instead of a peace treaty.

The U.S. Indo-Pacific Command's announcement limiting nonessential travel said it was based on a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention travel health notice and applies to all military, civilians, and contractors under its authority.

Col. Michael Tremblay, the garrison commander for Camp Humphreys, said Thursday that military authorities were still working on what that would mean for people preparing for an assignment on the divided peninsula.

Families who had already arrived for an assignment at Army garrison Daegu, which is at the epicenter of the outbreak, were being housed at Camp Humphreys for the time being, he said in response to questions from the community.

Stars and Stripes reporter Yoo Kyong Chang contributed to this report.
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Amid virus concerns, US bases in Japan hold town halls

By Caitlin Doornbos
Stars and Stripes

CAMP ZAMA, Japan — Authorities at U.S. military bases across Japan are taking steps to reduce the likelihood that COVID-19 finds its way onto these installations, including stocking up on masks and hand sanitizer.

Rumor control is part of that effort. At a town hall meeting Wednesday evening at Camp Zama, home to U.S. Army Japan headquarters, one man asked whether dependents would be evacuated.

"No," U.S. Army Japan Major Gen. Viet Xuan Luong told a packed ballroom of service members, civilian employees and their families.

That's a possibility if the coronavirus outbreak reaches pandemic status "months from now," he said, but advised the audience not to "worry about that right now."

Seven people associated with U.S. Army Japan are undergoing 14 days of quarantine after disembarking the Diamond Princess, a cruise ship moored three weeks at Yokohama after COVID-19 appeared on board. One of them — a U.S. contractor's wife — tested positive for the coronavirus, but has since recovered. U.S. Forces Japan spokeswoman Maj. Genieve White told



CAITLIN DOORNBOS/Stars and Stripes

A sign informs commissary customers at Yokosuka Naval Base, Japan, of purchase limits for antibacterial and sanitation products, on Thursday.

Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

So far, 691 people of more than 3,700 who had been on the ship have tested positive for the virus.

Misawa Air Base held a virtual town hall on its Facebook page Thursday evening to address coronavirus concerns. One change

announced was that security forces working at base entry points will no longer handle ID cards, but rather will have entrants hold up their IDs for scanning.

U.S. Forces Japan on Wednesday said base commanders may impose health screenings for those entering installations in Japan and urged them to cancel public base gatherings such as meetings, formations and social events.

Military units were instructed to place bulk orders for masks, gloves, eye protection, alcohol, hand gel, sanitation wipes, bleach and towels, according to a copy of the public health order obtained Thursday by Stars and Stripes.

The Camp Zama commissary and post exchange sold out of large bottles of hand sanitizer and face masks within days of the last shipment, despite a one-per-family restriction on purchases, officials said at Wednesday's town hall.

The exchange and commissary are restocking shelves and rationing those items, officials said. Similar rationing is taking place at the Navy Exchange and commissary at Yokosuka Naval Base.

A day after the USFJ announcement, installations across Japan announced event changes and cancellations due to the coronavirus risk.

Upcoming open-base spring festivals at Camp Zama, Army Garrison Okinawa and Naval Air Facility Atsugi have been canceled.

Yokosuka will hold its festival March 28, though it will no longer be open to the public without an escort, said base spokesman Randall Baucum. Base residents and personnel may still bring guests.

"The installation commander is continuously reviewing all activities on a case by case basis to determine if they need altered or cancelled," Baucum said in an email to Stars and Stripes on Thursday.

Atsugi officials on Thursday announced on Facebook that the annual Tomodachi Bowl football game between American and Japanese high school players was canceled. The next open-base event will not happen until Atsugi, they added.

At Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, no cancellations or changes have been announced, but spokesman Maj. Josh Didams said the base is "monitoring the spread of COVID-19 closely and is currently evaluating upcoming events and taking appropriate precautions as the situation develops."

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VIRUS OUTBREAK

In Italy, Army plans for long haul

BY NANCY MONTGOMERY
Stars and Stripes

VICENZA, Italy — U.S. military officials are planning for possible continued school closures and isolation facilities for any infected troops as Italy's number of coronavirus cases grows. Maj. Gen. Roger Cloutier said at a virtual town hall meeting Tuesday.

"As we look at the graph, we're still on the ascendant phase," Cloutier, commander of U.S. Army Africa, which is headquartered in Vicenza, said on Facebook Live regarding the outbreak.

"We don't know how long this is going to go. It could be a week, it could be a month," he said. "What we're trying to do is put everything in place to protect our families and protect our community."

The city of Vicenza, home to U.S. Army Garrison Italy, has three suspected coronavirus cases, Italian media reported Thursday.

More than 500 cases of coronavirus and 14 deaths have been confirmed throughout Italy, with clusters in Lombardy and the Veneto.

Lt. Col. Joe Matthews, commander of the base health care center, said 90 people in Vicenza had been tested for the coronavirus over the past three days at San Bortolo Hospital. One U.S. soldier's test result has not yet been returned, he said, and the other tests were negative.

Several troops with respiratory symptoms were confirmed to have influenza, Matthews said. U.S. officials, keeping with Italian directives, this week closed down base bowling clubs, church services, gyms, bowling alleys and other gathering spots through March 1 to try to prevent the spread of the new virus, or at least slow it down.



GREGORIO BORDIA/AP

A couple, wearing face masks, stroll outside St. Peter's Square, at the Vatican, on Thursday. In Europe, an expanding cluster in northern Italy is eyed as a source for transmissions of the new coronavirus.

so that health care facilities don't get overwhelmed.

Cloutier said that contingency planning to isolate soldiers who test positive for the coronavirus is completed.

Defense Department school officials said they were working to provide online lessons available if the schools remained closed. The garrison won't reopen its schools until Italians do, officials said.

Any virtual class days would count as regular school days.

"Ideally, we wouldn't have to tack on any days" at the end of the school year, Cloutier said.

But that remained in flux, as

did questions about leave policies for workers. Cloutier said that meetings were ongoing to devise broader Army policies, as the epidemic affects garrisons around the world.

So far, he said, permanent changes of station to and from Italy were proceeding as usual.

Roughly 7,000 U.S. service members are stationed in Vicenza. About 70% of those troops are accompanied by spouses and children.

According to the World Health Organization, about 80% of patients infected so far with the coronavirus have a mild illness

and recover. The other 20% have progressed to severe illnesses such as pneumonia. The mortality rate is thought to be about 2%, significantly higher than influenza, which is typically around 1% in the U.S.

The garrison has set up a phone line for coronavirus concerns and screening, at DSN 314-636-9000 or +39-0444-61-9000 from off post.

Testing for the coronavirus can be done at San Bortolo Hospital, not at the base clinic, Army officials said.

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Saudi Arabia halts pilgrimage; Iranian official has virus

Associated Press

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Saudi Arabia on Thursday banned foreign pilgrims from entering the kingdom to visit Islam's holiest sites over the new coronavirus, potentially disrupting the plans of millions of faithful ahead of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan and as the annual hajj pilgrimage looms.

The decision showed the growing worry across the Mideast about the virus as Iran confirmed that infected cases in the country spiked by over 100, to 254 now. Those with the virus in the Islamic

Republic now include Iranian Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar, better known as the English-language spokeswoman "Mary" for the 1979 hostage-takers who seized the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and sparked the 444-day diplomatic crisis, state media reported.

A total of 26 people have died so far in Iran, the world's highest death toll outside of China, where the outbreak began.

Saudi Arabia's barring of pilgrims from Mecca, home to the cube-shaped Kaaba that the world's 1.8 billion Muslims pray toward five times a day, and also

the holy city of Medina, appeared unprecedented in modern history. The kingdom's Al Saud ruling family stakes their legitimacy in overseeing and protecting the sites. It appeared Saudi officials worried about the risk of pilgrims spreading the virus as they had in Iran. The virus' epicenter in the Islamic Republic is the holy Shiite city of Qom, where the faithful in reverence reach out to kiss and touch a shrine. That shrine and others have remained open, despite Iran's civilian government calling for them to be closed.

There have been no confirmed cases of the new coronavirus in

Saudi Arabia amid the outbreak.

"Saudi Arabia renews its support for all international measures to limit the spread of this virus, and urges its citizens to exercise caution before traveling to countries experiencing coronavirus outbreaks," the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement announcing the decision. "We ask God Almighty to spare all humanity from all harm."

News of the cancellation shocked the Muslim world; many save their entire lives for a chance to see the Kaaba and walk the path of the Prophet Muhammad and visit his tomb in Medina.

Bahrain School extends closure

BY JOSHUA KARSTEN
Stars and Stripes

MANAMA, Bahrain — The U.S. Navy base school in Bahrain will close through March 10 as a precautionary measure due to coronavirus concerns, after several more cases were reported in the country.

Bahrain's Health Ministry said Thursday it had confirmed 33 cases of infected citizens in the small island kingdom, which is home to the U.S. Navy Central Command headquarters and the largest concentration of U.S. service members and their families in the Middle East.

The outbreak led to a two-week closure of all public schools in Bahrain. The Bahrain School, run by Department of Defense Education Activity, said Tuesday it would close for the week but announced the extension to parents via email and text message Thursday. The closure includes all scheduled events and extracurricular programs.

"Our families can expect in the coming days information on how their students can continue their academic progress while away from school," the statement said.

DODEA schools elsewhere have also been making adjustments in light of the outbreak. In Europe, plans are being developed to "deliver digital learning experiences," DODEA spokesman Stephen Smith said Thursday. Those plans differ based on varying community needs, he said.

There were no confirmed cases of coronavirus reported among the Defense Department community in Bahrain as of Thursday.

Bahraini officials said that they will intensify monitoring and testing of suspected coronavirus cases at entry points.

Naval Forces Central Command said Monday that service members are subject to 14-day quarantines and testing when coming to Bahrain from mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and South Korea. Personal leave to those countries is also restricted.

Stars and Stripes reporter Jennifer Swan contributed to this report.
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Health official: Germany 'at the beginning of an epidemic'

Associated Press

BERLIN — Germany's health minister said Wednesday that the country was "at the beginning of an epidemic" as authorities in the west tested dozens of people who had contact with a couple infected with the coronavirus gaining a

foothold in Europe.

Germany has been bracing for an increase in confirmed cases since the number of infected people spiked Friday in nearby Italy. The testing in western Germany came after a 47-year-old man with the virus was hospitalized in

serious condition in Duesseldorf.

The man's wife, who works in a kindergarten, was also confirmed to have contracted the virus. A soldier in the German air force who had contact with the hospitalized man also has tested positive, Col. Rainer Vob, acting head

of the German military hospital in Koblenz.

The cases brought Germany's total to 21. The government said late Wednesday in a statement it would establish an emergency task force regarding the coronavirus outbreak.

NATION

Dems anxious about House as Sanders rises

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sen. Bernie Sanders' ascendancy as Democrats' leading presidential hopeful fueled growing unease Wednesday, as lawmakers openly expressed anxiety that the self-proclaimed democratic socialist could cost them House control and questions abounded over what party leaders should do.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., projected calm — and neutrality — as she batted away reporters' queries about whether it was time for her to try thwarting Sanders to protect her party's majority.

"We're not going to lose the House," she said. "We're going to be united by whomever is the candidate for president. But we are taking responsibility for winning the House, and we're not assuming anything. But we feel very confident."

She delivered a similar message to colleagues at a closed-door meeting Wednesday morning, when she told them, "We cannot show any division. This has to be about unity, unity, unity." Her remarks were described by a Democratic aide on condition of anonymity to relay private comments.

Yet with Sanders, I-Vt., riding high after early nominating contest wins in New Hampshire and Nevada and a virtual first-place tie in Iowa, other House Democrats were less sanguine.

Time was growing short to head Sanders off. South Carolina holds its primary Saturday, followed three days later by Super Tuesday, when contests in 14 states and one territory will decide one-third of the delegates to this summer's Democratic convention.

Rep. Tom Malinowski, a freshman from a closely divided New

Jersey district, said Democrats have "a simple path" to defeating President Donald Trump by focusing on health care, the economy and a promise that their presidential candidate won't lie. "I don't want to squander that opportunity" by nominating a contender who divides Democrats, he said in an unspoken reference to Sanders.

Freshman Rep. Elaine Luria, D-Va., who defeated an incumbent Republican in 2018 in a swing district in coastal Virginia, said a Sanders candidacy would be "incredibly divisive" and endanger more centrist lawmakers like herself. The former Navy commander said of GOP efforts to paint all Democrats as socialists, "Bernie Sanders just adds fuel to that fire."

Rep. Scott Peters, D-Calif., a leader of his party's House moderates, said there is widespread concern among lawmakers from competitive districts "that a Sanders candidacy would sink their reelections."

Peters, whose San Diego district is safely Democratic, said Sanders would complicate moderates' reelection bids because "the face of the Democratic Party might be spouting things that are absolutely anathema to your voters." Sanders advocacy for "Medicare for All," the Green New Deal and student loan forgiveness has alienated many moderates.

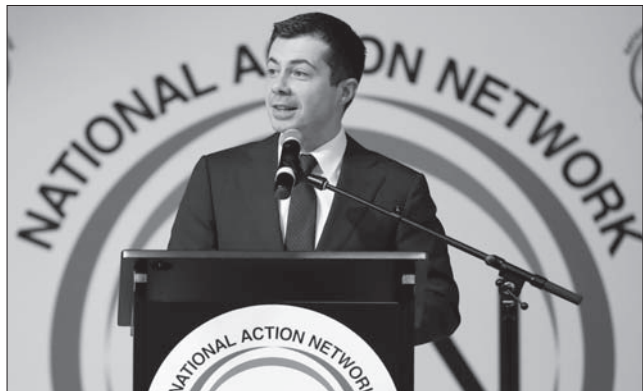
Of the 42 House seats Democrats gained in 2018 when they captured the majority, 29 are from districts that Trump either won in 2016 or lost by a narrow 5 percentage points or less. Most of them are moderates.

Republicans will need to gain 18 seats in November's elections to win House control, assuming they retain three vacant seats held previously by the GOP.



GERALD HERBERT/AP

Democratic presidential candidate Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., greets people Wednesday at a campaign event in Myrtle Beach, S.C.



MATT ROURKE/AP

Democratic presidential candidate and former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg speaks at the National Action Network South Carolina Ministers' Breakfast on Wednesday in North Charleston, S.C.

Buttigieg aides say path beyond March 3 is possible but tricky

Associated Press

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Democratic presidential candidate Pete Buttigieg is bracing his supporters for a difficult stretch, with the sobering assertion that front-runner Bernie Sanders will likely emerge from next week's Super Tuesday contests well ahead in the race for delegates.

The disclosure, made in a strategy memo sent to supporters, comes as the former South Bend, Ind., mayor prepares for the uncertainty of Saturday's South Carolina primary. After strong finishes in Iowa and New Hampshire, Buttigieg is working to beat expectations in South Carolina, where his pull among African American voters will be tested, while keeping up the fundraising

stream that launched him into the top tier.

Despite the challenging stretch leading up to Super Tuesday, there remains a path to the nomination for Buttigieg, his campaign strategists say, though one marked by assumptions about the rest of the field and the candidate's own performance over the next six critical days.

"The question is, Can he keep the balloon in the air?" said David Axelrod, former senior adviser to President Barack Obama. "So, I think there's a lot at stake here. This was always going to be the toughest part of the competition for him."

Punctuating his challenge, Buttigieg canceled a round of morning television appearances in South Carolina on Wednes-

day and scrubbed a day of Florida fundraising events from his schedule after falling ill with what aides described as flu-like symptoms, the result of a near-nonstop campaign schedule over the past two months.

Buttigieg did make time to speak, as did other candidates, at the National Action Network minister's breakfast hosted by the Rev. Al Sharpton in Charleston, S.C., on Wednesday morning.

After an afternoon of rest, Buttigieg had meetings scheduled Thursday on Capitol Hill with members of the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the centrist New Democratic Coalition, as well as a series of media appearances on March 3 primary state television states.

Bloomberg strategy tests social media rules

Associated Press

Mike Bloomberg's stockpile of cash, swarm of employees and paid social media influencers are testing the abilities of online platforms — and his Democratic challengers — to keep up with an expensive internet campaign.

Despite the billionaire and former New York City mayor's late entry into the presidential race, he has far outspent his rivals on nearly every platform in a matter of weeks.

His unconventional online strategy is heavy on memes and the paid support of prominent social media users, blurring the lines between political advertising, satire and misinformation.

That has not only boosted the platforms' bottom lines, but has also revealed how easily their policies can be bent.

"We're in the position where tech companies can't even apply

their own policies to what we're seeing," said Mark Jablonski, chief technology officer at DSPolitical, a digital advertising firm that has worked with several Democratic campaigns this year. "It's a different paradigm, and this mix is likely to be effective."

Bloomberg's self-funded campaign allows him to try out new online tactics and quickly buy an online community that other candidates have spent years building out.

Bloomberg has so far spent \$55 million on Facebook and Instagram ads, \$9 million of that in the past week. That compares to \$33 million spent so far by Republican President Donald Trump, and \$10 million overall spent by Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, a Democratic rival.

Bloomberg even leads on Snapchat, an app popular for sharing photos and short videos, where political ad spending is negligible.

All the presidential campaigns combined have spent roughly \$788,000 — with Bloomberg's campaign spending almost all of it: \$686,000.

Earlier this month Bloomberg exposed a loophole in Instagram's policies to run humorous, self-deprecating messages promoting himself on accounts of popular Instagram personalities with millions of younger followers.

The platform had discouraged campaigns from paying other Instagram accounts but amended its policies to allow them hours after the pro-Bloomberg posts went up, as long as they disclose who paid for the sponsored content.

His campaign has stirred up trouble on Twitter, too.

Last week, Twitter suspended nearly 70 accounts for posting identical pro-Bloomberg messages, in violation of Twitter's rules against spam.

NATION

Gunman kills 5 at brewery in Wis.

BY CARRIE ANTLEFINGER
AND GRETCHEN EHLE

Associated Press

MILWAUKEE — An employee opened fire Wednesday at one of the nation's largest breweries in Milwaukee, killing five fellow workers before taking his own life, police said.

The assailant who attacked the Molson Coors complex was identified as a 51-year-old Milwaukee man, police said.

"There were five individuals who went to work today, just like everybody goes to work, and they thought they were going to go to work, finish their day and return to their families. They didn't — and tragically they never will," Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett said.

Authorities offered no motive for the attack and did not release details about the shooter or how the shooting unfolded.

Police said that identities of the victims would not be released for at least 24 hours. There were no injuries.

Officers worked for hours to clear the more than 20 buildings in the complex where more than 1,000 people work. Police Chief Alfonso Morales said authorities believe the shooter acted alone.

President Donald Trump addressed the shooting before speaking at the White House about his administration's efforts to combat the coronavirus.

"Our hearts break for them and their loved ones," the president said. "We send our condolences. We'll be with them, and it's a terrible thing, a terrible thing."

The attack occurred at a sprawling complex that includes a mix of corporate offices and brewing facilities. The complex is widely known in the Milwaukee area as



MORRY GASH/AP

The Milwaukee Fire Department responds to reports of an active shooting Wednesday at the Molson Coors Brewing Co. campus in Milwaukee.

"Miller Valley," a reference to the Miller Brewing Co. that is now part of Molson Coors.

Molson Coors CEO Gavin Hattersley called the shooter "an active brewery employee."

"I am devastated to share that we lost five other members of our family in this tragic incident," he said in an email sent to employees. "There are no words to express the deep sadness many of us are feeling right now."

He said that the office would be closed the rest of the week and the brewery shuttered to give people time to cope.

"We are all a family. We work a lot of hours together, so we're all very sad," said Selena Curka, a brewery employee who was about to start her shift when the complex went on lockdown and she was turned away.

"It's just weird, because nine times out of 10 you're going to know the shooter," said another employee Thomas Milner. "It's

a tight-knit family. Within the brewery we all interact with each other."

"Miller Valley" features a 160-year-old brewery, with a packaging center that fills thousands of cans and bottles every minute and a distribution center the size of five football fields. A massive red Miller sign towers over the complex and is a well-known symbol in Milwaukee, where beer and brewing are intertwined in the city's history.

The facility is also home to corporate customer service, finance, human resources and engineering departments.

The last mass shooting in the Milwaukee area was in August 2012, when white supremacist Wade Michael Page fatally shot six people and wounded four others at a Sikh temple in suburban Oak Creek. Page killed himself after being wounded in a shootout with police.

Report: Domestic extremists killed at least 42 in 2019

Associated Press

White supremacists and other far-right extremists killed at least 38 people in the U.S. in 2019, the sixth-deadliest year for violence by all domestic extremists since 1970, according to a report issued Wednesday by a group that fights anti-semitism.

The Anti-Defamation League counted a total of 42 domestic extremism-related slayings last year. The gunman who shot and killed 22 people in August at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, accounted for more than half of them. Patrick Crusius, the suspect in the shooting, is accused of targeting Mexicans and faces federal hate crime charges.

The Oklahoma City bombing by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols in 1995 and the Pulse nightclub shooting by Omar Mateen in 2016 were deadliest attacks by domestic extremists in the past 50 years, according to the New York City-based ADL.

The ADL's annual Murder and Extremism report says that domestic extremists of all kinds killed 42 people in a total of 17 separate incidents last year, down from 53 killings in 2018 but higher than the 41 in 2017.

"This is part of a general trend of increasingly lethal attacks by

domestic extremists in the United States," the report says. Four of the deadliest years for extremist violence have been in the past five years, according to the ADL.

The four killings that weren't deemed to be acts of violence by far-right extremists were from the same case: the December 2019 attacks in Jersey City, N.J., that killed a police officer in a cemetery and three people at a kosher grocery store.

Fourteen of the 17 cases of killings by domestic extremists last year involved a single death, the ADL says. One of those appears to be the first killing linked to QAnon, a far-right conspiracy theory that centers on the baseless belief that President Donald Trump is waging a secret campaign against enemies in the "deep state" and a child sex trafficking ring run by satanic pedophiles and cannibals.

Anthony Comello, who is charged with killing a New York mob boss in March 2019, displayed QAnon-related messages on his hand during a court hearing. A defense attorney has claimed that Comello was deluded by internet conspiracy theories and thought he was helping Trump defend democracy.



CEDAR ATTANASI/AP

Mourners visit a makeshift memorial near the Walmart in El Paso, Texas, a week after 22 people were killed in an August mass shooting being investigated as a terrorist attack targeting Latinos.

California abnormally dry after low precipitation winter

BY OLGA R. RODRIGUEZ
Associated Press

SAN FRANCISCO — A winter with little precipitation has left most of California abnormally dry, and officials are bracing for the possibility of an early and more intense wildfire season amid record-breaking temperatures.

Drought has expanded to nearly a quarter of the state, mainly in central California, the heart of the state's agricultural sector, according to a U.S. Drought Moni-

tor map made public Thursday. The map shows that 70% of the state is abnormally dry.

February is looking to be the driest on record for much of the state, with chances of light showers on the horizon on March 1 and then not again until March 10.

Sierra Littlefield, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Sacramento, said that there is a strong chance the state's capital will see a completely dry February — something that has never happened.

"There is a lot of variability in the storm season, the rainy season for California," she said. "We do have years that are really dry and years that are really wet."

Downtown San Francisco is on its way to its first rain-free February since 1864, said meteorologist Anna Schneider.

The dry beginning of the year comes after a wet 2019 that capped mountains with snow, deluging water to reservoirs and helping to boost lush vegetation that can quickly turn into fuel

for wildfires during dry, windy conditions.

About 75% of California's annual precipitation typically occurs from December through February, mostly from atmospheric rivers — long plumes of moisture originating far out in the Pacific Ocean.

But a high-pressure system parked in the Pacific Ocean has been blocking storms from reaching California and steering them to the Pacific Northwest, Schneider said.

State officials planned Thursday to conduct a survey of the Sierra Nevada snowpack, which supplies about 30% of California's water.

The first reading of the winter there, done Jan. 2, found a snowpack that was 97% of the January average. But that had changed by the end of a largely dry January when the amount of water in the snowpack dropped to 72% of the Jan. 30 average, state water officials said.

NATION

Real ordeal In Alaska, rural living can make obtaining new special ID cards a lengthy and costly process

By BECKY BOHRER
Associated Press

JUNEAU, Alaska — For many Americans, going to a state motor vehicle office can be a tedious time suck.

For people who live in rural Alaska's vast patchwork of communities not connected by roads, just getting to a DMV can be a lengthy and pricey ordeal.

Motor vehicle offices across the U.S. have experienced high demand as an Oct. 1 deadline approaches for Real IDs, special licenses many will need to board domestic flights and enter some federal facilities.

In remote parts of the country, such as rural Alaska, the new ID cards can be harder to get.

People in Toksook Bay, for instance, rely on small planes to travel to and from their island village, resident Mary Kaihukiaak said. The nearest DMV is in Bethel, about 115 miles away.

"It's expensive," she said. "It's pretty close to \$200 just to go to Bethel one way."

Congress adopted the Real ID Act as a security measure following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Some states have opened extra offices to handle demand, extended hours, launched publicity campaigns or posted quizzes to help people assess if they need one or have another form of identification that will be accepted.

In Alaska, the head of the department that oversees the state Division of Motor Vehicles has downplayed the need for Real ID cards, citing alternatives, including less stringent documentation, such as passports, military IDs or tribal photo IDs.

Department of Administration Commissioner Kelly Tshibaka said about 350,000 people, nearly half Alaska's population, have passports. She didn't know how many Alaskans have tribal IDs, but DMV Deputy Director Jenna Wamsanz, citing conversations with communities, said they appear to be prevalent.

But critics say the state has a responsibility to provide equal access to DMV services, including Real IDs, and worry in particular about Alaska Native elders who must travel for medical care and for whom English is a second language.

"We should not be providing state services in a tiered manner that provides more specialized access or opportunity for some section of Alaskans," said Bethel Rep. Tiffany Zulkosky, who noted about 30 communities in her district lack immediate DMV access.

Real IDs won't be needed for flights with no federal Transportation Security Administration checkpoints, like those common among small Alaska communities. But they will be needed for commercial flights, including in larger cities in Alaska or in the Lower 48. People in the state often travel to Anchorage or Seattle for medical care.

"Lives may be in danger because you are waiting for someone to request services that they are unaware that they need," said Sen. Lyman Hoffman of Bethel, angrily admonishing Tshibaka during a recent legislative hearing after she noted that under state law, someone must "clearly request" a Real ID, and the state can't make anyone get one.

The state's largest Native organization, the Alaska Federation of Natives, has called on the state to visit rural Native communities to provide DMV services for Real IDs. Alaska has more than 200 tribes.

The state in December started a service that would bring DMV representatives to villages, but technological snags have raised questions about the viability of that effort. The cash-strapped state dropped a request for donations to take the service



MATT HAGE/AP Images for U.S. Census Bureau

People in Toksook Bay, on an island just off Alaska's western coast, rely on small planes to travel off the island. The nearest motor vehicle office is 115 miles away in Bethel.



BECKY BOHRER/AP

Alaska Department of Administration Commissioner Kelly Tshibaka appears before a state House committee in Juneau, Alaska, earlier this month.

on the road, deciding to partner with interested Alaska Native corporations or communities willing to pay for visits instead.

Wamsanz said the state is communicating with more than 20 communities to see if residents widely have other forms of acceptable ID.

Alaska's Yukon-Kuskokwim delta has more than 23,000 people in 58 communities not connected by roads, according to the Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corp., which provides health care throughout the region.

Gathering the documents needed for a Real ID and flying to a city with a DMV can cost hundreds of dollars, which can be daunting in areas plagued with chronically high unemployment and high costs of living. Records needed to obtain a card include a birth certificate or passport and proof of a Social Security number and residence.

Round-trip airfare from the farthest reaches of the vast Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta to Bethel, the regional hub, is about \$700, said Dan Winkelman, the corporation's president and CEO.

"That's an undue burden for someone that has no money and rarely travels to Bethel," he said.



GREGORY BULL/AP

A man picks up a package at the post office in Toksook Bay, Alaska, in January.

Tshibaka said the DMV wants to work with TSA on further informing Alaskans about their other options.

She said about 65,000 people in Alaska have military IDs and more than 100,000 have Real IDs. Wamsanz said there could be overlap in the numbers since some Alaskans choose to get a Real ID as an additional form of identification.

Meanwhile, the 20 tribes of Alaska's Bering Strait region that make up the non-profit tribal consortium Kawerak recently invested more than \$200,000 in upgrades for tribal IDs, said Cheri McConnell, Kawerak's program director for tribal affairs.

The TSA says on its website that a "federally recognized, tribal-issued photo ID" will be accepted. But Kawerak is urging residents to be prepared with documents for Real IDs just in case, McConnell said.

The first DMV visit to a rural town, New Stuyahok, in southwest Alaska's Bristol

Bay region, last month was sponsored by the Bristol Bay Native Corp. The main goal was to help people get driver's licenses, seen as a workforce development issue, said Carl Wren, the corporation's vice president of shareholder development. Residents from neighboring villages flew in or rode snowmobiles. Dozens got Real IDs.

Wren said tribes have their own membership requirements, and not all issue photo IDs.

She said the corporation agreed the DMV was a service it would want everyone to easily access, but since they don't, it looked for solutions.

"However people feel about whose responsibility it is, we felt this partnership would allow us to achieve a goal that we're trying to achieve and allow them to do what they haven't done yet, which is be in those smaller rural communities," she said.

NATION

The story behind LA's Mount Disappointment

By DEBORAH NETBURN

Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — Poor Mount Disappointment.

Located high in the San Gabriel Mountains, it's the only peak in the 60-mile range with such an unflattering name.

Nearby, you might summit Josephine Peak, named for the wife of a federal surveyor, or savor the views from Mount Markham, named after a former governor.

But Mount Disappointment honors nobody. It's jarring, petty and mean-spirited.

"It's not a popular destination," said Nathan Judy, a spokesman for the U.S. Forest Service.

And yet, "When I first read there was a mountain called Mount Disappointment, my immediate reaction was, 'I need to see this place,'" said Casey Schreiner, founder of the LA-based website ModernHiker.com. "And I don't think I was the only person who thought that."

Why exactly is it called Mount Disappointment?

The story begins 150 years ago when George Montague Wheeler, a 27-year-old Army lieutenant, proposed a bold plan to map the whole of the United States west of the 100th meridian — a north-south line that runs through Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakota.

While Wheeler's primary goal

was to accurately record the valleys, mountains, desert and other land features of the U.S., a letter from Andrew A. Humphreys, chief of the Army Corps of Engineers, reveals additional objectives.

Humphreys instructed Wheeler and his men to take stock of the Native American populations they encountered, asking that they gather "numbers, habits and disposition of the Indians who may live in this section."

The message behind these orders is clear, said Skyler Reidy, a Ph.D. candidate studying California history at the University of Southern California.

"The incredibly grim side is that they are surveying this land to steal it from native people," he said. "This is an imperial exercise."

Members of the Wheeler survey began measuring peaks in the San Gabriel Mountains in the summer of 1875.

While surveying the Santa Susana Mountains earlier that year, the group's leader, Lt. C.W. Whipple, noticed a prominent summit near the front of the San Gabriel range, a few miles northeast of what is now Altadena. Thinking that it would make a good triangulation point, he sent his chief topographer and two assistants to set up a survey station on its peak in the dry heat of a July morning. There was no trail to the top of the 5,963-foot summit, and the



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG, LOS ANGELES TIMES/TNS

Low clouds drift into the mountains and valleys in a view along the road to Mount Disappointment, a peak in the San Gabriel Mountains in the Angeles National Forest, Calif.

ascent was brutal.

John Muir, writing for the San Francisco Evening Bulletin a few years later, described the San Gabriel terrain as "Mother Nature at her most ruggedly, thornily savage."

When they finally reached the top, they saw that the view east was blocked by another peak that rose nearly 200 feet higher than the one they had just climbed. They immortalized their disappointment by naming the smaller

mountain Mount Disappointment. They then promptly scrambled up the higher mountain, known today as San Gabriel Peak.

Reidy said that he's not surprised the Disappointment name stuck.

"If you are the federal surveyor and you want to name it Mount Disappointment, I don't know who is going to stop you," he said.

Today, it takes just a few hours to reach the summit of Mount Disappointment. The trail is

paved and gentle, lined with supersized pine cones and skittish little lizards.

If you turn your back to all of that and stand on the edge of the peak, you can look out over the vast Los Angeles basin, hazy and dreamlike behind a thin veil of mist.

Birds dive below your feet. The mountain range undulates behind you.

There's nothing disappointing about it all.

Michigan boy is too young to drive, but races cars

By PHOEBE WALL HOWARD

Detroit Free Press

DETROIT — At age 12, Keegan Sobilo of New Baltimore carefully tucks his legs and arms into a fire suit, pulls on a helmet and climbs into a race car that exceeds 80 mph.

He has been doing this since age 8, the Detroit Free Press reported.

"I'd stand underneath the grandstand and whenever somebody would get close to Keegan on the track, I'd have to walk away," said his mother, Hillary Sobilo, 46, a kindergarten teacher at Cleveland Elementary School in Port Huron.

"At first, I was scared to death. I was like, 'Let's do bowling and swimming.' It's still very scary. But he knows what he's doing. Your heart goes out on that track every time he goes out there."

The sixth-grader always arrives at the track in his pajamas. The first time he wore his checkered train jammies to the track, Keegan went from last place to ninth place. He decided they brought luck. Since then, he has racked up a series of championships.

With his first corporate sponsorship secured, Keegan is focused on NASCAR.

For four years, Keegan has raced mini cars from May



JUNFU HAN, DETROIT FREE PRESS/AP

Keegan Sobilo, 12, gets into his late model race car in the garage of his home in New Baltimore, Mich.

through October.

This year, he moves into a full-size race car — the kind that professionals use.

"When I'm racing, I feel hot and tight in there, tight in the seat," he said. "In the car, I don't feel like I'm going that fast. When I go 90, it feels like you're going 60. Sometimes when you're going too fast, there's not enough grip and you're sliding."

People sometimes ask whether Keegan pressures his parents to allow him to drive on regular roads.

"He has never mentioned anything about it," said Roman Sobilo. "And what's weird is that

I asked him to move his mother's Ford Explorer two weeks ago on our property behind our garage, approximately 30 feet, and he was scared to do so. But he has no problem driving his full-size race car on the track."

Like the professional racers at Daytona International Speedway, Keegan wears a headset. He listens carefully to his crew chief, Tim Phillips, 59, of Orsego, who has won multiple championships as a driver and crew chief.

"I work on his car three nights a week and deliver it to the track," Phillips said. "Mom and dad leave me alone and I talk to Keegan on the radio as he's going around.

I'm in the pits when he's racing. It's just like on TV. If lap traffic is coming up, you need to be prepared."

"You've got to know what you're doing," said competitor Mike Todd, 69, of Galesburg, Mich. "These cars have quick steering and they're fast. I think I was into it a year before Keegan. It was like, 'Really, I'm going to be racing against a kid who doesn't have a driver's license? Come on, now.' I had to put myself in check. It was like having a grandson. I showed him respect and he showed me respect. The kid is cool. And he takes it very serious."

Keegan continues looking for support. Knowing that he needs sponsors, Keegan scheduled a meeting earlier this month at Golling Chrysler. Dodge, Jeep and Ram of Roseville and spent 45 minutes making his case.

"He came in and had a nice handshake," said general manager Matt Godfrey. "Then he gave me a book with a picture of him in his race car at a track. The second page is 'Golling sponsor meeting by Keegan,' where he describes himself as 'a 12-year-old with a love of racing that has grown since he was a young boy.'"

The young racer explained that, since seeing NASCAR at age 6, he has dreamed of racing. What stunned Godfrey, who said he has endured many presentations from

people of all ages, is that Keegan included plans for brand awareness, a social media strategy, a media strategy, a public relations strategy and promotions.

He listed Keegan's accomplishments: 2019 GLS Super Mini Cup champion, 2019 GLS Super Mini Cup Young Guns champion, 2018 GLS Super Mini Cup Young Guns champion and 2018 GLS Super Mini Cup most improved driver.

Golling has decided to sponsor Keegan "in one way or another," whether it's paying for tires, fuel or oil, filters, Godfrey said.

At school, Keegan has high honors and is an orange belt in karate; it focuses his concentration.

"He is respectful, polite and adorable. He works hard and he helps others," said Deb Siekmann, his fifth-grade teacher. "My husband is a NASCAR racer. I usually know the names of drivers but my husband really loves it. I'm just fascinated by the idea of Keegan driving a car."

Meanwhile, NASCAR cup series driver Erik Jones, 23, of Byron, Mich., who won the crash-filled Busch Clash, an annual exhibition the weekend before the Daytona 500. Jones shared his thoughts by email on Keegan and his dream:

"Keep chasing it. It's going to be a long road, of many ups and downs, but it'll all pay off once you reach your goal."

NATION

Going beyond the Vegas glitz

City that models itself as a marriage mecca works to reshape its image

By SUBRINA HUDSON
Las Vegas Review-Journal

LAS VEGAS — Inside the Little Vegas Chapel, Amanda Schild was smiling in her wedding dress, ready to grab pizza and celebrate her nuptials with husband Jordan Williams.

There was no drive-thru window or Elvis Presley impersonator. But the newlyweds had their photos taken in front of the chapel's version of the "Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas" sign.

Williams, 30, acknowledged Las Vegas has the stigma of a place to "get wasted and get married and then get divorced the next day."

But Schild, 33, called it affordable and convenient. Plus, they've been together for nine years and have three children.

"I don't like the details of planning a big wedding," Schild told the Las Vegas Review-Journal. "That's just not for me."

Tourists and Nevada residents are making what one expert calls "smarter marriage choices," including dating longer and ensuring financial stability before getting married.

The shift has fueled a decline in marriage rates across the country and in Las Vegas, where weddings are a \$2.5 billion industry.

The Review-Journal reported the industry peaked at \$3.1 billion in 2004, and Clark County Clerk Lynn Goya, the elected official overseeing Las Vegas marriage licenses, said the 71,800 permits issued in 2019 was down nearly 44% from a peak of 128,000 in 2004.

"We have been seen as 'The Hangover,' and that's not a great brand," Goya said of the 2009 film

comedy. "It's not a place you want to emulate to go get married. So, what we're seeing this year is we have really turned around our image."

Nevada's marriage rate, measured as the number of new marriages per 1,000 people, dropped to 26.7 in 2018, the lowest since the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention began providing marriage rate figures in 1990.

At the same time, experts said marriages may last longer and divorces may be fewer.

"Marriage used to be something that people did when they were younger and just getting started," said Karen Guzzo, professor of sociology at Bowling Green State University. "Now it's the last thing you do when you are becoming an adult — what we call like a capstone or an achievement."

Patrick McFarland, 45, and Melissa Hill, 50, dated for seven years and lived together before deciding to tie the knot recently at the Little Church of the West while visiting Las Vegas from Florida.

"We did the career (first), as well as bought our first house three years ago," Hill said, "so the evolution is where we are in the next stage."

University of Maryland sociology professor Philip Cohen, who released a study last year on divorce trends from 2008 to 2017, said couples who wait longer are less likely to get divorced.

"That rising age of marriage is definitely a factor in the falling divorce rate," he said. "The other thing that goes along with that is higher education. So there's more people who are not getting married before or until they have



BENJAMIN HAGER, LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL/AP

Jordan Williams, right, 30, and Amanda Schild, 33, from Rochester, Minn., tie the knot at The Little Vegas Chapel on Jan. 4 in Las Vegas. They have been together for nine years and have three children together. With the institution of marriage evolving, the city that models itself as a wedding mecca is reshaping its image.

'We have been seen as 'The Hangover,' and that's not a great brand. It's not a place you want to emulate to go get married. So, what we're seeing this year is we have really turned around our image.'

Lynn Goya
Clark County clerk

completed a college degree."

The divorce and annulments rate in the U.S. fell to 2.9 per 1,000 people in 2018, marking a consistent decline since 2000, when the divorce rate was 4.0, according to the CDC. In Nevada, the marriage failure rate was cut more than half, to 4.4 from a high of 9.9 in 2000.

"Essentially, marriage is becoming more of an elite institution," Cohen said. "It sort of indicates that marriage is becoming more rarefied. It's more of a select population that enters into marriage and they enter into a more stable marriage."

Las Vegas Wedding Chamber of Commerce President Jodi Harris said the nearly 100-member group launched a partnership in

March 2016 with the Clark County clerk's office and the Las Vegas Visitors and Convention Authority to promote Las Vegas wedding tourism.

Goya, who also serves on the wedding chamber board, said the Nevada State History Museum plans a wedding retrospective to show how Vegas became a marriage destination, as well as creating wedding-themed walking tours.

Las Vegas City Councilwoman Olivia Diaz has proposed designating a portion of Las Vegas Boulevard as a "Wedding Way" tourist attraction, including a marriage walk of fame.

The city also wants wedding chapels to be included in the Las Vegas Redevelopment Agency ex-

ternal renovation visual improvement program, Diaz said.

Wedding chapels had been categorized along with nightclubs, strip clubs and bars — excluded from redevelopment funds.

Little Vegas Chapel owner Michael Kelly predicted that Las Vegas will remain a wedding destination because it's affordable and couples have to jump through fewer hoops to get married.

"When you need something done quickly and you want it done right and you want it done professionally — that's how I see Las Vegas weddings," he said. "They come to Vegas and they think, 'Hey, I get a vacation. I get a honeymoon and it's a fraction of the cost of doing it back home.' It's just so much easier."



ELIZABETH PAGE BRUMLEY, LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL/AP

Las Vegas locals Sam Cruz, left, and Jeff Gaglione look at the lighting and speaker set up while walking up the aisle of their future wedding venue at Emerald at Queensridge in Las Vegas on Feb. 3.



ELLEN SCHMIDT, LAS VEGAS REVIEW-JOURNAL/AP

Florida-based couple Patrick McFarland and Melissa Hill pose after getting married Jan. 30 at Little Church of the West in Las Vegas.

NATION

Tribal leader: Border wall work hurts sacred land

Associated Press

PHOENIX — A Native American leader from Arizona grew emotional Wednesday as he told a congressional committee about the pain members of his tribe feel about U.S. officials blasting through land they consider sacred to build part of President Donald Trump's wall along the U.S.-Mexico border.

"No one reveres our military veterans more than the O'odham, however, dynamiting these sacred sites and burial grounds is the same as bulldozing Arlington National Cemetery or any other cemetery," Tohono O'odham Nation Chairman Ned Norris told lawmakers in Washington.

His testimony came hours after the government carried out a new round of explosions near the southern border as a group of

invited journalists watched. Construction crews this month began blasting and bulldozing through hills to build a 30-foot steel wall 60 feet wide in Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument.

Environmental groups also are decrying the work at the national parks system site that's named for its cactuses resembling organ pipes and is a largely untouched example of Sonoran Desert habitat.

"It's hard to see the blasting that you showed on the video today because I know in my heart what our elders have told us: that it is home to our ancestors," Norris said, choking up.

The administration says archaeological monitors working with Customs and Border Protection and the Army Corps of Engineers have found no sign of burial or other sacred sites in the

area. Department of Homeland Security acting Secretary Chad F. Wolf told Congress on Tuesday that he plans to travel soon to meet with the tribe to discuss their concerns.

U.S. Reps. Ruben Gallego and Raul Grijalva, both Arizona Democrats, also spoke against construction of the wall during the meeting of the House Natural Resources Committee's Subcommittee for Indigenous Peoples. The Tohono O'odham Nation stretches across southern Arizona and into Mexico.

U.S. Rep. Deb Haaland, a New Mexico Democrat and member of the Laguna Pueblo tribe, also spoke passionately, saying: "When tribal leaders don't have a seat at the table, indigenous history is lost."

U.S. Rep. Paul Gosar, an Arizo-

na Republican, noted that Organ Pipe is a well-known human and drug smuggling corridor and site of the 2002 shooting death of Kris Eggle, a park ranger who died while pursuing suspected drug cartel members.

Environmental advocates and elected officials are concerned about the wall's potential effects in Organ Pipe, including on water from an underground aquifer and migrating animals. A desert oasis in the monument, Quitobaquito Springs, is home to the endangered Sonoran mud turtle and Quitobaquito pupfish.

Border Patrol Chief Roy D. Villareal, of the agency's Tucson Sector, said on Twitter in recent days that over 90% of the cactuses near the construction area were carefully transplanted, saving more than 2,000 individual plants.

He also said archaeological monitors had not found burial sites or human remains in the detonation zone at a place called Monument Hill.

Laiken Jordahl of the Tucson-based environmental nonprofit Center for Biological Diversity challenges those assertions, saying on Twitter that he has seen chopped up cactus on the ground and water being wasted for concrete during recent visits.

Jordahl posted a video on social media earlier this month of one of the blasts that are carving a pathway for the wall through Monument Hill. It showed a long line of puffs of smoke and dust rising up from the dry desert landscape dotted with scrub and cactus.

The U.N. has designated the monument an International Biosphere Reserve.

House votes to make lynching a federal crime

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Sixty-five years after 14-year-old Emmett Till was lynched in Mississippi, the House has approved legislation designating lynching as a hate crime under federal law.

The bill, introduced by Illinois Rep. Bobby Rush and named after Till, comes 120 years after Congress first considered anti-lynching legislation and after dozens of similar efforts were defeated.

The measure was approved 410 to 4 on Wednesday. The Senate unanimously passed virtually identical legislation last year, although that bill wasn't named for Till. President Donald Trump is expected to sign the bill, which designates lynching as a federal hate crime punishable by up to life in prison, a fine, or both.

Rush, a Democrat whose Chicago district includes Till's home, said the bill will belatedly achieve justice for Till and more than 4,000 other lynching victims, most of them African Americans.

Till, who was black, was brutally tortured and killed in 1955 after a white woman accused him of grabbing her and whistling at her in a Mississippi grocery store. The killing shocked the country and stoked the civil rights movement.

"The importance of this bill cannot be overstated," said Rush, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus. "From Charlottesville to El Paso, we are still being confronted with the same violent racism and hatred that took the life of Emmett and so many others. The passage of this bill will send a strong and clear message to the nation that we will not tolerate this bigotry."

Rep. Bennie Thompson, D-Miss., who represents the area where Till was abducted, murdered, called the anti-lynching bill long overdue, but said:



ROBERT A. DAVIS, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES/AP

Emmett Till's photo, seen on his grave marker in Alsip, Ill.

"No matter the length of time, it is never too late to ensure justice is served."

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, D-Md., used similar language to urge the bill's passage. "It is never too late to do the right thing and address these gruesome, racially motivated acts of terror that have plagued our nation's history," he said, urging lawmakers to "renew our commitment to confronting racism and hate."

The bill was unanimously supported by Democrats. Three Republicans — Louie Gohmert of Texas, Thomas Massie of Kentucky and Ted Yoho of Florida — opposed the bill, along with independent Rep. Justin Amash of Michigan.

Gohmert said he supported the bill's concept, but preferred that those accused of lynching in Texas be tried in state court, where they could face the death penalty. Massie said he opposed the expansion of federal hate-crime laws. "A crime is a crime, and all victims deserve equal justice," he said in a statement. "Adding enhanced penalties for 'hate' tends to endanger other liberties such as freedom of speech."

Democratic Rep. Karen Bass of California, who chairs the Congressional Black Caucus, called lynching a lasting legacy of slavery.

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NATION

Survey: About 40% of US adults are obese

By MIKE STOBBE
Associated Press

NEW YORK — About 4 in 10 American adults are obese, and nearly 1 in 10 is severely so, government researchers said Thursday.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention findings come from a 2017-18 health survey that measures height and weight. More than 5,000 U.S. adults took part.

The survey found that the obesity rate was 42% — higher than the 40% found in a similar 2015-16 study. The severe obesity rate was more than 9% in the new survey, up from the 8% figure in the previous one.

Those increases aren't considered statistically significant: The survey numbers are small enough that there's a mathematical chance the rates didn't truly rise.

But it's clear that adult obesity



M. SPENCER GREEN/AP

According to a study released on Thursday, the U.S. obesity rate continues to rise.

rates are trending up, said the CDC's Cynthia Ogden, one of the report's authors.

A half-century ago, about 1 in 100 American adults were severely obese. Now it's 10 times

more common.

The obesity rate has risen about 40% in the last two decades.

The findings suggest that more Americans will get diabetes, heart disease and cancer, said Dr. William Dietz, a George Washington University obesity expert.

It also will be increasingly difficult for doctors to care for so many severely obese people, Dietz said. He has estimated that on average, every primary care doctor treating adults has about 100 severely obese patients.

"How's a provider going to do that? Severe obesity really requires very intensive therapy," he said.

The CDC did not report new obesity numbers for kids and teens. That may come out later this year, Ogden said. In 2015-16, 18.5% of kids and teens were obese and just under 6% were severely obese.

Dietz faulted the government

for not pushing for more measures to promote physical activity and better eating. Building more sidewalks and passing a national tax on sugary beverages could make a big difference, he said.

Obesity — which means not merely overweight, but seriously overweight — is considered one of the nation's leading public health problems.

It is measured by the body mass index, or BMI, a figure calculated from a person's weight and height. A BMI of 25 or greater is considered overweight, a BMI of 30 and above is obese, and a BMI of 40 or above is severely obese.

A person who is 5-foot-4, the average height for U.S. women, is considered obese at a weight of 174 pounds and severely obese above 232 pounds. A person who is 5-foot-9, about the average height for men, is deemed obese at 203 pounds and severely obese at 270.

Grandfather to plead guilty in toddler's death on cruise ship

By RICK CALLAHAN
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — An Indiana man charged in his young granddaughter's fatal fall from a cruise ship's open window in Puerto Rico agreed to plead guilty in her July 2019 death, explaining that he was doing so "to try to help end part of this nightmare for my family."

Salvatore "Sam" Anello, who was holding Chloe Wiegand when she slipped from his grasp and fell about 150 feet to her death from an open 11th-floor window on Royal Caribbean Cruises ship, filed change of plea documents Monday in a Puerto Rico court in which he agreed to plead guilty to a negligent homicide charge in the 18-month-old's death, said the family's attorney, Michael Winkelman.

Under the plea agreement, Anello wouldn't serve time behind bars and would serve his probation in Indiana, Winkelman said Wednesday, adding that a hearing in which a judge would consider the plea hadn't been scheduled.

"I took a plea deal today to try to help end

part of this nightmare for my family, if possible," Anello, of Valparaiso, said in his statement. "The support they continue to give me has been beyond overwhelming and I can't tell you how grateful I am for them."

Chloe Wiegand fell to her July 8 death from Royal Caribbean Cruises' Freedom of the Seas ship, which was docked in Puerto Rico. Anello was charged last year in Puerto Rico with negligent homicide in her death and initially pleaded not guilty.

Anello, 51, has insisted that he did not know the window was open when he lifted Chloe up to it, saying he did so to allow her to bang on the glass like she did at her brother's hockey games. He told "CBS This Morning" in November that he was trying to stand Chloe on the window's railing when she fell out of the window. He also said he is colorblind and that may be why he didn't realize the tinted window was open.

"From my point of view, at the moment the accident happened, it was as if the wall of protective glass disappeared. I was in complete disbelief," Anello said in Wednesday's statement. "It was a nightmare of the likes I could



MIKE DEREN/AP

Salvatore Anello agreed to plead guilty in the death of his granddaughter who fell from a window of the Freedom of the Seas cruise ship, seen above.

never have imagined before. I wasn't drinking and I wasn't dangling her out of a window. I just wanted to knock on the glass with her as we did together so many times before."

Chloe Wiegand's parents sued Royal Caribbean in December, accusing the operator of negligence in her death by allowing the 11th-floor window in the ship's children's play area to be open.

Winkelman said Anello's proposed guilty plea in Chloe's death would have "little or no effect at all on the civil lawsuit," noting that Anello is not a party to that case.

SC sued over schools' ban on LGBTQ in sex ed class

Associated Press

CHARLESTON, S.C. — It is against state law in South Carolina for public school sex education classes to mention anything other than heterosexual relationships, unless the talk involves sexually transmitted diseases. A federal lawsuit now aims to change that.

The National Center for Lesbian Rights and Lambda Legal said their lawsuit filed Wednesday seeks to overturn the Comprehensive Health Education Act of 1988 as an unconstitutional violation of the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment.

"The law singles out LGBTQ students for negative treatment," a news release introducing the lawsuit said. "It prevents LGBTQ students from receiving any health education about their relationships except in the context of sexually transmitted diseases."

The law also says any teacher who allows "a discussion of alternate sexual lifestyles" including "homosexual relationships except in the context of instruction concerning sexually transmitted diseases" can be fired.

State Superintendent of Education Molly Spearman, named as a defendant in the lawsuit, agrees that the law is on shaky ground.

She requested an opinion on its constitutionality from South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson. That opinion says "a court would likely conclude" that the law violates the equal protection clause requiring that people in similar circumstances be treated the same under the law.

Colo. poised to become 22nd state with no death penalty

By JAMES ANDERSON
Associated Press

DENVER — Colorado is set to become the 22nd U.S. state to abolish the death penalty after lawmakers on Wednesday approved a repeal bill that Democratic Gov. Jared Polis has pledged to sign into law.

Passage had been virtually certain with Democrats holding a substantial majority in the House — even with several Democratic lawmakers casting "no" votes for the 36-27 repeal approval vote.

The bill, passed by the Democratic-dominated state Senate in January, would apply to offend-

ers charged starting July 1 and would not affect the fate of the three men on Colorado's death row who face execution by lethal injection. But Polis has suggested he might consider clemency for them if asked.

"All clemency requests are weighty decisions that the governor will judge on their individual merits," said Polis spokesman Conor Cahill.

Colorado's last execution was carried out in 1997, when Gary Lee Davis was put to death by lethal injection for the 1986 kidnapping, rape and murder of a neighbor, Virginia May.

Wednesday's vote came after lawmakers spent three days engaging in somber and often emotional death penalty discussions that touched on morality, personal faith, deterrence, discrimination against defendants of color and wrongful convictions.

Democratic Rep. Jovan Melton said all of Colorado's condemned men are from his suburban Denver district, are African-American and that blacks account for just 4% of Colorado's 5 million residents.

"They're African-American, they're males, my age. That's not justice," Melton said. "That is the

last remnant of Jim Crow there is in Colorado." He added that he wasn't absolving them of their crimes.

But Republican and some Democratic opponents insisted that the threat of facing the death penalty has compelled countless defendants to seek plea deals to solve or close cases. They also urged their colleagues to refer the issue to voters in a referendum.

Republican House Minority Leader Patrick Neville said Colorado "must have capital punishment in its arsenal of justice or justice will not be done. We're saving the life of the killer means more than the life of the victim."

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AMERICAN ROUNDUP

Company rejects PETA billboard honoring cows

NC WINSTON-SALEM — An advertising company says it likely won't accept a request from an animal rights group to erect a billboard memorializing 21 cows killed in a tractor-trailer crash in North Carolina.

Lamar Advertising Co. of Baton Rouge, La., received a request from People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals to place the billboard, but the company said it doesn't accept advertising from the advocacy group, spokeswoman Allie McAlpin told the Winston-Salem Journal on Tuesday.

PETA said in a statement Monday that it was seeking to place a billboard at the site where a truck overturned along Interstate 40 near Winston-Salem on Feb. 18 "in honor of the cows who were injured and killed."

Pilot sent to prison for transporting marijuana

CT NEW HAVEN — A pilot from Connecticut has been sentenced to 2½ years in prison for his role in a marijuana trafficking operation that made millions of dollars by moving about two tons of pot across the country in a small plane, federal prosecutors said.

Donald Burns, 62, of Milford, was also sentenced Tuesday in federal court in New Haven to two years of probation.

The Federal Aviation Administration in 2016 began investigating a single-engine aircraft owned by Burns that was making regular flights between Stratford, Conn., and northern California via the southwest U.S., prosecutors said. Authorities who searched the plane after one of those trips in June 2017 found about 400 pounds of marijuana on board, authorities said.

Judge fines man for poaching raptor

WI MADISON — A federal judge fined a former master falconer from Michigan \$10,000 on Tuesday for poaching a Wisconsin raptor.

According to prosecutors and court documents, Edward Taylor, 64, of Fruitport, was a master falconer and raptor propagator. He traded a captive-bred Finnish goshawk for a female northern goshawk that his co-conspirator, James Kitzman, illegally removed from a nest on state land in Wisconsin's Vilas County in May 2017. Selling or bartering northern goshawks is illegal under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.

Police: Man used fake bills on Scouts' cookies

OR SALEM — A Salem man was arrested after he purchased Girl Scout cookies more than once using counterfeit money, police said.

Camden Ducharme, 36, was charged with forgery and theft, The Oregonian/OregonLive reported.



TYLER LARIVIERE, CHICAGO SUN-TIMES/AP

Historic honor flight set

Female veterans of every branch of the U.S. military salute as the national anthem is sung at an auditorium at the Pritzker Military Museum and Library in Chicago for the announcement Tuesday of the first all-women honor flight to Washington, D.C., later this year.

Earlier this month, Tiffany Brown said a man visited the cookie booth she and her daughters were running outside a Walmart Supercenter in Salem.

Brown said the man seemed "fidgety." He paid for a \$5 box of Tagalongs with a \$20 bill and received \$15 in change, but Brown's 13-year-old daughter, Ava, noticed the bill seemed odd.

It was slightly smaller, had a bluish tint, and the texture of the paper wasn't quite right. Brown said police confirmed it was fake.

Police identified Ducharme and arrested him at the store Sunday.

City to pay landlord for damage to wrong door

NE LINCOLN — The Lincoln City Council has decided to pay a landlord more than \$950 to repair an apartment door police busted through in error.

The Lincoln Journal Star reported that officers knocked on the door and announced their presence one morning last year. Apartment 2 was what the warrant they were serving said. They followed procedure and waited 30 seconds before breaking in, guns drawn. It turns out the person inside hadn't heard them.

It also turns out the warrant was wrong: It should have said Apartment 4. They eventually entered that apartment without incident and served the warrant.

Landlord Russ Pinyan filed a claim against the city. The council voted 5-2 to approve the claim.

THE CENSUS

\$700K

2011 and 2018 from Aurora VFW Post 2629. He has been charged with aggravated theft, tampering with records and money laundering, authorities announced Tuesday. Molnar had "complete control" of the post's bank accounts and used that access to tamper with a lottery machine and write improper checks, they said.

The approximate amount of money authorities say an Ohio man stole from a Veterans of Foreign Wars post. The Ohio Attorney General's Office said Dan Molnar, 74, of Aurora, stole \$714,376 between 2011 and 2018 from Aurora VFW Post 2629. He has been charged with aggravated theft, tampering with records and money laundering, authorities announced Tuesday. Molnar had "complete control" of the post's bank accounts and used that access to tamper with a lottery machine and write improper checks, they said.

Almost \$4M in work planned at Devils Tower

WY GILLETTE — The National Park Service is about to begin facility and trail work totaling almost \$4 million in Devils Tower National Monument in northeastern Wyoming.

The work will include making an overlook trail more accessible to people who are in wheelchairs or have other physical limitations.

Devils Tower is what remains of magma that pushed up through the earth and solidified some 50 million years ago. The formation stands about 900 feet above the surrounding landscape. Established in 1906, Devils Tower was the first U.S. national monument.

Valentine's Day balloons retrieved from ocean

CA LAGUNA BEACH — Boaters have been fishing balloons out of the ocean off Southern California since Valentine's Day, and some say it's a

predictable problem, The Orange County Register reported.

"It was crazy. Everywhere I looked," said Rich German, who rode his personal watercraft several miles off Laguna Beach after Valentine's Day and picked up 31 balloons in a few hours.

A Feb. 17 trip by Pacific Marine Mammal Center staff collected 20 balloons in a few hours, said spokeswoman Krysta Higuchi.

"It's not only dangerous for marine mammals, but for marine birds and the whole ecosystem in general," she said.

Video shows deacon being tackled at mass

FL POMPANNO BEACH — A man was captured on surveillance video tackling a deacon who was conducting a service Saturday evening at a Florida church.

Security video from the church shows the man sitting in a front pew at St. Coleman Catholic Church on Pompano Beach while the deacon was speaking to the congregation. The man then stood

up and charged the deacon. As stunned parishioners looked on, several other churchgoers ran to help as the man tussled with the deacon on the floor in the church, news outlets reported.

Thomas Eisel, 28, was arrested on charges of battery and disturbing the peace.

The Archdiocese of Miami told WSVN the deacon suffered some bruises but is otherwise OK.

School lesson compares Trump to communists

MD TOWSON — Republican lawmakers in Maryland are criticizing a history lesson at a public high school near Baltimore that compared President Donald Trump with Nazis and communists.

A slide used in an Advanced Placement history class at Loch Raven High School in Towson shows a picture of Trump above pictures of a Nazi swastika and a flag of the Soviet Union. Two captions read "wants to round up a group of people and build a giant wall" and "oh, THAT is why it sounds so familiar!"

"It is horrific. It is educational malfeasance," state Del. Kathy Szeliga said last week at a meeting of Baltimore County's delegation.

The school system said the slide was not part of the resources it provides for AP history teachers, and that the issue had become a personnel matter "which will be appropriately addressed by the school administration and is not subject to further clarification."

From wire reports

NATION

'A token of our respect' Islanders who suffered 1940s war atrocities on Guam get paid

By ANITA HOFSCHEIDER
Associated Press

HAGATNA, Guam — For Antonina Palomo Cross, Japan's occupation of Guam started with terror at church. The then-7-year-old was attending Catholic services with her family when the 1941 invasion began, setting off bomb blasts, sirens and screams.

It ended with her family surrendering their home and eventually carrying the dead body of her malnourished baby sister on a forced march to a concentration camp.

Now 85, Cross is among more than 3,000 native islanders on Guam who are expecting to get long-awaited compensation from the U.S. government for their suffering at the hands of imperial Japan during World War II.

Payments of \$10,000 to \$25,000 — federal tax money normally reserved for Guam's government — will be made to those who underwent forced labor or internment, suffered severe injury or rape, or lost loved ones during the U.S. territory's nearly three-year occupation.

"I'm happy to get it," Cross said after a recent meeting at central Guam's newly opened war claims office, where she verified her application was approved. The amount hasn't been determined yet, but "every little bit helps," she said.

Cross is retired from a local government job and relies on Social Security and her pension to get by. The great-grandmother said the war claims money will come in handy for manamko — "elders" in the language of Guam's indigenous Chamorro people — like her.

The United States, which first captured Guam during the Spanish-American War, had a small contingent of troops on the island when Japan invaded on the same December day that it attacked Pearl Harbor.

Many were taken prisoner or killed.

But most of those affected by the occupation were Chamorro people, who suffered internment, torture, rape and beatings. More than 1,100 are estimated to have died during the occupation.

For Cross' family, it meant being forced from their home in Hagatna, the capital, to their rural farm about 5 miles away before being sent to a concentration camp in 1944. While living at the farm, Cross remembers hiding from foreign soldiers as she walked to her Japanese school, where she was forced to learn the Japanese language and bow in the direction of Japan with her classmates.

Her sister was among an unknown number of Chamorro children who died of malnutrition during the occupation, which ended when the U.S. returned and forced the Japanese to surrender in a bloody battle.

Receiving the compensation now is a bittersweet moment that caps decades of political efforts



JOE ROSENTHAL/AP

The first religious services on Guam after U.S. landings are attended by soldiers Nov. 1, 1944. An indigenous Chamorro serves as altar boy in this improvised hut. The 1941 Japanese invasion of Guam, which happened on the same December day as the attack on Hawaii's Pearl Harbor, set off years of forced labor, internment, torture, rape and beatings.



PHOTOS BY ANITA HOFSCHEIDER/AP

Jesus Meno San Nicolas, 86, sits at the Guam war claims office in Tamuning, Guam, earlier this month. More than 75 years later, thousands of people on Guam, a U.S. territory, are expecting to get long-awaited compensation for their suffering at the hands of imperial Japan during World War II.

by Guam's nonvoting U.S. House delegates to persuade Congress that the people of Guam deserve recognition for their suffering under Japanese occupation.

"At the time the Chamorro people were experiencing this, there was a sense of abandonment by the U.S., and that sentiment has not gone away," former Guam Congressman Robert Underwood said.

President Barack Obama signed the Guam war claims measure in 2016. It provides \$10,000 to those who underwent forced marches or internment, or had

to escape internment; \$12,000 to those who experienced forced labor or personal injury; \$15,000 to people who were severely injured or raped; and \$25,000 to children, spouses and some parents of those killed during the occupation.

The amounts reflect similar war claims paid to survivors of other Japanese-occupied territories.

Many survivors say they feel guilty receiving compensation while their parents and siblings who have died got nothing.

Judith Perez, 76, was only a



Antonina Palomo Cross, 85, sits at the Guam war claims office in Tamuning, Guam, after getting confirmation that she will receive a payment for her experience living through the Japanese occupation of the U.S. Pacific island territory in 1941.

baby during the war and said she was hesitant to apply for a claim. She teared up as she said the check should be going to her parents, who have long since passed away.

"It's great to have money, but the people who are more deserving of it are the ones who really suffered physically and mentally, but they're gone," she said.

A 1945 U.S. law gave Guam residents a year to apply for compensation for war damages. However, delays shrunk the application window to seven months, and the bulk of the \$8 million in

payments were for property loss, not death and injury.

Guam also was left out of subsequent legislation that provided compensation to U.S. citizens and others who were captured by Japan during the war.

In 2004, a federal Guam War Claims Review Commission found the U.S. had a moral obligation to compensate Guam for war damages in part because its 1951 peace treaty with Japan forgave Japan of the responsibility to pay the territory reparations.

Yet the current program is still limited. Only those who were still alive when Obama signed the measure are eligible, and they had to apply between June 20, 2017, and June 20, 2018. That eliminated thousands who died over the past seven decades and anyone who missed announcements about the deadlines.

Also, the claims are to be funded with so-called Section 30 money, federal taxes that are already remitted to Guam and typically added to the local government's general fund. The program is a compromise after decades of failed attempts to get more expansive compensation supported by both Congress and the people of Guam.

However, Guam Congressman Michael San Nicolas said the law that created the war claims program was missing language needed to allow the U.S. Treasury to release the funds. His bill to fix that error passed the Senate this month and is headed to the House.

Rather than wait and risk more war survivors dying before receiving their checks, Guam politicians decided to start issuing payments using local money meant for Medicaid.

Krystal Pao-San Agustín, spokeswoman for Guam Gov. Lourdes Leon Guerrero, said the government expects to be reimbursed with Section 30 funds once San Nicolas' bill passes.

"It's a small amount, and it's definitely in no way enough to undo the pain of the past, but it's a token of our respect, our admiration and our love for them," Pao said.

Emotions were mixed at the war claims office as dozens lined up earlier this month, several with canes, walkers and wheelchairs.

Jesus Meno San Nicolas, 86, recalled his sister hiding in a tree to escape soldiers looking for women to rape.

He was forced to work six days a week in the rice fields as an 8-year-old, walking more than 2 miles each way every day. He also helped grow cabbage, radishes and other food for the Japanese.

His brothers had to work on the airfield. Once, a Japanese soldier told him to leave the house so he could rape a female relative. Meno San Nicolas still remembers her screaming.

He almost didn't file a claim.

"It's not worth it for the money, what they do to us in the family," he said, his voice cracking with emotion.

WORLD

Syrian opposition fighters retake key town

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Turkey-backed Syrian opposition fighters Thursday retook a strategic northwestern town in Syria, opposition activists said, and cut off the key highway linking the capital, Damascus, with the northern city of Aleppo, days after the government reopened it for the first time since 2012.

Despite the loss of Saraqeb, government forces made major gains to the south, taking control of almost the entire southern part of Idlib province with the capture of more than 20 villages Thursday, state media and opposition activists said.

The retaking of Saraqeb, which sits on the M5 highway, is a setback for Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces who have scored major gains in a weeks-long Russian-backed campaign in the last rebel stronghold in Idlib province. Officials had hailed the reopening of the motorway as a major victory in the nine-year conflict.

The government's military campaign to recapture Idlib, the last opposition-held stronghold in the country, has triggered a humanitarian catastrophe and the war's largest single wave of displacement. According to the U.N., almost 950,000 civilians have been displaced since early December, and more than 300 have been killed. Most have fled farther north to safer areas near the Turkish border, overwhelming camps already crowded with refugees in cold winter weather.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitoring group, said the opposition fighters seized the town of Saraqeb after intense bombardment by Turkish troops. Turkey and Russia support opposite sides in Syria's brutal civil war, with Ankara backing the opposition and Moscow backing Assad.

From inside Saraqeb, activist Taher al-Omar said the town is now under opposition control. He posted a video with a fighter saying the government forces "ran

away like rats."

The Observatory said more than 60 fighters were killed on both sides since Wednesday, adding that later on Thursday, government forces launched a counter-offensive under the cover of Russian airstrikes to try to retake the town.

Syrian state media reported intense clashes near Saraqeb, saying insurgents sent suicide car bombs and that Turkish forces bombarded the area. It said a small group of insurgents reached the highway to score a "propaganda stunt," adding that "Syrian troops are dealing with them."

State TV later Thursday confirmed that insurgents have cut the highway adding the fighting is ongoing in the area.

In southern parts of Idlib, government forces captured more than 20 villages since late Wednesday bringing southern parts of the rebel stronghold under government control, the Observatory said. It added that Syrian troops have now besieged another Turkish observation post in an area known

as Sheer Maghar, it added.

The government-controlled Syrian Central Military Media said government forces marching from northern parts of Hama province met Thursday with forces moving from southern Idlib bringing wide areas under Syrian army control.

If government forces now turn their march north they can eventually reach another major highway known as the M4 that links Syria's coastal region with the country's west. Assad has vowed to regain control of all parts of Syria.

Backed by Russian air power, Assad's forces have over the past few days captured dozens of villages, including major rebel strongholds, in the last opposition-held area.

The campaign also seized the last segments of the south-north M5 highway. When the government forces first took Saraqeb earlier this month, it marked their capture of the last major rebel-held town along the highway.



BEN BIRCHALL, PA/AP

Water park

A playground is partially submerged in floodwater in Tewkesbury, England, on Thursday as the town suffers continued flooding.

Police criticized after India's mob violence

The Washington Post

NEW DELHI — Rahis Mohammed's voice shook as he described how a mob of 200 people arrived in his neighborhood intent on destruction while calls to police for help went unanswered.

Standing on a deserted road dotted with charred vehicles on Wednesday, he watched as a police car passed. "After 48 hours they have come," Mohammed, 40, said bitterly. "They left us to die."

As India's capital reels from an outbreak of communal violence that has left more than 30 people dead and 200 injured, criticism of the response by law enforcement authorities is growing.

Witnesses say police were unwilling or unable to control the mobs and in some instances may have participated in the worst riots in Delhi in decades.

At least one police officer is among those killed in the violence. The Delhi Police have rejected accusations that their response was slow or inadequate and

denied allegations that officers encouraged rioters and beat residents.

By Thursday, the violence in neighborhoods of northeastern Delhi had subsided. Television channels showed a senior police officer walking the streets of one riot-hit area wearing riot gear and a helmet, urging people to come out of their homes and return to daily life.

The violence came after months of protests over a controversial citizenship law enacted by the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The law has intensified fears among India's 200 million Muslims that Modi's goal is to marginalize them and turn India into a Hindu nation.

Critics say the law, which excludes Muslims from a fast-track to citizenship, runs counter to India's secular ethos. Supporters of the law say it helps persecuted religious minorities from nearby countries. Members of Modi's party have vilified the protesters, likening them to traitors and criminals.

World powers express 'serious concerns' over Iran's nuke program

Associated Press

VIENNA — The world powers that remain party to the nuclear deal with Iran expressed "serious concerns" Wednesday about Tehran's violations of the pact, while acknowledging that time was running out to find a way to salvage it.

Wang Qun, Chinese ambassador to the United Nations in Vienna, told reporters after talks in Vienna between the parties to the deal, including Iran, that they are "racing against time to work out a specific solution so as to safeguard" the landmark 2015 agreement.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, as the deal is known, promises Iran economic incentives in return for curbs on its nuclear program, with the goal of preventing Iran from developing a bomb — something the country's leaders insist they do not want to do.

Since President Donald Trump's decision to pull the U.S. unilaterally out of the deal in 2018 and reimpose American sanctions, Iran's economy has been struggling.

Tehran has gradually been violating the deal's restrictions to pressure the remaining parties to the agreement — China, Russia, Germany, France and Britain — to provide new incentives to offset the American sanctions.

In response, the Europeans in January invoked a dispute resolution mechanism, designed to resolve issues with the deal or refer them to the U.N. Security Council.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told reporters that Iran still remains "open to any initiative which can ensure

Iran's dividends of the JCPOA."

"We are fully prepared to reverse the steps we have taken so far in return for the fulfillment of the other side's commitments in the JCPOA," he said.

In a statement following the meeting, the EU's top official for foreign affairs, Josep Borrell, said "serious concerns were expressed regarding the implementation of Iran's nuclear commitments under the agreement."

Borrell who chairs the joint commission of the JCPOA, was represented at the meeting by EU official Helga Schmid.

He said that "participants also acknowledged that the re-imposition of U.S. sanctions did not allow Iran to reap the full benefits arising from sanctions-lifting."

He also said that "all participants reaffirmed the importance of preserving the agreement recalling that it is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture."

Britain, France and Germany have developed a system known as INSTEX designed to facilitate trade with Iran while protecting companies from sanctions, but so far it has found little success.

Borrell said that everyone at the meeting acknowledged the importance of further strengthening INSTEX, and Iran seemed somewhat optimistic after the talks.

He discussed about different ways on how to strengthen this mechanism, how to provide it with more liquidity and funding, how to make sure that this mechanism can work, and I think the willingness is strong," Iran's Araghchi said. "Also the methods we discussed today can be utilized to expand trade between Iran and the EU."

WEEKEND



Latest remake ramps up fear factor
by taking the focus off of the villain

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WEEKEND: TECH & GADGETS



iStock

Connect from anywhere

In-flight Wi-Fi that works may be on the horizon

By JUSTIN BACHMAN
Bloomberg

Air travel and glitch-free internet access are often considered mutually exclusive, thanks to the technical difficulties associated with making Wi-Fi work at 40,000 feet.

For the airlines, a satisfying online experience is even more elusive. The hardware, software, maintenance and inability to easily switch service providers combine for a very expensive headache.

But there may be some good news on the horizon — a new era of ground-quality internet connectivity that could save carriers billions of dollars. The Seamless Air Alliance, a nonprofit group of 30 companies, says its new tech architecture will make in-flight connectivity systems modular, with open interfaces and components that can easily be swapped out.

The alliance includes Airbus and Delta Air Lines, with such equipment makers and satellite companies as Panasonic Avionics, Intelsat SA, Nokia Oyj and Vodafone Group. Together, they want to introduce a global standard, using protocols derived from the cellular and Wi-Fi industries.

Jack Mandala, the alliance's chief executive officer, said that airlines now "have equipment that only works with the provider they've chosen." Universal adoption of the framework, he predicted, could change that.

For passengers, this alliance may change the entire airport experience. Your mobile connection would migrate from one system to another, from the terminal onto the jet bridge and down the aisle to your seat — without the need to log in or pay. No longer would you be restricted to airline movies you've already seen, television episodes you've already skipped or video games you never wanted to play.

"Today, that experience can be a brand-damaging event for the airline," Mandala said of on-board internet access. "Passengers are out there on social media, complaining when they can't get service, and they don't blame the service provider — they blame the airline."

He said new internet companies will enter the market, attracted by the unified standards. This will boost competition and quality in an industry that often enrages travelers. "For in-flight connectivity," he said, "the high cost of capacity has been the Achilles' heel."

These new protocols might also save airlines billions of dollars, allowing for "rapid adoption of new technologies in a surgical manner," the group said in a statement. This means that airlines would be able to manage their Wi-Fi offerings more efficiently, easily changing providers as a new generation of low-Earth-orbit satellite networks come online. These could include offerings from Elon Musk's Starlink; Softbank Group-backed OneWeb; and Amazon.com's Project Kuiper.

A 5% improvement in these areas — based on an analysis conducted over 10 years, with a fleet of 10,000 internet-connected aircraft increasing to 25,500 by 2028 — would boost the value of the in-flight connectivity market by \$11.4 billion, according to a 2019 white paper the alliance commissioned. This would increase to almost \$37 billion if customer use rates were to double, along with a 5% improvement in the three other metrics, the study found.

Before you start dreaming of bandwidth, however, here's a buzzkill: Plenty of key industry players have yet to get involved — including American Airlines Group, Boeing, Gogo and Verizon Communications. Still, Mandala contends that it's only a matter of time before the industry coalesces around standards that lower costs for airlines.

To become compliant with the standards, most equipment makers will need to modify software, something Mandala, a former Qualcomm executive, contends is "not a big deal," financially.

"There are market forces at work that are ready to drive down costs, given the capacity that's coming online," he said. "Going to these standards will knock down these artificial barriers that's holding back this big growth in the market."

Among them: high prices, spotty service caused by bandwidth bottlenecks, the dodgy nature of typing in your credit card number with a snoopy seatmate five inches away, and the general milieu of glitch behavior encountered when trying to connect on different networks with different devices.

On those flights that offer Wi-Fi access, this friction-filled scenario leaves customer purchase rates well below 10%. Most passengers simply connect to the streaming entertainment delivered wirelessly from servers on the plane. A few even engage in that old-fashioned hobby called reading.

GADGET WATCH

Earbuds that help relieve stress

By GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

I have stress and wear earbuds often, so the Xen by Neuvana with stress-reducing earbuds seem like a perfect combination. They are specifically designed to gently stimulate a branch of the vagus nerve, a major nerve that regulates many critical bodily functions. And they can be synced with the Neuvana app on smartphones.

The Xen is a new wellness product designed to help improve sleep, reduce stress, boost mood and enhance focus. One of the many great features is that the system can be used any time of day. Just stay away from chores such as driving and any other machinery-operating responsibilities within 30 minutes of use.

According to Xen, they were invented by a top cardiac surgeon and are backed by science. Xen uses a revolutionary platform that sends a gentle, calming electrical signal via patented earbuds, targeting a branch of the vagus nerve in the ear.

This product syncs vagus nerve stimulation with your music and can easily be integrated into your daily routine, promoting balance and relaxation while commuting, working at your desk, watching TV or just hanging out with friends.

Once you are connected and working with your playlists, Xen has several wellness benefits, according to Neuvana. Using Xen before bedtime may improve the quality of your sleep.

Xen may make stress more manageable and help your body recover from stressful events. Xen may make you feel less anxious.

Each Xen comes complete with a Xen, headphones with a USB-C connection, earbuds in multiple sizes, a stand, a guide and charging hardware. They are compatible with many iPhones, iPod touches and Android devices with minimum of OS 5.

The setup is pretty straightforward — charge, connect, download and install a companion app, pair and use. The app walks you through the steps seamlessly, but you need to follow along as you'll have a lot of options and service choices.



One of Xen by Neuvana's stress-reducing earbuds

Neuvana recommends starting with 15-minute sessions twice a day and then increasing the amount over time as your comfort level increases along with the time of the sessions.

As you become more accustomed to the product, you may gradually increase the time per session. To be on the safe side, Xen should not be used more than 30 minutes at a time.

According to Xen, the electrical signal is described as tingling or tickling in the ear. The intensity can be adjusted up or down during your session. Some Xen users describe a calm feeling within minutes of starting a session, and the calmness can last a half-hour or more after the session ends. Many users find that daily use over a period of several weeks promotes a stronger sense of well-being.

Xen states: "If you have a medical condition and/or take prescription medications, you should talk to your doctor before purchasing or using Xen, and it's designed and intended to be used by individuals 18 years or older."

Since this is a health product, I'll try and stay away from a direct endorsement. But I have positive vibes from the Xen by Neuvana, and look forward to a long-term period of testing, followed by success.

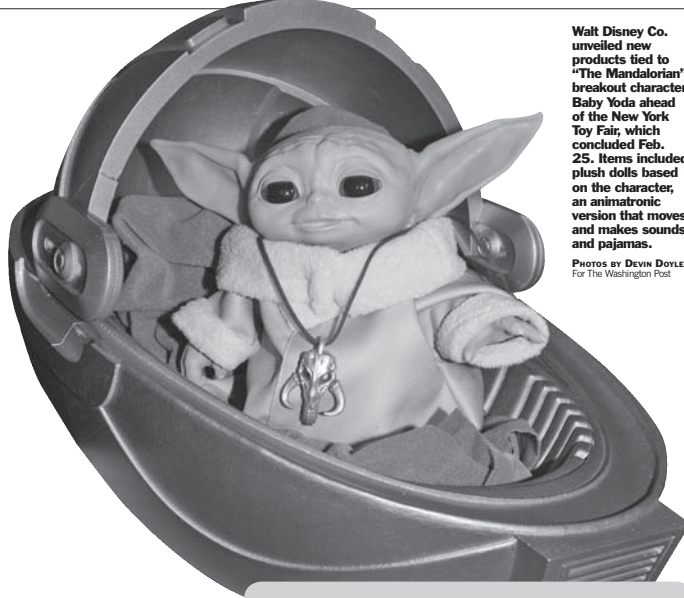
Email: neuvanalife.com/xen; \$399.99



Xen by Neuvana, shown on its stand, works with stress-reducing earbuds to stimulate a branch of the vagus nerve. It's controlled through the Neuvana app on smartphones.

NEUVANA
TNS photos

WEEKEND: ENTERTAINMENT



Walt Disney Co. unveiled new products tied to "The Mandalorian" breakout character Baby Yoda ahead of the New York Toy Fair, which concluded Feb. 25. Items included plush dolls based on the character, an animatronic version that moves and makes sounds, and pajamas.

PHOTOS BY DEVIN DOYLE
For The Washington Post



By DAVID BETANCOURT

The Washington Post

Greatly anticipated, this moment has been. The Baby Yoda toy void, the destroyer of many 2019 holiday shopping hopes, is officially coming to an end this spring.

That was the official word from the far, far away galaxy known as the Big Apple last week, as Disney and Lucasfilm gathered journalists days ahead of Toy Fair New York to show off their Baby Yoda wares of all forms, from pajamas to PopSockets, ones that will soon finally be in Star Wars fans' eagerly outreached palms.

The event was officially described as a showcase for merchandise inspired by the live-action "The Mandalorian" and the animated "Star Wars: The Clone Wars," two Disney Plus hits that represent the best of the fictional universe after the polarizing "Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker."

But there was no denying that everyone was here for products tied to the most famous 50-year-old child in Hollywood — which were strangely unavailable in shops in the wake of his viral fame in the fall.

That child, by the way, is officially just the Child, having yet to be named on "The Mandalorian" despite fans affectionately dubbing him Baby Yoda because of a strong likeness to the legendary Star Wars Jedi master. After the show's debut in November, "The Child" became a sensation through memes and GIFs, especially one that showed him sipping soup.

On Feb. 20 at the Dream Hotel in Manhattan, the Child was everywhere. Legos, action figures, costumes, backpacks, hats, shirts, wallets and socks were all on display. An image of the now-classic moment in "The Mandalorian" when a young Baby Yoda reaches out of a capsule and extends the cutest finger in the universe for the first time? Framed and ready for your wall. The capsule itself? Also available, and featuring an animatronic Baby Yoda that blinks, coos and will melt your heart, for \$60.

Build-A-Bear employees were there to show onlookers that if you squeezed their soon-to-be-available plush Baby Yoda's left hand, he made baby noises. Squeeze the right hand, and Ludwig Göransson's earworm theme song from "The Mandalorian" begins to play.

An espresso machine, seemingly guided by the Force itself, churned out Baby Yoda lattes.

One thing you wouldn't find was a mea culpa from Lucasfilm and Disney for seemingly missing out on millions

They're here!

Unveiled ahead of NY's big Toy Fair, Baby Yoda toys missed the holidays, but at least that prevented spoilers

by not having product ready for the 2019 holiday season. Bootleg product ended up appearing on eBay and Etsy, and Disney made efforts to remove them.

But attendees got confirmation of what was already assumed: The only way to keep Baby Yoda's end-of-Episode-1 debut a secret was to not have any products ready for purchase. Those products would have been seen online months ahead of "The Mandalorian's" debut, so showrunner Jon Favreau asked the powers that be at Disney and Lucasfilm to hold off on production until the first episode was released — thus creating a streaming, 21st-century "I am your father" moment.

The goal of holding back on products was to give Star Wars fans the same feeling they had when they discovered George Lucas' universe for the first time, according to "The Mandalorian" producer Dave Filoni. If that meant millions were left on the table, so be it.

"It's so hard to do surprises anymore," Filoni said. "We wanted the audience to experience meeting the Child with Mando," the bounty hunter title character.

That meant more than a few sad faces come the recent holiday season, but Filoni said Disney and Lucasfilm knew "they could come up with product quickly."

Paul Southern, Lucasfilm's senior vice president of licensing and franchise, was one of the few on "The Mandalorian's" product production side who knew of Baby Yoda's existence before the series aired.

"We live in a world with Star Wars where the fans, they have a voracious appetite for news. It's very difficult for us to manage the security and confidentiality of everything once things are in development. It just touches too many people," Southern said. "The last three months have been a lot of blood, sweat and tears to get this product to market quickly."

Joan McLaughlin, the senior vice president of brand merchandising and product design at Lucasfilm, didn't know the Baby Yoda storm was brewing because the de-

cision to keep the character a secret came before she was officially on board. But she later became a quick study.

"The phone didn't stop ringing from the powers that be at Disney saying, 'OK, how fast are you going to get this done?'" said McLaughlin. She also said fans should expect to see a heavy "Mandalorian" presence at Disney Parks in California and Florida soon. And she's been taking calls from retailers in regions where Disney Plus isn't even available yet.

"China. Latin America. This is truly a global (event)," McLaughlin said. "(These regions) are reaching out, saying 'What have you got? People here want the Child.'"

Toy companies often have to take precautions to not reveal key plot points from movies or series. And sometimes they do so anyway. A few years ago, a trenchcoat-wearing Batman action figure was called Nightmare Batman, which tipped off fans that when Ben Affleck put on the coat in "Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice," he was dreaming.

Hasbro, which frequently collaborates on action figures with Lucasfilm and Marvel Entertainment (also owned by Disney), is often a part of secret agreements that ensure big reveals remain a surprise, said the company's senior director of global brand marketing, Michael Balog. When asked if he knew the actual name of the Child, he laughed and said even if he did know (he didn't), he'd be sworn to secrecy.

The Baby Yoda products will be rolled out starting in March, and some — such as Lego products on Amazon — won't come until as late as August.



WEEKEND: MOVIES

Shifting the focus

How 'Invisible Man' star Elisabeth Moss helped writer/director Leigh Whannell turn classic monster tale into survivor's story

BY SONAIYA KELLEY
Los Angeles Times

When writer-director Leigh Whannell was approached to update the horror classic "The Invisible Man," he basically spatballed the entire plot on the spot.

Fresh off the modest success of his low-budget 2018 sci-fi thriller "Upgrade," Whannell found himself in a room with executives from Blumhouse Productions and Universal when "they floated this title to me like, 'What do you think about the Invisible Man?'" he said. "Which was weird to me because it was a bit Mad Libs. I was like, 'Not really sure? Never thought about the Invisible Man too much.'

"But one of the guys in the meeting said, 'Well, what would you do with the character?' And purely to fill the airtime I was like, 'I guess I would probably tell the story from the point of view of a victim, like a woman escaping a relationship.' I sort of vomited out the entire movie."

Whannell conceived of the character as a wealthy scientist (played by Oliver Jackson-Cohen of "The Haunting of Hill House") who is charming and controlling in equal measure. After his girlfriend manages to escape the glass prison they share together, he stages his own suicide just to continue to torment and control her under the cover of invisibility.

In a departure from the original H.G. Wells novel and its 1933 film adaptation—and despite the character's title billing—this invisible man is a distant secondary character.

"I think it's really obvious that the way

to make the Invisible Man scary is to not focus the film on him," said Whannell. "Once you put the monster in the spotlight, you demystify it. Not showing something is always the scariest thing."

Instead, he shifted the narrative focus from the titular antagonist to his intimate partner Cecilia Kass, a woman who is gaslighted to the brink of insanity, played by Emmy- and Golden Globe-winning actress Elisabeth Moss. "One of the things I liked the most about this movie is that it's a real-life monster," Moss said during a joint interview with Whannell this month. "That's what really curdles your blood when you watch the movie.

"That feeling of not being believed, not being heard or being scrutinized for believing something you know in your heart to be true is something I think on varying levels we can all identify with," she added. "When I start telling people what this movie was about and how it was being used as an analogy for gaslighting, I was really surprised by how many people would get this look in their eyes. It's a commonality that I think deserves to be explored."

"I think the 1933 film is a classic horror movie with an important place in the history of horror, but it's not terrifying to modern audiences," said Whannell. "I saw an opportunity to reframe it in a way that could be scary. We didn't want to rely on the histrionics of horror, we wanted it to be real. The scariest monster is the one you can imagine in your own life. It's not that fanged beast, it's the guy next door."

Upon finishing the script, Whannell

quickly realized that the success of the film would hinge on its central performance. "I realized that the whole movie rested on this one character's shoulders," he said. "The list of actors that can (carry an entire film) is short. And I remember everyone at Universal was really excited about Lizzie because they had just done 'Us' with her."

In a stroke of kismet, Moss had been hankering to revisit the horror genre after her experience working with Universal and Jordan Peele on the filmmaker's sophomore outing, which was produced by

Jason Blum and starred Lupita Nyong'o as a woman battling her shadow self.

"I've always loved horror, but I really wanted to do one after the experience of

watching Lupita and how absolutely magnificent she is in that movie," said Moss. "I could see, 'Oh, my God, OK, that's what you can do with a role like that.' She went so far and it was just the coolest thing, so I couldn't wait to get the script. They said, 'You're going to get an offer for "The Invisible Man." And I was like, 'OK, that's amazing,' because I loved working with Blumhouse. But I also was like, ... 'The Invisible Man?'"

"I guess if they can't see me, it's fine," Whannell joked.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

Elisabeth Moss stars in "The Invisible Man," written and directed by Leigh Whannell.

NurPhoto/Getty Images

'I think it's really obvious that the way to make the Invisible Man scary is to not focus the film on him. Once you put the monster in the spotlight, you demystify it. Not showing something is always the scariest thing.'

Leigh Whannell
writer/director, "The Invisible Man"



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

WEEKEND: MOVIES

'Invisible Man' takes spotlight off monster

Director's inventive twist empathizes with heroine's domestic abuse horror

By KATIE WALSH

Tribune News Service

"I see you." This simple statement of fact might be the most powerful and the most dangerous thing an abuse victim can say to their abuser. Because abusers operate in the dark, away from prying eyes, twisting their own warped reality into the truth. Cecilia (Elisabeth Moss) shouts "I see you" to a seemingly empty room. And although it comes at her lowest moment, the declaration is the first step on her road to redemption in Leigh Whannell's inventive and utterly riveting twist on "The Invisible Man."

To reinvent H.G. Wells' 1897 story, which is best known as the 1933 James Whale classic horror film, Whannell has flipped the notion of invisibility. In this take, invisibility is no superpower, and no affliction, like the bandage-wrapped Claude Rains, but rather, it's a threat. In his script, Whannell centers a woman, Cecilia, as the target of the invisible man, who is her abusive, vindictive tech mogul partner, Adrian (Oliver Jackson-Cohen). And she tries desperately to escape from him, running away in the middle of the night from his fortified oceanside mansion outside San Francisco, seeking shelter with friends and family.

Cecilia is afraid to leave the safe house with friends, convinced Adrian will find her, until word arrives of his suicide. That's when things really start to get weird. Knives disappear, mysterious kitchen fires start, and blankets creep in the middle of the night. It's all so mundane until it isn't. But by that point, Cecilia's friends James (Aldis Hodge) and his daughter Sydney (Storm Reid) are disturbed by her erratic behavior. And her sister, Emily (Harriet Dyer), is furious at

a cruel email she's received from her.

The one thing that remains steadfast is Cecilia's belief that Adrian (or his ghost) is stalking her. She knows her abuser and his patterns too well. She knows that in death, as in life, he will seek to gaslight, isolate and indict her in her own breakdown. What also remains steadfast is the film's own belief in Cecilia, too. From the outset, Whannell establishes unmotivated camera movements and compositions that lurk menacingly or draw attention to big empty corners in the room. We see the footprints and the path of breath in cold air; we see the violent force that brutally batters her. In a film where almost no one buys Cecilia's outlandish claims, the directorial point of view Whannell establishes never wavers in its belief in her.

Working with a cool, gray palette allows Whannell and cinematographer Stefan Duscio's camerawork to remain at the forefront of their visual storytelling, underlined by an anxiety-producing score of droning cacophony composed by Benjamin Wallfisch. The camera reveals the treachery of the environment in the most subtle of ways: focusing on an empty corner rather than her unbelievable testimony, or a unique, body-mounted shot of Cecilia collapsing.

At the center of the immaculately crafted film is Moss, who gives a virtuosic leading performance as the twitchy, terrified and tentative Cecilia. She shouts at the specter of Adrian, "Why me? You could have had anything... you've taken it all." With devastating specificity and empathy for his heroine, Whannell has inverted the invisible man archetype into an incredibly tense and suspenseful thriller exploring the psychological horror of intimate partner abuse.

"The Invisible Man" is rated R for bloody violence and language. Running time: 124 minutes.



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

A woman (Elisabeth Moss) whose abusive ex purportedly committed suicide is tormented by an unseen entity in "The Invisible Man," an update of H.G. Wells' classic thriller.

FROM PAGE 24

"Yeah, 'If they can't see me, I guess I can play any gender,'" said Moss. "But they said the woman was the lead and when I read the script, it was not only a horror film but this incredible character piece. It had a really challenging arc that you don't get in some of your best dramas. So I said yes immediately."

After Moss was secured, Whannell leaned on his leading lady to authenticate the female perspective. It's the latest in a successful series of creative collaborations for Moss, who has helped shape many of her strongest roles, from the heroine of Hulu's "The Handmaid's Tale" to her partnerships with indie filmmaker Alex Ross Perry, including last year's grunge rock drama "Her Smell."

"That was the missing puzzle piece of the script," Whannell said. "I was happy with the script, but I needed that collaboration with Lizzie. We would dissect scenes for hours and we would rewrite the script and kind of do an autopsy on these scenes. I feel like the film became stronger because we were able to compile..."

"There were times when a



UNIVERSAL PICTURES/AP

"The Invisible Man," starring Elisabeth Moss and Oliver Jackson-Cohen, modernizes the classic monster story with a female-forward, tech-centric plot that brings back the scares.

scene would only exist on our scripts," said Moss. "Yeah, exactly," said Whannell with a laugh. "And everybody would be like, 'Scene what?'" "It would just be written in the margins," said Moss. "And some of it would be written in mine and some of it would be written in yours."

"The funniest thing was

watching the reactions of the other actors," said Whannell. "They just had to roll with it. Because there's a certain sense of impostor syndrome that happens if you're writing a story about a woman's point of view (as a man). And I didn't really start feeling comfortable with it until Lizzie and I had all these conversations. She gave the film

authority ... and it felt like a true collaboration."

Though the script required Moss to stretch her imagination by fighting against an invisible adversary multiple times, the actress says the biggest challenge of all was the amount of running the role demanded.

"Let's just say I underestimated it," she said. "And the speed at which Mr. Whannell would require me to run, which was basically faster and faster and faster. I am not a particularly physical person; I do not really work out. And I got there and was like, 'I've made a terrible mistake. I absolutely should have gone to the gym.'"

"Remember a lot of times you'd be like, 'I feel like we got the shot?'" said Whannell with a laugh. "You'd be like, 'I really feel like that one worked.' And I'd be like, 'One more!'"

"I should have perhaps trained a little bit," she said. "And then once I got there I quickly ordered an elliptical machine for my apartment. Warming up before takes is different for me. I don't usually do the plank before a take on 'Handmaid's Tale.' So that was a whole new thing, but it was fun. I felt like I was Jason

Bourne, basically."

But not all of the physical stunts were grueling. Thanks to her background in dance, the choreographed fight scenes were a lot less arduous, Moss said.

"It was so much fun. We had such a great stunt team and they took really good care of me and made sure things were safe."

Leigh called me when I was in Toronto shooting Season 3 of 'Handmaid's Tale' and said, 'Look, I want to talk to you about the stunts and I would like you to do as much of it as possible.' And I basically was like, 'I want to do as much as I can. We should just always decide by what looks best on camera.'"

"It's very mechanical," said Whannell. "A lot of the fight scenes that Lizzie had to do were almost like dance choreography. This disembodied voice would be booming over the set counting out the motion control camera like, 'And one and two and...' And Lizzie knows that on three, she has to be here. And I remember thinking, 'God, I couldn't do that.'"

"I thought it was so fun, the idea of having to follow the counts," said Moss. "For my brain, that's perfect."

WEEKEND: VIDEO GAMES

Interactive, slice-of-life stories

Coffee Talk, Wide Ocean Big Jacket explore the dynamics, difficulties of navigating interpersonal relationships

By TODD MARTENS
Los Angeles Times

Sitting around a campsite near a tent. Making a coffee drink.

Typically, these activities are interstitial moments, actions that occur before or after something more exciting. Yet these undertakings are at the core of two new games, Wide Ocean Big Jacket and Coffee Talk.

Both approach interactivity with a light touch, letting players uncover intimate, conversational moments. We play less as directors of action and more as voyeurs. Throughout, we meet with sometimes odd characters — we meet an alien, for instance, who is not so hot at the dating app game in Coffee Talk — and while we don't become friends with these characters (tech has yet to make such a thing possible), we do walk away feeling as if we've shared a moment with them.

Play here comes in the form of discovery, as each game deals with mature themes where what isn't said is often of equal importance to what is said. Wide Ocean Big Jacket unfolds like an interactive animated film, albeit one with adult topics such as the never-ending difficulty of navigating interpersonal relationships regardless of age. Coffee Talk, which contrasts its nondescript name — one with echoes of an old "Saturday Night Live" skit — with a roster full of mythic creatures, can be experienced in multiple ways.

Both largely dispense with typical game-like elements, yet show how even delicate participation can illuminate the everyday. Simple acts, be it swinging around a camera in Wide Ocean

Big Jacket or opting to mix ginger and cinnamon in Coffee Talk, offer the illusion of choice, thus creating relaxing environments in which we can explore weighty topics.

Coffee Talk alludes to multiple thought-provoking subjects, from interracial dating (here it's interspecies dating, between an elf and a succubus) to a parent struggling to maintain a connection to his daughter: Wide Ocean Big Jacket, meanwhile, emphasizes the fragility in relationships. In Coffee Talk, we sometimes feel like a barista therapist, while Wide Ocean Big Jacket shows how efforts to console often fail. When a teen asks about sex, we shift the spotlight to her aunt, who squirms her way out of answering the questions.

So while the core narratives of the two games use interactivity relatively sparingly, they connect by creating a world in which we explore topics we often try to avoid. The characters in Wide Ocean Big Jacket may try to joke away a serious moment, as if real life could be solved with a clever social-media-worthy quip, but we're still there, a faceless observer moving among the campgrounds and prompting conversations to happen whether the characters want it or not.

Mord, the outgoing, goofy teen, seems to court confrontation, while her first crush, Ben, along for the family trip, struggles with awkwardness. The adults, Brad and Cloanne, are apparently happily married, although their partnership is stitched together with a string of compromises. The characters are drawn slightly exaggeratedly, all floppy limbs and bones. Charm abounds — Mord is confused when the grownups enthusiastically praise one another for their



Toge Productions

A scene from Coffee Talk featuring otherworldly customers in near-future Seattle in which the player, as a barista character, solves their troubles while mixing coffee drinks.

"good" stretches to alleviate back pain — and as we hop from adult to kid and back again, we can serve alternately as instigators or connectors, setting into action relationships and bonds.

We can let much of Coffee Talk play on autopilot, or take a more active role and explore the characters we meet via their writings or social media pages. Their concerns and their troubles are discussed at the coffee counter, and whether it's a vampire, an elf or a succubus, their issues are relatable. Be careful, of course, not to mess up their drinks — we may not be solving problems, but in Coffee Talk, the happier the patrons are, the more they may share.

Regular customer Freya, a green-haired journalist with dreams of writing fiction, digs into the tales and woes of everyone who comes into the shop, approaching most with equal amounts curiosity and suspicion. Male customers immediately put her on guard, and the world outside this near-future Seattle coffee shop is relatively bleak, even if werewolves and vampires are enjoying a peace treaty. America here is a place where "anyone can dream of being whatever they want to be and have those dreams crushed before they can even be discussed."

Fear is everywhere, and there's talk of closing borders. A fish, for instance, must leave her home in the ocean because there are no decent schools underwater anymore, only now she's lonely because no one she knows can get a visa. We delight in uncovering the interpersonal drama of fairy tale and fantasy creatures, but there's no denying that this is a game of modern life, where relaxing electronic beats create a calm environment in which we can make drinks and provide a little relief to those we meet along the way.

It's a reminder of the healing



Toge Productions

Gameplay in Coffee Talk includes mini games in which the player attempts to create latte art.



Toge Productions

Coffee Talk puts the player in the role of a barista therapist.

power of listening and talking. When an alien, dressed as an astronaut, lands in the coffee shop, the visitor proclaims that Earth has done little more than cause frustration. The planet's "vagueness has taught us a new kind of feeling," the extraterrestrial says, clearly indicating that this newfound emotion is one of discomfort.

Games for decades have been teaching us new tools — how to

fight off orcs or bounce off mushrooms and blast away at Nazis. Maybe they can also remind us how to talk to one another.

Coffee Talk
Platforms: PlayStation 4, Xbox One, Nintendo Switch, PC
Online: coffeetalk.info
Wide Ocean Big Jacket
Platforms: PC, Mac, Nintendo Switch
Online: wideoceanbigjacket.com



Tender Claws

Wide Ocean Big Jacket, allows players to explore the unique interaction of four believable, flawed characters.

WEEKEND: QUICK TRIPS

Europe

ON THE QT

DIRECTIONS

To get from Aviano to Grado's main beach, put Spiaggia Principale Grado, Viale Dante Alighieri, 72, 34073 Grado GO into your GPS.

City parking lots are open from 8 a.m.-8 p.m. and cost 50 cents per hour, which you usually pay at a meter. There are also parking areas along the roadways by the beaches, but make sure you park in a blue-lined area (indicating paid parking spaces) and pay at the meter. Don't park in an area marked by yellow lines. It's for residents only, and you'll get a ticket.

TIMES

Lifeguards clock out at 8 p.m.

COSTS

Most beaches have paid-for umbrella stations. The typical cost for one umbrella spot with two chairs is between 14 and 18 euros. You could also opt for a bungalow, which is a covered area that comes with four or more chairs and a table. That costs between 50 and 80 euros, depending on how big a bungalow you choose. Many of Grado's beaches post their prices online, but you can also find them at the entrance to the beach.

FOOD

There are stands at all the beaches offering fast-food items such as burgers, sausages, chips, candy and ice cream. Many also serve alcoholic beverages. Prices vary. Food in town is mainly seafood, but you will find non-seafood items on the menu. Some restaurants are pricey. If there aren't any prices listed on the menu and you care what you spend, ask your server how much a dish is before you order.

INFORMATION

More information is available at the Friulia Venezia Giulia website: www.turismo.fvg.it/Locality/Grado

— Norman Llamas



PHOTOS BY NORMAN LLAMAS/Stars and Stripes

If you visit the island of Grado, Italy, during the off-season — in the spring or fall — you're likely to have the beach to yourself.

It's always sunny in 'Little Venice'

Grado is a pleasant day trip from Aviano for the beach lover

BY NORMAN LLAMAS
Stars and Stripes

With Venice, the Alps and a multitude of beach towns all roughly the same distance from Aviano, the most challenging thing about living in northern Italy is sometimes picking where to go when you have some spare time.

My family has narrowed it down: We have a weakness for beach towns and, when we think of the best beaches in the area, one of the places we all agree on is Grado.

An island in the lagoon between Venice and Trieste, Grado has a unique yet familiar Venetian charm. It's no wonder that the locals call it "Little Venice."

It's an elegant island town bordered by farmland, with picturesque homes lining its narrow streets and numerous squares.

Its beaches are all very clean and, because they all face south, are never in the shade. The lagoon is beautiful. The sun always seems to shine — at least when we've visited.

Even the 90-minute drive to Grado makes a trip to the island worthwhile. You'll pass through beautiful villages, some dating back to the early days of the Roman Empire, until you reach a long causeway that crosses the lagoon from the mainland.

My family and I tend to spend most of our time in Grado on the beach. My wife and daughter spend hours in the water. My son and I love the pristine white sand and spaciousness of the beaches.

After a day of sea and sun, we often go for a stroll around town. Sometimes we'll stop off to visit the Basilica di Santa Eufemia and the Basilica di Santa Maria delle Grazie, Grado's oldest church, in the Campo dei Patriarchi, in the center of Grado. Also in the middle of town is the Sea Spa, or Terme Marine, which used to be a favorite destination for aristocrats during the 19th century and is still known as a place to go to rejuvenate mind and body, according to the Friuli Venezia Giulia website. We've never been because we spend too much time enjoying the beach.

If we've worked up an appetite, we like to grab a meal at a local restaurant. Most offer fresh seafood, but also have options for those who can't, or don't want to, eat seafood.

After dinner, we often set out on a quest for ice cream, or gelato as it's called locally. Grado doesn't disappoint in this department either — there seems to be a great gelato bar around every corner.

And if you're in northern Italy in the summer, each year on the first Sunday in July, Grado hosts the Perdon di Barbana festival, in which a procession of boats decorated with flowers and flags sails to the Marian sanctuary on the island of Barbana, which you can see when you cross the causeway. The ritual, which dates back 800 years, is another reason that Grado is one of our favorite beach towns. It should be high on your list of places to visit in Italy.

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Grado's mix of Venetian flair and elegance, family-friendly beaches and numerous eateries and gelaterias make it a must-visit for anyone in northern Italy.



Grado is known as the island of the sun or the golden island because its beaches all face south and are never in the shade.



Many of the beaches in Grado allow you to rent umbrellas and a beach chair or two for between 14 and 18 euros.



Most restaurant menus in the island town are dominated by seafood dishes, but they also offer items for people who can't or don't want to eat seafood.

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Feel the spirit at famous pilgrimage sites

Traveling as a pilgrim is a powerful way to experience your trip with a strong sense of purpose — to go beyond tourism and connect more deeply with a place, a culture or a faith. Travelers considering pilgrimages in Europe have the opportunity to follow centuries-old routes or trace new paths in a search for perspective on their own culture — or the culture of others.

The Camino de Santiago — the “Way of St. James” — is Europe’s ultimate pilgrimage route. Since the Middle Ages, humble pilgrims have trod hundreds of miles across the north of Spain to pay homage to the remains of St. James in his namesake city, Santiago de Compostela. Today, more and more pilgrims are traveling this ancient pathway — each for his or her own reason. It’s a substantial commitment: Most take a month to walk the 450 miles from the French border. But I’ve witnessed the pure joy in Santiago de Compostela’s main square as well-worn pilgrims are overcome with jubilation as they reach their goal.

For eight centuries, Assisi, Italy, has been one of the most visited pilgrimage sites in all of Christendom. With every visit I’m struck by how the spirit of St. Francis still pervades his hometown — even nonreligious travelers become pilgrims of a sort. Around the year 1200, this simple friar countered the decadence of the Church and society in general with a powerful message of nonmaterialism and a “slow down and smell God’s roses” attitude. A huge monastic order, the Franciscans, grew out of his teachings, which were gradually embraced by the Church. Sitting on a hill overlooking the town, hearing the same birdsong that inspired Francis, calms my 21st-century soul.

For me, as a Lutheran, coming to “Lutherland” is a bit like a Catholic going to Rome. Three destinations in eastern Germany make a meaningful Protestant pilgrimage. In Erfurt, visitors can tour the church and monastery where young Martin Luther struggled with his theological demons.



Rick Steves

Nearby is Wartburg Castle, where Luther hid after speaking out against Church corruption and where he diligently translated the New Testament into German. And in the unassuming little town of Wittenberg, Luther posted his 95 Theses on a church door, starting chain of events that would split Western Christian faith, cause empires to rise and fall, and inspire new schools of art and thought. The sights in this region are physical reminders of courageous accomplishments of the Reformation — and the enduring example Luther set for those who dare to speak truth to power.

Glastonbury, in southwest England near Bath, has been a religious site as far back as the Bronze Age. For thousands of years, pilgrims have climbed Glastonbury Tor, a hill seen by many as a Mother Goddess symbol. Glastonbury is also considered the birthplace of Christianity in England. According to legend, the Holy Grail lies at the bottom of Chalice Well, a natural spring at the base of the hill. England’s first church was built near this spring, and eventually a great abbey was founded that, by the 12th century, became the leading Christian pilgrimage site in all of Britain. Today, Glastonbury and its



ADDIE MANNAN/Ricksteves.com

The evocative ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, in southwest England, mark one of the holiest spots in Great Britain.

mysterious hill remain a center for those on their own spiritual quest.

Following tradition, many religious Jews travel to central and eastern Europe every year to pray by the graves of respected figures. They may place pebbles or candles on the tomb and leave messages on slips of paper. Increasingly, even nonreligious Jews design their own pilgrimages to meaningful sites for learning, reflection and remembrance. Europe’s venerable Jewish quarters offer rewarding glimpses into the richness and longevity of Jewish culture. As you stand before the Dohany Street Synagogue in

Budapest, for example, you can imagine the Jewish Quarter as it thrived in the 19th century. A walk through this lively zone turns up artifacts and monuments that ask travelers to ponder the huge loss of culture, knowledge and humanity that took place between 1938 and 1945.

Regardless of your religion, Europe offers plenty of opportunities for a profound experience, including the chance to be inspired by — and learn from — a religious scene that is not your own.

Rick Steves (ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

TOP TRAVEL PICKS

It's Basel's turn to celebrate carnival

While throughout much of Germany, Ash Wednesday signals the end of the carnival season, for the residents of Basel, Switzerland, Fasnacht festivities are just about to reach their peak.

In this city by the Rhine near where three countries meet, a very specific set of rituals will play out March 2-5. Things get underway in their usual dramatic fashion with Monday’s Morgestraich. At 4 a.m., all the lights throughout the Old Town are shut off and in the complete darkness, the words “Morgestraich! Vorwaerts, marsch!” ring out. With this cry, members of Fasnacht groups known as Cliques march forth, searching for their drums and piccolos, others accompanying enormous lanterns with illuminated images designed in accordance with a “sujet” that changes year on year and reflects the sentiment of the times. The theme for 2020 is “hold tight,” a reference to the growing popularity of e-scooters.

Those who don’t rise early enough for the Morgestraich could alternately catch one or a pair of parades known as Corteges. These follow two different routes through two different parts of the city: Grossbasel and Kleinbasel. Processions begin



Karen Bradbury

Read more about things to do in the Europe Traveler blog: stripes.com/blogs/europe-traveler

at 1:30 p.m. on both Monday and Wednesday and last for about four hours.

Tuesday’s celebrations are traditionally enjoyed by families. Costumed kids merrily roam the streets, and the brass and pipes that characterize the distinct sound of Guggenmusik set the backdrop for skits and songs performed in a dialect outsiders would struggle to decipher.

The traditional dishes awaiting sampling here include a soup made of brown fowl, onion tarts and caraway pretzels. The lanterns from the Morgestraich, works of art in their own right, are on display at the Muensterplatz.

At 7:30 p.m., the Guggenmusik concerts begin in earnest, with roughly 60 bands taking to spe-

cially erected stages.

Festivities end at 4 a.m. Thursday, precisely 72 hours from the time they kicked off. Expenses associated with Fasnacht are covered in part through the sale of lapel badges. These cute souvenirs come in copper, silver or gold, and their prices begin at 9 Swiss Francs, about \$9.15. Online: tinyurl.com/y6es7knf

Munich’s strong beer season

Once the madness associated with carnival settles down in Germany, it’s soon time for the more somber and contemplative season of Lent. But it’s not all calm and quiet across the board. In Munich and other parts of Bavaria, festivals will soon be cropping up to celebrate the seasonal variation of the region’s favorite beverage: stark bier, or strong beer.

The strong beer tradition dates back to the Middle Ages, when the monks who brewed the beer were supposed to abstain from eating in observance in Lent. Their ingenious solution was to craft a beer as strong and hearty as bread itself. Fortunately for us, the tradition has been passed down through the centuries, and Starkbierzeit, or Strong Beer Season, still gives cause for celebration.

Starkbiers are calorie bombs



iStock

Revelers parade down the streets of Basel, Switzerland during the Fasnacht celebration in 2015. This year’s theme is “hold tight,” a reference to the growing popularity of e-scooters.

with an innocuous golden hue and up to a whopping 7.9% alcohol content or more. They hide in plain sight and are easy to spot, with names on their labels typically ending in -ator (Maximator, Animator, Triumphator, Optimator) betraying their treacherous nature. One of the best-known strong beers is that brewed by Paulaner, the legendary Salvator.

Paulaner am Nockherberg is the brewer hosting the most famous of such celebrations. In its spacious hall, or weather permitting, in its beer garden, not one but many Starkbierfests take place from March 13 through

April 5. Starting at 2 p.m. Mondays to Fridays and 11 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays, visitors can drink, dance and make merry at a festival considered much more authentic than the internationally-oriented Oktoberfest. Entry to the festival costs 13.50 euros; this price includes a liter of strong beer or an alcohol-free drink. Online: tinyurl.com/thmc7bc

Paulaner isn’t the only game in town. Other fests celebrating this beer to knock your socks off include ones held at the Augustinerkeller or Loewenbrauerkeller.

WEEKEND: FOOD & DINING

Europe



Photos by Jackie Broome

Old Station Restaurant in Kaiserslautern, Germany, specializes in skewers of meat.

At least they got the fries right

A pointed look at Old Station Restaurant in Kaiserslautern

BY GREGORY BROOME
Stars and Stripes

If you don't have something nice to say, don't say anything at all.

Thank you for reading my review of Old Station Restaurant in Kaiserslautern, Germany.

As much as I'd like to end things there, saying only nice things is basically the opposite of journalistic ethos, so I am compelled to say more. At the same time, this is a mere restaurant review, not hard-hitting investigative journalism involving an issue of urgent public interest. As such, I will alternate my critiques with faint praise in a classic point-counterpoint style.

Point: I did not like my meal at Old Station. My wife did not like her meal at Old Station. I did not like what I tried of my wife's meal at Old Station, nor she mine.

Counterpoint: Old Station has an expansive menu beyond the burgers and grilled meat skewers we tried. Maybe some of that stuff is good.

Point: Old Station served me a very disappointing skewer of grilled chicken. I was only aware of two ways to screw up grilled chicken, namely undercooking and burning. And yet, Old Station challenged that assumption with fully cooked, unburnt chunks of grilled chicken



that tasted, for lack of a more sophisticated term, weird.

Counterpoint: Old Station did not screw up french fries, another dish I believe is difficult to get totally wrong, thereby leaving my fragile belief system partially intact.

Point: I spent my meal lamenting that I wasn't at Milano, the pizzeria with which Old Station shares a building, wrestling with an enormous calzone.

Counterpoint: Old Station has nice American Western decor, friendly service and really good iced tea. It's actually quite



Old Station Restaurant offers a wide variety of sizes and toppings on its burgers.



Old Station Restaurant is located in the hip Kammergarn area of Kaiserslautern, Germany.

pleasant before the food arrives.

Point: The food at Old Station is a bit overpriced and would be even if it included better versions of those dishes. Our bill for a party of two came to 46 euros with no alcohol.

Counterpoint: Having completed this review of Old Station, I can submit my receipt for reimbursement to Stars and Stripes in good faith and call it a free lunch. I guess I got what I paid for.

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Twitter: @gbroomestripes

OLD STATION RESTAURANT

Location: Schoenstrasse 15 in Kaiserslautern, next to Gartenschau

Hours: Open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to midnight and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.

Prices: Burger prices start at 5.90 euros (around \$6.50) and go as high as 12.90 euros

(around \$14) depending on size and toppings. Various upgrades are available for 1 euro or less. Steaks and meat skewers range from the high teens to low 20s. Schnitzel entrees are around 15 euros.

Information: Visit oldstation-kl.de or call 0631 414 5990.

—Gregory Broome

The ultimate grilled cheese uses the stovetop and oven

BY ELIZABETH KARMEI
Associated Press

Grilled cheese is the ultimate comfort food, an adult treat that harks back to childhood. I never met a grilled cheese sandwich I didn't like.

Where I grew up, there was an old-fashioned drug store with a lunch counter. When the weather was good, my best friend and I would ride our bikes there and order grilled cheese and made-to-order orange-ades. The grilled cheese was made with fluffy white bread and American cheese on a griddle. It had one slice of cheese between the bread slices and was as thin as a sandwich can possibly be, as the bread was compressed during grilling. Still, I have a vivid and mouthwatering taste memory of this grilled cheese, as if I ate it yesterday.

At home, grilled cheese mostly meant Swiss cheese and rye bread, or Roman Meal bread stuffed with sharp cheddar and grilled in a pan. I loved them both. When I lived in Chicago and needed comfort food, I would go to a Greek diner and order a grilled Swiss cheese on rye with bacon — enough said!

Recently, I have mashed up the best grilled cheese sandwiches of my memory to come up with the ultimate grilled cheese recipe.

I use a sturdy white bread; Pepperidge Farm original white is my top choice. I use one slice of American cheese, aka melty cheese, on each side to hold everything together and then add a thick slice of whatever cheese I have on hand. It is usually Muenster, Swiss or sharp cheddar — but you can even use pimento cheese if it doesn't have too much mayo in it.

I used to butter the bread and try to "grill" the sandwich on the stovetop in a non-stick skillet. But invariably, the cheese was still cool in the middle when the outside of the bread was brown. Making grilled cheese in a panini maker solved these problems, but then it wasn't a grilled cheese, per se. It was a crisp, flat-topped cheese bread.

I wanted to re-create the perfect drug-store grilled cheese,

but with more and better cheese.

So instead of spreading the bread with butter or mayo, I took a note from the drugstore griddle and put a small bit of butter in the pan. Once it was melted, I swirled the bread in the butter, adding a thin coat to one side of the bread. I removed one piece of bread, stacked the cheese on the other, and then topped it with the first slice — butter-side out.

If you're adding other ingredients, like bacon, tomato, mushrooms, caramelized onions, etc., now is the time to do it.

Quick tip: I keep my bread in the freezer and start out with frozen bread. The rigid bread helps keep the structure of the sandwich intact before the cheese starts to melt and hold everything together. Using frozen bread also slows down the browning (burning) of the bread.

Don't turn the heat higher than medium. I let the sandwich toast for 1-2 minutes, or until it's crisp and lightly brown, and then flip it to brown the other side. Do this carefully, because the cheese isn't melted yet and the sandwich won't hold together on its own. But if it slips apart, don't worry: At this stage, you can easily realign the bread.

Next, I pop the sandwich and non-stick skillet into a preheated 350-degree Fahrenheit oven for 2-4 minutes, depending on the thickness of the cheese and bread. This lets the cheese melt completely without the bread burning. It takes 3-4 minutes for the cheese to melt, and then your grilled cheese is ready.

Remove it from the heat, and slice on a plate or cutting board. You will have a super melty, gloriously brown and crispy grilled cheese sandwich with a buttery but not greasy crust.

Whatever cheese you choose, I recommend at least one slice of melty cheese to hold things together. American cheese comes in white and yellow, and if I am making a grilled cheese with a fancy cheese too, I opt for the white.

Enjoy your version of the classic, but don't stop there. Grilled cheese lends itself to lots of flavor variations.



ELIZABETH KARMEI/AP

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Europe

Outlander effect

Scotland sees a major tourism boost as a direct result of books, TV series

By ERIKA MAILMAN
Special to The Washington Post

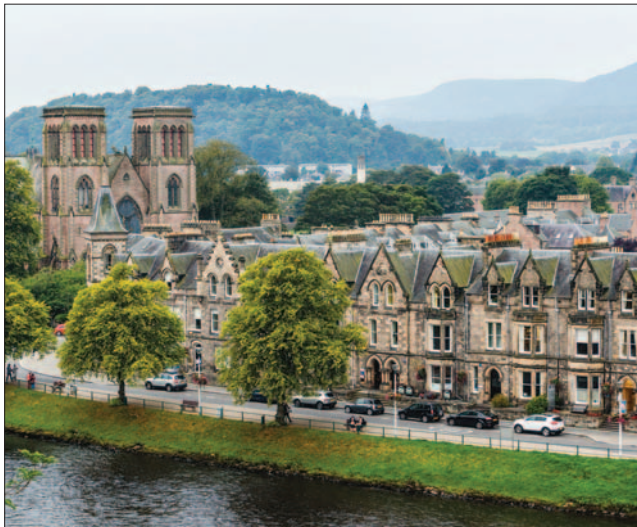
Best-selling author Diana Gabaldon hadn't even set foot in Scotland when she began the book that launched the popular Outlander series. But she's made the country so attractive to readers — and to watchers of the Starz television program, now in its fifth season and airing Sundays on AFN-Spectrum — that the Scottish government's tourism agency gave her an honorary Thistle Award for generating a flood of visitors to the fens, glens, jagged mountains and soft jade landscapes she so alluringly describes. According to numbers from VisitScotland, Outlander has increased tourism by an average of 67 percent at the sites mentioned in the books or used in filming.

Gabaldon, who is from Phoenix, wrote the first book and part of the second before traveling to Scotland. As a research professor pre-internet, she read exhaustively to craft indelible images of Scottish places for the "practice novel" she kept secret from her husband. When the unfinished draft sold in a three-book deal, Gabaldon let her professorship lapse and headed to Scotland. Despite having no Scottish heritage, she says, "I remember seeing the green land rising and thinking, 'This feels like home.'"

If you long to visit after being exposed to the sweeping vistas and compelling history in the books and the show — for which Gabaldon, 68, is consultant and wrote several episodes — here are some spots to include on the itinerary.



Gabaldon



istock photos

Located in the Scottish highlands, Inverness serves as the location for several important events and plotlines in the Outlander series.

INVERNESS

"It's called the heart of the Highlands," says Gabaldon of the city she names as her first recommendation, "and has reverberations through the third book and on into the rest of the series. It's where the entire clan system came to a screeching halt." In the show, however, Inverness is played by another city, Falkland.

CULLODEN BATTLEFIELD

(5 miles from Inverness)

Here, the Jacobite rebellion ended in one hour of brutal bloodshed in 1746. "The Scots really didn't have a chance," says Judy Lowstuter, owner of Celtic Journeys travel company. After the loss to the English, Scots "were not permitted to speak Gaelic, and in the Highlands that's all they spoke. They wouldn't let them wear kilts or play bagpipes; the whole culture was extinguished."

A battlefield is a sadder place to visit, but Hugh Allison, former property manager at Culloden who now owns Inverness Tours, says he's found a way to help U.S. visitors relate to the site. "You could make the argument that this is the battle that formed the United States of America," he says. Its repercussions emptied English and French treasuries, which meant England's King George III called for more taxes in the American colonies, "and we know where that went."

At Culloden, various clans have memorial stones on the battlefield. Although the character Jamie Fraser is fictional, his clan is not. And yes, that clan has a stone on the battlefield as well.

Like everyone I spoke with, Allison paid homage to the Outlander effect. "Twice as many people were asking where the Fraser stone is. You have to think, either it's a very fertile clan and there are twice as many Frasers as there were last year, or something else has happened. Diana (Gabaldon) was that something else."

FALKLAND PALACE

(Falkland, Fife)

This beautiful hunting palace has marvelous gardens and the oldest tennis court in Scotland, where Mary, Queen of Scots, and her father played. Besides serving as an apothecary in the show's "Hail Mary" episode, the palace appears in the inaugural episode if you know where to look for it, according to Allison. Claire peers in the window of the ironmonger (a term used until the 1970s in Scotland to mean "hardware store") at a blue vase. "Look over her shoulder and you'll see the gatehouse of Falkland Palace," Allison says.



Appearing in many Season 1 episodes of the Starz series "Outlander," Doune Castle also has featured in "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" and "Game of Thrones."

DOUNE CASTLE

(Doune, Perthshire)

This medieval stronghold that plays Castle Leoch on TV conveys visible poignancy: Claire and Frank visit it in ruins in the show's "modern-day" 1940s, and Claire returns when it is in its heyday. Visits to the castle have increased 227 percent since the Starz series debuted in 2014, according to a report called "The Outlander Effect & Tourism," commissioned by VisitScotland last year, the highest rise for the filming sites in the study.

THE COVENANTER HOTEL

(Falkland, Fife)

This serves as Mrs. Baird's B&B in the TV show, where Claire and Frank stay near Craigh na Dun. Gabaldon told me via email about a "busload of Spanish tourists from Barcelona who pulled up outside the hotel and streamed inside to check in, only to be told by the proprietress who had been watching out her upstairs window that I was outside ... They fell upon me in a frenzy of affection, hugging and kissing me and carrying on about Jamie and Claire." Graeme Watson, who now co-owns the hotel with Ross Moonlight, says the hotel serves food all day so you have a reason to stop even if you can't stay overnight in the room decked out as Claire's. "It's got an Outlander theme, so there are tartans at the bedspreeds, and a medicine bag in the room as a nod to Claire," he says.

CRAIGH NA DUN

The circle of vertical stones, so necessary for time travel? It doesn't exist. "The standing stones that appeared in the television series are fake and are in the studio in Cumbernauld, near Glasgow. They're made of something like Styrofoam," reports Lowstuter. But dinna fash, Sassenach, you can still visit the hilltop where the menhirs were temporarily placed, at Kinloch Rannoch Moor in Perthshire, about 90 minutes northeast of Edinburgh. It's hard to find, but there is a parking lot at Pitlochry, Perthshire. It's on private land, a working farm, so be a careful visitor. Gabaldon says Craigh na Dun, a phrase she invented, means "the stone of the hill" in Gaelic. "I was reading a lot of books on folklore and standing stone circles," she says, "and all of them ended the same way — 'But nobody actually knows the purpose of the stones' — and I thought, well, I can think of something."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

■ Interview with "Outlander" actor Richard Rankin, Page 39

FROM PAGE 30

FINNISH GLEN

Attempt this visit only if you are hardy and fit. In the show, this glen serves as the Liar's Spring, where Dougal confronts Claire about witchcraft, "the sexiest scene in the whole series," Lowstuter says. "It's a beautiful waterscape, like a fairy glen in this secret, wild Celtic landscape." Currently, it's very difficult to find and requires a sketchy maneuver to park your car where there's no official lot and, most treacherously, a climb down mossy, slippery stone steps, some of which no longer fit into their grooves. "How they got a film crew down there, I don't know," Lowstuter says. But thanks to a visitor center and, there are plans to put in a parking lot, build a visitor center and repair the stairs.

Some sites are off the tourist path for other reasons. The Reverend Wakefield's home, where characters settle into the library to conduct research, is a private house not open to visitors, according to Jenni Steele, the film and creative industries manager at VisitScotland. "There are a lot of locations in the series that I cannot promote," she said. "They might be on private land, or a historic structure delicate in its fabric that can't cope with too many visitors."

PRESTON MILL

(East Linton, near Edinburgh)

This is another site that has benefited from needed repairs. The old mill's wheel, under which Jamie hid from English soldiers, was jammed, but Steele said Outlander fans responded enthusiastically to a funding appeal for restoration work, and the target was reached quickly.

BAKEHOUSE CLOSE

(on the Royal Mile in Edinburgh)

Although you may not enter, you can climb the outdoor stone staircase to the print shop where Jamie and Claire were reunited. Steele says the shop is quite close to a historic printers' shop at Tweeddale Court called Oliver & Boyd.

Astonishingly, all the locations for "Outlander," excepting South Africa, were filmed in Scotland. The VisitScotland website features 42 shooting sites up through Season 4, and after Season 5 ends, its locations will be added, too.

The Scots praise Gabaldon not just for the tourists she's brought but for her generosity of spirit and sense of kinship with the country. There are tales of book signings that didn't end until 2:30 a.m., benefits for hospice associations, sandwich shops that gave her food on the house because she did so much to raise the local economy.

"People may go to Scotland thinking of Jamie and Claire, but when they come home, it's Scotland in their minds, because of the way Diana has represented Scotland in the books," Lowstuter says. "She kept very true to the history and magic of Scotland, embellished by her ability to bring it to life on the page."

More details online at visitScotland.com/outlander.

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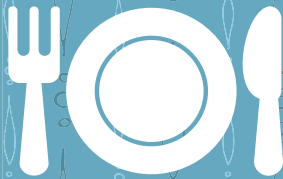
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WEEKEND: TRAVEL

cherry blossoms

Japan

TOKYO

MIDTOWN BLOSSOM 2020: March 20-April 19; 150 cherry trees are in bloom and can be viewed at an open-air terrace of Tokyo Midtown Garden; 9-71 Akasaka Minato-ku; 3-minute walk from Roppongi Station or Nogizaka Station; 03-3435-3010; Online: tokyo-midtown.com/en

CHERRY BLOSSOM VIEWING AT THE TOKYO NATIONAL MUSEUM: March 10-April 5; 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m., open until 9 p.m. on Fri. and Sat.; featuring many cherry blossom-inspired artworks on display in the galleries; 620 yen for adults, 410 yen for college students; 10-minute walk from Ueno Station; 03-5777-8600; Online: www.tnm.jp

CHIDORIGAFUCHI: March-April, at the northwest canal of the Imperial Palace; one of the most popular cherry blossom viewing spots in Japan. The trees are illuminated 6-10 p.m.; Kudan minami 2-chome Chiyoku; 5-minute walk from Kudan Shita Station; 03-3556-0391; Online: visit-chiyoda.tokyo

UENO CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: March 20-April 12; 5 a.m.-11 p.m.; A popular cherry blossom area since the Edo era. More than 800 cherry trees around Shinjiazobu park, Ueno zoo and The Tokyo National Museum. Trees are illuminated 5-8 p.m.; two-minute walk from Ueno Station; 03-3833-0030; Online: ueno.or.jp

TOSHIMAEN CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: March 17 and 18; Trees are illuminated dusk-8 p.m.; 500 yen for 3 or 3+; 3-251 Mukoyama; Nerima-ku; Toshimaen Station; 03-3990-8800; Online: toshimaen.co.jp/en/index.html

JINDAI BOTANICAL GARDEN CAMELIA & CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: March 10-April 12; 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m., closed Mondays; 620 yen adults and 720 cherry trees bloom starting in mid-March; 500 yen for adults, 250 yen for age under 15; 5-31-10 Jindai Motomachi, Chofu-shi; Bus from Mitaka Station or Chofu Station; 0424-83-2300; Online: www.tokyo-park.or.jp/jindai

RIKUGEN-EN GARDEN: March 20-April 2, 9 a.m.-9 p.m.; Rikugen-en, a garden built in Edo Period, is famous for the drooping cherry trees; Trees are illuminated dusk 9 p.m.; 300 yen for adults; 10-minute walk from Bunkyo Station; 03-3941-2222; Online: www.tokyo-park.or.jp/park/farmat/index031.html

SUMIDA RIVER CHERRY FESTIVAL: March 20-April 1; a row of cherry blossom trees continues about 1 km on both banks on the Sumida River; 6-30 p.m.; five-minute walk from Asakusa Station; 03-5608-6951; Online: visit-sumida.jp

SHINJUKU GYOEN: March 25-April 24; 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m.; 144-acre park in Shinjuku, famous viewing spot for 1,000 cherry trees; Kichijoji Pond; 250 yen for seniors and under 15; 500 yen for 18 and older; 10-minute walk from Shinjuku Station; 03-3350-0151; Online: env.go.jp/garden/shinjukugyoen

INKOASHIRA PARK: March-April; 500 cherry trees around the pond at Inagashira Park; 6-10 p.m.; 250 yen for seniors and under 15; 500 yen for 18 and older; 10-minute walk from Kichijoji Station; 0422-67-9000; Online: kansetsu.metro.tokyo.lg.jp/jimuho/zeibuk/inkoashira/index.html

FUSSA CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: March 28-April 5; 500 cherry trees along the banks of the Tama River; illuminated 5-9 p.m.; Free parking available on weekends; 11-21 Minamidenden Fussa-shi; 10-minute walk from JR Kumagaya Station; 042-551-1740; Online: www.city.fussa.tokyo.jp/fightsightseeing/ossu-meewen/sakura/1009352.html

KANAGAWA

ODAWARA CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: March 25-April 6; about 320 cherry blossom trees at Odawara Castle Park; illuminated 6-9 p.m.; 10-minute walk from Odawara Station; 3-30 Shiryama, Odawara; Tourist Association 0465-33-1521; Online: odawaracastle.com

TSUKAYAMA PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM: March-April; about 1,000 cherry blossom trees on the hill with a view of Yokosuka Port; Nishiheimocho 3-chome Yokosuka-shi; 25-minute walk from Isumi or Anjizuka Station; 042-822-2575; Online: kanagawa-park.or.jp/yokoyama/taesets.html

SANKIEN GARDEN: March-April; 9 a.m.-5 p.m.; seasonal flowers and historic buildings in the garden; 700 yen for adult; 58-1 Sannomai Honmoku Naka-ku Yokohama; 10-minute bus ride from Negishi Station; 045-621-0634; Online: sankien.or.jp

SAITAMA

GONOGENDO PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: March 25-April 9; known as one of the best sites for cherry blossoms in Japan; if has 1,000 cherry trees along a roughly half-mile-long lake; 30-minute walk from Saito Station. Shuttle bus service is available. 20-minute drive from Kuki IC on Tokai Express; 0480-44-0972 or 0480-43-1111; Online: satie-k.com/event/sakura/index.html

GUNMA

TAKASAKI CASTLE RUIN: March-April; 300 cherry trees along the Takasaki Castle Ruin's moat. Jyoshi Koen Takamatsu-machi, Takasaki-shi; 15-minute walk from Takasaki Station or 15-minute ride from Takasaki IC on Kanetsu Express; 027-321-1257; Online: www.city.takasaki.gunma.jp/kankou/history/zyosui.html

IWAI SHINSHU PARK NARCISUS FESTIVAL AND CHERRY BLOSSOM: April 1-21; 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m.; More than 300,000 narcissus to bloom on a farm next to Iwai Shinshu Park, next to a .63-mile avenue lined with cherry trees; 10-minute bus ride from JR Gunma Haramachi Station or 40-minute ride from Shibukawa IC on Kanetsu Express; 0279-70-2110; Online: www.gunlbo.net/event/event_shinjima1-174

SHIZUKOKA

IZU KOGEN CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: March-April; cherry trees along the streets near Izu Kogen Station in bloom, along with live performance show, food booth, and more; 500 yen for parking; 0577-3-6105; Online: www.izukyu.co.jp/index.php

MOUNT OMURO CHERRY BLOSSOM: March-April; 3,000 cherry blossom trees in 40 varieties bloom at Sakurano Sato of Mount Omuro; 13174 Futo Ito-shi; 23-minute bus ride from Station; 0557-37-2015; Online: itopa.com/spot/detail_5406.html

YAMANASHI

YAMATAKA JINDAI CHERRY BLOSSOM: March-April; Jindai cherry tree in the precincts of Jisaiji Temple is one of Japan's three giant trees, believed to be 1,800-2,000 years old; 2763 Yamataka, Mukawa-cho, Hakoto-shi; 15-minute walk from Hinokasa Station or 15-minute ride from Sudama IC on Chuo Express; 500 yen for parking; 0551-42-1351; Online: www.hakoto-kanko.jp

KYOTO

TOJI TEMPLE CHERRY BLOSSOM NIGHT ILLUMINATION: March 14-April 12; 6:30-9:30 p.m.; enjoy colorful "Jiji Zakura" from Tokyo district contrasted with Nijo Temple's five-story pagoda; 1,000 yen for adult; 500 yen for under age 15; 15-minute walk from



Kyoto Station; 075-691-3325. Online: toji.or.jp

NIJO CASTLE CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: March 20-April 12; 8:45 a.m.-4 p.m.; cherry trees in 50 varieties to bloom; 620 yen for 18 and older; 3-minute walk from Nijo-jo mae Station; 075-841-0096; Online: nijo-pcattle.city.kyoto.lg.jp/lang-en

KIYOMIZUDERA CHERRY BLOSSOM NIGHT ILLUMINATION: March 27-April 5; 6-9 p.m.; 1,000 cherry trees in blossom illuminated at Kiyomizudera; 1,294 Kiyomizu Higashiyama-ku Kyoto-shi; 25-minute walk from Shimizu Gojo Station or 10-minute walk from Shimizu-michi bus stop; 075-551-1234; Online: kiyomizudera.or.jp/en

KYOTO IMPERIAL PALACE CHERRY BLOSSOM: March-April; Open 9 a.m.-5 p.m., closed on Mondays; enjoy 1,000 cherry trees in bloom at the Imperial Palace gardens; free; 15-minute walk from Maruta machi Station; 075-211-6348; Online: env.go.jp/garden/kyotogyoen/english/index.html

NARA

MONTE YOSHINO CHERRY BLOSSOM: April 1-April 24; Monte Yoshino is now one of the best cherry blossom sites in Japan and is a UNESCO World Heritage site. It features 30,000 cherry blossom trees in 200 varieties; Trees are illuminated 6-10 p.m.; 75-minute ride from Nagoya Station 100-minute ride from Kyoto Station; 0746-320190; Online: www.visitnara.jp/en/news/ED02027

HIROSHIMA

MIYAHASHI CHERRY BLOSSOM: March-April; 17,000 cherry trees in bloom, near the Otsuri gate, which stands in the sea, and five-storied pagoda of Ikushimaha Shrine; 10-minute ferry ride from Miyajimaguchi pier; 0829-44-2011; Online: www.miyojima.or.jp/english/index.html

FUKUSHIMA

TSURUGAJO CASTLE NIGHT ILLUMINATION: April 6-May 10; 1,000 cherry trees to start blooming at Tsurugajo Castle; illuminated sunset 9:30 p.m.; 1-1 Ottemachi Aizu Wakamatsu-shi; 15-minute walk from Tsurugajo pier (Tsuruga Castle entrance) bus from JR Aizu Wakamatsu Station; 0242-27-4005; Online: aizukanko.com/event/102

MIHARU TAKIZAKURA CHERRY BLOSSOM: Month of April; Miharu Takizakura is one of Japan's three giant cherry trees and is believed to be more than 1,000 years old; illuminated 6-9 p.m.; 300 yen; shuttle bus is available from Miharu Station; 20-minute ride from Miharu Station or 20-minute ride from Funakichi Miharu IC; 0247-62-3690; Online: miharu-kanko.com/experience/183

NAGANO

MATSUMOTO CASTLE CHERRY BLOSSOM: April; koto and gagaku (traditional Japanese music instruments) and flute performance along with open-air tea services and free admission to the castle; 15-minute walk from Matsumoto Station or 15-minute ride from Matsumoto IC; 0263-32-2902; Online: matsumoto-castle.jp/lang

KAKATO CASTLE RUNN PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM: April 1-30; Approximately 1,500 trees, some more than 140 years old; 15-minute walk from Iida station; 500 yen for

adult; 250 yen for age under 15; 0265-94-2556; Online: www.inachiy.jp/shisetsu/koen-shisetsu/takatopikhoen.html

MIYAGI

ABAYAMA PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM: Month of April; 200 cherry trees to blossom; Open 24 hours; Abayama Park is in the Sendai Castle Ruins; 10-minute drive from Sendai Miyagi IC or 8-minute bus ride from Sendai Station; 022-225-7211; Online: city.sendai.jp/tyakuhachosen/meisho100sen/ichiran/015.html

SHIROISHI RIVER CHERRY BLOSSOM ILLUMINATION: April 3-18; 1,200 cherry trees along Shiroishi River dike; illumination 6-10 p.m.; 3-minute walk from Ogawara Station; 0224-53-2141; Online: www.town.ogawara-miyagi.jp

SHIROISHI CASTLE CHERRY BLOSSOM ILLUMINATION: April; About 200 cherry trees will bloom at Masuoka Koen; Shiroishi night illumination around the castle by 350 paper lanterns and LED lights sunset 10 p.m.; 400 yen for adults, 200 yen for children; 10-minute walk from JR Shiroishi Station or 10-minute ride from Shiroishi IC on Tohoku Express; free parking; 0224-24-3030; Online: shiroishi-shihiroshi.jp

AKOMORI

TOWADA CITY CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: April 20-May 5; 156 cherry trees along the Kama Highway to bloom; illuminated 6-10 p.m.; 34-minute bus ride from Shinchiro Towaoda Station; 30 minutes from Shimoda Momoi IC; 0176-58-6707; Online: aristawada.com

HIROSAKI PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: April 23-May 6; about 2,500 trees around the castle and moat bloom and are illuminated sunset 11 p.m. No drones allowed in the park; 20-minute bus ride from Hiroasaki Station; 320 yen for adult; 100 yen for children; 10-15:30-3131; Online: hiroasaki.or.jp/en/edit.html?id=cherry_blossom_festival

AKITA

SENSU PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM: Month of April; about 700 cherry trees. Illuminated 6-10 p.m.; 15-minute walk from Akita Station; 018-888-5753; Online: city.akita.lg.jp/kurashi/doro-koen/1003685/1007159/index.html

KAKUNODATE CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: April 20-May 5; 162 weeping cherry trees around the samurai district in Kakunodate; 394-2 Kaminagawara, Kakunodate, Senboku-shi; 20-minute walk from Kakunodate Station; 0187-54-2700; Online: www.city.senboku.akita.jp

IWATE

KITAKAMI TENSHOKU CHERRY BLOSSOM: Month of April; a cherry tree tunnel extends for more than 2 km along the Kitakami River from Sango Bridge; 20-minute walk from Kitakami Station; 0197-65-3033; Online: kitakami-kanko.jp/

MORIOKA CASTLE RUINS CHERRY BLOSSOM: April; Morioka has 18 varieties of cherry trees; 1-37 Ushimura Morioka-shi; 20-minute walk or 6-minute bus ride from Morioka Station; 019-604-3305; Online: cddte.or.jp

Pacific

The Ueno Cherry Blossom Festival in Tokyo is one of many opportunities this season to celebrate the blossoms. The festival runs March 20-April 12.

©JNTO

YAMAGATA

EBOSHIMARU PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM: April; more than 1,000 cherry trees in 25 varieties to bloom gloriously on the mountain at Eboshimaru Koen near Akayu Onsen; 20-minute walk from JR Akayu Station; 0236-04-2002; Online: nanyoshi-kanko.jp

KAJO PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM: Month of April; 1,500 cherry trees along the Yamagata to Castle's moat to bloom; 10-minute walk from Yamagata Station; 023-441-1212; Online: city.yamagata-yamagata.lg.jp/top_kanko

HOKKAIDO

GARYOKAKU PARK CHERRY BLOSSOM: April-May; 1,600 cherry trees; 15-minute walk from Garyokaku Koen station; 44 Garyokaku machi, Hakodate-shi; 0318-57-7210; Online: kakodate.travel/en

MARUYAMA KEN CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: April-May; 150 cherry trees are to bloom at Maruyama Koen; 5-minute walk from Maruyama Koen Station; 011-621-0453; Online: maruyamapark.jp/?page_id=13868

South Korea

SEOUL

GYEONGDEUNGPO YEODUIDO SPRING FLOWER FESTIVAL: Month of April; the festival is located along the Han River, one of the most popular cherry blossom viewing spots in Seoul. Tongin-dong, Inheung, Changdeok, Gyeongnam-gyeong; walking distance from Yeouido, Yeonanno and National Assembly Station; Online: mztzuri.com/yeouido-spring-flower-festival

GYEONGBUKGUNG PALACE: Month of April; Gyeongbukgung Station. Online: tommyoo.com/seoul-attractions-travel-guide

JEJU ISLAND

JEJU CHERRY BLOSSOM FESTIVAL: April 4-6; King Cherry Tree blossoms can be seen all over Jeju's downtown area and the Jeju Sports Complex; Jeju National University Bus Stop (Bus No. 6, 7, 10, 11, 37, 46, 55, 57, 500, 502); 064-728-2753; Online: korea.net/Events/Festivals/viewArticleId=5426

BUSAN

NAMCHEON-DONG: Late March; Namcheon-dong in Busan is more famously known as the Cherry Blossom Road in Samnak Beach town; 10-minute walk from Geumjeongnam subway station. Online: klook.com/blog/ken/cherry-blossom-forecast-korea-2020

GANGWON-DO

NAMI ISLAND CHERRY BLOSSOM: Early April; Nami Island is a popular day trip from Seoul; one-hour metro from Gangsong to Gyeongju; Online: skyscanner.com/my/news/inspiration/when-and-where-to-see-cherry-blossoms-in-korea-during-sakura-season

YEONGNAM

JINHAE HUNGHAE FESTIVAL: April 1-10; The Naval Port Festival in Jinhae, located in South Gyeongang Province, is held once a year when the cherry blossoms reach peak bloom; 1-37 Ushimura Morioka-shi; 20-minute walk or 6-minute bus ride from Morioka Station; 019-604-3305; Online: cddte.or.jp

Please confirm events before you travel, as details may change.

Pacific

WEEKEND: TRAVEL

Directionally challenged?

Navigational proficiency can be improved with the right tools and strategies

By CATHARINE HAMM
Los Angeles Times

Here's an embarrassing but true revelation: My sense of direction is less than optimal. That has led to many conversations like this one some years ago with my co-pilot, who thought GPS was for sissies, especially in L.A., which he knew well.

Him: Where are you going?
Me: I'm going to the tile store.
Him: In what state?
Me (glaring): Well, if you're really going to the tile store, you're apparently going by way of Oregon.

I reject the title of "complete moron" as was suggested by the co-pilot in the above story, but I will accept the title of "imprecise navigator."

That's one of three groups Steve Weisberg and Nora Newcombe identified in a study of navigational proficiency. The two others are "integrators," who understand landmarks and have a sense of place, and "nonintegrators," who are good with landmarks. The "imprecise navigator" excels at neither.

But, you say, GPS. Yes, there is that. And in a few more paragraphs, I'll talk about a new micro-GPS that helps the imprecise navigator (or anyone else) who might get lost in, say, a large resort.

But for now, if you have trouble navigating, consider what Oksana Hagerty, an education and developmental psychologist at Beacon College in Leesburg, Fla., a college for those with learning disabilities, has to say.

"Spatial intelligence, which enables our sense of direction, is probably the most hidden of our intelligences," she said in an email. "We are not always aware that the successful completion of many everyday activities depends on this particular ability: from 'reading' body language to moving furniture to make a room more comfortable to even anatomy exams. (Medical students with developed spatial ability have been found to perform better on these exams — unless they are paper-and-pencil multiple choice exams, of course.)"

"In modern culture, spatial information is, indeed, often 'masked' by verbal and numerical information: We have signs, maps (GPS) and itineraries to orient ourselves. If those are not available, we learn to use our own landmarks: It is somehow easier to turn 'at the red building' than to turn 'south' (provided that nobody changes the exterior of the building, of course.)"

At this point in your life, you probably know which category you fall into. If you don't, consider the last time you went into, say, a mall and came out a different door. Did you know where your car was?

If you have a mental map in your head, great. If you have chosen a landmark and can use that, great again. If you have neither, you need to create your own breadcrumbs.

It's about finding the strategy that

'A lot of times what happens as a student matures and becomes an adult is that the disability will be less of a disability because they are now putting those strategies into place. It becomes an automatic process. That's the key.'

Becky Ward

education experience specialist at Tutor Doctor

works for you, said Becky Ward, education experience specialist for Tutor Doctor, which provides one-on-one tutoring.

Once you've found that strategy, you must be your own best advocate to get the information you need to find your way, she said. If you don't understand "go three miles east and turn north," Ward said, then say, "I'm not quite clear what you mean. Is there any kind of distinct building I'm supposed to see, or some other physical feature?"

People aren't "cured" of their lack of direction, which some consider a learning disability, but, Ward said, "A lot of times what happens as a student matures and becomes an adult is that the disability will be less of a disability because they are now putting those strategies into place."

"It becomes an automatic process. That's the key."

It's also possible that an inability to navigate may be a lack of training.

"Lacking reading skills can be the result of not only dyslexia but also inadequate reading instruction," Hagerty said. "The latter is more to fix but only if appropriate instruction is available at an early age."

"The same with spatial ability. Some people lack a sense of direction more than others due to a neurodevelopmental deficiency," he continued, "but modern society has almost no tools (or need) to develop it, either spontaneously or by means of formal instruction."

Parents can help their children by giving them opportunities to play that involve "doing Legos, studying art and geometry or hiking," she said. Beyond that, they can help their kids by asking them to describe a place they know. That "helps develop memory for images," she said.

Then there's the GPS game: "When driving to familiar places, ask children to tell you where to go," she said. That enhances visual ability and sense of direction.

For the rest of us, there is GPS, which is great when it works, although if you lose a signal, you may be stranded. Maps are an analog backup that works for some.

You may not be able to make sense of a map, whether it's of the world's highways and byways or the path to your room at the ginormous resort where you're staying. You might as well be plopped in the wilderness as you turn that badly photocopied paper this way and that way.

Yes, I've done it. I just did it in Mexico, where I was sure I was going to have to sleep outside because I had no idea where I was or how to get to my room. My solution: Find someone who works there and tip nicely.

If you're like me, a tech solution still being rolled out may be your new best friend, whether it's in a sprawling resort or a mall.

Unlike big-picture GPS, this system will have its tech infrastructure inside the resort building to help phones get data and position their users on a map, said Nadir Ali, chief executive of Inpixon Indoor Intelligence.

Like your big GPS, this indoor mapping system will be able to guide you, using your phone, wherever you need help, once the technology is in place. It also can be used for security; the data are anonymous.

"We don't know who you are or your phone number; we just see signals from sensors" indicating where you are, Ali said.

It also may be a way for guests to choose their room before check-in, which may give them a new measure of control and thus satisfaction, he said.

Is privacy a concern? What if you're wandering the grounds and you see ads pop up on your phone for the property's happy hour — say, two-for-one drinks? The customer gets to decide how much he or she wants to interact, Ali said.

The technology has applications for any large space — a cruise ship, a convention center, a casino. An important consideration, Ali said, is that the hotel or property using the technology must focus on the guest experience, not foist itself on the unprepared.

That's a wave that's just beginning to crest, but for those who are drowning in disorientation, it may be the ticket to one of the rides we need.



WEEKEND: LIFESTYLE

Time for a change

Falling back, springing forward both interfere with our body clock. So which do we choose?

By ROXIE HAMMILL
Kaiser Health News

Changing over to daylight saving time—a major annoyance for many people—may be on its way out as lawmakers cite public health as a prime reason to ditch the twice-yearly clock-resetting ritual.

The time change, especially in the spring, has been blamed for increases in heart attacks and traffic accidents as people adjust to a temporary sleep deficit. But as legislatures across the country consider bills to end the clock shift, a big question looms ahead of this year's March 8 change: Which is better, summer hours or standard time?

There are some strong opinions, it turns out. And they are split, with scientists and politicians at odds.

Retailers, chambers of commerce and recreational industries have historically wanted the sunny evenings that allow more time to shop and play.

Researchers on human biological rhythms come down squarely on the side of the standard, wintertime hours referred to as "God's time" by angry farmers who objected to daylight saving time when it was first widely adopted during World War I.

What's not in question is that the clock switching is unpopular. Some 71% of people want to stop springing forward and falling back, according to a 2019 Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll.

Politicians have reacted accordingly. More than 200 state bills have been filed since 2015 to either keep summer hours go to permanent standard time, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

The measures getting the most traction right now are for permanent daylight saving time, which makes more sun available for after-work activities. In 2018, Florida passed a bill and California voters backed a ballot measure to do so. Maine, Delaware, Tennessee, Oregon and Washington joined in 2019, passing permanent daylight saving bills. President Donald Trump even joined the conversation last March, tweeting: "Making Daylight Saving Time permanent is O.K. with me!"

But none of those efforts can become reality without the blessing of Congress. States have always been able to opt out of summer hours and adopt standard time permanently, as Arizona and Hawaii have done. But making daylight saving time year-round is another story.

Still, Scott Yates, whose #Lock the Clock website has become a resource for lawmakers pushing for change, believes this year will be another big year. Yates is particularly encouraged by the attitude he saw from state legislators in August when he presented on the issue at the legislators' annual national summit in Nashville.

"I wasn't the court jester and it wasn't entertainment," he said. "It was like, 'What are the practical ways we can get this thing passed?'"



Yates, 54, a tech startup CEO based in Denver, has been promoting an end to clock switching for six years. He doesn't pick a side. It's the switching itself that he wants to end. At first, it was just about the grogginess and annoyance of being off schedule, he said. But then he began to see scientific studies that showed the changes were doing actual harm.

A German study of autopsies from 2006 to 2015, for instance, showed a significant uptick just after the spring switch in deaths caused by cardiac disease, traffic accidents and suicides. Researchers have also noted a significant increased risk for heart attacks and strokes. Three measures pending in Congress would allow states to make daylight saving time permanent. But, in the meantime, state lawmakers who want the extra evening sunlight are preparing resolutions and bills, some of which would be triggered by congressional approval and the adoption of daylight time in surrounding states.

The Illinois Senate passed such a bill, and Kansas is considering one after a bill to end daylight saving time died there last year. Utah passed a resolution in support of the congressional bill last year, and state Rep. Ray Ward, a Republican family physician from Bountiful, is steering a recently passed state Senate permanent daylight bill through the House.

"The human clock was not built to jump back and forth. That's why we get jet lag," said Ward, who was a co-presenter with Yates at the NCSL summit. "It is very easy to show that if you knock people off an hour of sleep, there's a bump temporarily in bad things that will happen."

Efforts have been particularly strong in California, where 60% of voters passed a ballot issue for permanent daylight time in 2018. A bill is pending in the state Assembly.

All of this alarms scientists who study human biological rhythms.

Researchers in the U.S. and the European Union have taken strong positions about permanent summer hours. The So-

cietty for Research on Biological Rhythms posts its opposition prominently at the top of its website.

Messing with the body's relationship to the sun can negatively affect not only sleep but also cardiac function, weight and cancer risk, the society's members wrote. According to one often-quoted study on different health outcomes within the same time zones, each 20 minutes of later sunrise corresponded to an increase in certain cancers by 4% to 12%.

"Believe it or not, having light in the morning actually not only makes you feel more alert, but helps you go to bed at the right time at night," said Dr. Beth Malow, director of the sleep division of Vanderbilt University School of Medicine. Malow has seen a lot of anecdotal evidence to back that up at the sleep clinic. Parents report their children with autism have a particularly hard time adjusting to the time change, she said.

Jay Pea, a freelance software engineer in San Francisco, was unhappy enough about California's proposed permanent daylight time that he started the Save Standard Time website to promote the health arguments for keeping it permanent. He said he doesn't think the scientific community is being heard.

"Essentially it's like science denial," he said. "It's bizarre to me that politicians are not hearing the experts on this."

Pea understands the human need to have the sun directly overhead at noon. "It's a wonderful connection to natural reality that unfortunately is lost on many people," he said. Daylight saving time "distances us from the natural world."

At the very least, lawmakers ought to consider history, he said. Daylight saving time was originally a plan to save energy during the two world wars but wasn't popular enough to be uniformly embraced after the conflicts ended. In 1974, the federal government decided to make it temporarily year-round as a way to deal with the energy crisis (although energy savings were later found to be underwhelming).



(Stock illustrations)

WEEKEND: MUSIC

BTS performs at the Rose Bowl in 2019.

Kent Nishinura, Los Angeles Times/TNS



Charting the course

With 4 million presales, K-Pop powerhouse BTS leads the genre into exciting new era



BTS' "Map of the Soul: 7"

By AUGUST BROWN
Los Angeles Times

If there's a digital age equivalent to camping outside a record store waiting for a new album to drop, it's what BTS fans did overnight: hovering over Spotify or Apple Music, pouring some very strong coffee and waiting for 4 a.m. EST to arrive, so they could finally stream "Map of the Soul: 7" when it landed.

The new album from the biggest K-pop group in the world is a global record biz event like no other, a comprehensive 20-song collection that looks forward, backward and all around the K-pop landscape that RM, Suga, J-Hope, Jin, Jimin, Jungkook and V helped create. It booked more than 4 million presales, easily eclipsing the year-end tally of its predecessor, "Map of the Soul: Persona" (and that's not even counting the streams to come).

The album is also a fantastic summary of BTS' accomplishments so far, and charts a path forward in a tumultuous but exciting new era for K-pop. It's an album about being in a band, about the relationships that form and get tested in the crucible of insane fame, all set to some of the most genre-invigorating music of their career.

Dedicated BTS Army troops will immediately notice that the front quarter of this gargantuan album is previously released material from "Persona," the 2019 EP that pivoted the band from their smash hit "Love Yourself" trilogy into this new period.

"Boy With Luv," "Make It Right," "Dionysus" and "Jamais Vu" will be plenty familiar at this point.

What comes next is the darkest, strangest and yet most relevant and ambitious music

BTS has made yet. It's partly a hat tip back to their roots as a hip-hop act, Bangtan Boys, but attuned to today's misty, hard-kicking sonics and bolstered by everything they've learned in the intervening years as pop stars.

On a first pass, the R&B and global pop moments are some of the most affecting, even more so given the breadth of the record. Jimin's "Filter" is a sweaty, Latin guitar-driven single that's his high point as a vocalist so far; "Louder Than Bombs," co-written with Troye Sivan, is a glitchy electro-pop stomper with some of the most moving vocal harmonies in the BTS catalog.

The group is beloved, however, for lyrics that peel off the insulation around K-pop fame and speak with singular candor about the cost of the spotlight, and what an experience like theirs both takes and gives to BTS' friendships. The band appears to be trying to do one of the hardest tricks in pop: the road album.

BTS' phenomenal ascent as artists mirrored the K-pop genre's rise in America, and their fans' path into adulthood with all its promise and vague sense of closing doors. "Twenty-four, feels like I became a grown-up faster than everyone else," Jungkook sings on "My Time." "But is it too fast? There are traces of losses / Don't know what to do; am I living this right?"

As the album drops its landing gear, "We Are Bulletproof: The Eternal" leaves fans feeling the arc of the journey, a piano ballad that insists the BTS Army really is in this together, that the band is figuring out this life thing right along with you. It would be a logical ending point, but then they throw on an old-school big-beat club number "Outro: Ego" and a remix, with a Sia collaboration, of "ON" for good measure.

WEEKEND: MUSIC



Zoe Kravitz plays Rob, short for Robyn, in Hulu's "High Fidelity."

Hulu/TNS

The evolution of the playlist

The new 'High Fidelity' and the state of the music geek in the digital age

By DAN DeLUCA

The Philadelphia Inquirer

There's a scene in "High Fidelity," the new Hulu series starring Zoe Kravitz as a record store owner, in which her character, Rob (short for Robyn), shows up unannounced at the apartment of British ex-boyfriend Mac.

She wants to hear him say that he loves her more than his new partner, Lily, and that the couple have no plans to marry, thereby ruining Rob's life. (Good luck with that.)

But Rob needs to know something else, something equally important. Has Mac listened to her playlist?

"It's like a love letter," Rob explains, speaking directly to the camera.

The characters in "High Fidelity," a gender-flipped adaptation of Nick Hornby's 1995 novel, are people who need music to figure out how to feel.

Making a playlist isn't just about throwing together a bunch of songs you enjoy. For Rob, her mix, which starts out with David Bowie's "Modern Love," is about expressing something personal to someone she cares deeply about — without the risk of putting her feelings into words. The music does the talking.

As it is for Kravitz's Rob, so it was for the male protagonist of the same name in Hornby's novel, as well as in the 2000 Stephen Frears film starring John Cusack. All three own a store called Championship Vinyl. All need to learn that judging people by their taste in pop culture — defining someone's worth by what they like, rather than what they're like — inevitably leads to disappointment.

In the new Hulu version, the focus is no longer on socially awkward, straight white men. Rob is a woman who dates women and men. Simon (David H. Holmes) is gay. Cherise (Da'Vine Joy Randolph) is African American, and far more likable than the Jack Black version of the character.

"The movie and the book are kind of perfect iterations of the source material," Veronica West, show co-creator

Kravitz's Rob is an old soul who treasures her record collection, and doesn't have the technical savvy to use Instagram to spy on her ex. She's "an analog person in a digital world," said West, rephrasing an Erykah Badu lyric.

But a digital world it is, like it or not. And for music fans, there's plenty to like — principally, that streaming services make available pretty much all the music

"I spent hours putting that cassette together," Rob recounts in the novel, talking about the tape he used to woo Laura, the original Mac. "There's a lot of erasing and rethinking and starting again. A good compilation tape, like breaking up, is hard to do."

In the reboot, Rob approaches her task with similar seriousness. She won't settle for a playlist programmed by an algorithm. Nor will she click on Spotify's 92-track 'Break Up Songs' playlist promising "the best cure for a broken heart!"

She wants to make something human that speaks to Mac's soul. In some ways, streaming technology makes her task easy. She's not limited to 45 minutes per side on a cassette, or 80 minutes on a recordable CD. And she doesn't have to buy the songs.

But in other ways, the job is harder: The modern music consumer must overcome the paralysis that results from too many options. If I can play absolutely anything, where do I start?

There's a problem with Rob's obsession with the sequence of the songs: the shuffle button. Mixtape making has always allowed fans to put the songs they love in the order of their choice. Back when they were made on CD-Rs and cassettes, they stayed that way.

When Rob asks Mac if he's played her "Modern Love" playlist, he says he has. But he doesn't reveal whether he's also followed her "Thou Shall Not Shuffle the Lady's Playlist" commandment and listened to her story in the order she wanted it told. That's one thing that the music geek doesn't get to control. In the digital era, the listener decides.

Making a playlist isn't just about throwing together a bunch of songs you enjoy. For ('High Fidelity' character) Rob, it's about expressing something personal to someone she cares deeply about — without the risk of putting her feelings into words. The music does the talking.

with Sarah Kucserka, told the Hollywood Reporter. "To make it modern and tell a different story, it seems like doing that from a female point of view was absolutely necessary."

Making it modern also means reflecting the ways being a music geek has been changed by technology in a generation.

Counterintuitively, Championship Vinyl is probably less anachronistic in the Hulu series than it was in Hornby's novel, which was set in 1995, the height of the CD era, when people were selling off LPs, a dated medium, clearly doomed.

In 2020, vinyl is booming. There's a demand for physical product in an ephemeral marketplace where streaming music services like Spotify and Apple Music have reshaped listening habits.

ever recorded.

The Hulu "High Fidelity" does a great job of taking advantage of that limitless digital jukebox. It reflects how the internet has diversified listening, with genre barriers broken down. You'll hear Frank Zappa, the Notorious B.I.G., Blondie, Manzanita y Su Conjunto, Daron and deep Prince cuts like "So Blue."

The excellence of the soundtrack — ace tastemaker Ahmir "Questlove" Thompson of The Roots is executive music producer — can be heard on a nine-hour Spotify playlist of 142 songs.

That ease of use typifies the streaming era. Things were more labor intensive in the original "High Fidelity," when making a mix meant dropping a needle on songs in your personal collection.

WEEKEND: BOOKS

The nontraditional student

‘Real Life’ explores being black and gay in college

By CHARLES ARROWSMITH
Special to The Washington Post

In his sincere debut novel, “Real Life,” Brandon Taylor broadens the embrace of the traditional campus novel. His melancholy hero, Wallace, a biochemistry Ph.D. student at an unnamed Midwestern university, is black, Southern, gay, “chubby, at best.” He’s anxious but wary about how his status as an African American in a very white milieu means he continuously has to prove himself, to tolerate racism (“They say the Swedes are the blacks of Scandinavia”), and to be held to a different standard by his colleagues. Meanwhile, he’s trying to cope with his father’s death, memories of sexual violence and his friends’ relationship woes. Over the course of a weekend, the tensions in his life find a lightning rod in his friend Miller, with whom he begins a testy relationship.

What is “real life” here? Like many first novels, “Real Life” appears to hew to its author’s own experience—Taylor has written numerous personal essays about being gay and Southern, his abusive upbringing and his experiences of sexual violence. With a boilerplate disclaimer about reading too literally, the parallels between Taylor’s life and Wallace’s experiences seem clear. In another sense, the title is a dry nod to the putative opposition between academic and “real” life, as in one character’s complaint: “You wouldn’t know the first thing about getting a real job, real health insurance, taxes.”

But it may also point to the insoluble, ineffable, capital-R “Real” of philosophy. In that sense, one might consider the surface of Taylor’s novel to be laid out on rolling, limitless forces—the Black Experience, the Queer Experience—whose undulations are what generate the novel’s unanticipated turns. What Wallace experiences as the unknowability of his friends and the inscrutability of his own actions are functions of this kind of Real-ism.

The resulting ambiguities are what give Taylor’s writing its strengths: his receptivity to nuance in the mundane, subcutaneous sexual vibrations, unconscious motivation. We know through throwaway observations (“The pale interior of Miller’s thighs flashed”) the direction of Wallace’s interest, we feel through his attention to physical detail the threat



Bill Adams

“Real Life” author Brandon Taylor explores what it’s like to be gay, Southern and black in a Midwestern college.

of male sexuality (“the hard stubble on [Miller’s] jaw rasps against Wallace’s neck”). Yet his apparent passivity and desire to erase himself through violent sex are in counterpoint to his assertiveness in social situations, the grenades he’s willing to throw into his friends’ dinner parties. This is the subject of Taylor’s book: Wallace’s passage into new (real?) life entails a growing rejection of his old life in favor of a new kind of agency. Like Job, who gives the novel its epigraph, Wallace reaches a point where he just won’t take it anymore.

Taylor also deals deftly, through close third-person narration, with what it’s like to be different in an overculture. Gently, slyly, he makes a point of noticing “white people,” undermining the unspoken rule of much realist fiction that race need only be mentioned when it’s other than white. Racist tropes are humorously inverted as when, gazing at Wallace’s white friends, “like a trio of pale, upright deer,” the narrator suggests, “you could be forgiven ... for thinking them related.” Even the setting is subtly color-coded, from the white university flag to a string of white lights at a party.

Taylor’s writing is least successful when it’s most self-consciously literary. There are many clichés of the “inky darkness” variety, clothes and former lives shed “like skins.” Some of the imagery—the innumerable dark hairs of

her anger, “a great stream of faces,” “The surface of his hunger was rough, like a cat’s tongue”—baffles rather than tickles. The lofty register that intrudes whenever a profound observation threatens—“There can only ever be a tenuous claim on the lives of others”—detracts from the vernacular panache exhibited elsewhere. There are far too many ominous birds skittering around.

There’s also an unevenness in the presentation of character. Miller, seemingly straight before the book starts, is surprisingly comfortable with not just sexual but romantic intimacy with Wallace. Elsewhere, a coy conversation between two gay men about a hookup app (“You know the one”) rings false. Some histrionics—Wallace’s nervous vomiting; a bigoted feminist (“gay guys always think that they’ve got the corner on oppression”)—may come down to personal taste.

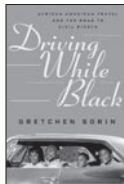
Misteps in style and characterization may be a product of Taylor’s desire to give sufficient weight to his themes—as he told The New York Times, he aims to inscribe black and LGBTQ+ lives into the campus novel genre. Still, the juxtaposition of what he has called “queer, bucolic malaise” with his critique of academic politics keeps “Real Life” moving with enough bite to forestall encroaching solemnity. With tighter editing and the autobiographical impulse out of his system, what Taylor does next will be worth watching.

‘Driving While Black’ paves the way toward civil rights

By RUSSELL CONTRERAS
Associated Press

Chuck Berry had his Cadillac. Scholar W.E.B. Du Bois drove his 1920s convertible. African Americans in 1950s Pittsburgh overwhelmed preferred their Buicks. By the mid-20th century, a travel revolution struck Black America and allowed African Americans to move freely throughout a land that had once enslaved their great grandparents. But barriers remained, from segregated hotels to sundown towns (that barred African Americans after dark) and white mob violence that endangered black families just trying to visit a national park.

“Driving While Black: African American Travel and the Road to Civil Rights,” by Gretchen Sorin, is a riveting story on how the automobile opened up opportunities for blacks in the U.S. The car allowed African Americans to avoid segregated trains and buses throughout the American South and gave blacks a chance to travel across the country. Travel guides presented a mod-



ern-day Underground Railroad to show black travelers which hotels and restaurants would serve them.

The free movement opened the window to migration across the land and away from Jim Crow, bring in the modern civil rights movement.

Still, the new freedom also presented challenges. “Black drivers could venture unwittingly into the wrong neighborhoods or stop at the wrong places,” Sorin writes. “Black motorists encountered racist law enforcement officers, racist gas station attendants, bigoted auto repairmen, threatening road signs, and restaurants that would only serve food to black patrons through a window in the back door.”

In Sorin’s work, her prose and talent for turning examples into captivating stories prevent the book from being a mere sociological study of how black travel changed the nation. Instead, she blends her own family’s history, and those who experienced the black travel revolution, to make the book enjoyable and noteworthy since it shows how the changes ushered in civil rights. Without a network of black motorists, for example, the Montgomery Bus Boycott following Rosa Park’s actions might have failed.

Today, black motorists still have to deal with police encounters that can turn deadly. As Sorin writes, that next chapter has yet to be written.

‘The Resisters’ is a reminder to stand up for what’s right

By DIANA ABU-JABER
Special to The Washington Post

There’s a darkness to dystopia: It’s embedded in the very word—the opposite of a utopia, a world gone wrong. The magic of Gish Jen’s latest novel, “The Resisters,” is that, amid a dark and cautionary tale, there’s a story also filled with electricity and humor—and baseball. At its heart, the novel is about the act of resistance and its attendant forces of courage and hope.

Set in AutoAmerica—in a future world of surveillance and melted polar caps—people are divided into two categories. The Netted have angel-fair skin and live and work in protected areas on higher ground, while the marginalized, multiracial Surplus live on houseboats or swampslands; their only employment is to “consume.” Our

narrator, Grant, a former college professor, describes himself as “copertended,” and his wife, Eleanor, a lawyer and activist, is “spy-eyed.”

In many ways, this book is about feistiness and not buckling under cruel and unjust bureaucracies. Grant and Eleanor are thoughtful mavericks, working to subvert a soulless system while trying to raise a fierce and powerful daughter. These characters wrestle with conundrums that will feel urgent to many readers, such as how to teach children to be fearless yet not reckless, to be responsible yet independent, to stand up for what’s right without becoming imprisoned or imperiled along the way.

“The Resisters” is in many ways an extended study on the dangers of willful ignorance and inaction. The story feels only a few clicks removed from our current situation: Climate change has resulted in a partial waterworld, and Alexa is now self-aware, offering advice on issues of propriety, relationships and moral quandaries. Many readers will recognize with a shudder their own lives in this potential world to come.



WEEKEND: TELEVISION & DVD

NEW ON DVD

“Queen & Slim”: After a painfully awkward first (and decidedly last) Tinder date, a young black man and woman (Daniel Kaluuya and Jodie Turner-Smith) get pulled over by a hostile white police officer (Sturgill Simpson). As tension escalates in the all-too-familiar scenario, the man shoots and kills the officer in self-defense. Dubbed “the black Bonnie and Clyde,” the couple go on the run and become a cultural symbol of the consequences of systemic racism and police brutality.

Kaluuya and Turner-Smith give masterful performances, as both characters’ initially diverging philosophies ultimately transform and intertwine. And director Melina Matsoukas and cinematographer Tat Radcliffe present a dreamy, music-video-esque aesthetic to the timely and tragic story.

“Dark Waters”: An attorney who had previously worked on behalf of chemical corporations takes on behemoth DuPont in this expert legal thriller based on a true story.

Robert Blytt (Mark Ruffalo) finds himself in a quandary when a farmer friend of his grandmother’s (Bill Campbell) comes to him with an eerie issue: His cows are mysteriously dying, and he can’t figure out why. After poring over decades of Dupont’s records, Blytt discovers that PFOA (C8), a chemical in Teflon, is poisonous to both animals and humans and is causing massive health issues, and he spends years fighting to hold the company accountable.

“An actor whose presence is always welcome, Ruffalo is splendid at projecting the unusual combination of bred-in-the-bone idealism with mulish stubbornness that made it impossible for Blytt to walk away,” wrote Los Angeles Times critic Kenneth Turan in his review. “Seeing ‘Dark Waters’ makes you wonder not why more people don’t call corporations to account, but why anyone does. And makes us all the more grateful when they do.”

Also available on DVD

“Playmobil: The Movie”: A brother and sister end up a part of the Playmobil universe after encountering an exhibit in a toy museum in this computer-animated film.

“2 Graves in the Desert”: A man and woman discover they’re being held hostage in a truck’s trunk. Stars William Baldwin and Michael Madsen.

“Ana”: A girl (Dafne Keen) and a car dealer (Andy Garcia) embark on a trip to locate the girl’s father.

“The Furies”: Kayla (Airlie Dodds) is forced into a game wherein masked men hunt down women.

“The Sonata”: A violinist (Freyja Tingley) inherits her composer father’s estate and discovers a sinister plan.

“Titans: The Complete Second Season”: A group of teen heroes continue their fight for good in this DC Universe series based on the Teen Titans team.

— Katie Foran-McHale
Tribune News Service



Richard Rankin and Sophie Skelton are part of the cast of “Outlander.”

STARZ ENTERTAINMENT
TNS photos

A chance meeting changed future ‘Outlander’ actor Richard Rankin’s aspirations from IT to Hollywood

By LUAINÉ LEE
Tribune News Service

Scottish actor Richard Rankin was on the primrose path to IT work when something terrible happened. He decided to become an actor.

Rankin was working in a bank and was being groomed for a coveted position in computer technology.

“If I was in IT, if I was in computers, you’d have stability in that,” he says. “You’d know where you were. You’d know where you wanted to go. You’d know how you’d want to progress. It’s very linear. Whereas this — not so much.”

Acting eventually provided him with the plum role of Roger, the Oxford don, in Starz’s uber-popular “Outlander.” But Rankin was on the cusp of rejecting all that when a chance meeting during a trip to Hol-

lywood changed his plans.

“I was staying at the Hollywood Roosevelt Hotel,” Rankin recalls in his almost impenetrable Scottish accent. “Me and my girlfriend at the time were having dinner at a very quiet restaurant. I don’t know why it was so quiet.”

The only other people in the restaurant were a party of filmmakers.

“And we joined them, and got to chatting,” Rankin continues. “They saw I was Scottish, which people find interesting. We were chatting, and they asked if I ever thought of being in the industry. I think at that point, I wasn’t entirely sure what I was doing. They said, ‘You have a good look for an actor’ — something along those lines. It was very conversational.”

“It sort of planted a very small idea, but it grew legs,” he recalls. “All the way on

the flight home I’m thinking, ‘Could I be an actor? Is that something I think I could do?’ And here we are. I think if that hadn’t happened, I probably would have never gone into the business.”

Performing officially won out over IT when Rankin landed a role in the play “Mary Queen of Scots,” in his native Glasgow — after a year of desolate rejection.

“My first year after graduating (from drama school) wasn’t particularly fruitful, and it was quite hard unless you secure the agent that’s right for you when you graduate. It can be a real struggle,” he says. “I think for the first year I had only two auditions or something. I was in Glasgow and had a Scottish agent at the time, and it wasn’t going particularly well. And I kind of conceded that perhaps it wasn’t for me.”

But “Mary Queen of Scots” rekindled his passion for performing.

“I got approached by another agent — a better agent — after that show and he asked to represent me, and I thought, ‘Yeah!’”

When Rankin told his parents of his decision to act, the reaction was unexpected.

“My dad was not impressed, but my mom is very liberal, and I think she thought she could have the experience vicariously. But my dad thought it was maybe a passing phase,” he says. “I had a lot of passing phases when I was a teenager. I wanted to be a lawyer. I wanted to be a pilot. I wanted to be a musician. I think that spoke volumes that I had a passion that had to be put into something, but I didn’t know what it was. My dad didn’t think it was a good move: ‘My God, what is the success rate in that field?’”

Rankin lost his father a year and a half ago. It’s a blow that still stuns, he says.

“That’s like nothing else; nothing compares to that,” he says, sighing. “It’s like the impossible has happened. That immortal figure of a parent — that’s the one constant that feels unchangeable, and then it’s gone. It feels quite an emptiness, quite a void.”

Still he finds joy in his work.

“The best part of my job is succeeding with a role, developing and telling the story of a character, but feeling you did it justice and you did it properly,” he says. “When you have developed a well-rounded, satisfying character, you get a lot from that. When you feel you’ve poured enough of yourself into that to truly have transformed the character — that’s very rewarding.”

“The worst part is the insecurity. You never know how far you’re gonna go or where you’re going to end up in a year or two. Unfortunately, I think that’s always there. I don’t think that ever goes away. But that makes it all the sweeter when you have a great role and great jobs that you can be really thankful for. And you know that you should step back and say, ‘Yeah, I’m in a really good place right now.’”

“Outlander” airs Sundays on AFN-Spectrum.



Sophie Skelton, Richard Rankin and Jeremiah MacKenzie share the screen in “Outlander.”

WEEKEND: HEALTH & FITNESS



ILLUSTRATION BY ANDREA VILLARI/Stars & Stripes

The pressures of productivity

Writers, researchers say the concept needs re-evaluating

BY STEVEN JOHNSON
The Washington Post

Anne Helen Petersen knows you're tired. In recent weeks, Petersen has been asking people about their feelings toward leisure, work and burnout. And she was struck by how few of them can find even a half-hour of free time — true leisure that isn't compelled by someone, or something, else.

"Is taking your kids to their soccer game leisure?" Petersen said. What about cleaning? One gig worker, she said, told her his only leisure was his half-hour commute home — followed by, if he's lucky, 15 minutes on the couch to stare at the ceiling.

The creep of work into life

has erased true free time, said Petersen, a senior culture writer at BuzzFeed who is turning her popular 2019 essay on millennial "burnout" into a book. But so has the desire to make all leisure time productive in some way, she said — even if it's as simple as doing something worth posting to Instagram.

The feeling that overwork is wearing on our mental well-being isn't new, of course. A wave of writers and researchers has pushed for a conscious retreat from constant work and connection. But Petersen is one of a few recent writers to more critically examine the past decade's countervailing trends in work and rest and how digital work has supercharged them. These writers are reminding us

that an obsession with productivity can be counterproductive. And they're suggesting that we rethink the concept of productivity altogether.

Productivity, measured most simply by the government as output per hour, became a national preoccupation following the Great Recession, as growth in productivity and wages (already sluggish) slowed. Meanwhile, work and life turned more digital.

It wasn't long before people worried that all the focus on productivity was having the opposite effect. Trendy ways to simplify followed close behind, offering "digital detox" retreats and decluttering programs for your mind and home.

More recently, businesses around the world have started tinkering with a four-day workweek. (American businesses have been slower to try it.) And productivity experts are trumpeting the importance of mental rest and reflection, especially in the digital age.

For her book "Off the Clock: Feed Less Busy While Getting More Done," speaker and author Laura Vanderkam asked more than 900 people to record time diaries over a given Monday. People who reported a "more abundant relationship with time" — meaning they felt they had progressed toward a goal, or spent time in ways that made them happy — were more likely to do something reflective, like

meditating or journaling. They checked their phones less often. They'd sooner hang out with friends than watch TV.

"It's not wasting time to engage in leisure activities that are rejuvenating to you," Vanderkam said. "It's a false dichotomy."

That holds true at the most fundamental level — the brain. Nancy C. Andreasen, chair of psychiatry at the University of Iowa Carver College of Medicine, coined the term REST (random episodic silent thought) in the 1990s to describe the high neural activity marking states of relaxation and free association.

She's now studying a small group of high-performing creatives — people at the top of their fields in the arts, sciences and mathematics. While the study is ongoing, she said, for many of them, "letting their mind run freely is a big resource for their creativity."

Focused, sequential work is different from the "randomness of thought that occurs during rest," Andreasen said. But in general, focused work relies on rest and free association. "That's the resource for the ideas that you're going to express when you're doing the productive component of the work," she said.

Petersen, the BuzzFeed writer, and other younger writers are highlighting why millennials — who in 2016 became the largest share of the U.S. workforce — have become sharper critics of the idea of more, and more efficient, work.

Faddish tips on maximizing free time, these writers note, are hardly helpful to people who need to work two or three jobs to get by. "Decluttering" can seem risky to people who can't afford to repurchase items down the line. And some efforts to step back can be superficial if they don't allow a more fundamental kind of rest.

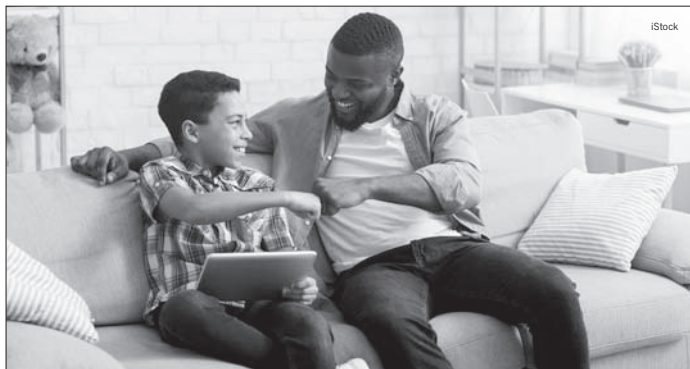
Artist and writer Jenny Odell has argued the fixation with productivity has warped our sense of fulfillment and growth.

"The point of doing nothing, as I define it, isn't to return to work refreshed and ready to be more productive," Odell writes in "How to Do Nothing: Resisting the Attention Economy," "but rather to question what we currently perceive as productive."

The common understanding of productivity crowds out the practices that actually make people and communities well, Odell writes. True productivity may look more like maintenance than creation. Practices based on solitude and observation — such as bird-watching, which looks like inaction but hones attention — "can help restore individuals who can then help restore communities," she writes.

That might seem like a "self-indulgent luxury" for people with time on their hands, she acknowledges. But "just because this right is denied to many people," she writes, "doesn't make it any less of a right or any less important."

WEEKEND: FAMILY



Online empowerment

How to help kids thrive in the digital world

By STACEY STEINBERG

Special to The Washington Post

When most of us hand our kids a smartphone, we give them rules for device usage. "Don't go on YouTube," we tell a 6-year-old while we impatiently wait for food at a restaurant. "Don't record me while I'm driving," we remind a 9-year-old on a road trip while he plays with his tablet in the back seat. "Don't post that picture!" we implore our 14-year-old as he shares on Instagram.

Our words over technology tend to focus on what children shouldn't do instead of what they should do. What if we reframed these conversations to empower our kids instead of inhibiting them?

Children need support from caring and involved adults to develop healthy autonomy, says Joy Gabrielli, an assistant professor and clinical child psychologist at the University of Florida. "Full technology restriction may not be the best answer," she says. Instead, we need to provide our kids with age-appropriate opportunities to develop skills for effective and safe technology usage.

Parents and educators want to protect our kids online. The temptation is to do this from a place of fear rather than a place of empowerment. We grew up with chores and classroom expectations, but we weren't exposed to online games and social media news feeds. We learned how to communicate emotions using facial expressions, not emoji. We have no digital parenting road map, and this inexperience often leads to fear, which informs our approach.

Here are some key messages set out by Safer Internet Day, an international campaign that took place in February, to help us find ways to empower our kids to thrive in the online world.

Be kind

Instead of just telling kids not to bully other kids online, talk about ways to be kind. Remind kids that compliments are as powerful via text as they are face to face. In her book "Shame Nation," Internet safety expert Sue Scheff talks about the importance of combating harassment and shame online. "Perhaps the very first place to start," Scheff writes, "is with a renewed emphasis on teaching empathy to our children."

Look for online role models

We spend so much time telling kids whom not to watch on YouTube that we miss powerful opportunities to broaden the circle of influence. But there is often a counterpart positive online role model for every negative one, Gabrielli says. We can steer them in a positive direction by doing research to align their interests with personalities who could foster their growth, instead of putting all our energy into finding out whose videos could harm them. Common Sense Media offers parents a list of vloggers that focus on more positive messages.

Focus on ownership

"When creating or publishing anything digitally, students have the same copyright protection as any other content creators," write Mike Ribble, Gerald Bailey and Tweed Ross, authors of "Digital Citizenship: Addressing Appropriate Technology Behavior." When we think about teaching our kids about their rights, it might be helpful to think about it in a manner that can empower them — instead of saying, "You have no right to use that photo," maybe it's best to frame the lesson as: "That is your image. You have a right to its ownership."

When our teens create digital content, we can prepare them for the possibility that someone might want to use their work without their permission. We can brainstorm the only way this would make them feel but also focus on remedies they can use to get credit for their work.

Industry leaders and policymakers should also play a role

While parents and teachers surely have a role to play in keeping kids safe online, industry leaders also must bear some of the burden. "Responsibility should be shared with all relevant stakeholders involved, including those commercial companies providing platforms and services that are used by children," write Eleonora Maria Mazzoli and Sonia Livingston of the London School of Economics.

As the Federal Trade Commission amps up its efforts to review the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, we can encourage policymakers to strengthen the guardrails protecting kids by giving children safe access to online spaces. This could include ensuring that all kids (not only the ones younger than 13) are protected under COPPA.

Ask for help

Older teens and young adults, who grew up more connected than we did, can help us make the internet safer for kids. We need to invite them into our conversations, hear their concerns and ask them to help us find the gaps between current policy and our children's practices.

This might include holding a spot for teens on corporate advisory boards or inviting young adults to speak about their online experiences to PTA groups and high school students. Kids can educate adults about risks online as well, and by supporting them in identifying these risks, we can promote their safety.

As Anya Kamenetz, an education correspondent at NPR, has written, perhaps kids have not only an interest in going online but also a right to thrive in online spaces. Children are going to explore their online worlds regardless of whether adults are ready for them to be there. It's our job to find ways to make it safe for them.

THE MEAT AND POTATOES OF LIFE

Lisa Smith Molinari



Military spouses are able to beat the odds

Two months into 2020, statistics dictate that most people have already given up on their New Year's resolutions. Sadly, only about 6 or 7 percent who make resolutions attain their goals. I've always been a resolution-maker and a yo-yo dieter, so I am forever making plans to lose 10 pounds, then breaking them.

But one year, I made a resolution that would take me a decade to achieve.

In 2010, our family was stationed in Stuttgart, Germany, where I made a New Year's resolution to submit essays I had written two years prior to newspaper editors. I had written about parenting, marriage and military life to relieve my own stress during my husband's yearlong deployment, and my essays had been sitting in a folder on my computer ever since. "I should finally do something with these," I thought.

I googled how to submit essays to newspaper editors, and flying by the seat of my double-digit-sized pants, I wrote to them and hit send.

In my mind, my goal had been achieved. I had done my research, conquered my fear, and put myself out there. Problem was, my essay got published.

My uncle called from the States two weeks after my submission to tell me that he was reading my essay in The Washington Post. I was stunned. "Now what?" I wondered.

Having struggled with self-confidence most of my life, and having left my legal career to manage our military family, I was so focused on getting over my fear of submitting my writing for scrutiny, I never stopped to think about what I would do if someone actually liked it. I didn't know much about the industry, but I knew that I couldn't waste the unique opportunity The Washington Post byline had given me. So, I continued researching, started a blog, created a column, reached out to other writers, pitched my work to countless editors, read my columns in public, joined writers' groups, and became intimately familiar with the feeling of rejection.

That resolution in 2010 followed its logical course — my original goal to simply submit my writing became my goal to publish an essay, which became my goal to be a columnist, which became my goal to syndicate, and so on and so on, until my goal morphed into one that many Americans have — to publish a book.

I had no business thinking that, just because I wrote a weekly column, I could publish a book. Although electronic self-publishing has made it easier to publish, it's harder to be successful at it. According to Publisher's Weekly, the average book sells less than 500 copies.

Facing these horrendous odds, I forged ahead with my plan to publish a book. Really?

Insane, I'll admit. But not only did I finish my manuscript, I signed a book contract, too.

That 2010 New Year's resolution I made to "put myself out there" took me 10 years to accomplish, but I did it despite every probability against me — a stay-at-home military spouse and mother of three, moving every few years, with no inside contacts and no previous experience in the publishing industry. Other military spouse authors set terrific examples — Corie Waters, Siobhan Falls, Alison Buckholtz, El Brown, Tara Crooks, Rebecca Yarros, Terri Barnes, Kristine Schellhaas and Jocelyn Green, to name only a few.

My book, "The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com," will be released on May 1, one week before Military Spouse Appreciation Day. So apropos, because I credit my accomplishment as a book author to having been a military spouse.

Ours is a unique lifestyle that fosters independence, resourcefulness, determination and guts. I may never lose that 10 pounds, but being a military spouse gave me the skills I needed to beat impossible odds and achieve something precious, rare and meaningful. Of that, I am eternally grateful and proud.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari's columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com
Email: meatandpotatoesoflife@googlemail.com

WEEKEND: CROSSWORD AND COMICS

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

NUMBER THEORY

BY SAM EZERSKY / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Sam Ezersky, 24, is the associate puzzles editor at The Times. A "puzzlehead" since childhood, he sold his first crossword to the paper, a Saturday, when he was 17. His job at The Times includes testing/face-checking the daily Mini crossword and curating the daily digital Spelling Bee. This puzzle started when he noticed a curious property of 26-Across, — W.S.

- ACROSS

1 "Consume it!"

5 Kind of case in grammar

11 Shed some pounds

17 Edited, in a way

19 Sister channel of HBO

20 What the answer at 26-Across is written in

21 Low-level, as a class

22 Question that might be asked when hurrying into a meeting

23 Duty for a property owner

24 Relative of marmalade

26 FIFTEEN

28 Oval Office V.I.P.

29 Transition point

30 Period preceding a school break

34 What the answer at 45-Across is written in

36 "Yes, captain"

40 Gaping opening

41 Willem of "John Wick"

42 Toward the stern

43 Howe'er

44 Chicago mayor

45 ELEVEN
- DOWN

46 Whom Harry Potter frees from serving Draco Malfoy's family

50 Spicy, crunchy snack

53 "Ars Amatoria" writer

54 Area the Chinese call Xizang

55 "Make sense?"

56 Hell

58 Square up with

59 & 60 Take control after a coup

61 SIXTEEN

62 "Just ____ boy, born and raised in South Detroit" (lyric from "Don't Stop Believin'")

63 Specks

64 Sleep: Prefix

65 Not quite right

66 Full of tension

67 "Hallelujah, praise the Lord!"

71 Because

75 TWO

76 Cozy spots to stop

77 Miss in the future, maybe

78 Buz source

79 Cocktail specification

81 Fictitious creature made from slime

82 Restaurant handouts for calorie counters

84 What the answer at 61-Across is written in

86 Final authority

88 Rainbows, e.g.

89 Flour filler

90 & 92 Alternative title for this puzzle

98 On-the-go sort

101 It's SW of Erie, Pa.

103 See 106-Across

104 What the answer at 75-Across is written in

105 Life lessons:

106 With 103-Across, character in Episodes I through IX of "Star Wars"

107 Millennial, informally

108 Things passed between the legs?

109 "Butt out!"
- TEAM

15 Team ____

16 Major Southwest hub, for short

18 In store

19 Like some New Orleans cooking

20 Sloppy

25 Letter in the classical spelling of "Athena"

27 "Here's something that'll help"

29 Some battery ends

31 Amorphous creatures

32 Dreaded musician of the 1960s-'70s

33 Brisk

34 Luxurious affair

35 Symbols of failure

36 1974 Eurovision winner that went on to international stardom

37 "Whoa!"

38 Immature stage of a salamander

39 Letters of credit?

41 Drops on the ground?

42 "Not on ____"

44 Where Wagner was born and Bach died

46 Scatterbrained

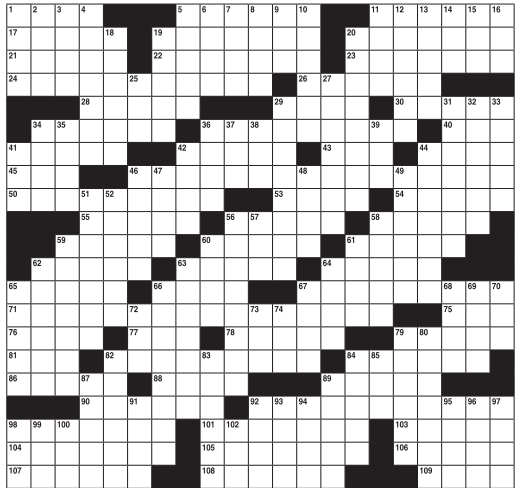
47 Man's name that sounds like two consecutive letters of the alphabet

48 At any time

49 Oktoberfest vessels

51 Some unfair hiring managers

52 "Go ahead," in Shakespeare



- 56 Openly controversial opinions

57 Knock out

58 Invoice directive

59 Like most medical-journal articles

60 High hairstyle

61 Club ____

62 Egypt's "king of the gods"

63 Excellent conductors

64 N.Y.C. neighborhood near No.Ita

65 "Ciao"

66 Put in jeopardy

67 Muscle cars of the '60s

68 Lyrical, as poetry

69 Facetious response to a verbal jab

70 "E.T." actress Wallace

72 "Ugh, stop talking already!"

73 Sack

74 Sun ____ "The Art of War" philosopher

79 Where most of America's gold is mined

80 Like the presidency of John Adams

82 Joint

83 Longtime Eagles QB Donovan

84 Suspect

85 Bible study: Abbr.

87 With a wink

89 Kisses, in Cambridge

91 Brown

92 Bring out for display

93 Candy wrapped in a tube

94 "I'll come to you ____"; Macbeth

95 Fenny-weensy

96 New pedometer reading

97 Beginner, in modern lingo

98 Mammoth

99 Western tribe

100 ____ Salvador

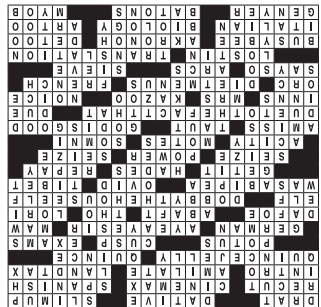
102 What will happily sell its Woolly

GUNSTON STREET



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

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FACES

“I didn’t think I did anything wrong”

Pete Davidson addresses Dan Crenshaw controversy in his new comedy special

By ALLYSON CHIU
The Washington Post

On Nov. 3, 2018, “Saturday Night Live” cast member Pete Davidson mocked Texas Republican Dan Crenshaw, a former Navy SEAL, who lost his eye in an IED explosion while serving his third tour in Afghanistan, for wearing an eye patch. In a “Weekend Update” segment ahead of the midterm elections, Davidson compared Crenshaw to “a hit man in a porno movie,” adding: “I’m sorry. I know he lost his eye in war or whatever.”

A week later, the scene that played out on the “SNL” set was one that fans had probably never seen before. Davidson was sitting next to Crenshaw behind the “Weekend Update” desk — and the comedian was apologizing to the newly elected congressman.

“I made a joke about Lieutenant Commander Dan Crenshaw, and on behalf of the show and myself, I apologize,” said Davidson. He later added: “I mean this from the bottom of my heart. It was a poor choice of words. The man is a war hero, and he deserves all the respect in the world.”

At the time, many viewers thought that the apology was heartfelt and genuine. But in a new Netflix stand-up special released Tuesday, Davidson appeared to take a different stance on the controversy that prompted his surprising mea culpa.

“I didn’t think I did anything wrong,” the 26-year-old said onstage at the Gramercy Theatre in New York. “It was like words that were twisted so that a guy could be famous.”

Davidson dedicated a portion of the roughly hourlong show, titled “Pete Davidson: Alive From

New York,” to addressing the fallout from his joke about Crenshaw, telling the audience he “kind of got forced to apologize” and pushing back against accusations that he helped get the Republican congressman elected.

The deep dive into the November 2018 incident began about halfway through Davidson’s set when he brought up how he often finds himself in trouble, pointing to the Crenshaw backlash as a prime example.

“I made fun of this guy with an eye patch and then I kind of got forced to apologize ‘cause, like, people were threatening to shoot me in the face,” Davidson said, noting that his mother was among the group of people urging him to make amends in light of the death threats.

Davidson went on to explain that he had been tasked with roasting politicians for a segment on “Weekend Update.” After seeing a photo of Crenshaw, who at the time was running for Congress, Davidson said he wrote what he thought was “a harmless joke.”

Then, just moments before going live, Davidson learned about Crenshaw’s past.

“One of my buddies who helped me write it goes, ‘Hey man, I just did some research,’ and I was like, ‘You just did some research now?’” Davidson recalled. “And he’s like, ‘Yeah, that guy Dan Crenshaw? I think he might have lost his eye in a war or something like that.’ And I was like, ‘What?’”

Knowing that Crenshaw may have been injured in combat, Davidson said all he could do was “go out there and try to be mindful.” So he dropped the “hit man” one-liner and followed it with the rushed apology.

The code was made famous by the also-notoriously difficult 1988 shooter game Contra, where the Konami code gave players 30 lives. Contra and Gradius were both arcade games, which means their difficult gameplay was designed to pull quarters out of pockets.

Hashimoto’s sequence made it into numerous other Konami games, and countless other games have included it as a cheat or hidden surprise (called Easter eggs). There are too many to list, but as a recent example, Fortnite’s black hole event last year gave you a shooting game once you inputted the code.

The code’s impact extends beyond gaming. It’s become a common code to find Easter eggs and other tricks on websites like BuzzFeed and Google. It is the top phrase explained in Vox’s explainer for “Easter eggs.” The code has been mentioned in various films and TV shows.



ROSALIND O'CONNOR/NBC

Pete Davidson, shown Oct. 12 during filming of “Saturday Night Live,” says he “kind of got forced to apologize” after cracking jokes about former Navy SEAL Dan Crenshaw in 2018.

“I said, ‘Whatever,’ and people were like, ‘You hate America!’” he said. “No, I just didn’t want to be incorrect about how he lost his ... eye. Is that a ... crime?”

Davidson continued to defend himself, sarcastically apologizing for not having “baseball cards with all of [Crenshaw’s] stats and information.”

But Davidson’s attempt to “be mindful” backfired spectacularly.

The comedian and “SNL” executives weathered intense backlash from both sides of the aisle as politicians, talk show hosts, veterans and others condemned the bit and called for Davidson to apologize.

That demand was met on Nov. 10, 2018, when Crenshaw, who had just won his congressional race, joined Davidson on SNL.

Crenshaw had a chance to throw some zingers at Davidson, including a reference to the comic’s broken engagement with pop singer Ariana Grande. The pair also appeared to share a moment after Crenshaw took time to remember Davidson’s father, a firefighter who died during 9/11.

While Davidson appeared to suggest in the new comedy special that his notable apology wasn’t entirely voluntary, he did issue another mea culpa in response to claims that he was responsible for getting Crenshaw elected.

“I did not make that guy win. That is America’s fault,” Davidson said. “The only thing I did do, which I am guilty of and I apologize for, is I did make that guy famous and a household name for no reason.”

ACMs favor Dan + Shay, Bieber, Morris

Associated Press

Grammy-winning duo Dan + Shay lead the 2020 Academy of Country Music Awards with six nominations for Dan Smeyers and five for Shay Mooney and helped pop star Justin Bieber earn his first-ever ACM noms.

In the nominations announced Thursday, the powerhouse duo share four bids with Bieber for song of the year as both writers and artists, music event of the year and video of the year for their chart-topping crossover duet “10,000 Hours.” Dan + Shay are also nominated for duo of the year and Smeyers is nominated individually as the producer in the music event category.

“10,000 Hours,” released in October, is spending its 20th week on top of Billboard’s Hot country songs chart. So far, it has peaked at No. 4 on the all-genre Hot 100 chart.

Maren Morris scored five nominations including two for album of the year as artist and co-producer for “GIRL,” female artist of the year, music event of the year and group of the year for performing in “The Highwomen,” the supergroup also featuring Brandi Carlile, Amanda Shires and Natalie Hemby. Busbee, Morris’ producer who died suddenly last year, is posthumously nominated for album of the year and producer of the year.

Thomas Rhett earned his first nomination for entertainer of the year — the show’s top prize — as well as nominations for album of the year as artist and co-producer, male artist of the year and video of the year.

Carrie Underwood is the sole female contender in entertainer of the year, alongside Luke Bryan, Eric Church and Luke Combs. Noticeably absent from the nominations was country legend Tanya Tucker, who earned her first two Grammy Awards last month for best country album and best country song after a remarkable comeback year.

The ACM Awards take place April 5.

Clive Cussler, adventure novelist, dies at 88

Clive Cussler, the million-selling adventure writer and real-life thrill seeker who wove personal details and spectacular fantasies into his page-turning novels about underwater explorer Dirk Pitt, has died.

Alexis Welby, spokeswoman for Cussler’s publisher Penguin Random House, says he died Monday at his home in Scottsdale, Ariz. He was 88. The cause was not disclosed.

The Illinois-born Cussler dispatched Pitt and pal Al Giordino on exotic missions highlighted by shipwrecks, treachery, espionage and beautiful women, in popular works including “Cyclops,” “Night Probe” and his commercial breakthrough, “Raise the Titanic!”

Hashimoto, creator of the famous ‘Konami Code,’ dies

By GENE PARK
The Washington Post

Up. Up. Down. Down. Left. Right. Left. Right. B. A. Start. It’s the most famous sequence of button pushes in video game history, and its creator, Kazuhisa Hashimoto, has died. He was 79.

His death is first announced on Twitter by his friend Yui Takenouchi, a sound designer on games including Dark Souls.

The Konami Code was first implemented in shooting game Gradius in 1986, a game that was famous for its difficulty. Hashimoto was responsible for converting the game from arcade to the Nintendo Entertainment System console, but found the game too hard to beat, so he created the code to give himself more lives. When the game shipped, it turned out he forgot to remove the code altogether.

It was more than a video game cheat code. It became a meme among anyone involved with computer software and information technology.

Cheat codes were an early solution to assist players to the still-new medium of video games. It was a catalyst for design decisions on accessibility, and a turning point in how to translate arcade success to home games.

Knowing the code meant you were armed with powerful information. There was no commercial Internet in the 1980s. To know the code, you had to know someone who knew, or at least subscribed to a print magazine that told you how to do it.

Thanks to Hashimoto, it’s now standard practice and worth the effort to punch in his famous sequence of buttons — you never know what you’re going to get. More than 30 years later, it’s the code that keeps on giving.

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OPINION

Trump's comments on virus weren't reassuring

By JONATHAN BERNSTEIN

Bloomberg Opinion

Believe it or not, I was all ready to praise President Donald Trump this time. I really thought when he announced a news conference for Wednesday evening that he would manage to stick to a reasonable script, and there were very promising rumors that he was prepared to make an excellent choice for a new coronavirus czar.

Why? Because so much was on the line for Trump, and what he had to do was so easy. And while he hasn't done it often, and I didn't expect it to last much beyond the initial statement, he has at times managed to read a reasonable speech as written. Surely with the markets in turmoil, and the nation poised on the edge of panic, it would be obvious even to him that this was not the time for airing his grievances, repeating his usual insults, and rambling on like some leader of a banana republic who long since lost touch with reality.

Well, if you watched Trump's press conference, you know I was wrong.

Yes, he used his usual juvenile nicknames and petty insults for the Democrats he's going to have to work with. Yes, he blamed the stock market drop on Monday and Tuesday on — wait for it — the Democratic debate Tuesday night. Yes, he repeatedly blamed his own role in the problem (setting up a potential "Mission Accomplished" moment in the likely event the pandemic spreads in the U.S.) and had administration officials praise him as well. All entirely inappropriate and counterproductive.

But it was worse than that. He was at times barely coherent even for someone who knew what he was trying to say. I can't imagine what it was like for the bulk of the nation, folks who only sometimes pay attention to politics but might have tuned in because they want to be reassured that the government is on top of the problem. He must have been almost completely incomprehensible to them, rambling on about



MANUEL BALCE CENETA/AP

President Donald Trump with Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar, right, and other members of the president's coronavirus task force speaks Wednesday at the White House.

how he had recently discovered that the flu can kill lots of people and referring in a totally oblique way to the budget requests he had made to Congress and their reaction. He occasionally said something that sort of made sense, but mostly Not. Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel's reaction was what I thought: "I found most of what he said incoherent."

At no time over the course of the news conference did Trump supply evidence that he had any idea what he was talking about.

As for the substance? What Trump needed to do was to bring in someone in the White House to be in charge. Asking Vice President Mike Pence to do it wasn't terrible, but it wasn't really a very good choice, either. I'm not very worried about Pence personally; a lot of liberals were taking shots at Pence for his poor record on public health when he was governor of Indiana, but what's important here are political and bureaucratic skills, not subject matter expertise. Pence should have the skill set for the job.

So what's the problem? First, I'm not thrilled with having a vice president lead

the charge. For one thing, Pence has other responsibilities, so he won't be the full-time coordinator that's really needed. But the real problem is having a virus czar who can't be fired and can't credibly threaten to resign — or even to be seen having any separation between himself and the president at all. (That's not really a Trump-specific issue; it's inherent in the job of the vice presidency.) That weakens Trump, and it also weakens Pence as czar. Someone brought in specifically for this job could have been given more authority and would have had a better chance to successfully steamroll the bureaucracy as needed.

Even worse was how Trump talked about him. Trump first buried the announcement at the end of his rambling opening statement. He also at one point said the Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar will still be leading the task force on the coronavirus. Then when asked he denied that Pence was a "czar" — an informal title, but one that connotes authority and the full backing of the president. And then he said everyone would be on the same team, but "they" also were reporting in some cases to both. I'll be going to meetings quite a bit, depending on what they want to do, what message they want to get out." In other words, Trump undercut Pence and muddled the lines of authority right in the announcement of Pence's new responsibilities.

The reason someone is needed in the job is to break down the bureaucracy and coordinate the actions across agencies. For it to work, the czar (or whatever) needs full, clear and consistent backing from the president, something that's not in Trump's nature. It's probable that he'd still did that he could at least have pretended to do so in the original announcement. Nope.

In other words, Trump is still making the situation as risky for himself as possible — and risking real policy failure in responding to real danger to public health.

Bloomberg Opinion columnist Jonathan Bernstein taught political science at the University of Texas at San Antonio and DePaul University.

Democrats essentially have a 3-person race now

By HENRY OLSEN

Special to The Washington Post

Tuesday night's Democratic debate was predictably nasty. But the donnybrook did indirectly narrow the race to a three-person candidates: Sen. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt.; former Vice President Joe Biden; and former New York Mayor Mike Bloomberg.

This was the last debate before the Super Tuesday primaries. Fifteen states and territories will vote that day, awarding about 100 electoral college votes. If a candidate hasn't broken through after that with at least one win and a significant number of delegates, he or she won't have a serious chance to be the nominee absent a deal at a brokered convention.

Polling before the debate showed that only Sanders, Biden and Bloomberg were doing well enough to stay in the race. If a candidate hasn't broken through after that with at least one win and a significant number of delegates, he or she won't have a serious chance to be the nominee absent a deal at a brokered convention.

This means the other candidates needed to land some knockout blows or otherwise stand out from the field to propel them-

selves into the campaign's next stage. None succeeded.

Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., came the closest by reprising her passionate attacks on Bloomberg's record as mayor and as chief executive of his eponymous company. If Democrats are looking for a progressive who is a strong champion of feminist values, she made a good case that she's that person. But it's not clear there are a lot of votes there, and polls show she may not even win her home state next week. She will likely garner some delegates here and there but no big wins.

Former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg tried a different tactic, contrasting himself with Sanders as the choice for moderate Democrats who want to beat President Donald Trump. He was pretty effective in making that case, but his problem is that Biden owns that lane. Buttigieg needs Biden fan him to rise but Biden's strength — and Buttigieg's weakness — among black voters keeps the former VP aloft. Buttigieg was nowhere near first place in any state going into Tuesday night. He was also nowhere near the magic 15% mark in California or Texas, the two states awarding the most delegates on Super Tuesday. And he's not going to surge based on Tuesday night's performance alone.

Klobuchar is another candidate who needed a home run but hit a single. She's even further behind than Buttigieg everywhere except Minnesota and is even more obviously running as the Biden alternative.

She again came off as knowledgeable, studious and serious but remains curiously passionless in most of her exchanges. Her New Hampshire debate moment, which produced the "Klobuchar" that propelled her to third place in that state, was fueled by rare moments where she dropped the careful facade and let her genuine views show. If this were high school, she would clearly be voted "most likely to succeed" but not elected class president. Case closed.

Tom Steyer remains the oddity in this race, a strangely awkward white businessman who nonetheless has connected with a segment of the black community. He did well in black precincts in last Saturday's Nevada caucuses and is polling well among blacks in South Carolina ahead of Saturday's primary. He still remains well behind Biden in that demographic and is far behind fellow progressives Sanders and Warren for support in the party's left wing. He'll likely finish third this weekend, get clobbered on Super Tuesday, and leave the race for good with only a few delegates to show despite spending more than \$200 million.

A week is a long time in politics, and perhaps something will happen to shake up the narrative. But it looks like that for all of the past year's hullabaloo, the contest will come down to three septuagenarians who started the race with name identification or money. Let the real games begin.

Henry Olsen is a Washington Post columnist and a senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center.

OPINION

What newspapers are saying at home

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

A deal with Taliban is a painful price for ending Afghan War
Los Angeles Times

More than 18 years later, President George W. Bush dispatched U.S. forces to Afghanistan to help topple the Taliban government, the U.S. and that Islamist group are on the verge of signing an agreement that the Trump administration hopes will lead to peace, the withdrawal of U.S. troops and reconciliation between Afghanistan's political factions.

If a seven-day period of "reduced violence" that went into effect over last week ends, the agreement—which has been the subject of on-again, off-again negotiations—will be signed Saturday, according to reports out of Washington.

It's possible to welcome this impending agreement—and we do welcome it—and still harbor doubts about whether all of the pieces will fall into place.

Will a deal between the U.S. and the Taliban be quickly followed by substantive negotiations between the Taliban and the government in Kabul, as the Trump administration anticipates? That is far from certain, given divisions within the current Afghan political system.

Can the Taliban be trusted to honor a pledge that, if they regain a measure of power, they won't provide a haven for al-Qaeda, Islamic State and other transnational terrorist groups? (It was because the Taliban government provided a haven for al-Qaida that the U.S. attacked Afghanistan after the Sept. 11 attacks.)

Yet even given these pitfalls, the Trump administration was right to open negotiations with the Taliban and announce that it would reduce the number of U.S. forces in that country, which now number 12,000 (compared to 100,000 at the height of U.S. involvement). The troops now deployed advise local troops and conduct counterterrorism operations, but they remain in harm's way.

Like President Barack Obama before him, President Donald Trump has been torn between a natural aversion to protracted military engagements—what Trump (and others) call "forever wars"—and pleas by military advisers that the U.S. not forfeit the political and financial gains it has achieved in an operation in which more than 2,000 Americans have died.

In 2017 Trump said in an address to the nation that he had reconsidered his original intention to pull U.S. forces out of Afghanistan and suggested that a political settlement involving the Taliban was a remote possibility, conceivable only after an "effective military effort." But later, despite no significant improvement in the security situation, he approved talks with the Taliban. Those negotiations were stalled after Trump overreached and proposed a premature meeting with Taliban leaders at a Pentagon gala last year, a characteristically grandiose gesture that alarmed his national security advisers. Trump abruptly canceled the meeting, citing a bombing in Kabul that killed 12 people, including a U.S. service member, and later declared the "deal" dead.

Now, negotiations are resumed, and rightly so. It doesn't diminish the sacrifice of U.S. troops to recognize that in almost two decades, the U.S. has not achieved the ambitious goals of defeating the Taliban or of ending endemic corruption in Afghanistan. It makes sense to return the focus to justifying the military action, preventing Afghanistan from again becoming



a staging ground for attacks on the U.S.

Phasing out the departure of the remaining troops could provide a measure of leverage for the U.S. over political developments in Afghanistan. But at some point the troops must come home, save perhaps for a small number of intelligence and counterterrorism personnel. Afghanistan has been America's longest war and among its least conclusive. It needs to be brought to a close.

Another sickness: Using health crisis to grandstand
The Wall Street Journal

Federal health officials warned Tuesday that the new coronavirus will spread much more than it has in the U.S., and financial investors continued their repricing down of assets as a result. Equally, all investors, not just politicians, meanwhile, were repricing upward their chances of another burst of new federal spending.

The Trump administration on Monday sent Congress a request for \$2.5 billion in spending to combat the virus that began in China. The government is now spending some \$40 million to \$50 million a month, so the request builds in the expectation of more U.S. cases than the 57 already diagnosed. The White House is seeking up to \$1.5 billion to develop and purchase a potential vaccine. Another quarter-billion dollars could go toward stockpiling protective gear, from masks to biohazard suits. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention would get the rest to cover testing, repatriating and quarantining Americans who test positive with the disease.

Cue the inevitable gripes from Congress that this isn't nearly enough. Speaker Nancy Pelosi called the request "long overdue and completely inadequate." Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer called the administration's proposal to tap some of the money from an Ebola preparedness account an example of President Donald Trump's "lowering incompetence." Senate Appropriations Chairman Richard Shelby, a Republican, worried that the White House was "lowballing" the emergency.

We'd take these complaints seriously if they were based on any expertise or factual understanding of the threat. Instead, they're ritualized gripes intended to set up the president to make the bill a blowout and dare Trump to veto virus funds. The Schumer-Pelosi gambit is to load up the supplemental bill with other health spending, whether for state grants, federal research funds, or even aid for Puerto Rico's disaster survivors.

Schumer wants to attach a \$3.1 billion demand with little tangible basis, a tacit acknowledgment of the difficulty of spending on a potential pandemic of unknown severity. If the virus proves more serious or longer-lasting, Congress will have many chances to spend more.

This is the same game Congress played in 2014 when it ultimately appropriated

\$5.4 billion amid the Ebola panic. Most of that money went to fight Ebola abroad and develop a vaccine and drugs for treatment. Yet Democrats are now objecting to the White House plan to shift some \$500 million of unused Ebola funds to fight the coronavirus. The administration deserves credit for trying to reallocate that money to the more urgent threat.

Asked about this criticism while visiting New Delhi, Trump said that if he had requested more money Democrats would have said it was too much. He has a point, though one guesses that Democrats are preparing the ground to blame the administration if the coronavirus spreads. Alas, there is no cure for cynicism in the service of pork-barrel politics.

Sanders' expensive universal child care plan a nonstarter
The Washington Post

Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders criticizes Democrats for lacking the courage to think big. But it takes no courage to promise impossible levels of new spending and propaganda on a mix of organizations—and it takes courage to level with voters. Sanders' rivals for the Democratic presidential nomination have done far better at that.

Fresh off a big win in the Nevada caucuses, he released on Monday his latest massive spending proposal, a plan to entangle all Americans to get child care. It is similar to the universal child care plans that Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., and former South Bend, Ind., Mayor Pete Buttigieg previously rolled out, except it would cost more than twice as much.

Each candidate's plan would provide universal access to child care. Each would cost \$700 billion over a decade, and Sanders' \$1.5 trillion. What's the big difference? In large part, it is that Sanders would make government-sponsored child care free to all, even the wealthiest of families. Warren and Buttigieg would ask families that could afford to pay something to do so.

The Warren plan, for example, would offer free services for those who make up to twice the poverty level—or about \$50,000 for a family of four. Everyone else would pay something, their contribution determined on a sliding scale based on their income, though no family would have to pay more than 2% of its income.

Sanders says he can pay for his unnecessarily expensive approach with money he would raise from his proposed wealth tax. But economists calculate a gap of \$1 trillion or more between what his wealth tax would raise and what he claims it would raise. Given the massive shifts in taxation that Sanders is already proposing, meeting

the shortfall with additional taxes would be extremely hard. Even if Sanders led a political revolution that reshaped Congress, making his plans more politically viable, the country does not have an unlimited supply of money that can be diverted into the federal treasury without consequences for economic growth. True progressives recognize that if Sanders' money is scarce and must be spent carefully with the poorest first in line, so that many needs can be met.

Sanders presents himself as the only one who really cares about issues such as health care, climate change and pre-K. But other credible candidates, not Sanders, are treating these candidates with the seriousness they deserve.

Weinstein verdict offers some hope for sex-assault victims
The New York Times

What does the hard-won, long-overdue conviction of Harvey Weinstein deliver?

It shows how difficult it can be to bring abusers to justice, particularly when they are wealthy and powerful. It shows how much the #MeToo movement has changed American life. And it shows how far society still has to go.

Weinstein was convicted on Monday of a felony sex crime and rape in the third degree but was acquitted of the most serious counts against him, predatory sexual assault. He is headed for at least five years in prison. That's a victory for Weinstein's victims.

But the Weinstein case shows the obstacles presented by the American legal system to successfully prosecuting abusers. The case, tried in a Manhattan courtroom, rested on testimony from just six women out of the more than 90 who have accused Weinstein of sexual misconduct. (He also faces charges of sexual harassment, raping a woman and groping and masturbatory in front of another.) It took decades of pressure by survivors, advocates, journalists and law enforcement to call Weinstein to account before the law. In 2015, Cyrus Vance Jr., the Manhattan district attorney, declined to prosecute credible allegations against Weinstein. Vance acted years later only after dozens of women went public with their allegations.

Weinstein's prosecutors were able to break through a barrier common to many assault cases, a lack of physical or other evidence. And they also overcame another, even more fundamental barrier: basic mistrust of women alleging sexual assault. Women have internalized that message of mistrust. Despite the far-reaching message of #MeToo, a vast majority of sexual assault victims never report violence to police. And even if they do, they have been conditioned to feel ashamed, although the assault was their fault; those who know it wasn't still have little faith in a criminal justice system that routinely disregards the testimony of victims.

If a more balanced legal approach to sexual assault can be developed, the norm instead of the exception, then, for a start, the law needs to change. State statutes of limitations need to be extended or eliminated to give victims the opportunity to come forward even years after a traumatic assault. Enforcement needs to change as well. Law enforcement needs to be trained to let women know that they will be listened to, and that their cases will be prosecuted quickly and thoroughly.

Weinstein's lead lawyer said her client was simply "a target of a cause and of a movement." That's correct—if the cause is the #MeToo movement, and if the movement is the national shift in consciousness over these crimes that arose in large part out of the revelation of Weinstein's behavior. So his conviction, too, stands for something larger: that some measure of justice can be attained, and with it the balance of power between sexual predators and their victims can begin to shift.

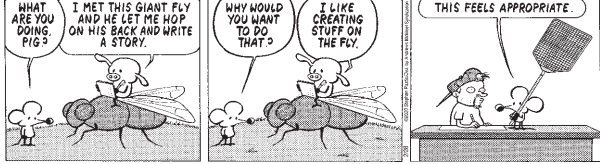
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Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



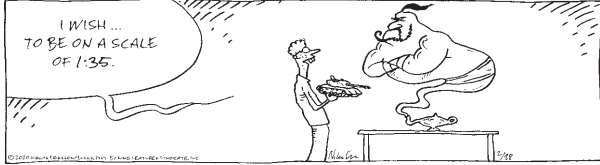
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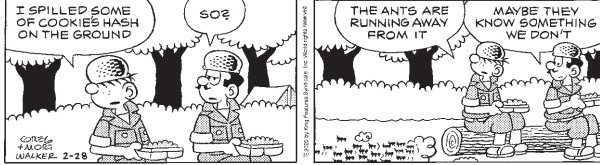
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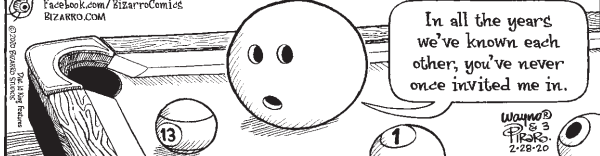
Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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41					42	43				44	45	
46					47					48		
49					50					51		

ACROSS

- Drenched
- Hawaiian Island
- Actress Perlman
- "As I see it," to a text
- Melodies
- Morays
- Mexican pancake
- Sprint
- Auction signals
- Lauder of cosmetics
- Union foes
- Two-wheeler
- "The Da Vinci"
- Scams
- "I love," to Livy
- Nullifies
- Notable time
- "No worries ..."
- Jail for a sailor
- Capri, for one
- Ball-rolling game
- Famed restaurant guide
- Gymnast Korbust
- Winged
- Fraud
- collada
- Dross
- Single
- Droops
- Rembrandt works
- Filch

DOWN

- Humorist
- Punk-rock subgenre
- Hotel workers
- Feels unwell
- Web address
- "This — test"
- It had a big part in the Bible
- Miami team
- Differently
- Tennis champ Arthur
- Fit — tied (irate)
- Heart charts (Abbr.)
- Cicatrix
- Arrive
- Idaho's capital
- Race place
- Furnace fuel
- 16th-century cartographer
- Idle of Monty Python
- Wise one
- Bulletproof garment
- Prom queen toppers
- Marshy areas
- Online journals
- Microwaves
- Others (Lat.)
- Jets or Sharks
- October birthstone
- Equal (Pref.)
- Roman 1051
- Music's Yoko
- Civil War soldier

Answer to Previous Puzzle

N	A	T	O	T	A	M	S	H	O	W
E	B	O	N	W	P	A	T	E		
A	B	B	A	E	E	R	A	N	T	S
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2-28

CRYPTOQUIP

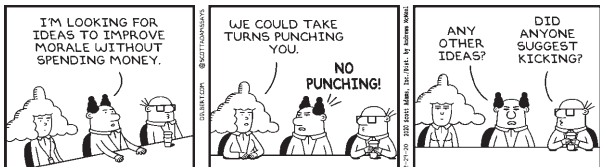
TL SPBRP NS YRVMJPR SJN
KTUJTB UJVLNTNTRM, T
HPRMJYR VLETRLN ERKNT
HPTRMNM JMRB BPJTB
SJLERM.

Yesterday's Cryptoquip: COMPANY PHONE AGENTS FIELDING CALLS FROM HIGHLY EDGY PEOPLE: CUSTOMER NERVOUS REPRESENTATIVES. Today's Cryptoquip Clue: P equals R

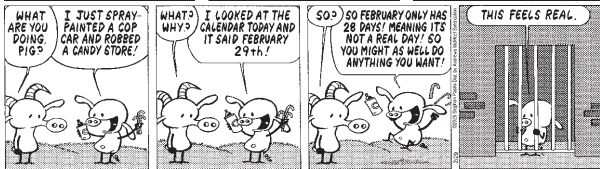
Frazz



Dilbert



Pearls Before Swine



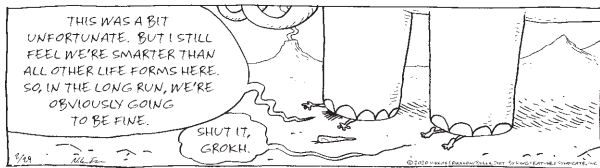
Non Sequitur



Candorville



Carpe Diem



Beetle Bailey



Bizarro



Eugene Sheffer Crossword

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51					52					53			
54					55					56			

ACROSS

- "Pygmalion" writer
- Gilbert, creator of CBS's "The Talk"
- 9 Pep
- 12 Vocal quality
- 13 — Bator
- 14 Docs' org.
- 15 Annapolis sch.
- 16 Pleads
- 17 Pouch
- 18 Toucan feature
- 19 Favorite
- 20 Hot
- 21 Ecol. watchdog
- 23 Suitable
- 25 Magic potion
- 28 Building beam
- 32 Jousting weapon
- 33 Major artery
- 34 At work
- 36 Wanting
- 37 — Paulo
- 38 Gear tooth
- 39 Spouse
- 42 "Gosh!"
- 44 Author Bellow
- 48 Garden tool
- 49 — luck (accidental success)
- 50 Pakistan's language
- 51 Mineral suffix
- 52 Cookbook author

- 53 Borodin's "Prince —"
- 54 Cowboy's sweetie
- 55 Men-only
- 56 Honky- —

- 22 Michelangelo masterpiece
- 24 Steinway product
- 25 "Evil Woman" gp.
- 26 PC linking system
- 27 Ky. neighbor
- 29 Dr. of hip-hop
- 30 Paris summer
- 31 "Way cool!"
- 35 Dairy case buy
- 36 Headache aid
- 39 Fillmore, for one
- 40 Tiny bit
- 41 Sense
- 43 Austen novel
- 45 Golden
- 46 Japanese noodle
- 47 Hide in the bushes
- 49 Insult, slangily

DOWN

- 1 Ticket half
- 2 Nozzle site
- 3 Author Quindlen
- 4 Unconvincing alibi
- 5 Inferior
- 6 Downwind
- 7 Unkept
- 8 Reply (Abbr.)
- 9 Bud holder
- 10 Big-screen format
- 11 "Pleasantville" star William H. —
- 20 Special talent

Answer to Previous Puzzle

W	E	T	M	A	U	I	R	H	E	A
I	M	O	A	I	R	S	E	E	L	S
T	O	R	T	I	L	L	A	D	A	S
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C	O	D	E		C	O	N	G	A	M
A	M	O		V	O	I	D	S	E	R
R	E	S	T	E	A	S		B	R	I
Z	A	G	A	T		O	L	G	A	
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S	A	G	S		O	I	L	S		R

2-29

CRYPTOQUIP

O I Y X H F X S U X E I B O N V
X V S K J F X V M N T J K K
N F F X U X H V N K F N L T H Y
V H U W X V M R J U B K J E R I Y X V M :
N B K I I O L I N Y .

Yesterday's Cryptquip: IN ORDER TO MEASURE OUT LIQUID QUANTITIES, I PRESUME ANCIENT CELTIC PRIESTS USED DRUID OUNCES.

Today's Cryptquip Clue: U equals T



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The collage displays several Stars and Stripes website pages, including:

- Veterans**: Article titled "How far along is the research to help veterans with PTSD?"
- Branches**: Article titled "Branches receiving from Trump's top defense priorities, according to DOD sources"
- Pacific Travel**: Article titled "Pacific Region offers all the opportunities and food a commander could want"
- Europe Sports**: Article titled "Rumors hold off Wimbledon to finish next on high note"
- Vietnam 1966**: A large graphic with the text "VIETNAM 1966" and "50" below it, accompanied by a photo of a soldier.
- Protests increase**: Article titled "Protests increase strategy concerns"

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MLS



CHRIS O'MEARA/AP

Inter Miami FC's Robbie Robinson, left, and the Tampa Bay Rowdies' Forrest Lasso battle for control of the ball during the first half of a preseason friendly on Feb. 22 in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Beckham's Miami team ready after seven years

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Used to bending free kicks for goals, David Beckham was not prepared for seven years of twists en route to his team's Major League Soccer debut this weekend.

"This I always knew was going to be a challenge. I didn't realize how big of a challenge it was going to be," the former England captain said Wednesday. "When we announced seven years ago, I thought it would take one or two years and we'll be playing in the league. We'll have a stadium. We'll have great players. But it took slightly longer than that."

Inter Miami opens its first season on Sunday at Los Angeles FC, joining the league along with Nashville as MLS expands to 26 teams. After a match at D.C. United on March 7, Inter plays its home opener March 14 against the LA Galaxy — not in Miami but at an 18,000-capacity, \$120 million venue and training complex built over about 10 months in Fort Lauderdale on the site of old Lockhart Stadium.

"There were moments where I looked and I thought this might not happen," said Beckham, the team's co-owner and president of soccer operations. "The biggest lesson is I'm more persistent than I thought I was and I'm more stubborn than my wife thinks I am."

Now 44, Beckham won six Premier League titles and the 1999 Champions League while



RICHARD DREW/AP

Co-owner David Beckham considers Inter Miami's legacy.

playing with Manchester United from 1992 to 2003, then added a La Liga championship while with Real Madrid. He joined MLS with the Galaxy from 2007-12, winning two titles and boosting the league's profile as part of a deal that gave him the right to buy an expansion team at a discounted price of \$25 million.

After detouring twice to AC Milan on loans during his time with the Galaxy, he finished his playing career with a Ligue 1 championship with Paris Saint-Germain in 2013.

A jet-setter married to a former Spice Girl, Beckham decided in 2013 on Miami as his preferred site for his team, and MLS made the announcement in February 2014. But the launch repeatedly was put off while the team was

stymied in its search for a stadium site.

"I'm obviously not from Miami. I'm from East London," Beckham said. "So me going to Miami, trying to buy a piece of land, talk to the politicians, wasn't actually getting us anywhere, funnily enough."

Jorge and Jose Mas of the telecommunications company MasTec Inc. were added to the ownership group in December 2017, with Jorge becoming the managing owner.

MLS awarded the team the following month, and it was named Inter Miami in September 2018 — the name was picked because owners view Miami as a diverse, global city. Still, it took until March 2019 for the team to say it would start play in 2020 in Fort Lauderdale, where the Strikers of the North American Soccer League were based from 1977-83 and Miami's first MLS team, the Fusion, played from 1998 to 2001 before getting retooled.

A proposed long-term home at Miami's Freedom Park still awaits political and legal approvals and a hoped-for 2022 opening could be pushed back to at least 2023.

Beckham has watched his team train this week and looks forward to its first competitive match. He hopes his ownership will be remembered as much as his playing days.

"I want a legacy in the game," he said. "I want to be able to create a legacy that my children can turn around in 20 years and say, 'My dad built this club.'"

Owners: League will surpass MLB, Premier League

BY RONALD BLUM
Associated Press

NEW YORK — Three days ahead of the Major League Soccer's 25th season, owners, executives and players gathered for a day of unbridled optimism and hypebole.

Los Angeles FC lead owner Larry Berg predicted MLS will surpass Major League Baseball in popularity during the next 10 years and Inter Miami managing owner Jorge Mas maintained it will be of higher quality than the Premier League and La Liga by 2045.

MLS anticipates soccer's status in the U.S. will be boosted when the Americans co-host the 2026 World Cup with Mexico and Canada.

"We definitely have the demographics in our favor, both in terms of youth and diversity. So I think we'll pass baseball and hockey and be the No. 3 sport in the U.S. behind football and basketball," Berg said Wednesday at the league's kickoff event.

MLS expanded to 26 teams this season with the addition of David Beckham's Inter Miami and Nashville, and plans are in place to reach 30 franchises by 2022 — triple the league's low from 2002-04. The league has increasingly attracted better players from South America, and Berg called youth academies the league's "crown jewel."

"The academies will be pumping out just incredible talent, which will help both the league and the U.S. men's national team such that we will vault way past Liga MX and the U.S. men's national team will vault way past Mexico, and then it will come down to the media deals... Whether we can be a top-five league or a top-three league will really come down at the end of the day to money, our ability to compete for players."

"I think the good news is players want to play here," Berg added. "We're the United States of America. People want to live

DID YOU KNOW?

Charlotte, one of two MLS franchises that will debut next season, paid a \$325 million expansion fee. The original teams that started play 25 seasons ago paid just \$5 million each.

SOURCE: Associated Press

here. It's an incredible lifestyle. The infrastructure is fantastic."

Mas partnered with Beckham, the former England captain, and envisioned the league's 50th year in 2045.

"I think the MLS will be one of the top sports leagues in the United States. I think it will be on par or exceed the best leagues in the world, the Premier League or Serie A or La Liga worldwide," Mas said. "I think that the MLS 25 years from now will be Premier League-ish if we want to so-call it that on the metrics that leagues are measured by."

Clark Hunt, CEO of MLS' Dallas team and the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs, compared soccer's progress in the U.S. to that of the NFL, which celebrated its 100th anniversary this season.

"The momentum that we have I think has a chance to take us to where the NFL is today," he said.

Austin, Texas, and Charlotte, N.C., join the league next year, followed by St. Louis and Sacramento, Calif.

Charlotte, announced in December, agreed to pay a \$325 million expansion fee. The original teams that started play in 1996 paid \$5 million each.

Detroit, Las Vegas and Phoenix remain on contract with the league, which also is monitoring efforts in San Diego. More warm-weather cities would help the schedule early and late in the year.

"We have no plan in place to go past 30," MLS Commissioner Don Garber said. "It's conceivable that in time we might look at a larger league to be able to address some of those challenges."



RICHARD DREW/AP

Major League Soccer Commissioner Don Garber speaks during the 25th season kickoff event in New York on Wednesday

SWIMMING/NHL/SOCCER



ANDREW MEDICHINI/AP

South African swimmer Chad Le Clos trains in Naples, Italy on Wednesday. Le Clos thinks Chinese swimmer Sun Yang should be banned and "I should get my gold medal back from Rio."

Le Clos seeks Sun Yang's gold

South African thinks Chinese swimmer should be banned, but odds are against it

By ANDREW DAMPE

Associated Press

NAPLES, Italy — Chad le Clos believes he has a claim on Sun Yang's gold medal from the Rio de Janeiro Olympics, with a verdict due Friday on the Chinese swimmer's latest doping case.

"He should be banned. It's as simple as that," Le Clos said in an interview with The Associated Press this week. "Anyone who tests positive should be banned. I should get my gold medal back from Rio."

"Not for the moment. I lost that. I don't really care about that," Le Clos added on Wednesday. "It's just for my record. If I break my leg and I can't swim again I want my record to say, 'Two individual golds, two individual silvers.' Because that's what it should be."

Le Clos' Olympic record currently contains one gold medal and three silvers — including a second-place finish to Sun in the 200-meter freestyle at the 2016 Games.

Odds are, though, that Sun won't lose any Olympic titles when the Court of Arbitration for Sport issues its ruling in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Swimmers set for championships

By IMMANUEL JOHNSON

Stars and Stripes

GRAFENWOHR, Germany — Hundreds of American schooled swimmers will converge on the Netherlands this weekend for the European Forces Swim League season-ending championships in Rindhoven.

Organized by the Kaiserslautern Kingfish, the event will fea-

The case centers on Sun's alleged refusal to provide blood and urine in September 2018 in a visit by sample collectors to his home in China. During the late-night confrontation, a security guard used a hammer to smash a container holding Sun's blood as the swimmer lit the scene with his mobile phone.

The World Anti-Doping Agency appealed after swimming federation FINA merely warned Sun and cited doubts about credentials shown by three sample collection officials.

A three-time Olympic champion, Sun could be banished from the sport for up to eight years but any ban likely won't be backdated before September 2018 — meaning all of his Olympic medals seem safe.

But there's also the fact that international swimming authorities worked to protect Sun from being banned, according to a Swiss supreme court decision.

FINA has faced criticisms in the past for favoring Sun during his career. It did not announce Sun's three-month ban for doping imposed by Chinese authorities until after it ended in 2014.

There are 136 races scheduled. Each swimmer can compete in as many as eight individual events and two relay races.

Swimming isn't a sport among DODEA Europe schools. But some high school students can still earn a letter if they meet specific requirements set by DODEA.

Blues' Buwmeester ruled out for rest of season, playoffs

By WARREN MAYES

Associated Press

ST. LOUIS — St. Louis Blues defenseman Jay Buwmeester has been ruled out from returning to play in the regular season or in the playoffs.

General manager Doug Armstrong made the announcement on Wednesday.

In a news conference at the Enterprise Center, Buwmeester spoke to reporters for the first time since he collapsed on the bench in the first period during a game at the Anaheim Ducks on Feb. 11.

"It was a scary thing, but its been going pretty good lately," he said. "We'll continue to evaluate things as it goes. I'm at the point now where I feel pretty good."

Armstrong discussed Buwmeester's status for the remainder of this season.

"To clarify, Jay and I have both spoken over the last week or so," Armstrong said. "We both understand that he won't participate in the regular season or playoffs for us. We've talked about longer-term things that may or may not happen, but we both feel, it's February. We don't have to make long-term decisions at this point. He's going to take time, get back in with his family and be around the team and he'll address those things as the summer progresses."

Buwmeester said there was no warning anything was about to happen.

"Everything up to that point was normal," Buwmeester said. "I hadn't been sick, or had much going on. It was completely out of the blue."

Buwmeester said he's been

moved by the response he has received from people.

"The outreach and support people have shown has been pretty overwhelming," Buwmeester said. "The people that were around at the time, as well as my dad being there on the trip, there were a lot of things that were absolute best-case scenario. He was able to relay information and that was extremely helpful to everyone."

"It's all been so humbling. It's a small world. People really do care."

The 36-year-old Edmonton native was hospitalized at the UC Irvine Medical Center in Orange County, Calif., and spent five nights in the hospital. Buwmeester had a cardioverter defibrillator implanted into his chest. It is a device that monitors heart function. It also can deliver a shock to the heart if an arrhythmia happens to restore a regular heartbeat.

"I'm at the point now that I feel pretty good," Buwmeester said. "The weird thing about this whole thing is you go from something that happened totally out of the blue and unexpected to being in the hospital for a couple of days. Now there are some restrictions as to what I can do. But I feel pretty good. That's a good thing."

Buwmeester said he hasn't thought about his future in the sport.

"There's been a lot going on. I think that's something that I'm definitely going to have to evaluate," Buwmeester said. "To say I've done that, I wouldn't say I've done that fully yet. There's decisions I'm going to have to make. That will come later."

NHL scoreboards

Eastern Conference

Atlantic Division									
Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	SW	OTL
Boston	64	39	12	9	84	222	193		
Tampa Bay	63	40	18	5	85	224	175		
Toronto	64	31	25	8	74	224	213		
Florida	63	33	24	6	72	219	213		
Montreal	65	29	27	6	69	197	199		
Buffalo	63	29	26	8	66	184	196		
Ottawa	64	21	31	12	54	169	219		
Detroit	65	16	4	34	13	131	244		

Metropolitan Division

Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	SW	OTL
Washington	63	37	19	6	80	202	170		
Pittsburgh	62	37	19	6	80	202	170		
Philadelphia	64	33	25	6	72	210	184		
N.Y. Islanders	62	36	20	7	77	179	168		
Columbus	65	31	24	14	76	170	171		
Carolina	63	32	27	4	74	202	175		
N.Y. Rangers	63	24	24	14	72	207	191		
New Jersey	62	25	27	10	60	177	211		

Western Conference

Central Division									
Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	SW	OTL
St. Louis	64	37	17	10	84	206	179		
Chicago	62	37	18	7	81	215	168		
Dallas	63	37	20	6	80	171	160		
Nashville	62	31	23	7	70	198	196		
Winnipeg	65	32	27	6	70	196	195		
Minnesota	62	30	25	7	67	191	201		
Chicago	63	27	28	8	62	187	203		

Pacific Division

Team	GP	W	L	OT	Pts	GF	GA	SW	OTL
Vegas	64	34	22	6	78	211	196		
Vancouver	62	34	22	6	74	207	190		
Edmonton	64	33	23	8	74	201	199		
Calgary	64	33	23	8	72	192	194		
Arizona	66	31	27	8	70	182	176		
Anaheim	65	32	30	8	68	165	200		
San Jose	65	26	33	4	56	161	204		
Los Angeles	63	25	33	5	55	167	204		

Note: Two points for a win, one point for overtime loss. Top three teams in each division and two wild card teams advance to playoffs.

Colorado 3, Buffalo 2
Vegas 3, Edmonton 1
Los Angeles 2, Pittsburgh 1

Thursday's games
Chicago at Tampa Bay
Dallas at Boston
N.Y. Rangers at Montreal
Toronto at Florida
Minnesota at Detroit
Vancouver at Ottawa
Calgary at Nashville
N.Y. Islanders at St. Louis
Washington at Winnipeg
New Jersey at San Jose

Friday's games
Minnesota at Colorado
N.Y. Rangers at Philadelphia
Colorado at Carolina
Buffalo at Vegas
Pittsburgh at Anaheim
San Jose at Columbus

Saturday's games
Boston at N.Y. Islanders
Carolina at Montreal
New Jersey at Los Angeles
Chicago at Florida
Carolina at Montreal
Detroit at Toronto
Buffalo at Arizona
Colorado at Nashville
Dallas at St. Louis
Winnipeg at Edmonton
Pittsburgh at San Jose

Sunday's games
Philadelphia at N.Y. Rangers
Calgary at Florida
Vancouver at Columbus
Washington at Minnesota
New Jersey at Anaheim
Los Angeles at Vegas

Soccer might be played without fans

Associated Press

MILAN — Inter Milan coach Antonio Conte probably won't have to sit through a torrent of boos when he returns to Turin for the first time to face former club Juventus.

That's because there could be no fans there to see it.

The Derby d'Italia, one of the season's biggest matches, might be played in an empty stadium on Sunday because of the virus outbreak in northern Italy. The epicenter of the outbreak is in the Lombardy region, and Milan is its capital.

"I hope that from today there will be a regression in the diffusion of the virus so that I, too, can go see Juventus-Inter," said Attilio Fontana, the governor of the Lombardy region. "We're monitoring the situation. I'm very calm. We need to see what the situation is. It's the same as for the schools. We'll do a check Saturday and then we'll see."

Four Serie A matches scheduled for last weekend were postponed, including Inter's match against Sampdoria. Italy has the most cases of the virus in Europe.

Serie A president Paolo Dal Pinto sent a letter to the government on Monday asking that games no longer be postponed in the affected areas but played without fans in attendance, something which Sports

Minister Vincenzo Spadafora said they were in agreement with.

However, no official decree has been made by the Turin council and Serie A's governing body has also yet to release a statement, giving rise to the hope fans could be allowed in.

Italy had 447 virus cases as of Wednesday. Twelve people have died, all of them elderly or suffering from other ailments, or both.

Italy has closed schools, museums and theaters in the two hardest hit regions and troops are enforcing quarantines around 10 towns in Lombardy and the epicenter of the Veneto cluster, Veneto/Euganeo.

The three biggest soccer leagues in Asia have gone into recess, as the governments of China, South Korea and Japan try to contain the fallout of the rapidly spreading virus. The surge of postponements of sports events has spread from China, where the outbreak started, to South Korea and Japan.

Japan's professional baseball league says it will play its 72 remaining preseason games in empty stadiums because of the threat of the spreading coronavirus. The regular season is to open on March 20.

"This was a bitter decision to make," Commissioner Atsushi Saito was quoted as saying. "Because we can't determine the situation, I won't say anything right now about playing today." If possible, we all want to go ahead on March 20.

OLYMPICS/COLLEGE BASKETBALL



ROMAN KOKSAROV/AP

The United States' Emily Sweeney speeds down the track during a women's race at the Luge World Cup event in Sigulda, Latvia on Jan. 25. She's said she's shutting down her season to allow her body to rest. Two years ago, she broke her back in a crash at the PyeongChang Olympics.

As luge season winds down, USA's Sweeney looks ahead

By TIM REYNOLDS
Associated Press

Luge's World Cup campaign ends this weekend in Germany, where most of the best 100 sliders in the sport will be looking to close their international seasons on a high note.

Emily Sweeney may be among them.

Her season ended a couple weeks ago, on her terms.

The USA Luge veteran is officially two years into her recovery from a crash at the Pyeongchang Olympics that she walked away from — even with a broken neck and broken back — and two years away, she hopes, from being a medal contender at the Beijing Games. She decided to listen to her body and step away from the frantic end of the season, heading home instead to meet her sister's new baby and formulate a plan for her offseason.

Here's what she has learned: Fractures heal, but everything else takes time. So while her body still betrays her from time to time on the track, an additional focus on the mental game is what Sweeney hopes will get her to the medal podium in Beijing in 2022.

"I am very comfortable about thinking about my weaknesses because I failed so much early on," Sweeney said. "I didn't make two Olympic teams right in a row. I constantly had to look at myself and say 'What's wrong? What am I not like?' I had to be creative with my training and with the whole process. And so, I think I'm pretty comfortable with challenges."

That's why, this season, when she felt like her body couldn't do it anymore, she simply went

DID YOU KNOW?

Emily Sweeney won a bronze medal at the 2019 World Championships in Winterberg, Germany, just a year after breaking her back in a crash at the 2018 Winter Games in PyeongChang, South Korea.

SOURCE: teamusa.org

home. The decision was not easy: Her team is still competing, she has plenty of friends on the circuit and her longtime boyfriend — Italian star Dominik Fischnaler — is a serious contender to win the men's World Cup overall title. But a setback right now could throw a serious wrench into her Olympic plans. The problem was pressure, not in the sense of what's comes with the prospects of winning or losing in competition, but the massive gravitational force that sliders feel and fight through when they are on the ice at speeds often topping 80 mph. It takes tremendous strength, and Sweeney's neck still isn't always up to the challenge. So, with wear and tear of the season taking a toll, she headed home.

"It's not a question of if I'm good enough," said Sweeney, who won a bronze medal at last season's world championships — cementing her status as one of the fastest women on ice. "I see it in my splits. I would have first-place splits, then get to the pressure and I ended up 15th. I just couldn't keep going through this cycle of pushing it, pushing it, pushing it and then losing all my speed as soon as I can't hold my head up anymore."

So she's working on her body and her mind. Sweeney is one of the most upbeat sliders on the luge circuit, always smiling, always happy, and most of the time her good mood is genuine. After the crash, however, the good mood wasn't always there and it took Sweeney some time to realize that there was more wrong than just the fractures in her neck and back.

"I went into a depression," Sweeney said. "It's weird saying that. But it feels foreign to me to say I broke my neck and my back two years ago. And it feels dramatic to say, which I guess I need to just get more comfortable with that. But I think that just the way I was raised was like, 'All right, brush it off and move on.' And that's why I think I appear a lot of times like it's just sunshine and rainbows, but this one forced me to stop. But you have to. And the alternative is to stay at that low and that just becomes miserable."

From therapy came a plan: Do one thing a day to feel better toward the ultimate goal of medaling in 2022.

Most days, she succeeds. When Sweeney is right, especially in sprint events, few women in the world have a chance of catching her. Her sliding career is peaking. Her mental game, she thinks, is catching up. And now she's got two years to put the whole package together.

"Being an Olympian was my dream since I was 7 years old," Sweeney said. "And then I became an Olympian, and I said, 'Well, that's not enough. I want a medal.'"

No. 10 Creighton has first Big East title in its sights

By ERIC OLSON
Associated Press

OMAHA, Neb. — A season that started with low expectations could finish at unprecedented heights for Creighton.

The 10th-ranked Bluejays are one of the hottest teams in the nation heading into their final three regular-season games. They've knocked off four Top 25 opponents while winning nine of their last 10. They sit one game behind first-place Seton Hall in the Big East.

"Right now, we've put the pieces together, we're playing connected," guard Mitch Balllock said. "When we do that, we have the ability to skyrocket."

The Bluejays (22-6, 11-4) came into the season picked seventh in the 10-team Big East, and with two projected starters out for the year because of injuries. Since a 1-3 stretch in January, they've been nearly unstoppable.

Creighton, which didn't appear in The Associated Press Top 25 until Jan. 13, has its highest ranking since it was No. 7 in 2017. The Bluejays are No. 8 in the NCAA's latest NET rankings, and their nine Quad 1 wins trail only Kansas, Baylor and Seton Hall. Most NCAA bracket projections list them as a No. 3 seed.

"It definitely puts a target on your back and you're going to get everybody's best shot," 10th-year coach Greg McDermott said. "At this stage of the season and in our league, you have so many teams fighting for seeding and for an NCAA bid, you're going to get everybody's best shot any way."

Balllock, Marcus Zegarowski and Ty-Shon Alexander rank in the top five in Big East three-point shooting, each making 40% or better in an offense that thrives in transition. Damien Jefferson, the fourth guard, stuffs the stat sheet

with his versatility. The 6-foot-7 Christian Bishop, who was forced into the center's role out of necessity, has become a major factor. Another weapon was added when transfer Denzel Mahoney became eligible in December.

"No one cares who scores. No one cares who does what," Zegarowski said. "We just want to win and play for each other. That's the system coach McDermott has made for us."

Unselfishness is the main characteristic of the team, McDermott said.

The Bluejays lead the Big East with 15.3 assists per game. Balllock has 85 assists to go with his team-high 84 three-pointers. Alexander has 42 assists against just 13 turnovers in 15 Big East games. Zegarowski averages a team-leading five assists to go with his 16.1 points per game.

Alexander not only is the team's leading scorer (16.9 ppg), he's usually tasked with defending the opponent's best player. He shut down star Markus Hovins for long stretches in two wins over Marquette, and he leads the Bluejays in steals.

"If there's a better two-way guard in this league," McDermott said, "I don't know who it is."

Next up is Sunday's game at St. John's. Win there, and the Bluejays would return home for their final two games against Georgetown and Seton Hall with a chance to win the Big East regular-season title for the first time since they entered the league seven years ago.

Balllock said it makes no sense to dwell on the ultimate goal when there are others to achieve first.

"You've got to start from where we haven't been," he said. "We haven't been to the Sweet 16. Right now we're trying to win a Big East title."



PHOTO BY NATHAN HARRIS/AP

Bluejays coach Greg McDermott has Creighton ranked No. 3, its highest ranking since 2017.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Mane event: Martin revs up Arizona State

Guard, known for his hair, is candidate for Pac-12 Player of Year

By JOHN MARSHALL
Associated Press

TEMPE, Ariz. — Remy Martin's bloom of hair has an ebullient quality to it, shimmering as he shakes a defender, bopping when he stops and pops, swooshing back as if he's in a wind tunnel as he flashes through the lane.

It's in his game, too, in the way the Arizona State junior guard whips crowd-roaring, no-look passes through his legs, raises up for three-pointers with the game on the line or bursts in front of a defender for a charge.

And it's in his personality, his natural joy for life revving up teammates and fans on the court, lifting the spirits of everyone he meets off it.

"He has such a positive way about him that's infectious to everyone around him," Sun Devils coach Bobby Hurley said.

Martin, whose full name was suggested a top-shelf after-dinner drink, was named after an uncle. He came to Arizona State as a star recruit and quickly became a favorite, with fans delighting in his game.

Martin burst off the bench as a momentum-changing sixth man as a freshman.

The 6-foot guard played with a confidence beyond his years, flicking no-look passes, fearlessly driving to the basket. He picked up opposing point guards full court, nodding his bouncy hair in approval after inevitably finding a way under their skin.

Martin still plays with the same tightness that could be the last play abandon as a junior, though has morphed into a level-minded floor leader to balance Hurley's volcanic sideline demeanor.

Martin has range that extends practically to Phoenix's Sky Harbor Airport and, with a 40-inch standing vertical leap, has



PHOTOS BY DARRYL WEAR/AP

Above: Arizona State's Remy Martin (1) leads his team off the court during a timeout against Oregon State during a game Saturday. Below: Martin is the Sun Devils' emotional leader and scoring leader at 19.1 points a game.

'Not only do I think he's one of the best players in the Pac-12, he's one of the best guards in college basketball.'

Sean Miller

Arizona coach on ASU player Remy Martin

the hops to finish at the rim against much bigger players. He's the rare guard with a sublime mid-range game, usually stopping and popping while the defender is still in mid backpedal, and is one of college basketball's fastest end-to-end players with a ball in his hand.

Hurley, the point guard for two national championship teams at Duke, has given Martin the freedom to do things other coaches would wince at, like the one-footed fadeaway he shoots multiple times a game.

"I've worked hard at being able to score at multiple levels," Martin said.

With his 24-point performance in a one-point, comeback win over rival Arizona, Martin became the first Pac-12 player in 23 years to start conference play with six straight 20-point games.

Martin took over down the stretch in a win over Stanford on Feb. 14, scoring 11 points in the final seven minutes. Two days later, he scored 15 of his 22 points in the final 11 minutes in a win over California, giving the Sun Devils their first Pac-12 weekend road sweep in 10 years.

Martin became the second player in Arizona State history (Shannon Evans in 2018) to be named the Oscar Robertson National Player of the Week for his big Bay Area efforts.

The Pac-12's second-leading scorer at 19.1 points per game, Martin is a front-runner for conference player of the year in what could be a two-player race with

Oregon's Payton Pritchard. He's has been the key cog during a seven-game winning streak that moved Arizona State, a team picked to finish sixth, to the top of the Pac-12 standings with two weeks left in the regular season.

"Remy Martin, what he's done at Arizona State is remarkable. He's a heck of a player," Arizona coach Sean Miller said, unprompted. "He's willed them to so many wins. Not only do I think he's one of the best players in the Pac-12, he's one of the best guards in college basketball."

Martin's infectious imprint spreads beyond the hardwood.

Through a joy for life and sincerity, he forges an instant bond with anyone he meets. Fans and kids who meet him usually decide Martin is now their favorite ASU player.

His mother, Mary Ann Macaspac, emigrated from the Philippines and Martin

has embraced his heritage. He wears a wristband with the flag of the Philippines on it and serves as a role model for young Filipino basketball players, showing them there is a path to success.

Right after hitting the game-winner against Southern California on Feb. 8, Martin gave his shoes to a young boy who gleefully carried the oversized sneakers in his arms up into the stands. Another Remy Martin fan for life.

When his team won the 10-11-year-old championship at Hurley's camp, Martin celebrated like he had won the national championship, jumping with the players before galloping off with one in his arms.

"I love living, I'm happy, I'm not taking anything for granted," Martin said. "I'm living, I'm healthy, I'm playing the game I love, so how can I not be happy?"

Now, about that hair.

Close-cropped on the side, it bursts out of the top of his head in an overrun bouquet of curls and swirls. When Martin is going at full speed, which is nearly all the time, his locks bob and sway as if he's being electrocuted, making it look like he's playing even harder than he is.

The upkeep, minimal. Martin usually climbs out of bed, does a quick check and heads out the door.

"I'm usually getting out of bed to head to practice," he said. "It's not like I'm going to a club or something, so there's not much that needs to be done."



No. 16 Penn State (20-7)
at No. 18 Iowa (19-9)
AFN-Sports
6 p.m. Saturday CET
2 a.m. Sunday JKT



No. 13 Seton Hall (20-7)
at No. 19 Marquette (17-9)
AFN-Atlantic
8:30 p.m. Saturday CET
4:30 a.m. Sunday JKT



No. 15 Auburn (24-4)
at No. 8 Kentucky (23-5)
AFN-Sports
9:45 p.m. Saturday CET
5:45 a.m. Sunday JKT



No. 7 Duke (23-5)
at Virginia (19-7)
AFN-Sports
12:00 a.m. Sunday CET
8 a.m. Sunday JKT



Saint Mary's (23-6)
at No. 3 Gonzaga (27-2)
AFN-Sports
4 a.m. Sunday CET
12 a.m. Sunday JKT



COLLEGE BASKETBALL/MLB



RAY CARLIN/AP

Kansas' Udoka Azubuike, left, dunks against Baylor's Freddie Gillespie last Saturday in Waco, Texas. Azubuike had 23 points and 19 rebounds in the Jayhawks' 64-61 victory over the then-No. 1 Bears.

Bully: Kansas center Azubuike dominating

FROM BACK PAGE

basketball." Boynton said later, "but I'd be hard-pressed to find a better national player of the year candidate than he is. The way he's playing now is pretty special. Obviously there's a special kind of fan base here and they appreciate it, but I don't know if anyone appreciates him nationally."

Azubuike has recently opened some eyes over the last month.

His run began with 17 points and 12 rebounds against Texas, then continued with 20 points and 15 boards at TCU. Azubuike had another double-double against Oklahoma, then had 23 points and 19 rebounds last Saturday as the Jayhawks (25-3, 13-1) beat then-No. 1 Baylor on the road to regain the top spot in the nation and forge a tie atop the Big 12 standings.

Along the way, Azubuike reached the 1,000-point mark for his career — a nice benchmark considering he missed much of his first couple seasons to injury. His total of 35 rebounds in the past two games are the most since Thomas Robinson had that many during the 2011-12 season, and his 42 points and 35 rebounds allowed him to join Robinson, Dedric Lawson, Wayne Simien and Drew Gooden as the only players with at least 40 points and 30 or more rebounds in a two-game span.

Azubuike has also been able to steer clear of foul trouble. His conditioning has improved to the point that he can easily play more than 30 minutes per game. And his defense has been unparalleled, almost single-handedly shutting down the entire paint.

"We've been trying to tell Duke all along he can dominate a game without getting a lot of touches. If that's the case, he's quickly becoming as good a center or the best defensive center since I've been here, and we've had some good ones," Kansas coach Bill Self said. "I think people have begun to recognize him for what he brings to the table."

Azubuike has come a long ways since his childhood in Delta, Nigeria. He was an exceedingly raw prospect coming out of high school, and his only offensive move early on was a dunk. But his game has improved over time to where he is a more well-rounded player — even his chronically poor foul shooting has reached an acceptable level.

'He's quickly becoming as good a center or the best defensive center since I've been here, and we've had some good ones.'

Bill Self

Kansas coach, on center Udoka Azubuike

Still, the question remains: Will the bruising big man's game translate to the NBA? Most mock drafts have the senior center going in the second round, if at all, primarily because teams are wary of drafting a prototypical center the way the game has evolved. And whereas Azubuike can dunk his way to big numbers in college, those easy looks at the rim will be much harder to find in the pros, and his mid-range game remains a work in progress.

"If he plays to his athletic ability that's how he'll get paid," Self said. "He'll never get paid by shooting 15-foot fadeaways or whatever it is. That's not who he is. So, can he guard a ball screen? Can he get to the rim? Can he defend outside his area? If he can do those things he has a chance to make it."

Most of the names hanging from the rafters in Allen Fieldhouse didn't just put up big numbers or earn a long list of individual accolades. That's not how the truly great ones get remembered at Kansas. They also took their team deep into the NCAA Tournament, and the best of them ushered the Jayhawks to the Final Four and beyond.

Azubuike has been there once, helping Kansas to the national semifinals as a sophomore. Taking his team back to the final weekend of the season would almost certainly cement his legacy among the best to play for the Jayhawks.

"If you look at Duke over the last recent games, you could make a case for it," Self said. "Hopefully he'll continue on this uptick and keep building on it, and if we win, he'll get some mention for player of the year. I'd like all our guys to be in the game for all the postseason accolades, but we still need to win games to think about any of that."

Not a whiff of nerves for Nationals' closer

Doolittle calmed by lavender oil on glove

By HOWARD FENDRICH
Associated Press

WEST PALM BEACH, Fla. — Washington Nationals reliever Sean Doolittle moves a glove out of the way as he reaches into a shelf in his spring training locker and grabs a different one, which he then hands over with a simple, if unusual, instruction: "Smell it."

So, of course, you do — getting a sweet whiff of lavender, the sort you might get from a candle, or bowl of potpourri. And now you know what Doolittle sniffed each time he juttied his right elbow toward home plate and tucked his glove under his chin to get his catcher's signs during last season's World Series.

At the suggestion of Washington's director of mental conditioning, Mark Campbell, Doolittle put lavender oil on the leather laces around the webbing of his glove for the postseason. It helped the lefty relax on the mound after a rocky regular season, much the way the bullpen as a whole morphed from disaster to asset in 2019, a trend of improvement the club figures will continue in 2020.

"I was so nervous during the playoffs. I was just a big ball of stress. Lavender has a lot of calming and soothing to it," Doolittle explained last week. "When I came set, I could smell it. It worked, man."

In October, he produced two saves and three holds, a 1.74 ERA and a .167 opponents' batting average as the Nationals went 8-1 in his appearances along the way to a championship.

"When you're a reliever and pitching in high-leverage situations in must-win games, and you're on-call every night for like a month, it starts to take its toll on you. And it's a challenge to stay even-keeled and to really manage that energy. That's the hardest part," Doolittle said. "(Campbell) helped me out a lot."



MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ/AP

Nationals pitcher Sean Doolittle, left, and catcher Yan Gomes leap in celebration after the team's 7-3 National League Division Series Game 5 win against the Dodgers in Los Angeles.

Might replicate that lavender treatment, though. "I now associate that smell with having success in high-leverage situations. And managing myself. There's really positive energy associated with that: We won the World Series. I got to contribute. And I pitched pretty well," he said. "So there's definitely a connection there for me. It's definitely been ingrained, so we'll probably stick with it."



NICK WASS/AP

At the suggestion of Washington's director of mental conditioning, Mark Campbell, closer Sean Doolittle put lavender oil on the leather laces around the webbing of his glove for the playoffs. It seemed to help — Doolittle produced two saves and three holds in October, posting a 1.74 ERA and a .167 opponents' batting average as the Nationals went 8-1 in his appearances on their way to a title.

MLB

Battle of nerves: Pirates' Burdi returns

Pitcher is back to throwing heat a year after his harrowing arm injury

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

BRADENTON, Fla. — The rib is stashed away somewhere in his parents' house in suburban Chicago, a reminder of what Pittsburgh Pirates reliever Nick Burdi needed to lose to find himself.

The images are ingrained in the 27-year-old's mind forever, every pitcher's nightmare come to agonizing life. The hard-throwing right-hander, his big league career finally gaining some traction following a series of fits and starts, slung a 97 mph fastball to Arizona's Jarrod Dyson in the top of the eighth at PNC Park last April 23 that Dyson took for a ball.

By the time Pirates catcher Elias Diaz stood up to throw the ball back, Burdi was crumpled in a heap on the mound, his pitching arm aflame. Both dugouts fell silent as Burdi clutched his biceps in agony. Burdi had undergone Tommy John surgery in 2017. He knew what it felt like when his elbow went haywire. This was not that, which made it all the more harrowing.

"I had the shooting pain, the throbbing pain in the bicep and elbow area but I didn't know what it was," Burdi said this week. "I didn't know if I had torn something again, if I had ripped something off the bone, whatever it may be."

Racing from the dugout, director of sports medicine Todd Tomczyk feared Burdi had fractured his arm. Those initial concerns passed. The team ordered Burdi — who made the club out of spring training in 2019 and had chalked up an impressive 17 strikeouts in 8½ innings — to rest. Yet as the

weeks passed, the numbness in the pinkie and ring finger of his right hand lingered.

Doctors eventually diagnosed Burdi with the neurogenic version of Thoracic Outlet Syndrome, which arises when the nerves between the collarbone and first rib compress. The symptoms — tingling and pain chief among them — were familiar, symptoms Burdi had dismissed for years as the cost of doing business when you throw a baseball triple digits for a living.

In a way, Burdi was relieved. At least he had an answer, though the surgery he underwent last June included the removal of the first rib on his right side, considered necessary to give the nerves room to breathe. Burdi ended up giving the rib to his parents as a present of sorts, joking he might ask for it back after he retires.

Ten months after Burdi's career flashed in front of his eyes in a quiet ballpark, he stood on the mound at Pirates City on Feb. 19 and officially hit reset. He faced outfielders Bryan Reynolds, Gregory Polanco and Jarrod Dyson. Reynolds — fourth in Rookie of the Year voting in 2019 — struck out on a check swing. Polanco didn't make contact. Dyson managed a tapper to the mound. Otherwise, they failed to get a handle on a fastball that touched 98.

On Wednesday, his fastball touched 100 mph as he struck out two batters while working a scoreless fourth inning.

Asked if he took a deep breath to drink in the moment his long road back was finally over, the 6-foot-3, 225-pound Burdi shook his head. That moment came last fall when he was cleared to start playing catch. Now he's too focused on trying to carve out his own spot in what could be a crowded bullpen.

"I'm fighting with 10-15 other guys who are healthy and haven't had surgery," Burdi said. "So I can't really look at it like that."

Most of those 10-15 other guys, however, don't have Burdi's stuff.



PHOTOS BY GENE J. PUSKAS/AP

Above: Pirates relief pitcher Nick Burdi, center, is helped off the field by a team trainer on April 22 after being injured while delivering a pitch against the Arizona Diamondbacks in Pittsburgh. **Below:** Burdi reacts immediately after injuring his arm. He's now back with the Pirates, one rib lighter and optimistic his issues with thoracic outlet syndrome are behind him.

The Twins were so enamored with him tafter a record-setting run at Louisville they used a second-round pick on him in 2014. Yet he struggled with consistency and Minnesota left him unprotected in the 2017 Rule 5 Draft six months after he underwent reconstructive elbow surgery.

The Phillies grabbed him and immediately flipped him to Pittsburgh for \$500,000 in international bonus pool money. Burdi made two appearances in the majors near the end of 2018 before earning an invitation north last year following an electric spring training in which he fanned 13 batters in 10 innings of work.

As promising as his 2019 started, it all vanished in an instant. Yet Burdi insists he never considered quitting as he eyed his second lengthy rehab in three years.

"I knew what I was getting into," he said. "I knew that it was going to be a long road again. This is something that baseball is my passion, it's my livelihood so it's one of those things where you



guys deal with it and move on and get ready for 2020."

There is no guarantee that Burdi is clear of TOS forever. Yet by launching himself off the rubber at Pirates City in the mid-February sun, the heat that pours out of his right arm as vibrant as ever, he took a massive step forward.

"To get over that mental hump is a testament of Nick's hard work

and the organization and all the resources that were poured into him," Tomczyk said. "It was pretty special to watch."

Just as special: how good Burdi felt in the aftermath. The post-outing discomfort he knew all too well is gone. Yeah, he could worry about it but what's the point?

"I'm ready to go back out there," Burdi said. "All gas from here out."

By the numbers

12.1 3.44 9.35

Strikeout average per nine innings for Pittsburgh Pirates pitcher Nick Burdi during five seasons in the minor leagues.

Burdi's ERA in his five seasons in the minors.

Burdi's ERA in his injury-shortened season last year with the Pirates as he pitched for only 8½ innings.

MLB



FRANK FRANKLIN II/AP

Minnesota Twins infielder Miguel Sano hit a career-high 34 homers last season but is gladly making the switch from third base to first to make way for free-agent signee Josh Donaldson.

Twins' Sano moves to first to make room for Donaldson

Associated Press

FORT MYERS, Fla. — For the Twins to land free agent Josh Donaldson, Miguel Sano knew what would be asked of him. He didn't hesitate.

Instead, Sano sent a video to Donaldson, lobbying the 2015 American League MVP to join the Twins. The key to Sano's pitch: He would happily move across the infield to play first base with Donaldson taking over at third.

Understand, too, that Sano has appeared in just 31 games at first base since making his big league debut in 2015, spending the last five seasons working to improve at third.

"The first time I met him, I saw that he's a really good guy and he's got a lot of energy," Sano said. "He's the kind of player that I love to see. He's positive and he loves the game. He likes to win and play hard."

Just as his teammates saw what Sano did.

"The teammate that he was to kind of help on the recruiting process of JD, tell him, 'Hey, you can have third base, I'm will-

'I don't think he's gotten enough credit for kind of relinquishing his position to bring in a guy he knew could help his team a lot.'

Jake Odorizzi

Twins pitcher, on teammate Miguel Sano

ing to move to first base' I think needs to be put out there," said Jake Odorizzi, who pitched two innings against Philadelphia on Wednesday.

"That's a really good team move and a really good team mindset. So, I don't think he's gotten enough credit for kind of relinquishing his position to bring in a guy he knew could help his team a lot. So, a lot of credit goes to him," he said.

After a disappointing start to the 2019 season, when he was sidelined until mid-May by a heel laceration suffered while playing winter ball, Sano rebounded, hitting a career-best 34 homers. He led Minnesota's "Bomba Squad" to a MLB-record 307 home runs and the AL Central title.

The Twins rewarded Sano with

a three-year, \$30 million extension in the offseason.

In past springs there have been questions about Sano's conditioning. Not so, this year.

"He's actually in great shape," manager Rocco Baldelli said. "He came in and spent, again, for the second straight offseason, he's worked incredibly hard. He's moving well. I don't think people tend to forget this, but I wonder if they do — he's an incredible athlete."

"Just because he has the size and strength that he does, doesn't mean this guy can't run. He can run, and he actually gives really good effort on the bases when he's out there. He's trying to be the best baserunner and best ball player that he can be, and we're going to see more of that."

Yankees' Stanton likely to miss opener

Associated Press

New York Yankees slugger Giancarlo Stanton will likely miss opening day because of a strained right calf, another significant injury for a team that was beset by health problems last season.

Manager Aaron Boone said Stanton was hurt near the end of defensive drills on Tuesday. An MRI found a Grade 1 strain.

"It will probably put us against it a little bit," Boone said Wednesday. "I would say it's time for him to get back, but then getting built up and stuff. We'll see."

The announcement came a day after New York said All-Star pitcher Luis Severino needed Tommy

John surgery and would miss the entire season. Slugger Aaron Judge and lefty James Paxton already had been slowed this spring by injuries.

The Yankees put a major league-record 30 players on the injured list last year, with Stanton missing most of the season.

Asked if he felt snake-bitten, Boone replied "No." The AL East champion Yankees open on March 26 at Baltimore.

Stanton played in just 18 games due a number of injuries last season, batting .288 with three homers in 59 at-bats. He hit 38 homers in his first year with the Yankees in 2018, one year after going deep a career-high 59 times in 2017 with the Miami Marlins.

Astros continue to be punished by beanballs, boos

Associated Press

PORT ST. LUCIE, Fla. — George Springer could only stand there all alone and listen.

The Houston Astros lead-off man had no choice when he stepped into the batter's box a bit too early and was showered with loud boos Wednesday at an exhibition game against the New York Mets.

Mets pitcher Noah Syndergaard turned and looked at the scoreboard clock that showed 1:09 p.m. — he waited for the minute to change so the game would officially reach the 1:10 start time, leaving Springer nowhere to go as the crowd heckled him.

"Cheater! Cheater! Cheater!" one Mets fan along the first-base side chanted at Springer.

Less than an hour south in West Palm Beach, the Astros were playing the St. Louis Cardinals in a split-squad game. Houston's Alex Bregman hit his first home run of spring training in the third inning, then was hit in the back in the fifth inning by a breaking ball from reliever Ramon Santos, making Bregman the seventh Astros player plunked in five spring training games.

"It was a splitter," Bregman said. "It just got away from him."

Dustin Garneau was hit Sunday against Washington, and Jose Altuve was grazed Monday against Detroit, when Osvaldo Duarte and Alex De Gotti also were hit. Aledmys Diaz and Jake Meyers were hit Tuesday by Miami.

In Port St. Lucie, the normal tranquility of February games again was broken as a split squad of Astros continued the team's latest stop on their spring training tour of desultory boos and catcalls, the result of their exposed sign-stealing scheme.

Two days after Altuve, Bregman, Carlos Correa and Yuli Gurriel got jeered for a game at Detroit's park in Lakeland, it was the Mets' turn to host at newly renovated Clover Park in Port St. Lucie.

Vilified this offseason by the baseball world due to their scam, the Astros brought a pedestrian lineup to face the Mets. Springer and fellow outfielder Michael Brantley were the top Astros who started.

So it wasn't mainly the names on the back of the jerseys that angered the small midweek crowd in attendance at New York's spruced-up ballpark, which had \$57 million of renovations and additions put in starting a year ago.

It was the logo and colors worn by Houston, ironically a similar orange-and-blue color pattern to what the Mets wore.

Jim Masotti, a Connecticut na-



KAREN WARREN, HOUSTON CHRONICLE/AP

Houston Astros third baseman Alex Bregman homered Wednesday but was also the seventh Astros player to be hit by a pitch in spring training.

tive who lives in Port St. Lucie seven months of the year, sported a dark New York Yankees T-shirt and deplored the cheating scam. But he stopped short of saying the title should be stripped from the Astros.

"As a Yankees fan, it's extremely discouraging," said Masotti, who followed Springer's career as a star at UConn. "I think it's a travesty for the integrity of baseball. What happened is something that may not go away for a while, unfortunately."

After Springer worked a two-out walk in the bottom of the ninth inning in Game 6 of the AL Championship Series in Houston last October, Altuve hit a walk-off homer off Yankees reliever Aroldis Chapman that sent the Astros to their second World Series in three years.

"The Yanks ended up being on the short end of this whole thing. As a Yankees fan, I'm very disappointed," Masotti said.

A native of New Britain, Conn., and the MVP of 2017's scandalous World Series, Springer drew the loudest boos. He had three at-bats and departed after a fifth-inning bloop single.

"The only guy I feel for — I'm a UConn alum — is Springer. I saw him play in college. I feel bad for him. I really do," Masotti said.

Springer fled out in the first, and Brantley batted next. Brantley grew up playing baseball in this area, starred in high school in nearby Port Pierce and is an offseason resident of Port St. Lucie.

Despite the local roots, he also drew a heaping dose of boos from his locals, though not like Springer did.

WRESTLING

The virtues of Pecora's perseverance

Winningest coach in NCAA history never imagined he would stick around so long

By WILL GRAVES
Associated Press

JOHNSTOWN, Pa.—In the fall of 1976, Pat Pecora packed what he could into a \$150 car bought from a family friend and made the hour-long drive east from the Pittsburgh suburbs into the western Pennsylvania highlands.

He had no idea what he was doing. The 22-year-old needed a job, and the University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown offered one that sounded an awful lot like three. Wrestling coach. Men's soccer coach. Gym teacher. Pecora needed to find a way to juggle them all at once. For \$9,000 a year.

Never mind that he hadn't so much as kicked a soccer ball or that the wrestling program he inherited consisted of a handful of guys practicing on a stage in the student union, where one roll too many sent them tumbling to the floor below. His earliest recruiting trips were walks to the cafeteria, where he'd scout for young men in high school wrestling shirts.

Join me, Pecora told them. We're going to be a family.

A family that's grown by the hundreds over the last 44 years, one bound by the tenets the winningest college wrestling coach in history began preaching long ago.

Head up. Butt down. Elbows in. Knees bent. Brothers for life. They're all baked into the foundation Pecora laid during that first fall, one that set the groundwork for 618 career wins (and counting), a pair of NCAA Division II national titles, 14 individual national champions and 154 All-Americans.

When UPJ edged Mercyhurst 22-13 on Feb. 7 to give Pecora his 617th dual meet victory — breaking the mark held by former Oregon State coach Dale Thomas for all NCAA divisions plus NAIA and junior colleges — the celebration included more than 100 alumni who remain close to Pecora years, even decades, after they've hung up their singlets.

"My dad would say, 'We're doing a good job as mothers and fathers if our children respect us,'" Pecora said. "My whole philosophy is, 'If I'm going to be a good coach, my wrestlers have to feel like brothers.'"

And they do. It's not uncommon for athletes a generation apart to develop a bond as close as theirs in their love of the sport and the man who nurtured it. Isaac Greeley, a two-time All-American under Pecora in the 1990s, still talks to his old coach at least once a week. It might be about their jobs. The current team. The old days. The future.

The program that struggled



PHOTOS BY KEITH SRANOCIC/AP



Above: University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown coach Pat Pecora started coaching the Johnstown team as a 22-year-old in 1972. Left: Pecora, the winningest wrestling coach in NCAA history, leans in during a match against Gannon last Saturday.

to find enough wrestlers to form a team in the early days began practice last fall with 45 athletes on the roster, all fighting for the 10 spots available during a given dual meet. Some bail out of frustration. Others stick around out of habit, loyalty and the off-chance they'll get a shot.

"From the guy who was a six-time national champ to the guy who wrestled one match to the guy who didn't even get in to start one match, he helped someone be a better wrestler because it was his brother," Pecora said. "All of that made this happen."

So did the guy who learned about the sport during living room brawls with older brothers Ernie and Richie in Turtle Creek, a mill town about 12 miles east of Pittsburgh. The Pecora boys would emulate the moves they saw during the professional matches they watched on TV on Saturday mornings.

"It was wrestling and it wasn't fun wrestling," Pecora said with

a laugh. "It was Jumping Johnny DeFazio drop kicks. Bruno Sammartino bear hugs. Illegal head locks. It was a fight, basically. And your big brother was beating you up."

Ernie, the oldest and biggest, had his way for years. Then Richie joined an actual wrestling team and learned the sport. Suddenly, things weren't so one-sided. By eighth grade, Pat was in the gym too, wrestling all the way through college at West Liberty University. There was something about the sport that drew him in — the discipline, the pressure of performing with no one else to rely on and no one else to blame.

"If I can run out in front of all these people and say 'Hey, I'm going to see what we can do,' then anything else I do will be easy by comparison," he said.

As a coach, Pecora sparred with his wrestlers well into his 40s. Current players insist the trim 66-year-old has the best core strength on the team. A non-

smoker, he overcame lung cancer in his 50s and became so antsy after surgery to remove a portion of his left lung that he attempted to tear the tubes out of his chest so he could get to practice. While his contemporaries sit and talk during pre-match warmups, Pecora often climbs stairs at the arena until it's time to work. Once the meet begins, the rest of the world falls away.

"There'll be times where he says something during the match and we'll talk about it a couple hours later and he'll say: 'I don't remember saying that? Did I really say that?'" senior Devin Austin said. "He's holding you accountable for how you wrestle during a match. If you don't give it your all, you're going to hear about it."

Such conversations are rare. Barry Gresh became Pecora's first All-American in 1979. The Mountain Cats have produced at least one every season since.

Pecora led the school to Division II national titles in 1996 and '99. The outside world took notice. In the early 2000s, Maryland offered to double Pecora's salary and give him a pair of full-time assistants as well as a volunteer coach, an academic adviser and a strength and conditioning coach.

It was the big time. He was intrigued but worried about the traffic. The cost of living. The idea of uprooting wife Tracy and their four children. He said he

DID YOU KNOW?

Renowned for his toughness — current players insist the trim 66-year-old has the best core strength on the team — Pat Pecora sparred with his wrestlers well into his 40s. Pecora — a nonsmoker — beat lung cancer in his 50s and became so antsy after surgery to remove a portion of his left lung that he attempted to tear the tubes out of his chest so he could get to practice.

SOURCE: Associated Press

was waiting for a sign from God. Then the father of one of his wrestlers left a voicemail on Pecora's phone, telling him: "Pat, this is God. Stay at UPJ."

So he did. "(Moving) didn't fit into our philosophy or my philosophy," Pecora said. "The family is the most important element of society."

And if he left, who's to say if he would have joined the likes of Thomas or Olympic champion and Hall of Fame Iowa coach Dan Gable as one of the best ever? Not that Pecora believes he deserves to be in such company. "That's wrestling royalty. I'm not wrestling royalty," he said. "I come from projects ... I grew up wrestling my two brothers in the living room. And I survived that. I grew up a tough kid, not afraid."

Pecora looks for that same respectful fearlessness while putting together a team. It's why so many of his wrestlers have been sons of coal miners and farmers.

"You're a fighter no matter what," Pecora said. "You can be both a fighter and a good man. You don't have to be a knucklehead, be a tough guy. You can show compassion, have a heart and still be a guy no one wants to mess with."

Even when the ride suddenly comes to an end.

"When guys lose at the national tournament, coach is crying with them," Greeley said. "And as a wrestler and a teammate and an alumni, you know how much it means to have someone in that moment who has been in the foxhole with you."

As for how much longer he plans to stay in that foxhole, Pecora — who became UPJ's athletic director in 2008 — says he'll stick around as long as the Mountain Cats are winning.

UPJ finished 21-3 in dual meets this season. The Division II Super Region tournament is this weekend in Erie. The national tournament is next month. There are pressures to run, says to mold, relationships to invest in.

The urge to teach the essential skills remains as strong now as it was when he pulled into campus nearly a half-century ago. So why stop?

"It's not like you have to do it forever," Pecora said, using one of his pet phrases. "You just have to do it the rest of your life."

NFL COMBINE



MICHAEL CONROY/AP

Alabama's Jerry Jeudy is considered one of the top prospects in a deep class of wide receivers taking part in the NFL Draft.

Immediate impact: WR class is loaded

By ARNIE STAPLETON
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — If your favorite NFL team doesn't have a Tyreek Hill, Julio Jones or Courtland Sutton streaking down the field, making cornerbacks cringe and constantly redefining the highlight catch, just wait.

Chances are good they'll grab one in this year's draft.

The NFL scouting combine in Indianapolis features a tantalizing wide receiver class unlike anything ever seen at the league's annual gathering of top prospects.

"You've probably heard every GM and coach talk about this wide receiver class; it is a good one," Jets GM Joe Douglas said. "Just watching them go across the stage, there is a lot of talented players and we see how much the pass game affects the National Football League. So we do feel good about this group."

Actually, teams feel great about the 2020 receivers.

Teams are more willing than ever to bypass the old wait-and-watch standby for a plug-and-play approach with bigger, faster, quicker pass-catchers coming out such as Calvin Ridley and D.J. Moore, who made an immediate impact in 2018, followed by Deebo Samuel, DK Metcalf, Marquise Brown, Terry McLaurin and A.J. Brown, who wasted no time establishing their credentials last season.

"There is a lot more receivers coming into the draft because there's just a lot more receivers in college football and high school football," Rams GM Les Snead said. "A lot of teams running three, four, five wide."

It starts way before college.

"I think in today's day and age where these guys were starting 7-on-7, it's almost like AAU basketball," Packers GM Brian Gutekunst said. "The receivers

are so much more advanced in terms of their fundamentals coming into college and the league than maybe they have been in the past. It's really just the NFL offense that will take time. So I think there's some guys sitting here today that I think will have a chance to make a pretty immediate impact, and I'm excited about that."

Guys such as Colorado's Laviska Shenault, Alabama's Jerry Jeudy and Henry Ruggs III, Oklahoma's CeeDee Lamb, LSU's Justin Jefferson, Arizona State's Brandon Aiyuk and Clemson's Tee Higgins.

Just to name a few.

The wide receiver group is "as deep as I've seen," NFL Draft analyst Daniel Jeremiah said. "I've got 27 wide receivers with top-three round grades in this draft. And consider average 31 are taken. We had a max of 35 taken in (2015). So this is a really phenomenal group of wideouts."

There's someone for everyone this year, whether they're looking for a deep threat, a crisp route-runner, a fearless man going over the middle or even taking the direct snap like Shenault did so often at Colorado.

"Receiver, of all positions, probably comes in the Baskin-Robbins 31 flavors," Bills general manager Brandon Beane said. "Size, speed, length, run after catch, all sorts of variables."

This year, especially.

"I think there could be a lot of guys drafted all the way through from 1 to 7 (rounds)," Beane said. "We were talking about it the other day. There's going to be guys drafted on the third day of the draft who may come in and take a veteran's spot on a team. It's that deep."

The best of the bunch is probably Jeudy or Lamb, but they all sport that one attribute that premier pass catchers also possess: a confidence bordering on cockiness.

Jeudy said he's the best, but he's hearing everyone else say they're the best.

"I feel like everybody should think they're the best receiver coming out in the class," Jeudy said.

Another chapter

Dobbins, Taylor continue RB rivalry

By MICHAEL MAROT
Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Jonathan Taylor and J.K. Dobbins spent three seasons vying for the title of Big Ten's best running back.

Dobbins' case begins with the three shiny conference championship rings he won playing at Ohio State. Taylor's argument shows up in a trophy case full of hardware he earned at Wisconsin.

Now two of the conference's most prolific runners find themselves engaged in yet another competition: Becoming the first running back selected in this spring's NFL Draft.

"It's been fun, especially this past year," Taylor said, standing at the same podium Dobbins used just a few minutes earlier. "I've always enjoyed going against those guys just because you come to the Division I level to play against the best guys in the country and O-State is one of those teams that is an elite team. So you have to enjoy that competition."

Taylor leaves nothing to chance when taking on the opposition. He worked out with the Badgers track team to become a more explosive runner. He used the JUGS machines to improve as a receiver. He learned to modify his breathing, which he credits for helping him maintain focus, and last year he added yoga to his workout routine because it helped with his flexibility and recovery time.

The results have been staggering.

He's the only FBS player to rush for more than 6,000 yards in three seasons, the only FBS player with three straight seasons over 1,900 yards and the only Wisconsin player with three top-10 finishes in Heisman Trophy voting. He won the Doak Walker Award each of the past two years, was selected as the Big Ten's top freshman in 2017 and its best runner the past two seasons.

So here in Indianapolis for the league's annual scouting combine, Taylor is trying to regain the upper hand.

"I'm trying my best to show I can crack 4.4 (seconds), trying to show I have that long-distance speed," he said, referring to his time in the 40-yard dash. "I know it shows up on film, but they still want to put a number on a sheet of paper."



TNS

Wisconsin running back Jonathan Taylor is the only FBS player to rush for more than 6,000 yards in three seasons.

If he hits that mark, the 5-foot-10, 226-pound Taylor would go a long way to being the first running back drafted in Las Vegas in April.

The 5-9, 209-pound Dobbins has other plans.

His impressive résumé includes being the first Ohio State runner to have a 2,000-yard season and the only one with 1,000-yard seasons as a freshman and sophomore. He's second on the Buckeyes rushing list, behind two-time Heisman winner Archie Griffin, and he matched Griffin's school record with three consecutive 1,000-yard seasons.

But Dobbins contends his 3-0 record against Wisconsin gives him bragging rights.

"I don't really see it as a rivalry because he plays on a different team," he said. "He's not on defense, so I'm not necessarily going against him. If there is a rivalry, I think I won the better of that because we beat them every time we played them."



DAVID PETKIEWICZ, CLEVELAND.COM/TNS

J.K. Dobbins was the first Ohio State running back to have a 2,000-yard season.

SPORTS



Positioned for impact

Loaded WR class tantalizing for WR-needy teams » **NFL, Page 63**

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Just bully

Bruising Jayhawks center Azubuike is force behind Kansas' return to No. 1

By DAVE SKRETTA
Associated Press

OLAHORENCE, Kan. — Oklahoma State coach Mike Boynton had just finished watching Udoka Azubuike bully his way to 19 points and 16 rebounds against his over-matched Cowboys when he pulled the 7-footer aside and pointed to the rafters in Allen Fieldhouse.

"Keep it up," Boynton whispered into the ear of the Kansas center, "and your name will be up there, too."

There are certain requirements for a player to have his jersey raised above the south seats in the old field house, among them becoming an All-American or winning the Big 12's player of the year award. It's not an honor that the Jayhawks bestow on just anyone.

The way Azubuike has been playing lately, it won't be long before his No. 35 joins the jerseys of the great Wilt Chamberlain, Clyde Lovellette, Jo Jo White and Danny Manning hanging from the ceiling.

"I don't watch a whole lot of national

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Inside:

■ Arizona State's Mane top candidate for Pac-12 Player of Year, Page 58

Kansas center Udoka Azubuike's 42 points and 35 rebounds over the past two games place him among Detric Lawson, Wayne Simien, Drew Gooden and Thomas Robinson as the only Jayhawks with at least 40 points and 30 or more rebounds in a two-game span.

ORLIN WAGNER/AP

RHP Burdi back throwing heat for Pirates » **MLB, Page 60**