WASHINGTON — The Pentagon has deferred a decision about the future of an aircraft carrier captain who was relieved of command after he raised concerns about the Navy’s handling of a sprawling coronavirus outbreak on his ship, defense officials said Friday.

The delay comes after the Pentagon's chief spokesman, Jonathan Rath Hoffman, told reporters earlier in the day that senior Navy officials would brief Defense Secretary Mark Esper about an inquiry into what happened with the USS Theodore Roosevelt and its former commander, Navy Capt. Brett Crozier.

Several other defense officials said they expected a conclusion to be announced afterward. But as the afternoon wound down, the Navy acknowledged that no decision was forthcoming. Two people familiar with the issue, including one senior defense official, said administration officials wanted more time to review their options.

Hoffman said in a statement that Esper had received a “verbal update” from senior Navy officials about the inquiry into the Theodore Roosevelt outbreak.

SEE DECISION ON PAGE 3

A man walks past a shuttered business in Philadelphia, Thursday.
Matt Rourke / AP

Poll: Most losing jobs during pandemic think they’ll return post-crisis
Page 4

Online: Get the latest news on the virus outbreak » stripes.com/coronavirus
Wall Street ends manic week with a gain

Associated Press

NEW YORK — In a manic week full of previously unthinkable market moves, Wall Street ended Friday with one reminiscent of what things were like before the coronavirus outbreak upended everything.

The S&P 500 glided to a gain of 1.4%, with Apple, Microsoft and other technology stocks leading the way, as they did so many times before the coronavirus outbreak. The bond market was quiet, while crude prices climbed again.

The gains offered a soothing coda for a wild week, which began with Monday’s astonishing plummet for oil and carried through Thursday’s sudden disappearance of a morning stock rally.

“The market sort of feels like Dorothy coming to the crossroads to tell her which way to go,” said Sam Stovall, chief investment strategist at CFRA.

The S&P 500 still lost 1.3% for the week as worries about the economic damage dealt by the coronavirus outbreak outweighed hopes that businesses could soon reopen. That snapped the first two-week winning streak for the S&P 500 since it began selling off in February.

The S&P 500 added 38.94 points to 2,836.74. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 260.01, or 1.1%, to 23,775.25, and the Nasdaq composite added 139.77, or 1.7%, to 8,634.52.

The weather is provided by the American Forces Network Weather Center, 2nd Weather Squadron at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb.
Navy expands sea-duty incentive eligibility

BY WYATT OLSON  Stars and Stripes

The Navy has added nearly two dozen job categories for which sailors are eligible for sea-duty bonus pay, an expansion done to ensure operations will continue during the coronavirus epidemic, the Navy said.

Twenty-three new ratings were added to an existing list of those eligible to receive sea-duty incentive pay for extending current tours at sea or returning to sea early, the Navy said in a news release Wednesday.

The additions bring the total number of ratings eligible for the bonus to just under 120.

The move was done to ensure the Navy continues to fill operational requirements for sea-going commands, particularly as this challenging time brought on by the [coronavirus] pandemic,” the news release said.

Sailors assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt account for 840 of those cases. The ship has been sidelined in Guam since late March as it deals with the contagion.

Sailors testing positive for the virus have been found in another 26 Navy ships now in port, a Navy official speaking on the condition of anonymity told Stars and Stripes on Wednesday.

Among the newly added rates qualifying for incentive pay are: aviation ordnanceman, culinary specialist, cryptologic technician, engineerman, gunner’s mate, machinery repairman and steelworker.

Depending on the rating, pay-grade and Navy enlisted classification code, qualifying second class petty officers and below who qualify could receive up to $750 for each additional month spent at sea. First class petty officers and above could receive $1,000 per month, the news release said.

Sailors who wish to extend sea duty can either choose a billet at their current command, or choose one at a new command, according to the news release. In doing so, sailors must commit to serve one to four years in that billet.

Requests for extension should be made more than 14 months prior to a sailor’s projected rotation date.

The destroyer, which typically has a crew of more than 350 people, has been deployed this month with a new coronavirus outbreak on a warship at sea, with at least 18 cases emerging on the destroyer USS Kidd. The outbreak became evident after a sailor aboard the vessel developed symptoms associated with the virus, and the Navy flew the individual to San Antonio, Texas, for testing.

“The chief of naval operations said he was open to Crozier’s reinstatement,” it said.

Secretary Thomas Modly to remove Crozier from command, citing bad judgment. Modly alleged that Crozier had sent his message to 20 or 30 people, but a copy of his email obtained by The Washington Post later showed that he actually sent it to three admirals, and copied seven other Navy captains.

“I fully realize that I bear responsibility for not demanding more decisive action the moment we pulled in, but at this point my only priority is the continued well-being of the crew and embarked staff,” Crozier wrote in the email, obtained by The Post. “… I believe if there is ever a time to ask for help it is now regardless of the impact on my career.”

Modly resigned on April 7, one day after flying from Washington to Guam to visit the crew and delivering a speech in which he insulted Crozier and lectured sailors for supporting him. Crozier, Modly said, had either written the memo to be leaked to the media, or was “too naive or too stupid” to be commanding officer of the ship.

Modly later apologized.

Trump, as commander in chief, has the authority to intervene in Crozier’s case. But it would be highly uncommon for a president to sway an administrative decision in the military.

The sensitivity comes after Trump created turmoil in the service last year by repeatedly weighing in on the case of Chief Petty Officer Edward Gallagher, a Navy SEAL who was acquitted of murder but convicted of posing with a corpse in Iraq. Esper fired former Navy Secretary Richard Spencer in November after the senior Navy official went directly to the White House and sought to keep Trump from getting involved in administrative discipline for Gallagher.

On Friday, the Pentagon also disclosed that the Navy is coping with a new coronavirus outbreak on a warship at sea, with at least 18 cases emerging on the destroyer USS Kidd. The outbreak became evident after a sailor aboard the vessel developed symptoms associated with the virus, and the Navy flew the individual to San Antonio, Texas, for testing.

“They are preparing to return to port, where they will undergo testing and 14 days of isolation,” Hoffman wrote.

He also said Modly’s departure was not an “administrative or personnel decision” and that a new skipper will be named for the USS Theodore Roosevelt, which is being enveloped in a controversy over Crozier’s memo to superiors about the threat of serious illness on his ship.

“The move was done to ensure the Navy continues to fill operational requirements for sea-going commands, particularly as this challenging time brought on by the [coronavirus] pandemic,” the news release said.

Sailors assigned to the aircraft carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt depart the ship earlier this month.

FROM FRONT PAGE

“After the Secretary receives a written copy of the completed inquiry, he intends to thoroughly review the report and will meet again with Navy leadership to discuss next steps,” Hoffman said. “He remains focused on and committed to restoring the full health of the crew and getting the ship at sea again soon.”

The delay comes amid speculation on Crozier’s reinstatement.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Michael Gilday, the chief of naval operations, has said he was open to Crozier’s reinstatement and recommended that on Friday, a person familiar with the discussions said Friday. The New York Times first reported the recommendation.

The Navy said in a statement that no final decisions have been made.

“Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Mike Gilday has presented recommendations to the Acting Secretary of the Navy, James McPherson. Secretary McPherson is continuing discussions with Secretary of Defense Mark Esper,” it said.

Another senior defense official, also speaking on the condition of anonymity, said that Esper’s briefing with Navy officials on Friday took about an hour. The inquiry is “in fact about far more than one person,” so Esper wants to ensure the report is thorough and can “stand up under the rightful scrutiny of Congress, the media, the families and crew of the Theodore Roosevelt, and the American people,” the official said.

President Donald Trump expressed an interest this month in reviewing Crozier’s case, after videos of sailors chanting their support for Crozier over “a bad day.”

The Navy said Friday that it had just completed testing the crew for the coronavirus. The service reported 856 positive cases among 4,954 tests, about 17%. One Theodore Roosevelt sailor, Chief Petty Officer Charles Robert Thacker Jr., 41, died April 13 after testing positive on March 30.

Crozier, as captain of one of the Navy’s most powerful strategic weapon systems, was on a fast track to becoming an admiral when he sent an email and memo on March 30 that pleaded for more help in evacuating, testing and quarantining sailors from his crew in Guam after the outbreak. The March 31 publication of the memo in the San Francisco Chronicle prompted Acting Navy Secretary Thomas Modly to remove Crozier from command, citing bad judgment. Modly alleged that Crozier had sent his message to 20 or 30 people, but a copy of his email obtained by The Washington Post later showed that he actually sent it to three admirals, and copied seven other Navy captains.

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Poll: Most think jobs will return after crisis

By Josh Boak and Emily Swanson
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — One out of every four American adults say someone in their household has lost a job to the coronavirus pandemic, but the vast majority expect those former jobs will return once the crisis passes, according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

The economic devastation wrought by COVID-19 is clear: 26.4 million people have lost their job in the past five weeks, millions of homeowners are delaying mortgage payments and food banks are seeing lines of cars that stretch for miles. Forty-six percent of all Americans say their household has experienced some form of income loss from layoffs, reduced hours, unpaid leave or salary reductions.

And yet, the survey finds a majority of Americans still feel positive about their personal finances. One possible reason: Among those whose households have experienced a layoff, 78% believe those former jobs will definitely or probably return.

Another positive sign: The percentage of workers who say their household has lost a main source of income is not significantly different from a few weeks ago.

Seventy-one percent of Americans now describe the national economy as poor, up from 60% three weeks ago and 33% in January. At the same time, 64% call their personal financial situation good — a number that remains largely unchanged since before the virus outbreak began.

Some of the resiliency can likely be traced to the nearly $2 trillion rescue package enacted by Congress that expanded jobless benefits, extended forgivable loans to small businesses and provided a government check to most Americans — money that has helped stabilize some families’ finances.

Skyler Banks, 24, used her 2019 tax refund and a separate government check for $3,000 to prepay six months of rent on her house. Her plan: to ensure her family’s housing is secure in case coronavirus infections spike in a second wave later this year and the nation’s economy gets worse.

“We’re not sure how many people actually have COVID-19,” said Banks, who lives in Dyersville, Tennessee, and works at Walmart. “If they open everything back up, we have no clue what is going to happen.”

Indeed, the country is split on whether the economy will rebound over the next 12 months. Forty-five percent expect it will improve, while 37% say it will worsen. Just 17% expect it to stay the same.

The survey found Americans overwhelmingly support stay-at-home orders and other efforts to slow the spread of the coronavirus — 61% described efforts in their area as about right, while 26% said they didn’t go far enough — even as those actions have forced an untold number of businesses to close.

Lower-income households and those with less education appear especially hard hit by job losses — 29% of those whose families earn less than $50,000 a year said their household experienced a job loss, compared with 22% of those who make more. Similarly, 28% of those without a college degree experienced a household layoff, while just 19% with a degree said the same.

As the crisis drags on, 22% of Americans have started to miss payments on housing or debts, the survey found. That includes 11% of Americans who have unpaid rent or mortgage bills, 11% who have missed a credit card payment and 19% who were unable to pay another type of bill. Some were unable to pay more than one kind of bill.

More than half of Americans, 58%, think the government has done enough to help small businesses, while 53% say the same of aid to individuals. Meanwhile, about 4 in 10 think too much assistance has been offered to larger corporations. The poll was conducted before Congress passed a new bill worth nearly $500 billion aimed at helping small businesses and hospitals.

The virus outbreak has reshuffled vintage toys, jewelry and artwork online. The Houston resident’s earnings have been solid enough to continue the same kind of bill.

Overall, 52% of Americans say they approve of how President Donald Trump is handling the economy. Trump’s overall approval rating stands at 42%. Even though 53% of Republicans said national economic conditions were poor, 88% of them approve of Trump’s economic stewardship. Twenty-three percent of Democrats approve, even as 90% call the economy poor.

Monique Hewan, a nursing student in Cold Spring, Kentucky, said the outbreak only appears to have intensified political tensions as some Republican governors make plans to allow some businesses to reopen and to ease other restrictions aimed at slowing the spread of the virus.

She depends on whether you’re red and blue as to how you think about it,” she said. “The calls for older people to die for the sake of the economy — it’s just insanity.”

WASHINGTON — Spend what takes, Washington said as it confronted the coronavirus. With over $2 trillion later, it’s unclear where that spending will end.

One of the lasting legacies of the coronavirus pandemic will be staggering debts and deficits on the U.S. balance sheet, with shortfalls hitting levels that would have been unthinkable just a few decades ago.

A fiscal stranglehold that is likely to persist for a generation, with debt levels having passed the point of easy return in a capital where governments are increasingly incapable, or unwilling, to constrain them.

The latest, and dire, projection from the Congressional Budget Office, released Friday, states the U.S. deficits will mushroom to $3.7 trillion in 2020, fueled by the four coronavirus relief bills signed into law by President Donald Trump. A fifth bill is already in the works and will be “expensive,” according to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif.

The deficit for 2021 is estimated to tally $2.1 trillion, double previous CBO estimates.

The report predicts a devastating hit to the economy this quarter at an annualized rate of decline of 40% — probably the sharpest economic shock ever — accompanied by a 15% unemployment rate this spring and summer. For the entire year, the economy is predicted to shrink by 5.6%.

CBO Director Phillip Swagel cautioned that there is “enormous uncertainty” on the projections, given the unprecedented nature of the crisis, but it’s plain the economic shock is unlike anything seen since the Great Depression.

“Challenges in the economy and the labor market are expected to persist for some time,” Swagel wrote in a blog post. “He said the economy is likely to begin rebounding in the third quarter, but the jobless rate will remain about 10% by the end of 2021.

On the government front, coronavirus-related figures point to red ink unparalleled since World War II. Economists generally say the most significant measure of debt and deficits is to compare it against the size of the economy, and by that measure, the debt is soon to rival the record. CBO says publicly held debt will reach 101% of gross domestic product by the end of this year, just below the post-war high.

The deficit was entrenched long before the virus, with federal revenue receding to well below historic averages and the spending side of the ledger rising thanks to record Pentagon expenditures and the addition of baby boomers to Medicare and Social Security.

Even Washington’s few remaining spending hawks say red ink should not be a focus for now as the government faces unemployment levels not seen since the Great Depression and shuts down orders lasting well into next month or beyond.

“Right now, I think the wise move for Congress is to keep and the addition of baby boomers to Medicare and Social Security.

That being said, the budgetary cost is enormous, cannot be ignored, and makes it even more important that lawmakers begin thinking about how to fix the federal budget after this is over.”
Physician in charge at VA acknowledges shortage of adequate protective gear

By Lisa Rein
The Washington Post

WASHINGTON — For weeks, nurses and other employees at Veterans Affairs hospitals have said they were working with inadequate protective gear. VA officials denied it.

But in an interview, the physician in charge of the country’s largest health care system acknowledged the shortage — and said masks and other supplies are being diverted for the national stockpile.

“I had 5 million masks incoming that disappeared,” said Richard Stone, executive in charge of the sprawling Veterans Health Administration. He acknowledged that he’s been forced to move to “austerity levels” at some hospitals.

Stone said the Federal Emergency Management Agency directed vendors with equipment on order from VA to instead send it to FEMA to replenish the government’s rapidly depleting emergency stockpile.

FEMA has responded to President Donald Trump’s decision to invoke the Defense Production Act to boost supplies as governors have made frantic requests for masks, ventilators, medical gowns and other supplies, depleting the stockpile.

VA’s four-week supply of equipment — on the shelves of 170 medical centers and in an emergency cache normally used for hurricane responses — was almost gone, and employees have held protests to say they were not safe.

The system was burning through about 200,000 masks in a day, Stone said.

“The supply system was responsible to FEMA,” said Stone, a former combat surgeon and former Army deputy surgeon general. “I couldn’t tell you when my next delivery was coming in.”

The shortages, and the agency’s claims that they did not exist, have been a low point in what observers say is an otherwise commendable response by VA to the pandemic. The health system, with fewer COVID-19 patients than it expected, is now reaching out to assist veterans in troubled state facilities.

President Donald Trump arrives to speak about the coronavirus in the James Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House on Friday.
Many states fall short of mandate to track virus exposure

Associated Press

ATLANTA — As more states push to reopen their economies, many are falling short on one of the federal government’s essential criteria for doing so — having an efficient and robust contact-tracing system in place. The systems are needed to track people who have been physically near a person infected with the coronavirus.

An Associated Press review found a patchwork of systems around the country for so-called contact tracing, with many states unable to keep up with canoeloads of data and scrambling to hire enough people to handle the task for the months ahead. The effort is far less than what public health experts say is needed to guard against resurgence or a second wave.

The result is a wide array of strategies and little national coordination. With few exceptions, most states reviewed by AP are going it alone. Many other countries dealing with the pandemic are taking a national approach to testing.

As late as Friday, the website for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said detailed guidance on contact-tracing for states was “forthcoming.”

“We’ll not ever control the whole country unless we have the same strategy,” said Dr. Cyrus Shahpar, a former CDC official. “Right now, that’s not what we’re doing.”

Contact tracing is a pillar of infection control and typically requires in-depth interviews with those who may have been exposed. The number of public health employees needed for the work throughout the U.S. remains up for debate, but some estimates are as high as 300,000 people.

Louisiana, which has been hit hard by the virus, had only about 70 people working on tracing contacts this week. By comparison, North Dakota, with less than a fifth of Louisiana’s population and no serious outbreaks, has 250 case investigators and will soon bring on an additional 172 staffers.

With more than 37,000 confirmed coronavirus cases, Pennsylvania is still working to determine how many people it will need in the field. In Texas, coordination will be left to individual counties.

Health experts worry that a scattershot approach will only prolong the crisis, and they urge a more coordinated strategy.

In South Korea, for example, the national health agency oversees the effort, gathering and sharing data on the movement of confirmed cases with local health departments. The country has seen its case count plummet and remain low.

There is little consensus in the states on basic questions such as how extensive the tracing should be and whether cellular data should be used to assist in identifying people who may have been exposed at a public location.

Some states have taken decisive action. Utah has 250 people at the state health department assisting local agencies in tracing contacts, and it can add 500 more staffers if needed. Massachusetts expects to spend $44 million on an aggressive contact-tracing plan and has already begun hiring and training the 1,000 people it expects to need.

Other states are slower to create robust tracing systems. California, with nearly 40 million people and more than 37,000 confirmed cases, has limited tracing ability. It recently announced plans to establish a “contact-tracing workforce” and train 10,000 people. In Los Angeles, the nation’s second most populous city, those found to be positive at drive-thru testing centers are being asked to sign up for a contact-tracing program.

Washington state, which experienced the first major outbreak in the U.S., was also overwhelmed. It now has about 760 people focused on tracing contacts, with plans to expand the workforce to 1,500 by the second week of May.

One major challenge for states is the ability to conduct widespread virus testing, which has been hampered in part by the difficulty of getting kits. The state health department in Washington Gov. Jay Inslee has said for the state’s contact-tracing plan to work, daily testing must increase from the current 5,000 to about 4,000 tests to 20,000 or 30,000 tests.

The CDC said Friday that it is working with state and local jurisdictions to identify needs for “surge support staff” to assist with contact tracing and other infection-control measures. Currently, states seeking help must rely on CDC staff members who are engaged with state health departments and other agencies.
Louisiana sees death rates greater than other states

Associated Press

Baton Rouge, La. — Even amid positive trends in Louisiana’s coronavirus outbreak, officials are grappling with a state death rate from the virus that appears higher than other states’ rates while outlining Louisiana’s own modeling.

The Louisiana Department of Health offered reporters a first detailed look Friday at the state’s modeling of deaths from the COVID-19 disease caused by the coronavirus. And while Louisiana’s falling hospitalization rate is tracking the projected results for Gov. John Bel Edwards’ statewide stay-at-home order, the death rate is higher than expected.

More than 1,600 Louisiana residents have died from COVID-19, about 6% of all positive tests for the coronavirus announced so far in the state. But that testing data doesn’t reflect who never developed symptoms and never get tested for the virus.

The department estimates that 2% of Louisianians who contract COVID-19 are dying from the virus. But the degree of the feeling of the number of residents positive but who have not been infected, said Jeannie Donovan, policy director for the agency.

The department is trying to determine why the death rate is double what was expected and varies considerably among regions of the state, she said.

Among the theories: Louisiana’s higher-than-average percentage of residents who have high blood pressure, obesity, chronic kidney disease and other health conditions may be a factor. Also, the state may be seeing a larger share of older people and those with undiagnosed health conditions or who are infected but not the general population, which could skew the death rate, Donovan said.

Alabama

Montgomery — Gov. Kay Ivey will work with the state health officer “to firm up a timetable to reopen” state businesses, her office said Friday, as the state’s current stay-home order for the coronavirus outbreak sets to expire on April 30.

Facing political pressure to follow the aggressive plans of other Southern states, including Georgia, which began reopening businesses Friday — Ivey has stated that the decision to reopen will be driven by data. Ivey spokeswoman Gina Maioia said, “we will probably hear an announcement from them next week as to how Alabama will gradually phase in business.”

The governor’s office believes it has evidence that a high number of people have contracted COVID-19.

Michigan

Lansing — Gov. Gretchen Whitmer on Friday lengthened her stay-at-home order through May 15, while lifting restrictions so some businesses can reopen and the public can participate in outdoor activities like golf and motorized boating during the coronavirus pandemic.

“I want to ... have a diversity of that point to make sure what we are sending to our seniors is low sodium and not high-fructose drinks or sugary drinks and the like,” Newsom said.

Restaurants have been one of the hardest-hit industries in the pandemic, with more than 1 million workers either laid off or furloughed, according to a survey by the National Restaurant Association.

Local governments will choose when restaurants will make the food and get the money. But restaurants have to meet nutrition guidelines. Meals can’t be too sugary, and lunch and dinner must have at least one piece of fresh fruit or vegetable.

Massachusetts

Boston — Gov. Charlie Baker said Friday that while the state continues to battle the coronavirus, it still hasn’t reached the other side of the surge.

That means steps taken to slow the spread of COVID-19 — from shuttering nonessential businesses to social distancing — will remain in place.

“Until we start to see some of that kind of information about the peaking of the surge and the move in the other direction for some sustained period of time, we’re not going to be interested in reopening anything,” Baker said.

Baker said there has been some discussion about how fast the state might safely reopen the economy, but again emphasized the state is not at that point.

Health officials are keeping an eye on the number of people tested and what percentage have tested positive. The percentage of positive tests compared to all tests has fluctuated in the 20s, Baker said.

Baker, a Republican, also cautioned that the state has been focusing a good portion of its testing efforts on hospital workers, who are believed to have a high number of people who have contracted COVID-19.

California

Sacramento — California restaurants will get taxpayer money to feed millions of seniors during the coronavirus pandemic, but only if they can offer meals with fresh fruit, vegetables and no sugary drinks.

Gov. Gavin Newsom said Friday the requirements reflect California’s values, though lawmakers have repeatedly failed to impose special taxes and require warning labels for sugary drinks in the past.

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Postal Service warned to raise Amazon charges

By MARTIN CHUTINSER and DARLENE SUPERVILLE
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Friday that he won’t approve a $10 billion loan for the U.S. Postal Service unless the agency raises charges for Amazon and other big shippers to four to five times current rates.

“The Postal Service is a joke because they’re handing out packages for Amazon and other internet companies and every time they bring a package, they lose money on it,” Trump told reporters in the Oval Office.

Trump said the changes the administration will insist on will make it a “whole new ballgame” at the Postal Service. He said the Postal Service did not want to make the changes because they did not want to offend Amazon and other companies.

Looking at Mnuchin, who was with him in the Oval Office, the president said, “If they don’t raise the price of the service they give... I’m not signing anything and I’m not authorizing you to do anything.”

Mnuchin told reporters that he had Treasury officials working with the Postal Service on the changes and if they decide they need more money.

“We are going to post certain criteria for (a) postal reform program as part of the loan,” Mnuchin said. He said the Postal Service board is already conducting a search for a new postmaster general to run the agency and undertake reforms of operations.

The Washington Post, which first reported the administration’s push for changes at the Postal Service, quoted unnamed officials as saying that Postal Service officials have been told the administration wants to use the $10 billion loan as leverage to influence how much the agency charges for delivering packages and how it manages its finances.

Trump has complained for years that the Postal Service was being exploited by Amazon and other shippers and that was the reason the agency was losing so much money. But analysts have said that efforts to sharply boost charges on big shippers like Amazon could backfire by raising prices above those being charged by competitors such as UPS and FedEx.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who was about the administration’s efforts Friday, said the Postal Service enjoyed wide support from the American people and that the administration is threatening to harm a critical part of the economy.

“This is really dangerous and Mnuchin at Treasury is trying to leverage the debt situation in a way that must be stopped,” Pelosi told reporters.

Biden’s links to Obama could limit appeal to Hispanic voters

By WILL WEISSErt
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Joe Biden’s tenure as Barack Obama’s vice president is complicating his efforts to deepen ties with Latinos who could be critical to winning the White House.

For many Latinos, Biden’s embrace of the Obama years is a frightening reminder of when the former president ejected about 3 million people living in the U.S. illegally, earning him the moniker of “deporter in chief.”

That’s one reason Latinos overwhelmingly backed Bernie Sanders during the Democratic primary. But with the Vermont senator out of the race and Biden left as the presumptive Democratic nominee, Latinos face an agonizing choice. They could look past Biden’s resume and vote for him or sit out the election and risk another four years of President Donald Trump, who escalated his hard-line stance this week with an executive order freezing some immigration into the U.S. during the coronavirus pandemic.

“The ‘Let’s go back to how things were’ for people who feel like they have a boot on their neck, it’s not always that compelling,” said Marisa Franco, director and co-founder of the Latino activist group Mijente, which made its first-ever endorsement when it backed Sanders for president.

Biden long defended the administration’s immigration policy, even telling one activist in South Carolina who decayed deportations, “You should vote for Trump.” But just before losing the caucuses in heavily Hispanic Nevada in February, Biden conceded, “We took far too long to get it right.”

“I think it was a big mistake,” Biden said.

Domingo Garcia, president of the League of United Latin American Citizens, said some “in the more liberal side of the Latino community” view the issue as a “litmus test that’s something they’ve not forgotten.” But he said many activists see it as paling in comparison to Trump’s race-baiting.

The Republican president isn’t toning down his approach to the issue of immigration, viewing it as a way to motivate his base.

“Our community definitely understands and knows the consequences of having Trump as president,” said Laura Jimenez, the Biden campaign’s Latino engagement director. “This election is about our lives, our safety, our ability to thrive and be in this country and be accepted.”

Boy Scouts suit filed as Hawaii shuts abuse claims window

By JENNIFER SINCIO KELLEHER
Associated Press

HONOLULU — Eight men were sexually abused by Boy Scouts in Hawaii in the 1960s and 1970s, they alleged in a lawsuit filed Friday as the state’s window closed on allowing child sex abuse claims that would have been barred under a statute of limitations.

Various states and Washington, D.C., extended or suspended the statute of limitations to allow child sex abuse claims stretching back decades. In Hawaii, a window for filing such claims was first opened in 2012. It was reopened in 2018 and closed Friday.

The lawsuit by the eight men now living in Hawaii, California, Oregon and Washington state also comes while attorneys urge potential victims to come forward as Boy Scouts of America works on its bankruptcy plan.

The Boy Scouts filed for bankruptcy protection in February in an effort to halt hundreds of individual lawsuits and create a huge compensation fund for men who were molested as youngsters decades ago by scoutmasters or other leaders.

The Scouts resorted to Chapter 11 in hopes of surviving a barrage of lawsuits, many of them made possible by changes in state laws to allow people to sue long after sexual abuse.

Named as a defendant in the Hawaii lawsuit is the Boy Scouts’ Aloha Council.

While the bankruptcy proceedings have halted lawsuits against Boy Scouts of America, the windows allow for filing claims against local councils and other sponsoring organizations, said Stewart Eisenberg, one of the attorneys representing the eight men.

“Hawaii is one of the first to close their windows,” he said. States that have active windows include California, Arizona, New York, New Jersey and Montana.

The Hawaii lawsuit filed in state court will likely be put on hold and it’s unclear whether it will be transferred to bankruptcy court, Eisenberg said.

“It’s important because the council, we believe, need to be held to account, because in many instances they were the ones that were directly responsible for hiring the perpetrator, putting him in a position where he could gain access to kids in their programs, at their scout camps and so on and forth,” said Tim Kosnoff, another attorney representing the men.

The two lawyers are part of Abused in Scouting, a consortium of law firms representing victims.

Aloha Council representatives couldn’t immediately be reached for comment after the lawsuit was filed Friday afternoon.

Among the allegations, a California man says he was about 10 when an assistant scoutmaster abused him during camping trips on Oahu. The assistant scoutmaster “would tell ghost stories, and many of the scouts would become very scared,” and the assistant scoutmaster would use that fear to visit scouts in their tents and abuse them, the lawsuit said.

Another California plaintiff said he was about 14 around 1976 when a cook “held a knife to his throat in the shower while forcing him to comply with his sexual demands” during a five-week Boy Scouts camping trip on the Big Island, according to the lawsuit.

A deadline for bringing claims in the bankruptcy proceedings is expected in the fall, Kosnoff said.
NATION

Judge OKs Baltimore's aerial surveillance test

Associated Press

PHOENIX — The federal government is proceeding with plans for a border wall even as communities where construction is ongoing protest the presence of workers, according to court documents.

In the Yuma, Ariz., area, the government modified a contract on March 24 to add 1.5 miles of a 30-foot border wall with angled tops and an anti-climb plate to the cost of $55.8 million. That’s according to documents the Sierra Club obtained this week in one of two lawsuits challenging the use of defense department funds to build the wall.

The federal government is looking to award another $50 million contract next month to add fiber optic cables, lighting, closed circuit TV, a ground detection system and signage.

Still, lawmakers and advocates are calling for construction to be halted amid the coronavirus outbreak, saying the workers put small border communities with few health care resources at risk.

In Ajo, Ariz., construction crews are working on a wall project and scaring residents who fear getting the virus, said resident Emily Saunders. Ajo has about 3,500 people and has seen years of border barrier construction and increases in Border Patrol personnel. Some of the workers come from the Phoenix area, a roughly 90-minute drive north.

“Here in Ajo we’re so isolated that when folks come in from the city they’re bringing germs that we don’t have yet,” Saunders said, adding that the nearest hospital is 90 minutes away.

Ajo residents and advocates are calling for construction to be halted amid the coronavirus outbreak, saying the workers put small border communities with few health care resources at risk.

Workers install a new section of 30-foot-high “bollard wall” at a construction site south of Yuma, Ariz., near the border between the United States and Mexico last month.

Building more barrier along the southern border has been one of President Donald Trump’s key issues.

This week, Customs and Border Protection launched a web page dedicated to all things border wall, including videos of ongoing construction. As of this week, the administration has completed 170 miles of border wall, and another 180 miles or so are under construction.

Kentucky’s Democratic governor vetoes abortion legislation

Associated Press

FRANKFORT, Ky. — Kentucky’s Democratic governor vetoed legislation Friday that would have given the state’s anti-abortion attorney general new authority to regulate abortion clinics.

The measure cleared the GOP-dominated legislature in the waning hours of this year’s legislative session. As a result, lawmakers won’t have an opportunity to override Gov. Andy Beshear’s veto.

The bill also would have given Republican Attorney General Daniel Cameron the power to suspend abortions as an elec-

tive procedure during the coronavirus outbreak.

Another part of the vetoed measure would have required doctors to provide life-
sustaining care for an infant born alive after a failed abortion at-
tempt. Beshear noted in his veto message that existing law al-
ready protects the life of infants.

Kentucky lawmakers have moved ag-
gressively in recent years to put restrictions on abortions. Their passage of the latest measure, and Beshear’s veto, sets the table for keeping the issue front and center in this year’s election, when many GOP lawmakers face re-election themselves.

Republican House Speaker David Os-
borne said he was “outraged and sad-
den” by the veto.

“Make no mistake, the governor had a choice and he used it to defend the indefe-
sible,” he said.

Cameron denounced the veto as “repre-
ensible” and “an affront to the people of Kentucky.”

In his veto message, Beshear focused on the “born-alive” sections of the legislation. He said existing Kentucky law already fully protects newborns from being denied life-saving care. Beshear, a former state attorney general, added that similar mea-
sures have been struck down elsewhere.

“During this worldwide health pandem-
ic, it is simply not the time for a divisive set of lawsuits that reduce our unity and our focus in defeating the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and reorienting our economy,” he said.

Cameron said there’s nothing more di-
vise than to veto a bill that “protects our most vulnerable.”

The bill’s lead sponsor, Republican Sen. Whitney Westerfield, also criticized the governor’s action.

“I’m not surprised, but I am supremely disappointed the governor has once again shown his hostility to unborn life,” Wester-
field said.

Beshear supports abortion rights but backs “reasonable restrictions,” especially on late-term procedures.
Celebrating amid shutdown
Former partisan Modesto Di Veglia waves his tricolored Italian Partisans National Association scarf from the balcony of his apartment in Rome on Thursday to celebrate the 75th anniversary of liberation from the Nazis during World War II. All Italian Liberation Day activities were cancelled because of COVID-19.

Ambush kills 12 rangers who guarded gorillas in Congo
By Al-Hadji Kudra Maliro

BENI, Congo — An ambush near the renowned Virunga Park in eastern Congo has killed 12 rangers who helped guard some of the world’s last remaining mountain gorillas in the wild, and another five people, authorities said Friday.

The attack, which left five other rangers critically injured, was carried out because the families of the victims of this ambush to inform them.”

Joel Wengamulay, a spokesman with the Congolese Institute for the Conservation of Nature. A driver and four civilians also died, he added.

“Investigations are underway to find the killers who attacked our convoy,” he told The Associated Press. “We have started calling the families of the victims of this ambush to inform them.”

Daniel Maniragua, deputy administrator of the Rutsuru territory, condemned the attack and pointed the finger at the FDLR rebels. The fighters, who have been active in the area for more than 25 years, are among the armed groups competing for control of the region’s vast natural resources.

“I think that these rebels did not ambush just the rangers but attacked civilians on this road to Rumanagabo,” he said. “We call on the central government to strengthen the military presence in the area to eradicate these negative groups that are swarming in the region.”

Britain drags its feet on negotiating trade deal as Brexit deadline looms

BRUSSELS — Despite the devastating economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic, Britain is making scant effort to negotiate a far-reaching free trade deal in the wake of Brexit that would stave off a costly final separation at the end of the year, the European Union said Friday.

EU negotiator Michel Barnier said his British counterparts keep insisting on unrealistic deadlines and demands that could only lead to a chaotic trade rupture which would mount economic losses on both sides on top of those already expected from the coronavirus crisis.

“I am worried,” Barnier said after what he described as another week of “disappointing” video negotiations between both sides. Barnier said Britain had made it clear it would not seek an extension to the transition period beyond Dec. 31, even though it could get one of up to two years.

Britain officially left the 27-nation bloc on Jan. 31, but remains within the EU’s economic orbit, including its single market for trade in goods and services, until the end of the year.

The two sides have until then to work out a new relationship covering trade, security and a host of other issues.

Both sides have been hit hard by the coronavirus, with Barnier and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson both having been infected.

ISIS member on trial in Germany for child’s death

BERLIN — An Iraqi man went on trial in Germany on Monday for genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, on allegations that as an Islamic State member he was part of an effort to exterminate the Yazidi religious minority, and killed a 5-year-old girl he purchased as a slave by chaining her in the hot sun to die of thirst.

Taha Al-J., 27, whose full name wasn’t given in line with German privacy laws, faces a possible life in prison if convicted of the charges and others, including murder for the death of the Yazidi girl and membership in a terrorist organization.

No pleas were entered in the German system, and Al-J. declined to give any opening comment to the panel of judges hearing the case other than to confirm his identity as the trial opened, according to the court.

Al-J. was a German convert to Islam identified only as 28-year-old Jennifer W., has been on trial separately in Munich since last April on charges of murder, war crimes and membership in a terrorist organization.

Al-J. was still at large when his wife went on trial, but was arrested a month later in Greece on an international warrant.

The charges against Jennifer W. are based partially on the allegation that she did nothing to help her husband.

The Yazidi girl’s mother, who survived captivity, testified at W’s trial and is also expected to appear as a witness at the trial of Al-J., according to the court.

W, who quit school after completing eighth grade, grew up in Lower Saxony as a Protestant but converted to Islam in 2013.

She’s alleged to have made her way to Iraq through Turkey and Syria in 2014 to join the IS. In 2015, as a member of the extremist group’s “morality police,” she patrolled parks in Fallujah and Mosul, armed with an assault rifle and a pistol as well as an explosive vest and looking for women who did not conform with its strict codes of behavior and dress, prosecutors said.

She was taken into custody when trying to renew her identity papers at the German embassy in Ankara in 2016 and deported back to Germany.

The trial against her husband is scheduled to resume April 27.
Disaster degustation
A coronavirus food and film pairing guide

By Carolina A. Miranda
Los Angeles Times

I’ve twisted myself into a yoga pretzel on Zoom. I’ve downloaded the meditation apps. I’ve watched koala bear naps on the San Diego Zoo’s koala cam. (OMG, the baby.) All of it has helped soothe my simmering corona anxiety to some degree, though none quite as much as streaming a film festival’s Worth of disaster flicks and diving into a pile of snacks.

“Aramgeddon.” “The Towering Inferno.” “San Andreas.” “28 Days Later.” If it in some way features the end of humanity — or a piece of humanity — I will watch it. And I will find it relaxing. Mainly because nothing makes me feel better about my station in life than knowing that at least a bunch of zombies aren’t gnawing at my dangling entrails.

Naturally, whenever I watch, I always — always — prepare a plate, since impending doom builds an appetite. Here, I outline five very simple dishes that can be made from just about any stock of disaster rations and pair them with five of my favorite disaster films.

Diner dash

Movie: “Miracle Mile”

This 1988 flick by writer-director Steve De Jarnatt features a lovely young couple, played by Anthony Edwards and Mare Winningham, who meet and fall in love at the La Brea Tar Pits — because gazing upon a drowning mammoth is just the sort of thing to bestir hot pangs of desire. Their blossoming union, however, is cut short when Edwards picks up a ringing pay phone outside of Johnnie’s Coffee Shop on Fairfax, and learns that a nuclear attack is imminent. Then it becomes a race against time to get out of L.A. before the bombs hit.

The terrible haircuts and the scenes of the Miracle Mile in the ‘80s make this a must-see for anyone who considers themselves an Angeleno. And, of course, there’s the dialogue: as riots consume Wilshire Boulevard, Winningham declares: “Hell, I’ll write an article about all this for Esquire. Someone will probably make a TV movie out of it.”

Or maybe a full feature film.

Food pairing: Grilled ham and cheese sandwich.

Since much of the action is set around a diner, it’s only right to eat diner-y food. Pancakes, burgers and watery coffee are all good options. I went with what I had on hand: ham and American cheese, the sort of cheese that will survive any end-of-the-world scenario.

Preparation tip: In grilling your sandwich, use all the butter you can. American cheese may survive a nuclear attack, but the butter definitely will not.

Instant soup’s on

Movie: “Flu”

When it comes to flu flicks, I am incredibly partial to South Korean director Sung-su Kim’s 2013 thriller, which features all the right teeth-gritting plot lines: a fast-moving, fatal virus and a single mom doctor who is laboring to find a cure — in a race against time and an official from the World Health Organization with an itchy trigger finger.

Food pairing: Nongshim instant ramen.

It may seem glib to suggest Korean instant ramen for a Korean movie, but it’s a match made in disaster heaven. One, because Nongshim instant ramen is featured in a scene that takes place inside a quarantine camp. Also, because Nongshim ramen is good. Two of my preferred flavors are Spicy Seafood Ramyun and the Shin Ramyun Noodle Soup in Gourmet flavors.

Preparation tips: Prepare as directed, then add whatever toppings you can scrounge up. My favorites include canned or frozen corn (we’re in a pandemic; don’t judge), mushrooms, an egg and a pat of butter. Scallions, chopped cilantro and leftover bits of chicken or beef are also great.

Eggs and a side of apocalypse

Movie: “This Is the End”

I thought the end of the world was going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max. Instead, it’s going to be super-Mad Max.

Preparation tips: Fried eggs and bacon with toast.

If the devil is about to consume your soul, you might as well eat all your protein in one go — like the unrepentant Danny McBride, in a key scene in the movie.

Preparation tip: Fry the eggs in the bacon grease. We can’t see your too-tight pants on Zoom. Hell, we can’t tell if you’re wearing pants at all.

A lo cubano

Movie: “Juan de los Muertos” (“Juan of the Dead”)

In this humorous 2011 political allegory by director Alejandro Brugués, a group of rum-drinking Havana slackers face off against an army of the undead — flesh eaters they initially confuse for dissidents. Alexis Diaz de Villegas plays Juan, a veteran of the Cuban intervention in Angola who makes an under-the-table business out of dispatching zombies with a variety of implements, including an oar.

Food pairing: Oven-roasted chicken with rice and beans and tostones.

A Cuban movie calls for Cuban food, a cuisine that knows how to make a lot out of a few basic staples: rice, beans, chicken. But the critical part are the tostones: green plantains that you fry twice.

Preparation tips: Slice a green plantain into 1-inch-thick diagonal wedges. In a broad frying pan, heat enough vegetable oil to cover the bottom of the pan over medium heat. Fry the bananas slices lightly on each side — about three to four minutes total — and remove them when they start to soften and change color. Drain on a paper towel.

Then comes the smashing. Cut a couple of large squares out of a brown paper grocery bag. Place a piece of banana between them and use the palm of your hand to press them to about a ½-inch width. Fry for about 3 to 4 more minutes at medium heat, turning the bananas until they are golden and crisp. Salt to taste.

“The Andromeda Strain,” from 1971, with Kraft mac and cheese and Campari soda.

1970s cheese

Movie: “The Andromeda Strain”

Based on the book by Michael Crichton, the plot revolves around an alien contagion that crash-lands to Earth aboard a satellite and turns human innards to dust. A team of scientists take to a secret underground bunker to study the rapidly multiplying organism so that they can develop a cure. It’s a race against time, and a U.S. president who isn’t big into science.

And it’s totally worth it for the rudimentary technology, 1970s sets and Kate Reid as the lone female scientist, a sassy lady with a sensible haircut who chain smokes and utters lines like, “I never liked red lights. It reminds me of my years in a bordello.”

Food pairing: Kraft macaroni and cheese and steamed broccoli, accompanied by a glass of Campari and soda.

This pairing is all about aesthetics: the film’s unnatural palette — those ‘70s reds, greens and oranges — begs for food and drink of an equally unnatural color. Kraft, with its nuclear shade of orange, and its undertones of milk protein concentrate, is just the sort of thing you might eat in an underground bunker.

Campari adds color, as well as the bitter taste of certain annihilation.

Preparation tips: The Kraft recipe calls for ¼ cup milk and 4 tablespoons of butter. Change that to 2 tablespoons of milk and 5 tablespoons of butter and you’ve got creamier mac. Refill your Campari as needed.

Grilled cheese and ham and a dazed Anthony Edwards in “Miracle Mile.”
**POST MALONE**

Is Planet Earth’s most relatable pop star

BY LUCAS SHAW • Bloomberg

On the night of Thursday, March 12, just hours after some of the world’s largest concert promoters urged a moratorium on live events due to the spreading coronavirus, 18,000 people packed into the Pepsi Center in downtown Denver to watch Post Malone perform. “If I get the coronavirus at the Post Malone concert tonight in Denver, just know it was lit,” one fan wrote on Twitter, along with an emoji expressing tears of joy.

Such blind devotion is not uncommon among admirers of Post Malone, a 24-year-old Texan whose real name is Austin Richard Post. Last year, his music was listened to more times than any artist in the U.S., according to MRC Data, and he generated more than 1.6 billion views on YouTube. “White Iverson” was generating millions of views on YouTube in the U.S., second only to Louisana rapper YoungBoy Never Broke Again.

In Bloomberg’s new Pop Star Power Rankings, which grade artists’ earnings ability based on six criteria across touring, album sales and social media, Post Malone debuted at No. 10 for March, thanks to the continued sales of his latest album, “Hollywood’s Bleeding.”

Looking back at the 2019 data, Post would have ranked No. 1 for the entire year.

“This guy is never really off the radar,” said David Bakula, the head of analytics at MRC Data. “Every single week he is streaming like crazy.” Bakula has seen the rise and fall of every pop star over the past couple of decades. Post is the first act he’s seen who gets equal amounts of play on mainstream Top 40 radio, alternative rock and hip-hop stations.

Post even has a following among fans of country music. Before Goldenvoice postponed its annual Stagecoach festival, which occurs the weekend after the Academy Awards, Post was reluctant to play in front of a crowd. Halfway through the set, Post had put on pajama pants as he crawled out of a primordial swamp of nacho cheese, Jeff Weiss, a prominent music writer, wrote in the Washington Post in October 2018. He called Post’s music “one of the shallowest bastardizations of rap to date.”

His fans are not easily dissuaded. Post’s audience has broadened from teens and tweens to include adults. He is as popular in Los Angeles and New York, where he can sell out an arena two nights in a row, as he is in Omaha, Neb., where he grossed more than $2 million in ticket sales one night this year.

Record executives compare Post to Nickleback and Creed, two rock bands that never got much respect from critics or awards but sold more than 100 million albums between them.

Post is easy to mock, a goofy-looking white guy with face tattoos, who endorses Bud Light and Croc shoes. While most pop stars in the age of Instagram craft online personas that seem just a tad too perfect, Post resists this artificiality. He belongs to the Chrissy Teigen school of social media: Messy is good. His Instagram is littered with photos in which he looks tired and ridiculous. You’re just as likely to see him in pajama pants as Gucci. For many of his fans, that unemphatic relatability is central to what makes him special.

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In February, Esposito and a group of friends drove down to Philadelphia to see Post perform. They packed into Section 104 of the Wells Fargo Center, close enough to feel the pyrotechnic display. “He doesn’t care what other people think,” said James, a Wisconsin resident who sees Post Malone as his favorite artist. “He belongs to a Post Malone fan account. (He declined to provide his last name or age.) “He seems like a genuine person.”

As a kid from Port Washington, N.Y., said she has seen the Dave Matthews Band about 75 times. She fell in love with Post Malone after hearing the song “Sunflower” on the radio. Esposito’s only complaint about her new favorite act is his ample use of swear words. “As a mother of two kids, I curtail the language they do,” she said. “When they are not in the car, I listen to more of his music.”

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Jessie Reyez might be petite, but she’s a monster. We didn’t say that. She did, on her official debut album. But she memorably adds a certain expletive before the word “monster.” Reyez is definitely a monster when it comes to music. The Toronto-bred artist who once handed out mix-tapes for free has created a stunning full-length debut album. But she memorably adds a certain expletive before the word “monster.” Reyez is definitely a monster when it comes to music. The Toronto-bred artist who once handed out mix-tapes for free has created a stunning full-length debut album.

The 14-track “Before Love Came to Kill Us” comes in terrestrial and celestial forms, with songs inspired by her grandfather’s journey from Mexico and California earthquakes, as well as family reunions taking place in other dimensions.

Recorded principally in Quebec with members and collaborators of Arcade Fire, the collection began as largely instrumental ballads, mostly hushed moods occasionally linked by similar themes or visions.

Ward, whose career also has included roles in supergroup Monsters of Folk and — with Zooey Deschanel — in She & Him, filters reality through poetry, dreams and humane science fiction, alternating looks through grounded telescopes and microscopes in orbit.

“Unreal City,” referencing a dream about a “continental shake” and “the final tidal wave,” has the album’s nimblest rhythms and sunny backing vocals, tuning our satellite radio to the Soothing Sounds of the ’70s channel amid the calamity.

Opener “Migration of Souls,” with striking vocals from Irish duo The Lost Brothers, has a transcendent focus, while its sister track, “Heaven’s Nail and Hammer,” echoes the atmosphere of the Cowboy Junkies at their most delicate. “Coyote Mary’s Traveling Show” sounds like the result of a fragile Sun Records session.

Ward considers “Chamber Music” and “Torch,” another exception in its sprightliness, also to be connected, and says that while he can’t reveal the poem that may have transformed guitar instrumental “Stevens’ Snow Man,” the words “may be useful in the middle of a drought or winter or pandemic.” If we only knew.

The relaxed pacing, Ward’s intimate vocals and tips of the cap to Hank Williams, Elvis Presley and the sounds of the West give the album a hushed moods occasionally linked by similar themes or visions.

Winona Evans

Nina Simone
Fodder On My Wings (Verve/UMe)

Nina Simone’s “Fodder On My Wings” is an album of contrasts and extremes — personal traumas and world sounds, joy and despair, harmony and defiance, the carnal and the spiritual.

Recorded in Paris in 1982, as Simone’s enduring restlessness and creeping mental illness kept her life seemingly barely tethered to anything but her music, it’s a considerable triumph of personality and genius.

The album opens with the gloeful “I Sing Just To Know That I’m Alive,” a horn-filled tune in which Simone bids farewell to the year gone by while fondly recalling Trinidad, one of the many places — Barbados, Liberia, Switzerland, France and the Netherlands among them — where she lived after leaving the U.S. in the early 1970s.

“Fodder In Her Wings” appears to depersonalize the album title, but references to self are clear and the weariness deeply intimate — “fodder in her wings” and “I want to be with you — she flitted here and there.” With an African-inspired introduction ceding to harp, chord and piano, her words appear together but separate. “Oh, how sad” — indeed.

The repetitive, direct approach of “Vous etes seuls, mais je desire etre avec vous” — You are alone, but I want to be with you — leaves no room for doubt, while “Il y a un baume a Gilead” and “Heaven Belongs To You” are the spiritual expressions in the equation.

“Liberian Calypso” is another sparkling composition recounting a carefree night of dancing, followed in brutal contrast by one of the bonus tracks, a bitter yet stately reworking of Gilbert O’ Sullivan’s “Alone Again (Naturally),” more depressing even that the original.

Narrating her father’s agonizing death, it rails against sad but lasting marriages, betrayals and childhood deceptions, yet includes a most understandable lament: “I loved him then and I loved him still. That’s why my heart’s so broken.”

At the end, the brief “Stop” and the even briefer “They Took My Hand” are in playful, Mose Allison mode, the former undressing the tragedy of “Send In the Clowns” and the latter a rollicking Bob Marley salute.

“Fodder On My Wings” is not an album for casual listeners or day trippers, but one that shows how clearly Simone could fold her inescapable anguish and raw honesty into her art.
NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

BARISTA TRAINING DAY
BY JOEL FAGLIANO / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

ACROS
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GUNSTON STREET

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

RESULTS FOR ABOVE PUZZLE

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15 YEARS IN AFGHANISTAN
The villain becomes a hero

‘Screen time’ has gone from sin to survival tool

BY GEOFFREY A. FOWLER AND HEATHER KELLY
The Washington Post

W

e’re on Zoom calls six hours per day. The kids have gotten their own iPads. And no need to keep asking, Netflix — we’re definitely still watching. But we should stop being hard on ourselves for staring at screens and start embracing how they’re helping us survive. And in this extraordinary moment, that’s just what the doctor ordered.

Before the coronavirus outbreak, Brett Vergara abided by the trendy advice that excessive “screen time” was as bad as smoking, but for you and me. He would put his phone on airplane mode at work to make its screen less alluring. Then last month, New York forced him to stay at home with his roommates he hardly knows. “There’s just a different lens to the world we’re currently in,” the 27-year-old said during a break from playing the latest “Animal Crossing” video game.

Vergara joked he was “personally victimized” by a recent notification from Apple that his screen use had surged to 10 hours per day. “What do you expect from me? Get out of here, iPhone.” A few weeks in, America’s great self-quarantine is prompting a rethink of one of the great villains of modern life. Now your devices are portals to employment and education, ways to keep you inside and build community, and vital reminders that you’re not alone. The old concerns aren’t gone, but they look different when people are just trying to get by. Before our new normal, screen time concerns had spawned an industry of screen “addiction” experts, books and detox events. Researchers have linked excessive screen time to depression and obesity. In 2016, the American Academy of Pediatrics decreed that kids aged 2 to 5 should have no more than one hour of screen time per day. In 2018, facing criticism from lawmakers and even some investors, Apple and Google added controls to their software to, theoretically, encourage people to use their devices less.

Now many experts are reframing the issue, at least temporarily, and rejecting screen shame. Last week, the World Health Organization officially encouraged people to play video games as a way to get us to stay at home. And the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommended people “call, video chat, or stay connected using social media.”

These screens are doing important jobs. They’re a way to keep kids distracted while parents working from home try to balance nonstop video meetings and Slack notifications. With seniors confined to their rooms for safety, nursing homes have replaced daily activities with family video calls. Shows like Netflix’s top-ranked “Tiger King” are escapes to even crazier realities.

For millions of Americans now struggling with isolation or depression, screens are a path for healing. Every day at 9 p.m., New York comedian Kelly Bachman hops on a video chat with complete strangers from around the world to read “Harry Potter” aloud. The connection is a “joyful constant,” she said. “We are trying to find light in dark places as Dumbledore would.”

Unsurprising to anyone sheltering in place alone or home schooling kids, Americans fortunate enough to have home broadband have never used it more. Comcast says its peak network traffic is up as much as 60% in some regions. Verizon says overall network traffic for video games is up 102%. Half of Americans think a home internet outage would be a “very big” problem right now, according to the Pew Research Center.

What we heard from most other doctors and therapists is that it’s OK to have more screen time now — just try to focus on the quality kind.

“I don’t want parents to beat themselves up about anything,” said Nusheen Ameenuddin, a Mayo Clinic doctor and chair of the American Academy of Pediatrics council on communications and media. “These are really extraordinary, unusual circumstances and we don’t expect anyone — even before COVID-19 — to follow rules one hundred percent.”

Now the saying we should become couch potatoes. Sleep, fresh air and exercise improve your mental health and build your immune system. And all of the nasty problems we discovered with apps, games and social media haven’t gone away, from misinformation to bullying.

But being stuck at home during the coronavirus pandemic can actually give us some clarity about which uses make us feel better — and not.

“This isn’t the time to say all screens are bad,” said Tracy Dennis-Tiwary, a psychology professor at Hunter College in New York City. “This is the time to say, ‘What am I noticing about how technology supports my well-being and — how it gets in the way?’ And that’s going to be different for every individual.”

There are tips for a healthy balance that still resonate in the time of the coronavirus. Having any rules in place, even if they slide away, can help families cope, Ameenuddin said. Keeping devices out of the bedroom at night can help everyone sleep better.

Consider picking one day per week where you just put the phone down. Tiffany Shlain, author of the book “24/6,” said her family has been unplugging for the Sabbath for a decade, and she finds the practice even more useful under stay-at-home orders where everyone’s daily use of screens has skyrocketed.

“We’re going through an extraordinary period in human history. And I want time to reflect,” said Shlain. “I feel like I’m just on and responding and connecting all this stuff and it’s too much.”

The latest smart home product I tried is the Vera Ezlo Atom smart home controller hub, part of the Vera controller family. For the most part, the Atom looks like a flash thumb drive (1.1-by-0.4-by-2 inches) with a standard USB-A connector but interfaces with devices. Inside the Atom is a 160 MHz 32-bit LX6 processor, with NOR 16 MB of flash memory and SDRAM 520 KB of RAM. It’s built with 2.4GHz Wi-Fi for connecting to your home network. It needs to be plugged into any USB power source and, when used with the Vera mobile app, it controls smart home devices, including lightbulbs, thermostats, window sensors, motion detectors, locks and more.

Setting a smart home device intimidates a lot of users, but I found the Atom as easy as can be to use. I simply downloaded the app, follow the setup instructions and had the Atom working to control lights within minutes. I then connected it to a few other Z-Wave Security devices I already had planted in my home.

The app has a user-friendly dashboard, which lets you set up new rules for schedules, shortcuts and instant control. I’d recommend it for first-time smart home users or for those who have existing devices and want to control them from one place. The Atom also works with smart home assistants, Alexa, Google Assistant and Apple shortcuts.

You have eight choices of cover colors, a microfiber cleaning cloth and one Pilot FriXion pen is included with each.

Online: getvera.com; $29.95

GADGET WATCH
Light, portable replacement for ordinary spiral notebook

BY GREGG ELLMAN
Tribune News Service

I’ve always been one to go lighter, smaller and as portable as possible. The Rocketbook Core notebook is a nice addition to my mission. My school years were during the pen and pencil period, so I can only imagine how handy this product would have been during those stages. Last week, the World Health Organization officially encouraged people to stay-at-home days, I would normally have Post-it Notes covered with chores and shopping lists everywhere, but the Rocketbook Core simplifies everything and even lets me save and upload the content in PDF or JPEG to cloud services such as Google Drive, iCloud, email and Dropbox.

To put my schoolwork theory to the test, I enlisted a college student to give the product a try. Within a few days she gave it an A+, and especially enjoyed the cloud upload with the reusable notebook. She also pointed out that for some classes a laptop or tablet aren’t needed, making the Rocketbook Core lighter and easier to tote around campus, whenever college students actually return to campuses.

At first glance, the Rocketbook Core looks like a traditional spiral notebook. Instead of paper, it makes use of patented reusable technology consisting of a synthetic paper, which you write on. Once you’re done, the page wipes cleanly with a damp cloth for the next use.

Before erasing, uploading the content is pretty simple. With the Rocketbook app on your smart phone or tablet, the pages can be scanned for the cloud storage.

Writing is done using a special pen from the Pilot FriXion line of markers or highlighters.

The cost-friendly Rocketbook Core is available in letter size (8.5-by-11 inches) with 32 pages for $34, and the executive is 6-by-8.8 inches with 36 pages for $32. Both are also available with a dot grid pattern or lined.
Remembering the mischief
Film adaptation of 2018 book explores evolution of the Beastie Boys

By Mark Olsen
Los Angeles Times

This is nice, just hanging out with you guys.” Spike Jonze is in Hawaii. Adam Horovitz is in his garage, and Michael Diamond is in his bedroom, both in greater Los Angeles. It’s late March, not long after the coronavirus prompted shelter-at-home orders, and the three of them are on a video conference call ostensibly for an interview about their collaboration on the new film “Beastie Boys Story.”

Originally scheduled to have its world premiere at the South by Southwest Film Festival — canceled because of the global pandemic — the movie hits Apple TV Plus on Friday.

Though they are promoting the film — directed by Jonze as an adaptation of a stage show performed by Horovitz and Diamond, better known by their respective Beastie Boys monikers “Ad-Rock” and “Mike D” — the trio would rather just catch up, share inside jokes, playfully razz one another and think about anything besides the thing everyone can stop thinking about.

“This is crazy,” Horovitz says at one point. “I got no plans to do nothing except try not to die. Straight up.”

There are running gags about how Diamond cannot get the camera on his computer to work — “Hold on, I’m going to crack the firewall,” Jonze says — or their complex relationship to “leather bad boys,” the type of thing they arefar from. “I’m not friends with either of them, but it was the film was going to be more of a theatrical?" Jonze continues. “And it was kind of like that, this kind of this continuous arc. Like I remember how we finished the book and I was going before a walk with Spike one day. And that’s before we even did our very first show, and I was like, ‘Adam and I are trying to figure out what to do. Pretend like we’re actual authors, wear Harris tweed blazers with suede patches and act professorial at bookstores?’

“And we talked about, well what if we picked the stories we like and made it a little more theatrical?” Diamond continues. “And it was kind of like that, this nice thing where we literally had no idea what we’re doing, but it seemed to kind of work, and it felt good to us. And then originally I think we all thought that the film was going to be more of this document of what we’d done on stage, but then actually we realized, once we started, that it kind of took a life of its own and realized, no, it had to be its own thing.”

For a band that seemed dedicated to always moving forward to its next creative endeavor, its evolving cultural curiosities often making a road map to the styles of the zeitgeist, the idea of looking back might seem anathema.

Asked whether his perspective on the band has changed at all over the course of putting together the book and show and now movie, Diamond says dryly, “Bunch of jerks.”

He adds, “I think the thing that doing the show and movie and everything made me appreciate is just how completely frigging unlikely the whole thing is. Because while you’re in it and you’re making stuff, you don’t know. The fact that all these things happened in the first place and keep happening, in a good way — that we were really fortunate to be able to continue for this ridiculously long time and doing what we love with people that we love and still somehow managed to enjoy doing it. So I guess we appreciated that more.

Throughout the book and on into the stage show and movie, Horovitz and Diamond are remarkably candid and reflective about mistakes they made along the way, such as the undiplomatic way they dropped their first drummer, Kate Schellenbach, from the band, or the bratty, regressive attitudes they displayed during the early “License to Ill” era and how they made a conscious effort to adopt more progressive views as they developed over the years.

They performed in several cities and filmed three nights in April 2019 at Brooklyn’s Kings Theater for the movie.

“I think it’s definitely our intent to have each thing sort of be its own thing,” Diamond says of the evolution from book to audiobook to stage show to movie. “But then I also really liked that it was kind of this continuous arc. Like I remember how we finished the book and I was going for a walk with Spike one day. And that’s before we even did our very first show, and I was like, ‘Adam and I are trying to figure out what to do. Pretend like we’re actual authors, wear Harris tweed blazers with suede patches and act professorial at bookstores?’

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“The interesting thing is that if you write a book about yourself, it’s a good opportunity to be able to rewrite history, right?” Horovitz says. “You can write whatever you want; you can write how amazing you were, and you can blame other people for this, that and the other, whatever. And so feel like we tried to just sort of tell it like it was.

“Good example: Russell Simmons,” Horovitz continues. “We had great times with Russell Simmons. He was really important to our band. Same with Rick Rubin, right? I’m not friends with either of them, but it was an amazing time that we had together. So that will remain. What does it do to yourself to pretend or to just block that out of your life?”

“I think that’s part of being fortunate,” Diamond says. “We actually got to be around long enough to comment on the dumb stuff that we did. I feel like a lot of times, people just don’t get that moment of actually still having some relevance to be like, ‘Hold on, let’s rewind here for a minute and let’s look at what we did and sort of be able to live through that again.’”

Before Jonze can answer about his plans in the process of filming the stage show and the film, Horovitz interrupts — “Can we go back to the walk that you and Mike had on the beach?”— canceled because of the global pandemic — the movie hits Apple TV Plus on Friday.

Though they are promoting the film — directed by Jonze as an adaptation of a stage show performed by Horovitz and Diamond, better known by their respective Beastie Boys monikers “Ad-Rock” and “Mike D” — the trio would rather just catch up, share inside jokes, playfully razz one another and think about anything besides the thing everyone can stop thinking about.

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Michael Diamond, aka “Mike D”
Beastie Boys member

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Woman sentenced for posing as FBI agent

NC  CHARLOTTE — A North Carolina woman was sentenced to three years in prison for impersonating an FBI agent on an online dating site, and on a date.

Riane Brownlee, who identified herself as Agent Alexandria Mancini, posed in a dating profile with a fake FBI badge and a stolen gun, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the Western District of North Carolina said in a news release.

Brownlee had prior convictions on various charges, including identity theft. The day she was arrested, she told a date she was working as an undercover agent in a drug case without the awareness of law enforcement.

3 men arrested for possessing stolen guns

SD  RAPID CITY — Rapid City police arrested three men they said were in possession of firearms stolen from a local pawn shop.

Ten AR-15-style rifles and one shotgun were stolen from Pawn With Us, according to authorities. Investigators said they received a tip that some of the weapons were at a Rapid City home.

Officers saw three men leaving the property in a vehicle, pulled it over, found two of the guns in the vehicle and arrested the three.

Police said two additional guns and methamphetamine were found in the residence.

Dog found 4 months after being stolen

CA  SAN FRANCISCO — Four months after a distraught San Francisco woman hired a plane to fly a search banner for her stolen dog, the blue-eyed mini Australian shepherd was found and the two were reunited.

Emilie Talermo, 31, said she received a call from an animal shelter in Palmdale, which is about 370 miles away in Southern California, telling her someone had just dropped off a dog with a microchip connected to her phone number.

To be sure it was her 6-year-old dog, Jackson, Talermo asked the shelter to send her photos.

“As soon as I saw them, I burst into tears. It was him!” Talermo said.

Teen in recovery after fall near waterfall

ME  WEST FORKS — A Maine teenager rescued after slipping and falling 30 feet down an embankment near the state’s tallest waterfall is recovering.

Maine officials and volunteers were able to place Antonio Jacobs, 18, of China into a rescue jacket after he slipped and fell into a gorge at the base of Moxie Falls.

Maine Game Wardens said Jacobs was immobile when they found him.

The teen was hiking with three friends when he fell down the embankment, according to a news release from the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife.

DNA used to ID 2 victims after cases went cold

FL  DAYTONA BEACH — Two victims of separate violent crimes were identified through DNA decades after their cases went cold.

The Volusia County Sheriff’s Office said in a Facebook post that DNA was used to identify the remains of Howard “Kip” Evans, whose body was found in 1986, and Doris Regina Chavers, whose body was found in 1991.

Evans was 29 when he disappeared and his remains were found in January 1986, officials said. His body had been there for an undetermined amount of time.

In 2019, information about Evans was received from posts in a missing persons group, sheriff’s officials said. Detectives obtained a DNA sample from his mother in South Carolina.

Chavers was last seen at her mother’s home in Aug. 1, 1989, and reported missing the following year, the post said. Two fishermen found her badly decomposed body on Aug. 19, 1991.

In 2018, Seminole County Sheriff’s officials looked further into the case and tracked down Chavers’ biological daughter. Detectives received confirmation that the daughter’s DNA sample matched the remains found in Volusia County in 1991.

Virtual kickoff

Amid virus concerns, Arfa Yousuf, 8, throws a kick as her martial arts instructors look on virtually during a belt test at her home in Richardson, Texas. Yousuf took a break from her family’s Ramadan preparations to participate in the online test during mandated social distancing measures meant to help stop the spread of the coronavirus.

Man angry about aid check set shed on fire

LA  MARKSVILLE — Fire Marshals in Louisiana said a man set his mother’s shed on fire out of anger for not receiving a federal stimulus check amid the coronavirus pandemic.

Marvin Smith Jr., 51, got into a dispute with his mother over the federal payout before the arson happened, the Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal said in a news release.

Investigators were able to determine the fire was intentionally set inside the Hamburg shed. They arrested Smith after witnesses told them they saw him in the shed moments before the fire started. Witnesses also told investigators they saw Smith flee the scene after the fire.

Man killed by bullet fired from nearby apartment

KY  FRANKFORT — A Kentucky man was fatally shot when a gun went off in a neighboring apartment unit, piercing through walls, a couch and the man’s back, authorities said.

Samuel Sexton, 20, was in a friend’s Frankfort apartment when he was fatally struck, Capt. Dustin Bowman told news outlets.

Frankfort police said the shot came from an apartment across the hall. Police accused Trevor Fridenmaker, 20, of handling the gun that went off. Police said Fridenmaker tried to hide the gun but it was found along with an additional gun and marijuana.

He was charged with manslaughter, evidence tampering, possession of marijuana and drug paraphernalia.

Officer charged for nude photos of minors

GA  VALDOSTA — A Georgia police officer was arrested for possessing nude photos of underage people, authorities said.

Valdosta Police Lt. Jeremiah “J.B.” Jones was charged with one count of child exploitation and was later fired from the department, police Chief Leslie McNahan told news outlets.

Lowndes County Sheriff Ashley Paulk said a social media account was brought to their attention by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation, which prompted an investigation into Jones.

Man shoots at FBI field office; no injuries

AZ  PHOENIX — The FBI said no one was injured and a suspect is in custody after he allegedly fired at the bureau’s Phoenix field office.

FBI spokesman Jill McCabe said a man approached the bureau’s North Phoenix offices and fired at the building and at an employee who was exiting. The shooter did not access the FBI’s building or grounds, she said.

Phoenix police officers and FBI agents took the man into custody without incident.

From wire reports
OPINION

Trump fan not the person for Pentagon post

By Max Boot

The Washington Post

T he barriers to the politicization of the military have been so high, from the days of Donal d Trump to the present, that some believe they cannot be breached. But they are being breached — andカラー at the top, or at the very least in the White House and its closest advisors, is being breached. The military is not immune to political influence, and it is being influenced by political figures.

Army investigators also looked into complaints from T a t a ' s (by then gone) aide that he had failed to pay court-ordered child support. They dismissed the accusation after T a t a produced a court order that contained an arrears equation and mentioned a penalty for non-payment.

In February, Esper agreed to fire the undersecretary of defense for policy, John Rood, who had been chosen by M a t t s. Rood alienated Trump by criticizing decisions such as holding up military aid to Ukraine, exiting the Iran nuclear deal and withdrawing troops from Syria. Rood “never hesitated to tell the suburban neighborhood that he disagreed on stuff,” a former administration official told Politico. “He defied the administration’s policy decisions.”

Now, Trump is reportedly nominating retired Army Brig. Gen. Anthony Tata — a Fox News regular — as Rood’s successor. It’s impossible to imagine Mattis signing off on this choice for the Defense Department’s No. 3 job.

Tata is a West Point graduate who had a distinguished Army career, but he retired under a cloud. According to the Raleigh (N.C.) News and Observer, in 2012, Tata’s inspector general concluded that, while still married to his first wife, Tata had affairs with women, and he had a romantic affair with a non-commissioned officer — and that he had a son out of wedlock. Army leadership chose to let it go, even though adultery is technically a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, because Tata believed that his marriage was over. But the inspector general concluded that his “actions reflected poor judgment and a pattern of misbehavior.”

Under the circumstances, his misconduct was prejudicial to good order and discipline.

Army investigators also looked into complaints from Tata’s (by then gone) aide that he had failed to pay court-ordered child support. They dismissed the accusation after Tata produced a court order that contained an arrears equation and mentioned a penalty for non-payment.

They deny the court order turned out to be a forgery. Tata denied connecting the court order, but did decide to refer a few months later.

Since leaving the Army, Tata has authorized Tom Clancy-style thrillers and he has served — or something — as chief operating officer of D.C. Public Schools, superintendent of the Wake County, and was court-ordered to stop using military-related themes. He was fired from the Wake County post after less than two years.

But that is not why he is being nominated for a top Pentagon job. It is because of his shameless boosterism for Trump on Fox News.

A Dec. 29, 2018, article on Fox News’ website gives a taste of Tata’s abject sycophancy: “President Trump’s foreign policy achievements in his first four years are staggering in their success … From muting the North Korean missile and nuclear threats, to mostly defeating ISIS in Syria, to countering Russia by insisting that NATO member nations … pay their fair share to defend themselves. President Trump is hitting on all international relations cylinders.”

There is seemingly nothing that Trump can’t do a block, or two, or three in a night for, according to Parade magazine. “And then voila now they’re in people’s homes. Streets are emptier, emboldening pests to take over. And when something goes wrong — such as the sound will help scare them away. Your name will not be mentioned, and unaddressed because of COVID-19?”

“I’m extremely concerned,” Chelsea Gridley-Smith, director of environment for the National Association of County and City Health Officials, told me. Because local health departments are focused on COVID-19, many lack the resources to tackle the simultaneous spread of rats. Several city health departments are unable to even continue their normal pest management, let alone expand to address the surges into new areas.

No neighborhood is safe. Contrary to popular opinion, rats are not just an urban problem or a companion to poverty. “Hotel, apartment, private home, mansion, you name it,” Corrigan says. “Rats do not discriminate.”

Beyond the current challenge, rodent experts also worry about what happens when the COVID-19 pandemic ends. Pest management expert Angela Tucker warns that people could face unpleasant surprises when they return to workplaces where rats will have had months to flourish unrestrained. Especially troubling are shuttered restaurants, which, even if they were rodent-free in February, might not pass rat inspections a month from now.

The good news is that there are ways to mount an anti-rat resistance. Seal gaps under doors or other entrance points into your home. (Rats can squeeze through a hole the size of a quarter.) Use the garbage disposal, if you have one, to limit the food waste you’re putting in the trash can. Make sure your trash stays in tightly sealed, lid-covered, secure bins. Avoid keeping yard debris, like leaf piles or construction materials, where rats can hide.

Know the signs of rat infestations. Look for droppings and gnaw marks. Check around dense vegetation or shrubs, because rats like to dig burrows in areas with ground cover. Keep a keen eye out at night, when they are much more likely to be active. And be vigilant about cleaning. Rats “basically pee everywhere they go,” Gridley-Smith says.

If you spot a rat in an alley or public street, call your local health department or animal control.

The key to getting ahead of an outbreak is to avoid an experience like mine, make noise — rustle something, jangle some keys — as you approach an area where you fear rats might be present, as Mr. Trump’s friend Tata is suggesting.

On that night, I had silently approached the trash cans at just the hour when my neighbor was gearing up for his evening exploits. I recoant this tale not to create extra stress but to prevent it. If raising awareness and sharing expert tips can help keep vermin at bay, then perhaps I will have confronted a rat so that you don’t have to.

Trump fan not the person for Pentagon post

By Max Boot

The Washington Post

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The Washington Post
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Back in full swing

Taiwanese league under way in empty stadiums

By RALPH JENNINGS
Associated Press

NEW TAIPEI CITY, Taiwan (AP) — Taiwan is set to begin baseball season Feb. 15, 2020, at the Xinzhuang Baseball Stadium in New Taipei City, Taiwan. Taiwan’s five-time Chinese Professional Baseball League is banning spectators over concerns of spreading the coronavirus in a crowded space. But Taiwan has relatively few cases of COVID-19 so the league decided it was safe to let in players, coaches, cheerleaders, costumed mascots, face-mask-wearing batboys and the media. "We’d like to have fans coming into the stadium to cheer us on, yet due to the outbreak they can’t," said Wang, an infielder for Brothers. "We are still lucky, since we have not stopped our season and people can still see us in this way." Other baseball leagues around the world have been postponed or canceled or delayed competition. The Tokyo Olympics have been pushed back a year. At the Taiwan ballpark, about 150 placards were placed upright, some with cut-out effigies, and thanked Taiwan’s medical personnel for keeping coronavirus cases low on the Western Pacific island.

Rock and roll sounds blasted out of the bleachers as if in a normal game, and players did some cheering for their teammates to replace the din of fans. "I think it feels like a real game," said Mac Huang, a long-time baseball fan and middle school teacher. "They think what we’re doing is really good. We won’t find it so different, actually." He particularly noted the impact of players being “scolded” by comments from fans in the stands.

A Monkeys game on April 15 attracted about 650,000 viewers through the season’s end in mid-May. "Because there is so much room up there in the stands, it leaves space for creativity and each team can be creative as it wishes," the commissioner said.

Teams are still making some money from broadcast games, he said. The league charges a subscription fee for online viewers. In Taiwan’s Taoyuan county, the unbeaten Rakuten Monkeys are charming fans by playing 40 mannequins in the stands — to be sent to local clothing stores once their duties are done. Stadium seats support four long LED-lit display boards that twinkle with slogans to inspire base hits and home runs.

The Monkeys, last season’s champions, deploy six robots to deploy six robots to bang drums along with the cheerleaders. Fans are excited enough that about 50 of them have sponsored the LED boards, cheer squad leader Eric Chiu said. "We have to be grateful to Taiwan’s citizens for keeping the outbreak under control and let us do this," league commissioner Wu Chih-yang said.

To keep fans watching on their phones, PCs and TVs, the league is encouraging teams to give their stadiums a realistic, lively feel. That’s where the placards and cheerleaders come in. Online game commentary is being broadcast in English as well as Chinese this year in case overseas fans want to watch a live season. "Because there is so much room up there in the stands, it leaves space for creativity and each team can be creative as it wishes," the commissioner said.

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**Analysis**

**Time for unity has come**

Federer’s online comments spark conversation about bringing together WTA, ATP

**By Howard Fendrich**

Associated Press

Here was Billie Jean King’s initial reaction when she saw Roger Federer’s tweets suggesting that the men’s and women’s professional tennis tours unite: “I was ecstatic” to see Roger Federer champion the cause of unifying the WTA and ATP online, saying “The time’s right.”

It probably should have happened a long time ago, but maybe now is really the time.

Roger Federer

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Just brought back memories of how hard we’ve been trying all these years for that to happen," King said. "In my day, the men could just curl up and grab their heads around us ever making a dime."
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She ushered in women’s pro tennis with a group called the Original 9, which signed a contract for a symbolic $1 to start a tour in 1970. Then she got the WTA going in 1973, a year after the ATP was formed.

"The men always felt that they were more dominant in the sport," said Dell, who played mixed doubles at Wimbledon with King in the 1960s. "Now equal prize money has come into the sport, and the women's game has grown and grown, and we’re finally equal.""

"I’m ecstatic to see Roger Federer champion the cause of unifying the WTA and ATP online, saying “The time’s right.”
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You know you per our discussions I completely agree that it would be great to get out of this world crisis with the union of men’s and women’s tennis in one only organisation tennis ball.”
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Kygios was undeterred, returning to Twitter later to follow up on his comments.
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“Did anyone ask the majority of the ATP what they think about merging with the WTA and how it is good for us?”
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He followed that up with another, more declarative tweet: “We shouldn’t merge.”
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It might be complicated to figure out how to make it happen — Dell asks. Start with a commissioner’s office led by two people, one from each tour — but the benefits could be enormous, both in terms of finances and appeal to the public.
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As Federer noted: “It’s too confusing for the fans when there are different rankings systems, different logos, different websites, different tournament categories.”
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He wasn’t advocating for competition to be combined. He was pushing for the sport to be run as one sport. And that would put it in a unique position, with global appeal because it features men and women. They already share a stage at the four Grand Slam tournaments and combined events such as at Indian Wells or the Miami Open."
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It probably should have happened a long time ago, but maybe now is really the time,” Federer wrote, with an eye to the financial woes facing players, tournaments and the tours themselves as a result of the coronavirus pandemic that has shuttered tennis until at least mid-July. “These are tough times in every sport, and we can come out of this with 2 weakened bodies or 1 stronger body.”
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The current head of the women’s tour, Steve Simon, and the leader of the men’s, Andrea Gaudenzi, have been cooperating to deal with the consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak.
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“Tennis has always led the way when it comes to putting men and women together on the biggest stages,” Gaudenzi said via email. “It’s one of our strengths, and sets us apart from many other sports.”

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**NCAA men’s hoops get options**

**INDIANAPOLIS — The NCAA is giving teams new scheduling options for the 2020-21 season.**

The NCAA’s Division I Council approved a proposal Friday to give men’s basketball programs choices with 26- and 29-game schedules.

The council vote still must be reviewed by the NCAA Board of Directors and won’t be considered final until the conclusion of its board meeting on Wednesday.

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**49ers acquire Pro Bowler Williams from Redskins**

Associated Press

The San Francisco 49ers acquired seven-time Pro Bowl offensive tackle Trent Williams from the Washington Redskins on Saturday, sending a fifth-round pick in this year’s draft and a 2021 third-rounder to acquire Williams.

Williams’ agent, Vincent Taylor, said in a statement that it was time for Williams to leave Washington after he sat out all last season in a dispute with management.

“Trent Williams is ready to get back to competing in the NFL and is glad to be part of a great organization like the San Francisco 49ers,” Taylor said.

Two people familiar with the deal say the Niners will send a fifth-round pick in this year’s draft and a 2021 third-rounder to acquire Williams. The people spoke on condition of anonymity because the compensation hasn’t been announced.

Williams sat out the entire 2019 season because of a dispute with Washington’s front office.

The deal reunites him with 49ers coach Kyle Shanahan, who was the offensive coordinator in Washington when Williams was drafted fourth overall in 2010.

**NASCAR race in N.C. possible**

**CHARLOTTE, N.C. — The governor of North Carolina said Thursday that NASCAR teams can work in their race shops if they maintain social distancing guidelines, clearing a potential hurdle to resuming the sport.**

While such a move, if it actually happens, would be arriving about a half-century late, this most certainly is a case of better late than never, no matter what someone like 24-year-old Australian player Nick Kyrgios thinks.

“Did anyone ask the majority of the ATP what they think about merging with the WTA and how it is good for us?”
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**Briefly**

The San Francisco 49ers acquired seven-time Pro Bowl offensive tackle Trent Williams from the Washington Redskins on Saturday, sending a fifth-round pick in this year’s draft and a 2021 third-rounder to acquire Williams.
Davis, US boxers remain committed

BY GREG BEACHAM
Associated Press

LOS ANGELES — Keyshawn Davis took several weeks to choose his path to boxing stardom after the Tokyo Olympics were postponed.

Thanks to the coronavirus pandemic, the top professional prospect on the U.S. Olympic qualification team was suddenly facing nearly a year without an amateur fight that he could accept one of several lucrative offers to begin his professional career immediately.

Davis began his deliberation, the 21-year-old lightweight was leaning toward turning pro. After speaking to family, coaches and his fellow fighters, he decided to keep his Olympic flame burning.

“It’s just hard to say no to the Olympics,” Davis said from his home in Virginia. “That’s like passing up a deal right in front of your face that makes a lot of sense.”

Every member of the U.S. team agrees so far. Even with an extra year to wait, Davis and his 12 teammates are all still focused on Tokyo and the rewards of the Olympic experience.

The Olympic postponement could have caused upheaval for many Western nations’ teams in an amateur sport that frequently loses its brightest talents to the pros, even in normal Olympic cycles. But U.S. head coach Billy Walsh has managed to keep his whole team together for 2021 by selling his boxers on the prospect of brighter pro futures if they show a little patience.

“We’ve always had that challenge,” said Walsh, the Irish coach who has restored the fractured U.S. program to respectability in his five years in charge. “Since I came here, we’ve turned that around a piece. We’ve given the guys the vision of first becoming an Olympic champion, as all the greats did back in the day, and using that for a platform to launch your professional career.”

After decades of the pro game’s predation and innumerable scandals, amateur boxing is no longer the marquee Olympic event that catapulted Muhammad Ali (then known as Cassius Clay), Sugar Ray Leonard and Oscar De La Hoya to athletic superstardom.

Yet Olympic experience still turns heads within the sport — and it remains an enormously valuable commodity to boxing promoters, who pay higher prices for fighters they can promote with “Olympian” perpetually affixed to their moniker.

And if a boxer manages to come home with gold, the game changes even more. Just ask two-time gold medalists Vasyl Lomachenko or Claressa Shields, who established pro careers and claimed world title belts within months of their Olympic triumphs.

“You can go now, and you’re going to have to take 20-odd fights to fight for a world title,” Walsh told his fighters recently. “You go get an Olympic gold, or if you have those Olympic rings on your shoulder, that will fast-track you to world title fights. You’re a name. You’re known. You’re an Olympian.”

Olympic pole vaulting silver medalist Sandi Morris runs on the vaulting runway she is building with her father in Greenville, S.C. Morris didn’t have a place to practice and plenty of down time due to the coronavirus pandemic. So she and her father are constructing their own pole vault setup.

Morris building own pole vault setup

BY PAT GRAHAM
Associated Press

As soon as this weekend (they just need the landing mat to arrive).

Viewing is definitely encouraged — from windows for now (social distancing and all).

“There are tons of houses that can see the field from their windows,” said the 27-year-old Morris, who usually trains in Fayetteville, Ark., but traveled home to start the project with the Tokyo Games postponed to next summer and no foreseeable competitions. “So I’m being literal when I say they’re going to watch me from their windows. It will be fun.”

This project has been in the back of their minds for ages. Morris would always venture home and wouldn’t be able to stay long because she had to return to practice.

Now, her coach can simply send along a workout.

“This virus kind of pushed us to do something that we’ve always wanted to do,” said Morris, who finished second to Katerina Stefanidi of Greece at the 2016 Rio Olympics.

The entire endeavor took about three weeks and cost around $4,000 (not counting the landing mat, which usually runs around $30,000 but was loaned to her). There’s a rubber surface covering the runway for better traction, too. No concrete was used so it can be moved (albeit, not easily).

The blueprint was provided by Scott Kendricks, the father of two-time world pole vaulting champion Sam Kendricks. The Kendricks family built a similar setup years ago in Mississippi (they’ve since switched to a fabricated runway).
old powers trending in wrong direction

BY RALPH D. RUSSO
Associated Press

Miami and Nebraska dominated college football from the 1980s through the early 2000s. Since the Hurricanes and Cornhuskers played for the 2001 national championship, they have been trending in the wrong direction, and both are coming off losing seasons in 2019.

So maybe it should be no surprise that neither the Hurricanes nor Cornhuskers had a player taken in the NFL draft's first three rounds. Heading into Saturday's final four rounds, Miami is still trying to extend a streak of having at least one player drafted that started in 1976. Nebraska will try to avoid a second straight season of no drafted players after having its 56-year streak snapped in 2019.

Other prominent college programs without a draft pick after Friday's third and second rounds would be Michigan State, Oklahoma, Stanford and Virginia Tech.

Through three rounds, none of the power five schools in North Carolina had a player drafted. The first round saw Carolina college player drafted was safety Kyle Dugger from Division II Lenoir-Rhyne, taken in the second round by New England. In the third round, running back Darrynton Evans from Appalachian State was selected by the Denver Broncos and Alex Highsmith from Charlotte was picked by Pittsburgh.

Meanwhile, national champion LSU tied a record with 10 players taken in the first three rounds and the Southeastern Conference had a record 40 players drafted overall.

Miami was the No. 1 producer of NFL players for years in the 1980s and '90s while winning four national titles. "The U" was inarguably the most powerful college football program overall.

So maybe it should be no surprise that they were left out in the first round. But the Hurricanes and Cornhuskers have gone without a first-round pick for 20 consecutive years.

This is the third straight season Nebraska has gone without a first-round pick after having its 56-year streak snapped in 2019.

In adjusted terms, both schools were trending in the wrong direction, and both are coming off losing seasons in 2019.

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Receiver-heavy

Wideouts valued most in second round

By Barry Wilner
Associated Press

Pitch and catch.
While only one quarterback, Oklahoma’s Jalen Hurts, was taken in the second round of the NFL Draft on Friday, the guys who haul in passes were everywhere.

Starting with the top two selections on Day 2 — Clemson’s Tee Higgins to Cincinnati and Southern California’s Michael Pittman to Indianapolis — seven wideouts were drafted. Add that to the six who went in the opening session, and it set an NFL record through two rounds.

The NFL these days is built on passing offenses. This draft is loaded with outstanding pass catchers. Many teams had both Higgins and Pittman rated as top-32 talent.

So the Cincinnati Bengals held firm atop the second round by grabbing Higgins to catch Joe Burrow’s passes. The pair worked out together heading toward the draft.

And Higgins idolizes Bengals star receiver A.J. Green.

“I actually model my game after him,” Higgins said. “Man, it’s crazy. I was just

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