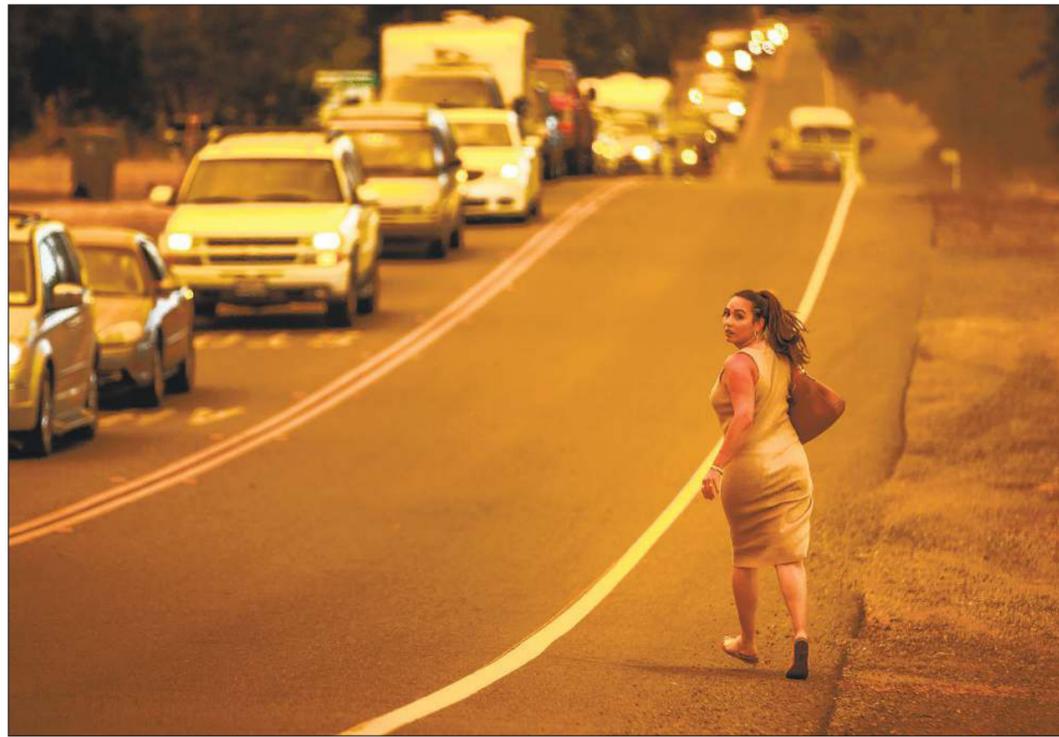


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Photographs by ETHAN SWOPE Associated Press

A WOMAN RUNS and drivers leave town Tuesday as the Thompson fire burns in Oroville, Calif. A Cal Fire official said some residents who lost homes to the 2018 Camp blaze were being asked to evacuate once again.

Debate disaster places Harris in delicate position

The vice president is unbending in her support for Biden, but she needs to guard her place as next in line.

By NOAH BIERMAN AND HANNAH WILEY

WASHINGTON — Vice President Kamala Harris wouldn't bite.

"Joe Biden is our nominee," she told a CBS News reporter outside a San Francisco fundraiser Tuesday night amid signs the president's Democratic dam was breaking.

The reporter tried another tactic, asking whether she was ready to lead the country if needed. Nothing.

"I am proud to be Joe Biden's running mate," she replied.

In the week since Biden's disastrous debate performance, Harris has received more attention than at any time since her early, rocky days as his No. 2. Polls and party infrastructure give her an advantage over other possible Biden replacements, should he choose to step out of the race against former President Trump.

But Harris is in a delicate position — a magnified version of the political pressure she has faced throughout her tenure in office. She can't afford to show even a hint that she is looking to replace Biden, the oldest U.S. president at 81. Yet she has to watch her back, to make sure others do not usurp her in the event Biden's job becomes available.

"She absolutely, positively has to dance with the one who brought her, and any daylight that she shows between herself and the only person on Earth who could be called her boss would be seen as disloyal," said one former advisor, who requested anonymity to avoid angering fellow Democrats

with succession talk. "If ground keeps shifting ... inevitably she's going to be put in a position of potentially having to make a decision or maybe a decision's being made for her."

So far, she's been earning relatively good marks from Democrats appreciative of her attempts to defend Biden, while Republicans continue to mock her public speeches as word salads.

"It's been interesting to watch people who have been critical of her over the last 3½ years say, 'Oh, I'd support her,'" said an ally who is in regular contact with Harris' and Biden's inner circles, who asked for anonymity to avoid upsetting friends in Biden's orbit. "People believe, and have always believed, she can prosecute the case."

Harris went on CNN within minutes of last week's debate, when most Democrats were still shell-shocked, offering the first version of Biden's defense. She acknowledged what she called a "slow start" while insisting, "I'm not going to spend all night with you talking about the last 90 minutes when I've been watching the last 3½ years."

Harris has made a similar case since then, traveling to speeches and fundraisers, [See Harris, A5]

Some staying as fire spreads

When authorities ordered Brian Wong and his neighbors to evacuate as the Thompson fire bore down on the city of Oroville this week, the restaurant owner knew he couldn't leave.

He had learned from the 2018 Camp fire how things can go wrong for people who can't defend their property, he said.

Oroville is about 20 miles south of Paradise, where the deadliest wildfire in California history killed 85 people and destroyed the Butte County town.

"In the past I wouldn't hesitate to leave, but I'm hearing a lot of stories about fire victims that were not taken care of in Paradise," the 53-year-old said. "I'm afraid of leaving my house, leaving my property, and next thing it burns and we get into a complicated mess."

"I'm choosing to stay behind and defend my property if I need to," he added.

As of Wednesday, more than 28,000 Butte County

While 28,000 in Butte County are under evacuation orders, one says Oroville residents 'have been through this numerous times'

By MELODY GUTIERREZ, BRITNY MEJIA, JIREH DENG AND SUMMER LIN
REPORTING FROM OROVILLE, CALIF.



NINE fires ignited in Northern California on Tuesday. The Thompson is the largest at over 3,500 acres.

residents were under evacuation orders. The Thompson fire had grown to more than 3,500 acres with 0% containment. Four homes had been destroyed and thousands of structures were under threat, according to Rick Carhart, a public information officer with Cal Fire's Butte County station.

Carhart said a number of evacuees who lost their homes in the Camp fire were being forced to flee once more.

Crews battled the blaze — one of several that broke out across the state this week — under excessive heat and red flag warnings. Temperatures were forecast to reach 108 degrees Wednesday, with wind gusts of 15 to 20 mph.

Much of Northern California remains under a red flag warning, an alert for extreme fire weather. A combination of winds up to 30 mph, low humidity and hot temperatures "can contribute," [See Wildfire, A10]



KATHARINE LOTZE Getty Images

ANGEL CITY FC now values itself at \$300 million after being started four years ago, according to a report. Above, Angel City's Gisele Thompson fights for the ball.

Women's sports getting big boost with power couple buying into Angel City

By KEVIN BAXTER

Walt Disney Co. chief executive Bob Iger and his wife, Willow Bay, dean of the USC Annenberg School of Journalism, are close to completing a deal in which they

would invest \$250 million in Angel City FC, nearly doubling the value of the most valuable women's sports franchise in the world.

Dylan Byers of the news website Puck was first to report on the negotiations, which were confirmed to

The Times by two people with knowledge of the investment but who are not authorized to speak about it on the record. The transaction could be completed quickly, with Bay and Iger replacing Reddit co-founder [See Angel City, A7]

Paramount-Skydance deal is back on track. What happened?

After mogul nixes proposed sale, tech scion comes back with a sweetened offer for the Redstone family.

By MEG JAMES

A storied movie studio and broadcast network are poised for a generational changing of the guard that could dramatically reshape the entertainment business.

Shari Redstone and her family on Tuesday accepted tech scion David Ellison's proposed \$2.4-billion purchase of their investment firm, National Amusements Inc., commonly known as NAI, which owns the controlling shares of beleaguered media company Paramount Global.

The Redstone family submitted the offer from

Ellison's Skydance Media to Paramount's special board committee, which now must accept or reject it. The struggling media giant owns CBS, the Paramount Pictures film studio and cable channels MTV, Nickelodeon and Comedy Central.

On Wednesday, Paramount board members began evaluating the offer, a version of which they came close to approving three weeks ago before Redstone got cold feet and called off the talks. Now the question hangs over the company: Is the deal for real this time, and what happens once it closes?

"It's feeling a lot like Groundhog Day," analyst Jamie Lumley of research firm Third Bridge said in an emailed statement. "Renewed hope that both parties will be able to get a deal over the line is being tempered by concerns that [See Paramount, A7]

Boxer is giving Biden a deadline

MARK Z. BARABAK

When Barbara Boxer arrived in the U.S. Senate, her image as a fiery liberal from Marin County — land of crystals, hot tubs and aging hippies — preceded her.

It was not a good thing. "The word was that I was this very militant feminist and the guys were frightened to death," Boxer recalled.

The colleague who smoothed her path — "She's good people," he assured the Old Bulls — was Joe Biden, who by 1993 was already starting his third decade on Capitol Hill.

The two grew close, personally and politically. "We really bonded on protecting dolphins and protecting women," Boxer said of their legislative work (regulating purse seine nets, cracking down on domestic violence), which had begun in the 1980s when she was in the House.

Boxer endorsed Biden when he ran for president in 1988 and again in 2020, notably passing over the Democrat who replaced her in the Senate, Kamala Harris.

Given all that, Boxer was slack-jawed as she and family members watched Biden mumble and bumble his way through his disastrous debate performance last week. "This wasn't the Joe we knew," she said. "Something was off."

Instantly, what had been a persistent, low-grade nervousness among Democrats turned into a full-fledged party freak-out. A small but growing chorus [See Barabak, A5]



Newsom scraps anti-crime plan
Some fellow Democrats dissent on alternative to GOP-backed measure. CALIFORNIA, B1

Inspired by immigrants
Celebrate newcomers on July 4, columnist Gustavo Arellano writes. CALIFORNIA, B1

LeBron James to stay with Lakers
They agree to two-year contract with no-trade clause and \$104-million maximum. SPORTS, B10

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PERSPECTIVES

West Bank land at center of L.A. protest

The recent violence at the Adas Torah synagogue in Los Angeles was rooted in a decades-long international battle over the expansion of Jewish settlements on land Israel seized and occupied during its 1967 Six-Day War with Arab states.

The latest skirmish in that battle — which has been at the center of Israeli-Palestinian animosities — broke out June 23 when pro-Palestinian demonstrators, protesting against a real estate promotional event in which at least one company was offering properties for sale in the occupied West Bank, clashed with pro-Israeli counterprotesters.

Building settlements on seized Palestinian land is a violation of international law and threatens the prospects that Palestinians will one day have an independent country as part of a two-state solution. But the Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has consistently resisted U.S. and international pressure to stop settlement building. The government is reportedly considering legalizing five more settlements in the West Bank.

The conflict over the fate of Palestinian lands intensified in October when Hamas militants attacked Israel, leading to the ongoing war in Gaza. The future of the West Bank, where Jews have purchased property for decades, was quickly drawn into the conflict as leading figures in Israel's right-wing government called for protecting Israel by expanding settlements on biblical territory Jews refer to as Judea and Samaria.

Netanyahu's strategy, which has been embraced with fervor by nationalists and ultraconservative Jews, is to create a patchwork of Israeli settlements to block the forming of a contiguous Palestinian state.

In late June, a real estate venture called My Home In Israel advertised homes for sale at the event at Adas Torah. An archive of the website for My Home In Israel showed properties listed for as much as \$4.1 million in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and in the West Bank settlements of Ariel and Efrat, which was established in the 1980s and has stone homes and the air of a Southern California neighborhood.

My Home In Israel could not be reached for comment. Other companies, including the similarly named Home In Israel, which is run by Julian Shapiro, do not sell properties in the West Bank, Shapiro said. Since Hamas attacked Israel there's been a "big, big rise" in interest by American Jews to invest in the country, he said. Much of that, according to real estate developers, is driven by Jews wanting to show solidarity

Clash at Adas Torah synagogue was sparked by an event promoting real estate for Jewish settlements in seized Palestinian territory

By Jeffrey Fleishman



MAYA ALLERUZZO Associated Press

THE JEWISH settlement of Efrat in the occupied West Bank. Building settlements on seized Palestinian land violates international law and threatens the prospects for a future, contiguous Palestinian state.

with Israelis, growing anti-semitism, and opportunities for those seeking long-term investments.

"America is our biggest market right now," said Shapiro, who has been brokering Israel properties from his base outside Tel Aviv to clients around the world for 24 years. "We would never sell a property in the West Bank. We don't think it's the right thing to do." He said he follows the protests and political sensitivity in the U.S. around the occupied territories, suggesting that he doesn't want to be unfairly targeted by protesters: "We don't want to advertise because it causes all kinds of havoc."

Marketing programs in Canada and the U.S. by the Israeli Real Estate Event have elicited protests this year by pro-Palestinian demonstrators. A promotion at a New York synagogue was canceled over fears of unrest. The majority of properties offered at the promotions, which connected potential buyers with mortgage brokers, lawyers and builders, were within Israel's legal borders. The West Bank settlements of Efrat, Neve Daniel and Maale Adumim were also advertised, according to a flier cited by the Times of Israel.

An ad for the event, which was organized by Gidon

Katz, a global promoter of Israel real estate, read: "In a world where uncertainty looms and anti-Semitism shows its face more boldly than ever, the decision to invest in a home in Israel is not just wise — it's exhilarating!"

Tensions around West Bank lands are unlikely to ease. Politicians and Jewish community groups condemned the violence at Adas Torah as an act of anti-semitism. There was criticism of police tactics from both groups, and U.S. Atty. Gen. Merrick Garland said

his office would investigate.

The West Bank — about the size of Delaware — was seized from Jordan in the Six-Day War. An estimated 500,000 Israelis — up from 300,000 in 2010 — live in enclaves among about 2.7 million Palestinians. About 40% of the West Bank is run by the semiautonomous Palestinian Authority, which receives much of its funding from Israel.

The territory has become increasingly violent, and international officials worry that further expansion of Is-

raeli settlements will open a second front in the Gaza war.

"Settler violence and settlement-related violations have reached shocking new levels, and risk eliminating any practical possibility of establishing a viable Palestinian state," United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said in a statement in March. At least 500 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed by Israeli forces — and some by settlers — since October, according to

the Palestinian Authority Health Ministry.

The Hamas-led attack on Israel, which killed some 1,200 people, shook Israel's sense of security. Israel retaliated with a war in Gaza that has killed at least 37,900 Palestinians, according to the territory's Health Ministry, and devastated the enclave. That has emboldened right-wing nationalists to push for a more aggressive occupation of the West Bank, including ragtag outposts that fly tattered flags and dot hilltops around Palestinian orchards and grazing lands.

The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem has said: "In order to expand and consolidate control over the lands it occupied, Israel has applied myriad military, civilian, legal and administrative measures through which it has torn apart Palestinian space, divided the Palestinian population into dozens of disconnected enclaves and unraveled its social, cultural and economic fabric."

More than 250,000 Palestinians were displaced from Gaza and the West Bank in 1967. Despite years of global condemnation, Israel disputes that the West Bank settlements are illegal. It has taken a harder stance that threatens to incite wider Middle East conflict.

Ultraconservatives in the Netanyahu government claim that the Palestinian Authority can no longer be trusted to administer its part of the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority has "joined Hamas in trying to harm Israel in Israel and the world, and we will fight it," Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said in a statement published in the Jerusalem Post. "For those who needed proof, we got it on October 7. A Palestinian state in the heart of Israel is an existential danger; I will not allow such a disaster to be brought upon the State of Israel."

Israel's turbocharged land seizure

Appropriation in West Bank is largest parcel approved in years, a tracking group says.

By Julia Frankel

JERUSALEM — Israel has approved the largest seizure of land in the occupied West Bank in more than three decades, a settlement tracking group said Wednesday, a move that is likely to worsen already soaring tensions linked to the war in Gaza.

Israel's aggressive expansion in the West Bank reflects the settler community's strong influence in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government, the most religious and nationalist in the country's history. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a settler himself, has turbocharged the policy of expansion, seizing new authorities over settlement development and saying he aims to solidify Israel's hold on the territory and prevent the creation of a Palestinian state.

Authorities recently approved the appropriation of nearly 5 square miles of land in the Jordan Valley, according to a copy of the order obtained by the Associated Press. Data from Peace Now, the tracking group, indicate it was the largest single appropriation approved since the 1993 Oslo accords at the start of the peace process.

Settlement monitors said the land grab connects Israeli settlements along a key corridor bordering Jordan, a move they said undermines the prospect of a contiguous Palestinian state.

It is in an area of the West Bank where, even before the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war, settler violence was displacing communities of Palestinians. That violence has only surged since Hamas' Oct. 7 attack ignited the war in Gaza. Settlers have carried out more than 1,000 attacks on Palestinians since October in the West Bank, causing deaths and damaging property, according to the United Nations.

The land seizure, which was approved late last month but publicized only



NASSER NASSER Associated Press

PALESTINIANS carry the bodies of those killed in an Israeli airstrike near Tulkarm, in the West Bank.

on Wednesday, comes after the seizure of roughly 3 square miles of land in the West Bank in March and 1 square mile in February.

That makes 2024 by far the peak year for Israeli land seizure in the West Bank, Peace Now said.

By declaring them state lands, the government opens them up to being leased to Israelis and prohibits private Palestinian ownership. This year's land seizures are contiguous, linking two already existing settlements to create a solid block near the border with Jordan. The lands were declared to be closed Israeli military zones before they were declared state land.

The Palestinians view the expansion of settlements in the occupied West Bank as the main barrier to any lasting peace agreement, preventing any possibility of a cohesive state. Most of the international community considers settlements illegal or illegitimate.

Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East War, territories the Palestinians want for a future state. Israel's current government considers the West Bank to be the historical and religious heartland of the Jewish people and opposes Palestinian statehood.

Israel has built well more than 100 settlements across the West Bank, some of which resemble fully developed suburbs or small towns. They are home to more than 500,000 Jewish settlers who have Israeli citizenship.

The 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under seemingly open-ended Israeli military rule. The Palestinian Authority administers enclaves scattered across the territory but is barred from operating in 60% of the West Bank, which includes the settlements as well as areas with a population of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians.

Yoni Mizrahi, the head of settlement tracking at Peace Now, described the land grab announced Wednesday as part of a strategy to establish a buffer zone between Jordan and Palestinian lands and choke off the practical possibility of a Palestinian state. The aim, he believes, is to push Palestinians into isolated islands surrounded by Israeli land.

"They definitely see this area as a strategic area, as the first and one of the easiest ways to begin annexation," he said.

Prominent human rights organizations have pointed to Israel's rule over the West Bank in accusing it of the international crime of apartheid, allegations Israel rejects as an attack on its legitimacy.

Smotrich was granted expanded powers over Israel's administration of the occupied territory under Netanyahu's governing coalition. Smotrich laid out his plans for the West Bank at a conference for his ultranationalist Religious Zionism Party last month, a recording of which was obtained by Peace Now. He said he intended to appropriate up to nearly 6 square miles of land

in the West Bank this year.

"We came to settle the land, to build it, and to prevent its division and the establishment of a Palestinian state, God forbid," he said during the conference. He vowed to "change the map dramatically" by claiming more West Bank land than ever as state land.

He also promised to expand the establishment of farming outposts, which hard-line settlers have used to extend their control of rural areas, and to crack down on Palestinian construction.

The proliferation of outposts has driven up settler violence in the West Bank since the start of the Israel-Hamas war, rights groups say, leading several Palestinian villages to leave their land.

Palestinians say the violence is geared toward putting wide swaths of land under Israeli control and pushing the prospect of a Palestinian state further from reach.

The U.S., European Union, Britain and Canada have imposed high-level sanctions against violent settlers and settler organizations, but some of those targeted have told the AP that the measures have had little effect.

The declaration published Wednesday was signed under the authority of Hillel Roth, a deputy Smotrich appointed this year to boost settlement expansion and state land declarations in the West Bank, Peace Now said.

The declaration came a day after Peace Now said Israeli authorities were scheduled to approve or advance construction of more than 6,000 new settlement homes in the occupied West Bank in the coming days.

COGAT, the Israeli military body in charge of civilian affairs in the West Bank, was not immediately available for comment.

Hamas cited the expansion of settlements as one of its justifications for the Oct. 7 attack into southern Israel, in which Palestinian militants killed about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostage.

Frankel writes for the Associated Press.

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THE WORLD



LUCANUS OLLIVIERRE Associated Press

EVACUEES from Union Island in St. Vincent and the Grenadines arrive in Kingstown, the archipelago's capital, on Tuesday after Beryl hit. On Wednesday, a hurricane watch was in effect for Haiti's southern coast.

Jamaicans board up and hunker down for Category 4 hurricane

ASSOCIATED PRESS

KINGSTON, Jamaica — Hurricane Beryl is roaring toward Jamaica on Wednesday, with islanders scrambling to make preparations after the powerful Category 4 storm earlier killed at least six people and caused significant damage in the southeastern Caribbean.

The U.S. National Hurricane Center said Beryl's eye-wall was "brushing the south coast of Jamaica."

Wind-whipped rain pounded the island for hours as residents heeded authorities' call to shelter until the storm had passed. Power was knocked out in much of the capital.

Prime Minister Andrew Holness said Wednesday afternoon that nearly 500 people were placed in shelters.

"We are placing emphasis on ensuring they are comfortable and well looked after," he said in a social media post.

Before Beryl's arrival in Kingston, people had earlier boarded up windows, fishermen pulled their boats out of the water and workers dismantled roadside advertising boards to protect them from the lashing winds.

Kingston resident Pauline Lynch said that she had

stockpiled food and water in anticipation of the storm's arrival. With wind already driving rain, Lynch said, "I have no control over what is coming so I just have to pray that all people of Jamaica is safe and we don't suffer no deaths, no loss."

By midday, winds howled in the capital, turning the sea into churning whitecaps.

"We are very concerned about a wide variety of life-threatening impacts in Jamaica," including storm surge, high winds and flash flooding, said Jon Porter, chief meteorologist at AccuWeather.

Porter called Beryl "the strongest and most dangerous hurricane threat that Jamaica has faced probably in decades."

A hurricane warning was in effect for Jamaica, Grand Cayman, Little Cayman and Cayman Brac.

Beryl was forecast to weaken slightly over the next day or two, but still be at or near major-hurricane strength when it passes near the Cayman Islands on Thursday and into Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula on Friday, according to the U.S. National Hurricane Center.

Jamaica was under a state of emergency as the island was declared a disaster zone hours before the im-

acted areas, threatened flash flooding and mudslides on the mountainous island, he said.

Mexico's Caribbean coast was preparing for Beryl on Wednesday. The government issued a hurricane warning for the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula from Puerto Costa Maya to Cancun.

The head of Mexico's civil defense agency said that Beryl is expected to make a rare double strike on Mexico.

Laura Velázquez said the hurricane is expected to make landfall between late Thursday and early Friday along a relatively unpopulated stretch of the Caribbean coast between Tulum and the inland town of Felipe Carrillo Puerto. Because the coast there is largely made up of lagoons and mangroves, there are few resorts or hotels in the area south of Tulum.

The hurricane is expected to weaken to a tropical storm as it crosses the Yucatan Peninsula and re-emerge over the weekend at storm strength in the Gulf of Mexico.

Velázquez said that Beryl is then expected to hit Mexican territory a second time in the gulf coast states of Veracruz or Tamaulipas, near the Texas border.

Heavy rains of 4 to 8 inches, with up to a foot in iso-

lated areas, threatened flash flooding and mudslides on the mountainous island, he said.

Mexico's Caribbean coast was preparing for Beryl on Wednesday. The government issued a hurricane warning for the coast of the Yucatan Peninsula from Puerto Costa Maya to Cancun.

Verdict upheld in Italy slaying

ASSOCIATED PRESS

ROME — An Italian appeals court on Wednesday upheld the convictions of two American men in the slaying of an Italian plainclothes police officer during a botched sting operation but significantly reduced their sentences.

The new verdict, ordered after Italy's highest court threw out the original convictions, drew acceptance from the men's families and disappointment from the officer's widow.

Finnegan Lee Elder and Gabriel Natale-Hjorth had been found guilty in the July 2019 slaying of Carabinieri Vice Brigadier Mario Cerciello Rega, and after the first trial, they were both sentenced to life in prison, Italy's harshest penalty.

Those sentences were reduced on appeal before Italy's highest Cassation Court last year ordered a new trial altogether. On Wednesday, the appeals court convicted Elder and sentenced him to 15 years and 2 months in prison; it sentenced Natale-Hjorth to 11 years and four months, along with a fine of 800 euros (\$863).

"I don't think we could ask for a reasonable, better decision today," said Ethan



ALESSANDRA TARANTINO Associated Press

FINNEGAN Elder, wearing plaid, is one of two U.S. men convicted in the stabbing of an Italian officer.

Elder, Finnegan Elder's father.

Teenagers at the time of the slaying, the former schoolmates from the San Francisco Bay Area had met up in Rome to spend a few days vacationing. The fatal confrontation took place after they arranged to meet a small-time drug dealer, who turned out to have been a police informant, to recover money lost in a bad drug deal. Instead, they were confronted by two officers.

Cerciello Rega was stabbed 11 times with a knife brought from the hotel room.

In ordering the retrial, the Cassation Court said it hadn't been proved beyond a reasonable doubt that the defendants, with limited Italian language skills, had understood that they were dealing with Italian police officers when they went to meet the alleged drug dealer.

Prosecutor Bruno Giangiacomo said his office would wait to read the court's written reasoning be-

fore deciding on a possible appeal.

Prosecutors had asked that Elder be sentenced to 23 years and nine months and Natale-Hjorth to 23 years.

Rosa Maria Esilio, the widow of Cerciello Rega, was devastated by the verdict, said her lawyer Massimo Ferrandino.

"For five years she has been carrying a huge pain," he said.

Prosecutors alleged that Elder stabbed Cerciello Rega with a knife that he brought with him on his trip to Europe and that Natale-Hjorth helped him hide in their hotel room. Under Italian law, an accomplice in an alleged murder can also be charged with murder without having carried out the slaying.

But lawyer Francesco Petrelli, who represented Natale-Hjorth, said the appeals court clearly recognized that there was a different level of participation by his client.

19 bodies found in latest grisly scene in Mexico

Officials say remains in and around a dump truck in Chiapas state are part of cartel wars.

By **PATRICK J. McDONNELL**

MEXICO CITY — Social media users in Mexico have been circulating a video featuring especially grisly images: a tangle of bloodied bodies, some in tactical gear, lying in a dump truck.

A narrator on the video speaks of the remains as trophies and boasts that the carnage in Chiapas state was the handiwork of the Sinaloa cartel, once the fiefdom of Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán, whose successors are moving to expand the imprisoned kingpin's former drug-smuggling empire.

This week, Mexican authorities said they discovered 19 bodies on an isolated dirt road, the latest deaths in a brutal trafficking war that has convulsed the nation's poorest and southernmost state.

The men had been shot dead, according to Mexico's Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection, their bodies found in and around the abandoned truck. At least six carried Guatemalan identification.

Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador on Tuesday called the loss of life "lamentable" and blamed a confrontation between two armed groups.

"What motivates this?" López Obrador asked at his morning news conference. "The traffic of drugs and also the traffic of migrants, of people."

The president, whose six-year term ends Oct. 1, has disputed estimates from U.S. officials and others that up to one-third of Mexican territory — including much of Chiapas state — is in effect under the control of criminal groups.

The Sinaloa cartel and its major rival, the Jalisco New Generation cartel, are said to be battling to control lucrative smuggling routes in Chiapas, which shares a long and largely remote border with Guatemala. It was unclear whether the dead were affiliated with the Jalisco cartel; nor did authorities clarify whether they were executed or killed in a shoot-

out.

The area is a prime trafficking corridor for cocaine from South America as well as migrants from across the world who enter Mexico from Central America en route to the United States. The lure of illicit profits has drawn criminal mobs to the scenic zone of jungles, mountains and rivers, where much of the population is Indigenous.

"Unfortunately, Chiapas has been caught in the middle of this trafficking war for both drugs and migrants," said Mike Vigil, former head of the Drug Enforcement Administration's overseas operations. "Smuggling migrants has now become a multibillion-dollar business for the cartels."

The Chiapas turf war has wreaked havoc in the once-peaceful state, leaving scores dead, forcing thousands to leave their homes and cratering a once-thriving tourist industry.

"Violence has spread like a cancer in our state," the Chiapas-based Fray Bartolomé de las Casas Center of Human Rights reported in April. "This situation is characterized not only by the armed confrontation among criminal groups, but also the intent to control, with strategies of terror, the social, economic and political life of the communities."

Although the mayhem in Chiapas is often described as a battle between the Sinaloa and Jalisco cartels, dozens of armed criminal gangs operate in the state, experts say, some allied with larger groups and others semiautonomous.

The Chiapas municipality of La Concordia, where the bodies were found, has seen waves of violence in recent months.

A spate of attacks on mayoral candidates and their entourages in Chiapas in the run-up to last month's elections left at least 16 dead, including Lucero Esmeralda López Maza, a 28-year-old woman running for mayor in La Concordia.

A series of gun battles there in April killed at least 10, according to police, though a human rights group put the death toll at 25.

Times special correspondent Cecilia Sánchez Vidal contributed to this report.

Israel kills another senior Hezbollah commander

ASSOCIATED PRESS

BEIRUT — An Israeli strike in southern Lebanon on Wednesday killed a senior Hezbollah commander as tensions between the two sides continue to boil, a Hezbollah official told the Associated Press.

The strike near the southern coastal city of Tyre took place as global diplomatic efforts have intensified in recent weeks to prevent escalating clashes between Hezbollah and the Israeli military from spiraling into an all-out war that could possibly lead to a direct confrontation between Israel and Iran.

A Hezbollah statement identified the commander as Mohammad Naameh Nasser, who went by the nom de guerre Abu Naameh. A Hezbollah official, speaking anonymously in line with regulations, said he was head of the group's Aziz Unit, one of three regional divisions in southern Lebanon.

Nasser is the most senior official from the Iran-backed group killed since Taleb Sami Abdullah, who was killed in an airstrike June 11. Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, in a speech honoring Abdullah, said he played a pivotal role on the front line since clashes began on Oct. 8.

Hezbollah said that in response to Nasser's killing, it launched Falaq rockets with heavy warheads targeting



Hezbollah Media Relations Office

MOHAMMAD Naameh Nasser died in a strike in southern Lebanon.

the headquarters of the Israeli military's 769th Brigade in Kiryat Shmona, as well as 100 salvos of Katyusha rockets targeting the headquarters of Israel's 210th Division and the Kilaa air base in the Israeli-occupied Syrian Golan Heights.

The group also shared video of Nasser taking part in what it said was an operation at an Israeli military outpost in southern Lebanon in 1999 back when it was under occupation.

In a video circulated by local media Wednesday, people rushed toward a charred vehicle with a large plume of smoke. Civil Defense said its first responders took an unnamed wounded person to a hospital.

The Israeli military acknowledged the attack, saying that Nasser alongside Abdullah are "two of the most significant Hezbollah" militants in southern Lebanon. It said Nasser led attacks from southwestern

Lebanon.

Hezbollah launched rockets on northern Israel a day after a Hamas surprise attack on southern Israel in October, leading to limited clashes along the tense border. The attacks have since gradually escalated, with Hezbollah introducing new weapons in the attacks and Israel striking deeper into Lebanon.

The group maintains that it will stop its attacks once there is a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip. Until then, it says, it will continue the attacks to pile pressure on Israel and the international community. Israeli officials have threatened to launch a larger military operation should Hezbollah not stop its attacks.

Hezbollah deputy leader Sheikh Naim Kassem told the Associated Press in an interview Monday that Israel cannot expect the group's attacks to remain limited should it launch a military operation within Lebanon, even if it aims to keep the conflict below the threshold of all-out war. Allies, including thousands of Iran-backed militiamen in Iraq, have offered to join Hezbollah on the front lines.

Israeli airstrikes on Lebanon since October have killed more than 450 people, most of them Hezbollah fighters, but the dead also include more than 80 civilians and noncombatants. On the Israeli side, 16 soldiers and 11 civilians have been killed.

THE NATION



DAVID J. PHILLIP Associated Press

EMERGENCY facilities received a letter from the Biden administration after the Supreme Court's failure last week to decide whether state abortion bans override a federal law that requires hospitals to stabilize patients.

Ruling prompts White House to issue emergency abortion orders

BY AMANDA SEITZ AND CHRISTINE FERNANDO

WASHINGTON — The Biden administration told emergency room doctors they must perform abortions when necessary to save a pregnant woman's health, following last week's Supreme Court ruling that failed to settle a legal dispute over whether state abortion bans override a federal law requiring hospitals to provide stabilizing treatment.

In a letter this week to doctor and hospital associations and emergency facilities, Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Director Chiquita Brooks-LaSure reminded hospitals of their legal duty to offer stabilizing treatment, which could include abortions.

"No pregnant woman or her family should have to even begin to worry that she could be denied the treatment she needs to stabilize her emergency medical condition in the emergency room," the letter said.

It continued, "And yet, we have heard story after story describing the experiences of pregnant women present-

ing to hospital emergency departments with emergency medical conditions and being turned away because medical providers were uncertain about what treatment they were permitted to provide."

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will also resume investigations into complaints against ERs in Idaho after the high court ruled last week that hospitals there must be allowed to do emergency abortions for now, despite a state ban.

In Texas, the most populous state with a strict six-week abortion ban, enforcement remains on hold due to a lower-court ruling.

The letter is the Biden administration's latest attempt to raise awareness about a 40-year-old federal law that requires almost all ERs — any that receive Medicare dollars — to provide patients stabilizing treatment in medical emergencies. Hospitals that turn away patients or refuse to provide such care are subject to federal investigations, hefty fines and loss of Medicare funding.

In response, the Texas Alliance for Life said the Biden administration "falsely suggests that... state pro-life laws fail to protect women

facing life-threatening emergencies during pregnancy."

"This is untrue," the group said in a statement, adding that such "laws provide an abortion exception for those rare but tragic circumstances [when] a pregnancy poses a threat to a mother's life, including ... when death is not imminent. Those include Texas and Idaho."

The ER is the most recent place that the Democratic administration has argued it can require rare emergency abortions to be performed despite state bans. After *Roe vs. Wade* abortion rights were overturned by the Supreme Court in 2022, the Health and Human Services Department quickly sent letters to doctors, saying that they were required to provide abortions as needed to keep patients medically stable.

An Associated Press investigation found that complaints about ERs turning away pregnant women spiked in 2022 after *Roe* was overturned, raising concerns about emergency pregnancy care in states with abortion laws.

In Idaho, enforcement of the federal law had been on hold for emergency abortions since January, when the state's ban took effect. The law threatens doctors with prison if they perform an abortion, with an exception only if a woman's life, not her health, is at risk.

The Biden administration says this conflicts with the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act, or EMTALA. Roughly 50,000 women a year develop serious pregnancy complications, such as blood loss, sepsis or organ failure. In the most serious

cases, when a fetus is unlikely to be viable, doctors may recommend abortion.

Texas is also suing the Biden administration over its guidance around the law. A lower-court ruling that said the law could be enforced is being appealed by the Justice Department to the Supreme Court.

Health and Human Services has also sought to make it easier for a patient who is turned away or not appropriately transferred to file complaints against hospitals. Earlier this year, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services unveiled a web page that allows complaints to be submitted in a straightforward, three-step process, including in Spanish.

"We will continue to build on our recent actions to educate the public about their rights to emergency medical care and to help support efforts of hospitals and health care professionals to meet their obligations," the agencies said in their letter this week.

Lupe Rodriguez, executive director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Justice, said her team encouraged Health Secretary Becerra to make such tools available in Spanish. Latinas are more likely to be uninsured, lack access to prenatal care and live in states with abortion bans, she said.

"It's incredibly important to be centering Latinas and people of color," Rodriguez added, "because we're the most impacted by these abortion bans and attempts to restrict emergency care."

Associated Press writers Seitz and Fernando reported from Washington and Chicago, respectively.

Pro-Trump group suggests a second U.S. revolution

Heritage Foundation envisions a 'bloodless' revolt with hard-right Project 2025 agenda.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — The leader of a conservative think tank orchestrating plans for a massive overhaul of the federal government in the event of a Republican presidential win said that the country is in the midst of a "second American Revolution" that will be bloodless "if the left allows it to be."

Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts made the comments Tuesday on Stephen K. Bannon's "War Room" podcast, adding that Republicans are "in the process of taking this country back."

Democrats are "apoplectic right now" because the right is winning, Roberts told Dave Brat, a former congressman from Virginia who is the podcast's guest host while Bannon serves a four-month prison term for defying a congressional subpoena in the investigation into the U.S. Capitol attack on Jan. 6, 2021.

"And so I come full circle on this response and just want to encourage you with some substance that we are in the process of the second American Revolution, which will remain bloodless if the left allows it to be," Roberts said.

His remarks shed light on what a group that promises to have significant influence over a possible second term for former President Trump is thinking about this moment in American politics.

The Heritage Foundation is spearheading Project 2025, a sweeping road map for a new GOP administration that includes plans for dismantling aspects of the federal government and ousting thousands of civil servants in favor of Trump loyalists who will carry out a hard-right agenda without complaint.

His call for revolution and

vague reference to violence also unnerved some Democrats who interpreted it as threatening.

"This is chilling," former Democratic presidential candidate Marianne Williamson wrote on the social media platform X. "Their idea of a second American Revolution is to undo the first one."

James Singer, a spokesperson for President Biden's reelection campaign, pointed to this week's Fourth of July holiday in an emailed statement.

"248 years ago tomorrow America declared independence from a tyrannical king, and now Donald Trump and his allies want to make him one at our expense," Singer said, adding that Trump and his allies are "dreaming of a violent revolution to destroy the very idea of America."

Roberts, whose name Bannon recently floated to the New York Times as a potential chief of staff option for Trump, also said on the podcast that Republicans should be encouraged by the Supreme Court's recent immunity ruling.

He said Monday's decision — which gives presidents broad immunity from prosecution — is "vital" to ensure a president won't have to "second-guess, triple-guess every decision they're making in their official capacity."

Heidi Beirich, co-founder of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, said Roberts' comments about a "second American Revolution" are "a bit terrifying but also elucidating."

The 1,000-page Project 2025 playbook calls for far-reaching changes in government, including rolling back protections for the LGBTQ+ community and infusing Christianity more deeply into society.

"Roberts, the Heritage Foundation and its allies in Project 2025 want to re-order American society and fundamentally change it," Beirich said. "He's said the quiet part out loud."



STEVE HELBER Associated Press

THE HERITAGE FOUNDATION aims to dismantle aspects of the federal government and hold sway over a potential second term for former President Trump.

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U.S. sends 116 migrants back to China

Flight comes after cooperation resumed on an issue that has stirred intense debate.

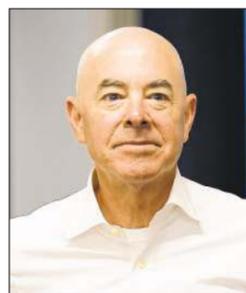
ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The Department of Homeland Security said that it sent 116 Chinese migrants in the United States back to home in the first "large charter flight" in five years.

The flight, which happened over the weekend, comes as Chinese immigration has become the subject of intense political debate in the upcoming U.S. presidential election.

"We will continue to enforce our immigration laws and remove individuals without a legal basis to remain in the United States," Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas said in a statement Tuesday.

The department said it was working with China to "reduce and deter irregular migration and to disrupt illicit human smuggling through expanded law enforcement efforts." It did not



EVAN VUCCI Associated Press

UNDER Homeland Security chief Alejandro N. Mayorkas, the U.S. is working with China to combat illegal migration.

respond to questions about how long the migrants had been in the U.S.

In recent years, the United States has had a difficult time returning Chinese nationals who do not have the right to stay in the U.S. because China has resisted taking them back. Last year, the United States saw a drastic surge in the number of Chinese migrants entering the country illegally from Mexico.

U.S. authorities arrested more than 37,000 Chinese nationals on the southern border in 2023, 10 times the

number during the previous year.

Chinese migration has increasingly become a rallying cry for Republicans and former President Trump, who have raised suspicions about why Chinese migrants are coming to the U.S. Asian advocacy organizations are concerned that the rhetoric could encourage harassment of Asians, while migrants have said they're coming to escape poverty and repression.

This year, the U.S. and China resumed cooperation on migration issues.

The Chinese government has said it is firmly opposed to "all forms of illegal immigration." In a statement in May, China's embassy in the U.S. said the country's law enforcement was cracking down "hard on crimes that harm the tranquility of national border, and maintained a high pressure against all kinds of smuggling organizations and offenders."

Homeland Security said it's working with China on more removal flights in the future but did not give a timeline for when the next one would happen.

Earlier this year, a char-

ter flight carried a small but unknown number of deportees to the northeastern Chinese city of Shenyang, according to Thomas Cartwright of Witness at the Border, an advocacy group that tracks such flights.

Homeland Security officials did not say how many people were on that March 30 flight, but the Gulfstream V aircraft typically has a seating capacity of 14. It also made a stop in South Korea before heading back to the U.S., Cartwright said.

The announcement of the large charter flight comes after Ecuador cut off a key route used by Chinese migrants to get to the Western Hemisphere. Ecuador was one of only two mainland countries in the Americas to offer visa-free entry to Chinese nationals and had become a popular starting point for Chinese migrants who then trek north to the United States.

As of July 1, Ecuador has in effect reinstated visas for Chinese nationals after the South American country said it had seen a worrying increase in irregular migration.



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Los Angeles Times



RONDA CHURCHILL/Associated Press

VICE PRESIDENT Kamala Harris speaks during a post-debate campaign rally Friday in Las Vegas. Outside a San Francisco fundraiser Tuesday night, she told a CBS News reporter firmly, "Joe Biden is our nominee."

Vice president faces political pressure — and opportunity

[Harris, from A1] including a Tuesday night event in San Francisco, in which she categorized the "elephant in the room" as both the debate and the prospect of another Trump presidency.

"She's doing her job, and to suggest there is somebody waiting in the wings, somebody looking to get a jump start on 2028 — no, that's not Kamala Harris," said Donna Brazile, an ally who wants Biden to stay at the top of the ticket.

Her sometime rival Gov. Gavin Newsom has taken a similar tack, positioning himself as a public defender for Biden, distancing himself from elements of the party who want the president to step aside. He was scheduled to visit the White House on Wednesday night to "stand with the president," he said in a fundraising email.

Harris had lunch with Biden on Wednesday. She also joined Biden on a campaign call in which he reassured staff that he was "in this race to the end," according to a person familiar with the call who spoke on condition of anonymity. "We will not back down. We will follow our president's lead. We will fight, and we will win," Harris told the staffers, this person said.

Though Biden promised her weekly lunches when she took the job, the meetings have been inconsistent, an indication that the president has often leaned more on longtime aides than on his deputy.

But if she were to run for president, she could campaign on the administration's legislative successes, including its environmental and infrastructure spending bills.

Republicans would seize on her role as a key player in Biden's immigration policy: Early in his tenure, the president assigned Harris to oversee a strategy intended to bolster economic, security and political conditions in Central America to stem the "root causes" of migration.

But Harris has never been comfortable with the assignment, and Republicans have gleefully cast her as the "border czar" as they have attacked the Biden administration for record numbers of border arrests.

Harris gained political strength after the Supreme Court overturned the right to abortion in 2022, leading the White House's response. She has been unable to change the law or to stop red states from passing extensive restrictions on the procedure, but she helped the

Democratic Party use the issue to overperform in the 2022 midterm elections. Democrats are hoping to use the issue again if they can move beyond the concerns over Biden's fitness for office.

A CNN poll released Tuesday found three-quarters of American voters believed Democrats would have a better shot at the White House without Biden. Among possible replacements, only Harris polled within 2 percentage points of Trump. Allies have long said her name recognition and control of the party apparatus would put her in a better position to lead than potential rivals, who include Newsom and Govs. Gretchen Whitmer of Michigan, Josh Shapiro of Pennsylvania and Tim Walz of Minnesota.

Rep. James E. Clyburn (D-S.C.), who has been a pivotal Biden supporter, said Tuesday on MSNBC that he would support Harris as a replacement, but that his first preference is Biden remaining the candidate.

"But I want to support her going forward, sometime in the future," he said.

But there remains deep concern about Harris in the party. Even the CNN poll showed her with ground to make up against Trump in a

theoretical matchup, and that's without the media scrutiny and Republican assault that would come with leading the ticket. And her early struggles in the job — which produced high staff turnover and low poll numbers — set a bad impression for many voters, though her average approval in polls has improved slightly in the last few months.

A March USA Today/Suffolk poll found that 54% of voters said she is not qualified to serve as president, compared with 38% who said she is. Focus groups shared with The Times by a pro-Biden Republican group this year showed swing voters and even Black voters had negative impressions, some of which her allies believe were tied to her race and gender.

But even if Harris would have work to do, no other possible replacement has faced as much national scrutiny, possibly making them a higher risk for the party.

"She has been under that spotlight and has taken her lumps as a result," said the former advisor. "No one can say she's unknown at this point."

Bierman reported from Washington and Wiley from San Francisco.

Abortion rights backers submit extra signatures

Advocates in Arizona say they have twice the number needed to put issue on ballot.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

PHOENIX — Arizona abortion rights supporters on Wednesday turned in more than double the signatures needed to put the issue on November's ballot in the key swing state.

Organizers say they submitted 823,685 signatures, far above the 383,923 required, from registered voters. The measure would add an amendment to the state constitution providing a fundamental right to an abortion if voters approve it.

County election officials have until Aug. 22 to verify whether enough of the petition signatures are valid and provide results to the Arizona secretary of state's office.

Activists in two other states — Nebraska and Arkansas — also are planning to submit signatures this week for ballot measures about abortion. If successful, those states and Arizona will join five others where the issue is set to go before voters this year: Colorado, Florida, Maryland, Nevada and South Dakota.

The issue is a key part of Democratic campaigns in this year's elections. Opponents of the proposed amendment say it goes too far and could lead to unlimited and unregulated abortions in Arizona. Supporters say a change in the state's constitution is necessary to ensure that abortion rights cannot be easily erased by a court decision or legislative vote.

The proposed constitutional amendment would allow abortions in Arizona until a fetus could survive outside the womb, typically around 24 weeks, with exceptions to save the parent's life or to protect her physical or mental health. It would restrict the state from adopting or enforcing any law that would prohibit access to the procedure.

Arizona currently has a 15-week abortion ban in place.

Officials with Arizona for Abortion Access, a coalition that includes the American Civil Liberties Union of Arizona and Planned Parenthood of Arizona, turned in hundreds of boxes of signed petitions to the secretary of state's office Wednesday morning.

Arizona for Abortion Access spokesperson Dawn Penich said it was the most signatures ever submitted for a citizens initiative in state history.

"That was our goal from

the get-go," Penich said. "We started collecting signatures in September and October 2023 and saw how passionate people are about this issue."

Arizona's current abortion ban was signed into law in 2022 and includes exceptions in cases of medical emergencies and has restrictions on medication abortion. It also requires that an ultrasound exam be performed before an abortion is done, as well as parental consent for minors.

Two months ago, the Arizona Supreme Court upheld an 1864 abortion ban that permitted the procedure only to save the mother's life and provided no exceptions for survivors of rape or incest. But the Republican-controlled Legislature voted for a repeal of the Civil War-era ban, and Democratic Gov. Katie Hobbs quickly signed it. The 19th century law had been blocked in Arizona since the U.S. Supreme Court's 1973 decision in Roe vs. Wade that affirmed the constitutional right to abortion nationwide.

In Nebraska, organizers of a petition to enshrine abortion rights in the state constitution have expressed confidence that they've gathered enough signatures to get it on the November ballot.

Allie Berry, campaign manager for Protect Our Rights, and organizers of a competing petition effort to codify Nebraska's 12-week abortion ban in the state constitution would not say how many signatures they had gathered ahead of Wednesday's deadline.

Supporters of an Arkansas proposal to scale back the state's abortion ban face a Friday deadline to submit petitions to qualify for the November ballot.

The group behind the measure, Arkansans for Limited Government, said on Tuesday that it still needed 8,200 signatures. The group must submit at least 90,704 valid signatures to qualify.

The proposed constitutional amendment would prohibit the state from banning abortion within the first 18 weeks of pregnancy. The proposal includes exemptions for rape, incest and fatal fetal anomalies and to protect the mother's life. It would also exempt abortions performed to protect the mother from a physical disorder, physical illness or physical injury.

Arkansas banned nearly all abortions under a law that took effect when the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe vs. Wade. Arkansas' ban currently exempts abortions only to protect the mother's life in a medical emergency.

Boxer gives Biden brief window to right campaign

[Barabak, from A1] has called for the 81-year-old incumbent to withdraw from the presidential race, before it's too late and he drags his party down with him. (Many more express that sentiment in private.)

Boxer isn't there. Not yet, anyway.

Two weeks, she said. Give Biden two weeks to demonstrate that his zombified appearance in Atlanta was an anomaly.

"The man has done it, time and time again," Boxer said this week in a conversation from her home in Palm Springs. "Every time he's been counted out, he's come back. Can he do it one more time? I don't know the answer. But out of respect and admiration for what he's done, let's give him the time to do it."

"And if he can't, he can't," Boxer said, "and there will be someone else."

That's not exactly a stand-firm-until-the-last-dog-dies endorsement.

But it's not casting a gravely wounded Biden to the wolves, either. When the late Sen. Dianne Feinstein was going through her widely chronicled mental and physical decline, there were widespread calls for her to quit and make way for someone younger, more vigorous and more acute. Boxer, who

made history with Feinstein when the two were elected to the Senate in tandem, offered a gentle nudge. There is life — and a good one — to be had after leaving the Senate, she advised her former colleague in a 2021 interview.

But Boxer never overtly pushed Feinstein, the way many others did. Her fellow Democrat died in September at age 90, hours after casting her final vote on the Senate floor.

The situation with Biden is different, Boxer said.

"We don't know what happened with Joe," she said, still puzzled nearly a week later.

She speculated. Perhaps his lifelong stutter kicked in under the studio lights? Maybe Biden suffered from a terrible head cold, or from cold medication he'd taken?

"I think the president owes the country an explanation," Boxer said. And more crucially, she went on, he needs to show voters that he can not only take on Donald Trump, but that he can also defeat him in November.

"He needs to be out without a script. Without a teleprompter and just face the press, face the public," she said. "That's critical."

Biden has made a few public appearances, including a comparatively feisty



CHIP SOMODEVILLA/Getty Images

BARBARA BOXER and Joe Biden, in 2006, grew close while working together in the Senate. The California Democrat now says she'll keep backing him for reelection bid if he assuages concerns about his age and mental acuity within two weeks.

showing at a North Carolina rally the day after the debate. He spoke to reporters following the Supreme Court's carte blanche decision granting presidents near-total immunity, and again while discussing the country's sizzling weather at an emergency operations center in Washington.

But Biden worked off a

teleprompter and refused to take reporters' questions.

The president's first without-a-net appearance is a scheduled interview Friday with ABC's George Stephanopoulos. The stakes are exceedingly high. Another tottering performance could lead to a dam burst of calls from Democrats for Biden to step aside.

Meantime, polls taken after the night of the June 27 debate show Biden losing ground to Trump and voters expressing heightened concern about the president's mental and cognitive health.

Like many people, Boxer speaks of a Trump restoration in apocalyptic terms. "This race is like no

other," she said. "We have to stop a man who says he's going to be 'a dictator on Day One.' Who wants to imprison his opponents. ... It gets worse and worse, day by day."

She extolled Biden's performance over the last 3½ years: his record on job creation, addressing climate change, fighting to lower the cost of prescription drugs. But that's all in the past, and none of it seems to matter very much to voters who, in the here and now, worry and wonder very much about Biden's capabilities going forward.

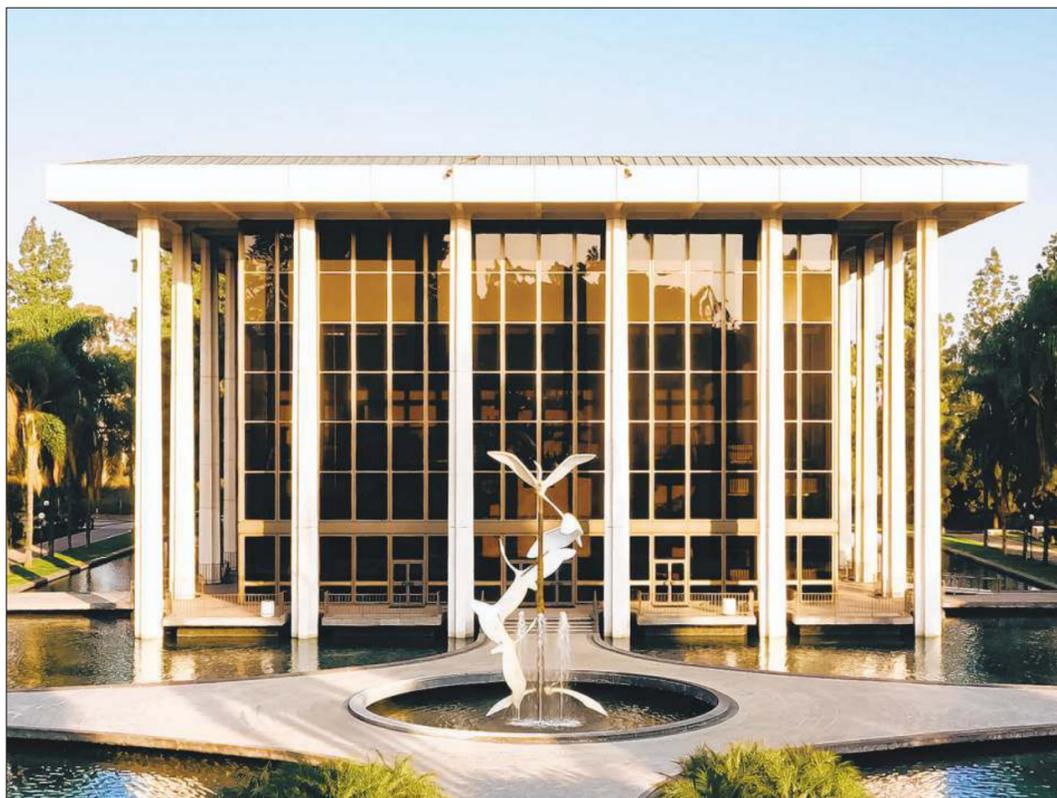
Democrats are nervous, Boxer said. "I'm nervous. I'm very nervous."

But she's still willing to give Biden a shot at one more political comeback. Two weeks, she said. "Because in August we have the convention, and if there is going to be an open convention, there needs to be time for people to decide who they're supporting."

That's a long way from "Biden or bust." It shows even the best of friends and greatest of admirers have limits to their hope and patience with a president whose mental and physical capacities seem to be touch-and-go.

But there's no room for sentimentality with so much at stake.

BUSINESS



Ambassador Foundation of Pasadena

FANS of the 50-year-old Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena have called it the “Carnegie Hall of the West.” Among those who have performed there are jazz legends Ella Fitzgerald, Dave Brubeck and Dizzy Gillespie.

Ambassador Auditorium goes on the market for \$45 million

The Pasadena venue, opened in 1974 and now owned by a church, is revered by music aficionados.

BY ROGER VINCENT

The storied Ambassador Auditorium in Pasadena, which was long considered one of the region's top classical music venues, is for sale after being owned by a local church for the last two decades.

Harvest Rock Church is asking \$45 million for the 1,200-seat auditorium near the Old Pasadena district that has also hosted jazz greats including Ella Fitzgerald, Dave Brubeck and Dizzy Gillespie. It has been called “the Carnegie Hall of the West” by fans.

The evangelical Christian Harvest Rock Church is based on the property and uses the auditorium for services. It also rents the venue to the Pasadena Symphony and the Colburn Orchestra as well as other performers that the church finds compatible with its religious

mission.

The church recently paid off its mortgage on the property, Pastor Che Ahn said, and decided to sell it to make a move to a bigger facility somewhere in the Los Angeles region.

“We’re hoping that someone will buy it to really restore it to the original purpose and intent of that building,” he said.

The Ambassador Auditorium was intended to be a showplace for live performances when it opened in 1974. The Times called it a “new Taj Mahal for the arts.”

It was also the centerpiece for Ambassador College, operated by the Worldwide Church of God on a 40-acre campus near the intersection of Colorado and Orange Grove boulevards that has been largely redeveloped in recent years.

Harvest Rock Church and Maranatha High School bought a 13-acre portion of the campus site with five buildings including the auditorium from Worldwide Church of God in 2004 for an undisclosed amount. The auditorium controlled by Harvest Rock Church is assessed at \$13.5 million, public records show.

Ambassador College founder Herbert W. Armstrong was a televangelist who set out to call attention to his ministry by building a lavish auditorium where he could broadcast services and host high-profile nonreligious events, including an opening performance by the Vienna Symphony Orchestra on April 7, 1974.

The auditorium made a big impression on local music aficionados, said Donna Perlmutter, who was a music critic at the Los Angeles Herald Examiner newspaper when it debuted.

“We were, at the time, bowled over by the presence of it,” she said. “It was to compare with any marvelous auditorium in Europe.” That it had been created by a bombastic radio and TV evangelist known for making dark end-times prophecies seemed unusual, she said.

“It was almost comical to think of who it was who erected this magnificent place,” Perlmutter said of Armstrong. “It was such a weird juxtaposition.”

The acoustics are “optimal,” she said. “It bears a bright, undistorted sound. No singer could want more.” The hall’s design by the

architectural firm Daniel, Mann, Johnson & Mendenhall strived for a mid-century version of glamour, with a main lobby chandelier composed of 100 custom bulbs and 1,390 crystals in three tiers of polished bronze.

Finishes include walls of Brazilian rosewood and rose onyx, African shedua wood railings and ceilings adorned with hand-rolled 24-carat gold leaf.

The auditorium is set in a 500,000-gallon water pond that holds a 37-foot solid bronze egret designed by British sculptor David Wynne, who also famously made a bronze sculpture of the Beatles’ busts in 1964 and is said to have introduced them to Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

Potential buyers of the auditorium include the city of Pasadena, private investors, or a group of investors seeking “to acquire a landmark with profound historical significance,” said real estate agent Isidora Fridman of Compass, who has the listing with Lauren Rauschenberg. The property at 131 S. St. John Ave. will officially go on the market July 9, Compass said.

Microsoft agrees to pay \$14 million to end discrimination claims

BY SUHAUNA HUSSAIN

Microsoft will pay a \$14.4-million settlement after California’s Civil Rights Department accused the company of retaliation and discrimination against workers who take parental or disability leave, or leave to take care of a family member.

Workers at Microsoft in California experience disadvantages in pay and promotion opportunities when they take these types of protected leave, a multiyear investigation by the Civil Rights Department found.

Employees who took protected leave would receive lower bonuses and unfavorable performance reviews, the department said in its complaint, filed July 1 in Santa Clara County. When Microsoft managers awarded annual bonuses, stock awards or merit increases, they did not consider time on protected leave as time during which employees were actively working — although other forms of leave were not discounted, according to the complaint.

Women and people with disabilities were disproportionately affected, the department alleged.

Some managers also allegedly commented negatively about employees who took leave, and workers have reported concerns with retaliation after requesting or taking protected leave.

“Microsoft’s challenged actions are ongoing and will continue to harm,” the complaint states.

Microsoft spokesperson

Sarah Naciri said it disagreed with the allegations.

“Microsoft is committed to an environment that empowers our employees to take leave when needed and provides the flexibility and support necessary for them to thrive professionally and personally,” Naciri said in an emailed statement. “While we believe the agency’s allegations are inaccurate, we will continue to listen, learn, and support our employees.”

Microsoft, headquartered in Redmond, Wash., maintains offices in California, mostly concentrated in the Bay Area.

Nearly all the money from the agreement will go toward current and former employees eligible for direct relief. A worker is eligible if they worked for Microsoft in California in 2017 or later for at least three months and took a leave protected under state or federal law.

As part of the settlement, Microsoft agreed to hire an independent consultant to examine and make recommendations on the company’s personnel policies to ensure managers do not consider time on protected leave in determining annual rewards and promotions.

The company also agreed to train managers and human resources personnel about this kind of discrimination, and to ensure employees know how to raise complaints if they believe they were denied bonuses or other awards unfairly.

Additionally, the consultant will provide annual reports to the Civil Rights Department.

Fed seeks more evidence of a cooling economy

June meeting minutes show policymakers see signs of slowing inflation but are not ready to cut rates.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — Federal Reserve officials at their most recent meeting welcomed recent signs that inflation is slowing and highlighted data suggesting that the job market and the broader economy could be cooling.

Both trends, if they continued, could lead the Fed to cut its benchmark interest rate in the coming months from its 23-year peak of 5.3%.

The minutes of the Fed’s June 11-12 meeting, released Wednesday, showed that the policymakers saw several factors that could further ease inflation in the coming months. These factors included the slower growth of wages, which reduces pressure on companies to raise prices to cover their labor costs.

The policymakers also pointed to several cases of retail chains and other businesses lowering prices and offering discounts, a sign that customers are increasingly resisting higher prices.

Yet the officials also said more evidence was needed to demonstrate that inflation was returning sustainably to the Fed’s 2% target. They signaled that they were in no rush to reduce borrowing costs.

The minutes of the Fed’s meetings sometimes provide key details behind the policymakers’ thinking, especially about how their views on interest rates might be evolving. The financial markets are eagerly awaiting more clarity about the likely timetable for the Fed to begin cutting its benchmark rate. Rate cuts by the Fed would probably lead, over time, to lower borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans and credit cards as well as business borrowing, and could also boost stock prices.

In a noticeable shift from previous minutes, the officials cited concerns that a further cooling of the job market would probably lead to layoffs. So far, slowing de-

mand for workers has mostly appeared in the form of fewer job postings. Their stated concern about a possible increase in layoffs suggests that the Fed needs to more fully consider both its policy goals: stable prices and full employment. That is a shift from the previous two years, when the Fed was focused solely on curbing inflation, which reached a four-decade high in 2022 of 9.1%.

“The vast majority of participants assessed that growth in economic activity appeared to be gradually cooling, and most participants remarked that they viewed” the central bank’s benchmark rate as high enough to slow growth and inflation.

After last month’s meeting, Fed officials issued a statement saying that inflation had resumed declining toward their 2% target. But they also scaled back their expectations for rate cuts this year, from three cuts to one.

At a news conference, though, Chair Jerome H. Powell downplayed the forecast for a single cut and said either one or two cuts were equally plausible. Four of the 19 policymakers said they envisioned no cuts at all this year. The remaining 15 officials were nearly evenly split between one and two cuts.

On Tuesday, financial markets drew encouragement from remarks Powell made during a monetary policy conference in Portugal. Powell said the Fed had made “quite a bit of progress” toward bringing inflation back to 2%.

Consumer price increases were persistently high in the first three months of the year, he noted, but in April and particularly May, inflation resumed the steady decline that had begun in the second half of 2023.

In the latest Fed minutes, many of the officials also noted that lower- and moderate-income households are “encountering increasing strains as they attempted to meet higher living costs.”

“Such strains,” the minutes said, “which were evident in rising credit card utilization and delinquency rates as well as motor vehicle loan delinquencies, were a significant concern.”

Sierra Club, union reach deal; strike averted

Environmental group agrees to reinstate some laid-off workers in exchange for canceling a pay raise.

BY SUHAUNA HUSSAIN

A strike by workers of the Sierra Club, the prominent environmental organization founded in California, was narrowly averted Tuesday after an overnight 18-hour-long marathon bargaining session.

As part of a deal reached between the Sierra Club and the Progressive Workers Union, which represents those employed by the organization’s national chapter, 12 workers, including several union leaders, will be reinstated — out of some 70 workers who were recently laid off.

In exchange, the union agreed to forgo a 7% raise for workers the organization had previously agreed to in negotiations. It also agreed to withdraw several unfair labor practice charges it had filed with the National Labor Relations Board alleging the organization had deliberately delayed bargaining and retaliated against union leaders.

The deal was struck mere hours before picket lines were scheduled to be held at 8 a.m. Tuesday at the organization’s offices in Los Angeles, Oakland and Washington, D.C. The deal appears to have, at least for the mo-



BRIAN VANDER BRUG Los Angeles Times

A SIERRA CLUB organizer near Mammoth Lakes in 2021. The deal with the Progressive Workers Union was struck hours before the walkout was to begin.

ment, put to rest internal turmoil at the environmental group over allegations of retaliatory layoffs and financial mismanagement.

Walter Keady, newly elected president of the Progressive Workers Union, said in a statement that the vote to strike “showed that Sierra Club’s unions are committed to protecting one another in the face of financial trouble at the organization.”

“No deal is perfect, but we are excited that this agreement meets our strike platform and avoids unnecessary harm to the Sierra Club community that could have occurred during a strike,”

Keady said.

The Sierra Club agreed that if fundraising stays on track, it will not carry out additional layoffs for at least the next 10 months. Those who will not get their jobs back will receive additional severance and layoff benefits under the agreement.

The deal also settles issues raised in contract talks that have dragged on for several months. It covers issues related to overtime hours, pay raises for added job responsibilities, and use of generative AI, among others.

Final negotiations are scheduled over the next

week, and a contract agreement is expected to be ratified by the end of the month.

Sierra Club Executive Director Ben Jealous announced the deal in an email to staff midday Tuesday.

In the email, he thanked the union’s leadership “for their commitment and willingness to work together to reach an agreement,” and he emphasized the organization’s “mission critical work” to protect clean air and water.

“We all share a deep love and commitment to the Sierra Club and the dedicated staff and volunteers who are the lifeblood of our organization,” Jealous wrote.

A changing of the guard for Paramount Global?

[Paramount, from A1] we've been here before and it's unclear whether all outstanding issues have been addressed."

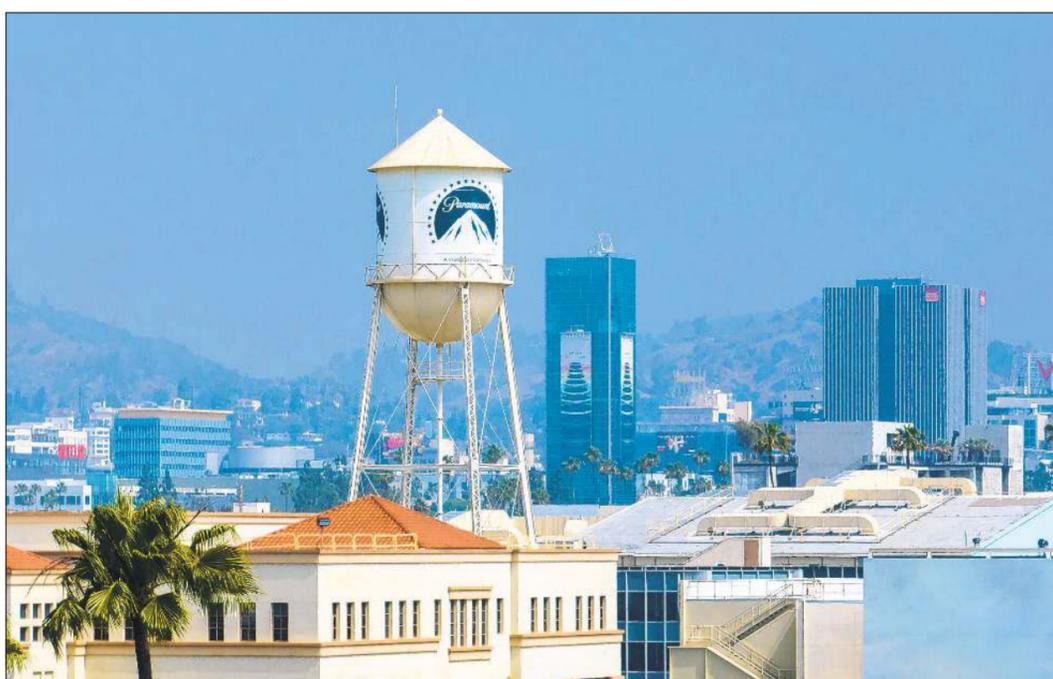
The prize now finally feels within reach for Ellison, the 41-year-old son of billionaire Larry Ellison, co-founder of Oracle Corp. The breakthrough came this week after months of high drama, including tumultuous behind-the-scenes negotiations, boardroom conflict and two spectacular U-turns by Redstone.

Redstone abruptly pulled the plug on Ellison's deal June 11, just as it appeared the deal was on the edge of completion. Her shifting stance startled industry observers — and Paramount insiders — because she had been the biggest champion of Ellison's bid, even sidelining the deal's detractors who had been standing in the way, including ousting former Paramount Chief Executive Bob Bakish.

After Redstone abandoned the talks, Ellison and his bidding partners spent about a week regrouping. Ellison then reached out to Redstone to try again, according to two knowledgeable people not authorized to discuss the internal process.

Ellison and his backers RedBird Capital Partners, private equity firm KKR and Larry Ellison had agreed to sprinkle in more sweeteners — including another \$50 million earmarked for the Redstones' NAI — in an attempt to restore trust and get deal talks back on track, according to three people familiar with the process.

In total, the Skydance-Paramount deal is valued at



BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

STRUGGLING media giant Paramount Global, which owns CBS, the Paramount Pictures studio and cable channels MTV, Nickelodeon and Comedy Central, is poised to be joined with David Ellison's Skydance Media.

about \$8.4 billion.

Selling National Amusements would net the Redstone family \$1.75 billion, after the firm's debts are paid. In addition, Skydance and its financial partners have agreed to provide a \$1.5-billion cash infusion to help Paramount pay down some of its debt to improve its balance sheet. Those payments would be made after the deal closes, knowledgeable people said.

The arrangement also would set aside \$4.5 billion to buy shares belonging to Paramount's B-Class, or nonvoting, investors who might be eager to exit.

Wall Street cheered the new twist Wednesday, sending Paramount shares up nearly 7% to \$114.6.

As part of the transaction, Ellison intends to merge privately held Skydance — the 14-year-old Santa Monica movie, television and gaming firm behind Paramount blockbuster "Top Gun: Maverick" — with Paramount.

The next step is for Paramount's board to approve the deal. The arrangement would also require the consent of federal regulators. That process would take months.

Momentum grew in re-

cent days because both sides wanted to clinch a deal before next week's annual Sun Valley, Idaho, media mogul conference, which draws such heavy hitters as Walt Disney Co. Chief Executive Bob Iger, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy and founder Jeff Bezos, news baron Rupert Murdoch — and Redstone.

The Skydance group also agreed to strengthen provisions to try to shield the Redstone family from shareholder lawsuits related to the deal, knowledgeable people said. Some nonvoting shareholders have long objected to the Ellison pro-

posal, saying it benefited the Redstone family at the expense of everyday investors.

Wrangling over indemnification proposals proved fraught in the days before the deal collapsed in early June.

At one point, Redstone sought the ability to allow regular shareholders to have a say with a nonbinding vote. But that was a nonstarter for Skydance and RedBird. In the end, the two sides agreed on a 45-day "go shop" period, allowing Paramount to field other offers.

It's unclear whether there are others interested in buying Paramount whole,

largely because of the severe challenges facing the cable programming business. The company's cable channels, once industry leaders, have seen their audiences flee in the shift to streaming and bountiful on-demand offerings, including from Netflix and Hulu.

Apollo Global Management and Sony Pictures Entertainment had expressed interest in parts of Paramount. Sony wanted the Paramount Pictures studio and its rich library, which includes the "Mission: Impossible" and "Top Gun" franchises. Warner Bros. Discovery was interested, in large part, in buying CBS to strengthen its television portfolio, including TNT and CNN.

But even under Ellison, the company may need to consider unloading certain assets, analysts said. Paramount has reportedly restarted the process of potentially selling BET, for example.

"I think what we can expect is a stabilization of its balance sheet," said Laurent Yoon, senior analyst at Bernstein. "If you're able to stabilize the balance sheet, it helps them to invest in growth. But even if they invest in growth, they're not going to see the fruits of that in the near term. It will take time."

Other potential buyers of National Amusements surfaced in recent months, complicating Redstone's decision.

She has overseen the family's empire since her father, Sumner Redstone, began dealing with health issues eight years ago. He died in 2020.

The other suitors — former top Seagram and Warner Music executive Edgar Bronfman Jr. and Hollywood producer Steven Paul ("Ghost in the Shell," "Baby Geniuses") — separately had proposed paying the family more than \$1.75 billion.

Challenges amid the changing industry in many ways prompted Redstone to part with her beloved family heirloom. The decision to let go was a difficult one, according to people close to the mogul. Her family has long taken great pride in its ownership of Paramount, formerly known as Viacom.

Redstone's adult children — who are in line to inherit the family's fortune — had initially advocated for the Skydance deal, according to two people familiar with the matter but not authorized to speak publicly.

In addition to the family's Paramount shares, National Amusements includes a regional movie theater chain founded by Sumner Redstone's father, Mickey, a former linoleum floor salesman, during the Great Depression.

Times staff writer Samantha Masunaga contributed to this report.

Pending Angel City sale shows value of women's sports

[Angel City, from A1] Alexis Ohanian as the team's controlling shareholder.

Ohanian also was the team's representative on the National Women's Soccer League Board of Governors. It was not immediately clear who would assume that role.

Angel City officials declined to comment.

Last fall, Ohanian, Angel City's lead investor and one of its four primary owners, raised objections to the team's profligate spending. Angel City had by far the most revenue in the NWSL last year at \$31 million, but it also is spending the most, leaving it years away from profitability.

The resulting six-month feud ultimately led the team's board to hire Moelis & Co., a New York investment bank, to manage a sale



ASHLEY LANDIS Landis/Invision

BOB IGER and wife Willow Bay are close to acquiring a majority stake in the Angel City FC soccer team.

of the NWSL club.

According to the online site Semafor, the investment from Bay and Iger has a pre-capital valuation of \$250 million.

The team now values itself at \$300 million, Semafor said. That's \$120 million more than the valuation Sportico gave the club in October and nearly 5½ times

the average 2023 valuation of the other 11 NWSL clubs.

Angel City FC was launched four years ago by actress Natalie Portman, venture capitalist Kara Nortman and entrepreneur Julie Uhrman, who quickly recruited more than 100 investors from Hollywood and the sports world. The vast majority of the team's investors are women, giving it the largest female-led ownership group in pro sports history.

That made Bay's role in the investment particularly important to many of the owner/investors who had to sign off on the deal.

Iger and Bay attended Angel City's home game against Orlando on Sunday, one Angel City (4-8-3) lost, falling to 11th in the 14-team league standings.

Investors have been

flocking to women's sports and the NWSL in the last couple of years, with global investment firm Sixth Street backing Bay FC, the expansion team in Northern California; the Levine Leitchman family, which jointly manages the investment firm Levin Leitchman Capital Partners, buying the San Diego Wave in March for a record \$120 million; and Laura Ricketts, co-owner of baseball's Chicago Cubs, buying the Chicago Red Stars last summer.

Nearly every NWSL team has undergone an ownership change or welcomed significant new investment in the last four years, giving the league more billionaire backers than ever before.

"The industry, the sports industry, recognized that women's sports were a good investment," said Cheryl Cooky, a professor of women's, gender and sexuality studies at Purdue. "And so they're also sort of joining the bandwagon."

MARKET ROUNDUP

Wall Street hits more record highs on rate hopes

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — Wall Street's record-breaking rally kept going Wednesday after weak reports on the U.S. economy kept the door open for possible cuts to interest rates.

The Standard & Poor's 500 rose 0.5% to set an all-time high for a second straight day and for the 33rd time this year. The Dow Jones industrial average slipped 0.1% while the Nasdaq composite added 0.9% to its record set the day before. Trading ended early for the day ahead of the Fourth of July holiday.

Tesla again helped boost the market and rose 6.5% a day after reporting a milder drop in sales for the spring than analysts feared. It was one of the strongest forces pushing upward on the S&P 500, along with Nvidia. The darling of Wall Street's rush into artificial intelligence technology climbed 4.6% to bring the chip company's gain for the year to 159%.

The action was stronger in the bond market, where Treasury yields slid after a flurry of reports that came in weaker than expected on both the job market and U.S. services companies. The data could keep the Federal Reserve on course to deliver the cuts to interest rates this year that Wall Street desires.

One report said activity for businesses in the real estate, retail trade and other U.S. services industries contracted in June for just the

Major stock indexes

Index	Close	Daily change	Daily % change	YTD % change
Dow industrials	39,308.00	-23.85	-0.06	+4.29
S&P 500	5,537.02	+28.01	+0.51	+16.08
Nasdaq composite	18,188.30	+159.54	+0.88	+21.16
S&P 400	2,917.86	+7.25	+0.25	+4.90
Russell 2000	2,036.62	+2.75	+0.14	+0.47
EuroStoxx 50	4,965.80	+59.47	+1.21	+9.82
Nikkei (Japan)	40,580.76	+506.07	+1.26	+21.27
Hang Seng (Hong Kong)	17,978.57	+209.43	+1.18	+5.46

Associated Press

third time in 49 months. The reading was weaker than economists' forecasts, which called for just a slowing of growth. Perhaps more importantly for Wall Street, the report from the Institute Supply Management also said prices were increasing at a slower pace.

That followed reports from earlier in the morning showing a slowing job market. One said slightly more U.S. workers applied for unemployment benefits last week than economists expected, though the number remains low compared with history. Another from ADP indicated employers outside the government slowed their hiring last month, when economists were forecasting an acceleration.

A much more anticipated report will arrive Friday, when the U.S. government will give its comprehensive update about how many workers employers added to their payrolls during June.

The yield on the 10-year Treasury dropped to 4.35% from 4.44% late Tuesday, a

notable move for the bond market, and much of the slide came after the report on U.S. services businesses. It's been generally sinking since April on hopes that inflation is slowing enough to get the Federal Reserve to lower its main interest rate from the highest level in more than two decades.

Wednesday's move erased some of a recent recovery for yields. Last week's debate between President Biden and former President Trump pushed some traders to make moves in anticipation of a Republican sweep in November, which would raise the possibility of tax cuts and other policies that could cause the U.S. government's debt to swell.

The two-year Treasury yield, which more closely tracks expectations for Fed actions, fell to 4.70% from 4.75% late Tuesday. Traders are now betting on a nearly 3-in-4 chance that the Federal Reserve will cut its main interest rate as soon as September, according to data from CME Group.

On Wall Street, Constellation Brands sank 3.3% after swinging between gains and losses during the day. The company behind Modelo beer and Robert Mondavi wines reported stronger profit for the latest quarter than expected, but its revenue came up just shy of analysts' forecasts.

All told, the S&P 500 rose 28.01 points to 5,537.02. The Dow dipped 23.85 to 39,308.00, and Nasdaq gained 159.54 to 18,188.30.

This is a traditionally strong time of year for Wall Street, according to Mark Hackett, Nationwide's chief of investment research. He said the first half of July has been the best two-week stretch for stocks on the calendar since 1928, and the S&P 500 has risen in July for nine straight years.

Even though discouraging reports have shown lower-income households are struggling to keep up with still-high inflation, "the glass-half-full mindset of investors continues to drive markets higher," Hackett said.

In stock markets abroad, indexes rose across much of Europe and Asia. France's CAC 40 climbed 1.2% to recover more of its losses caused by worries that a swing away from centrist government policies could lead to higher debt for the French government.

The FTSE 100 rose 0.6% in London ahead of an election in the United Kingdom, while Tokyo's Nikkei 225 jumped 1.3%.

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OPINION

LETTERS

A unifying celebration of our nation? Not this Fourth of July

Today, our nation brandishes the flag and our collective pride as we celebrate the day when, 248 years ago, a group of traitors to the English monarchy formally declared the independence of the United States from the British Empire. The flags we wave and the national union we exalt may be the same, but as the letters below make clear, the reasons we have for doing so might be different — especially ahead of the November election.

Last month, we asked readers to share their thoughts on the Fourth of July, specifically what they see as continuing to bind our nation together in a politically fraught time. Some readers wrote letters saying they detected an effort to elicit a positive reaction — but sorry, L.A. Times, not this Fourth of July. Others said they felt a sense of heightened pride over American ideals that are under assault. A handful saw plenty to praise about our nation.

Perhaps this is a display of our national motto, “*e pluribus unum*” — out of many, one. I suppose that’s one positive way to look at a polarized nation on its 248th birthday.

— Paul Thornton, letters editor



Photo illustration by JESSICA DE JESUS Los Angeles Times; Getty Images

I never gave much celebratory thought to July 4. When civics was taught in my high school during the 1970s, I was engaged enough to learn it was when the United States formally broke from Great Britain in 1776. That’s it. Let the fireworks begin.

It is only now, as a senior citizen, that I am beginning to realize the Fourth of July means so much because of what may be lost.

My young adult children have fewer rights than I had at their age. After all, I had the privilege of attending and graduating from a prestigious university due to affirmative action. I had the right to have an abortion after an unfortunate circumstance. I had the right to read the books of my choice without a raised eyebrow.

And oh yes, we had the right to protest our universities’ investments in apartheid South Africa with minimal blowback.

While I have always regarded Juneteenth as the true date of my ancestors’ freedom, the wave of authoritarianism hitting our nation forces me to recognize that our democracy is fragile. The Constitution is increasingly being interpreted without consideration of the amendments meant to level the playing field for marginalized groups. We may soon take a deep dive into dictatorship.

So this year, my celebration extends from Juneteenth to July 4. I hope the movement backward can at least be paralyzed by having more Americans get their information from credible sources and voting in November. If you don’t know what an authoritarian government is, research and read. If you don’t know how it might affect you, challenge yourself to think about it critically.

This year, I celebrate the freedom to vote — because make no mistake, that can change too.

LYNN WILLIAMS
Los Angeles

::

I am celebrating this Fourth of July because the America in which my grandsons are growing up is a better country than the one I did.

Between 1960 and 2020, our country made more progress in education, politics and economics than in any 60-year period in our history. America changed dramatically, and our institutions have reflected that.

Between 1976 and 2020, our minority population grew by more than 200%, as we became one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world. High school dropout rates declined, and the number of minority students who went to college increased by nearly 400% — and the number who graduated, by almost 700%. Poverty rates have declined, and median family incomes have gone up.

In 1964, out of 435 House members, only 12 were women and eight were minorities. Today, as a consequence of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, there are 126 women and about 130 minority members in the House.

Millions of Americans fought to make America a more egalitarian and a more democratic nation, and they succeeded. The abolitionist minister Theodore Parker and the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. talked about the moral arc of the universe being long but bending toward justice — and in the last 60 years, that arc has bent more toward justice than in any period in our history.

JOHN PEREZ
North Hollywood
The writer was a member of the California Postsecondary Education Commission from 2005-2011.

::

The Fourth of July brings up mixed feelings of pride, pain and sadness.

Pain, because my daughter was born on the Fourth of July and died on Dec. 25, 1972, of leukemia.

Pride, because our family has served for six generations in various military branches. It began with our ancestor Andres Nava, who died during the Texas Revolution defending the Alamo. It continued with grandfathers on both sides of the family who were drafted in World War I. In World War II, our ancestor Alfredo Basaldua Nava served in the Pacific theater and received many medals.

Many more family members served our country elsewhere and were commended for their service. As is traditional in our family, the names of Andres (Andrew) Nava and Alfredo (Alfred) Basaldua Nava have been given to many of their descendants.

Finally, I feel sadness knowing many people do not know just how many Americans of Mexican descent have served in the military, including many Medal of Honor recipients. Furthermore, many immigrants from Mexico have served or are serving to protect our nation’s freedoms today.

This July 4, I will be remembering my daughter, who called herself a “real-life niece of my Uncle Sam” after she found out the fireworks and barbecues were not really about her birthday. I will be thinking about my ancestors and descendants who served this country for all these

generations and in all these wars, and I will pray that we can one day celebrate peace on our nation’s birthday.

MARY LOU NAVA
HAMAKER
San Clemente

::

In your invitation for people to write commemorating Independence Day, I sensed a desire for letters in the vein of, “There’s still more that unites us than divides us.” While I wish that were the case, it clearly is not.

As we’re staring down the barrel of another Donald Trump presidency, what can you say about the man that hasn’t been said before? You’re talking about an individual completely lacking in honesty, compassion, intelligence, morality — virtually everything that makes a decent human being, well, decent.

While I am revolted by the man, my dismay is more directed at the roughly half of the voting populace that will mark their ballots for him in November. I will never understand what kind of hatred and delusion these people are under, and no amount of “talking it out” will change anything.

What mystifies me as well is that there is no discussion of breaking this country up. If there ever were any values that truly united us, they’re long gone. Those of us out west would be happier governing ourselves, and I’m sure those in Texas would as well.

Would a break-up be messy? Of course. But I fear the status quo will be worse.

MARK BATTISTA
Studio City

::

As an Indigenous Native American, my perspective on celebrating the Fourth of July probably differs from that of most others.

My family lived on a reservation, and we loved the Fourth of July celebration — it was the highlight of the year. When World War II started, as a 10-year-old I was convinced that everything American was good, and anything relating to the enemy was bad. I identified strongly and proudly with America. That patriotic spirit bound our union.

As an adult, I was a family man of faith, a Korean War veteran, a retired business owner and a taxpaying citizen. I have been blessed in all those endeavors.

But recently I have become aware of some ignored history that causes me to wonder: Should we be celebrating the Fourth of July at all?

Consider what the greatness of this country was built on. In the 15th century, explorers were empowered in the name of religion to take land, and to enslave or exterminate the Indigenous inhabitants if they resisted. Chattel slavery of Africans enriched slave owners. Indigenous people were victims of government-ordered genocide.

Our land was stolen. We

were removed to reservations or massacred. Our cultures were eliminated in boarding schools. Very little of this is revealed accurately in our history books.

Politicians usually end their speeches with, “May God bless America.” I now believe, rather than seeking God’s blessing, we should be pleading for mercy.

HAROLD PRINTUP
Mar Vista

::

I am sorry, L.A. Times. I would like to be as positive as you seem to be and write a nice essay on what binds this country together.

Not today. I only celebrate a publication such as yours to allow me my voice, and maybe for not much longer.

Early in his presidency, Trump declared the free press to be the enemy of the people. That should have been the reddest of red flags. If he wins back the White House, how long before he can shut down The Times and every other publication that he finds disagreeable?

We’ve seen an entire political party bend the knee with no shame. We know the people will follow, as too many already have.

The question is, do we survive this? Will we be bruised and bloodied but still holding onto our ideals? I’m not so sure.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak my mind.

JOHN G. HILL
Mission Hills

As my city of Huntington Beach prepares for its popular Fourth of July parade, one cannot ignore the fact that Surf City is greatly polarized because the ultraconservative majority on our City Council consistently focuses on contentious culture-war policies. Tension will surely be noticeable at this year’s event.

Behind the veil of overt patriotism, one cannot ignore what took place during the last year in city government, including attacks on the public library, false stories of election fraud and blatant anti-LGBTQ+ policies.

Despite such gloom, democracy has been rekindled in recent weeks. Thousands of signatures have been collected for two ballot initiatives, which would give all Huntington Beach citizens, not just a handful of far-right conservatives, a voice in how our public library is managed.

During the summer of 1776, American towns celebrated their new independence from a monarchy ruled by a few. Let’s hope that Huntington Beach can return to the day when residents can celebrate the true meaning of the Fourth of July — because as Abraham Lincoln said, a house divided against itself cannot stand.

CAROL DAUS
Huntington Beach

::

Philosophies aside, what binds our nation is our flag.

Born and raised in Baltimore, I have always held a special place in my heart for our flag. To this day I get teary-eyed whenever I hear “The Star-Spangled Banner” and see our flag on display.

Our nation has fought for it.

Soldiers have died for it. Other nations can only wish they had one like it.

It is hated by some, revered by others.

It moves me.

It calms me.

It commands my respect.

It is the most iconic symbol of my lifetime.

MARK SKURNIK
Mission Viejo

::

This is the 95th birthday of our nation within my lifetime. My introspection is influenced by the experiences of my grandparents, who fled antisemitism and the pogroms of 19th century Ukraine.

America did not invent freedom and individual rights. Those yearnings have dwelt forever in human hearts the world over. Rather, our nation is ennobled by the institutions and documents created by the Founding Fathers — the Declaration of Independence and Constitution, which guarantee the blessings and define the obligations of U.S. citizenship.

My innate optimism about the future of our nation is tempered currently by these concerns:

I am appalled by indications that roughly half of the voters are currently inclined to return Trump to the presidency, even though his term in office was beset by administrative chaos and terminated with illegal actions to reverse the 2020 election. He is a convicted felon who admires tyrants and a person of deeply flawed character.

I am concerned about the eminence of extremists in both major parties. I am concerned about the failure of our schools and colleges to produce well-informed citizens. I am concerned about societal ills such as homelessness and aggressive lawlessness.

I hope this Fourth of July will celebrate the emergence of inspirational and unifying leadership to realign our nation toward its benevolent potential.

MEL SPITZ
Beverly Hills



OP-ED

Make baseball beautiful again

By Rubén Martínez

THE FOLLOWING CONFESSION may come as a shock to those who know me: I am now a conservative. When it comes to baseball, that is.

I watched the blown check-swing call that allowed the Dodgers to win a game against the Rockies last month in an improbable comeback and to the fury of Colorado fans. The ump's clear mistake will only add to demands that check-swing calls be included in the instant replay protocol.

But check-swing subjectivity is a fundamental part of the way baseball is supposed to function: humanly, in sublime, sometimes maddening imperfection. MLB interventions to "fix" it — larger bases, the ghost runner at second base in extra innings, batters limited to one timeout per at-bat and, worst of all, the pitch clock — are blows against the beauty of the game.

Admittedly, these changes seem to be quite popular. Games had been running longer and longer with incessant pitching changes, dawdling batters and, yes, replay reviews. But what monstrous hubris to think we know better than baseball's Original Framers! Ninety feet between bases, 60 feet, 6 inches between pitching rubber and home plate — these are divinely induced measurements. Start messing with tradition and the heart of the game is lost to hyper-regulated "reality."

Baseball is not reality. It is myth performed by real bodies. And imperfection, which is also the unexpected, beyond the reach of metrics, is where the magic comes from — magical triumph and magical heartbreak, larger than life, operatic.

There is no doubt that soccer is the "beautiful game," but baseball gives it a run for its money. Its own beauty has resulted from the gradual accrual of tradition, which has given us a poetics.

Languor is one of baseball's essential characteristics. Seemingly nothing happens for long minutes; no one scores, no "bang-bang" double plays, just lazy fly balls and dribbled grounders; you are swayed by the lullaby of sun and beer into a somnolent state.

And then "just like that," as Vin Scully used to say, there's a majestic home run blast, a leaping catch, a fierce duel between pitcher and batter, a spectacular strikeout. The explosion of affect is all the more powerful for having emerged so suddenly from the caesura. (Soccer fans experience a version of these symphonic changes of tempo on the pitch.)

Baseball's temporality is inseparable from its physical dimensions, the space-time of the game. The vast swath of grass between outfielders, the closer quarters of the infielders, the tunnel of focus that connects pitcher, batter, catcher and umpire.

The imperfection of umpires is indispensable in the gestalt. Video appeals rob us of the opportunity to yell at the ump to get glasses, or suffer much worse things. A blown call can lead to simultaneous jubilation and heartbreak, with the losers rending their garments and smarting from the insult of being "robbed."

All as it should be.

I say: Bring back smaller bags and keep stealing a base a rare art! I say: No more ghost runner (what did he do to deserve to be there?) and go on all night with punch-drunk players if that's what the game demands. And most of all I say: Smash the pitch clock with an Adirondack bat. The timer is an abomination under baseball heaven, depriving us of the organic crescendo of tension in an epic at-bat in the late innings of a close World Series game (Kirk Gibson, 1988).

When I interviewed Scully after the Los Angeles riots- uprising of 1992, I asked him what he'd said on the air about the chaos unfolding that first night, as a game was underway at Dodger Stadium. "I didn't say a word," he told me. He thought first of his responsibility to the fans and their safety — what if he caused panic? And he added: "There should be one place left where the rest of the world doesn't intrude."

He might as well have said baseball is sacred. Not to be messed with. Not even (as if it were possible) by history itself.

On all this, I come down as far more conservative than, say, old-school, bow-tied traditionalist George Will, who for once approves of the "progressive" in the form of the new rules he thinks augur a return of baseball to its one-time status as national pastime. The game, awash in play-by-metrics, Will has argued, is bloated not by poetic languor but by analytical ennui.

True that, Mr. Will. We agree about baseball's slow death-by-numbers. At the end of the day, all the measurements miss the point — the ineffable beauty of a summer afternoon ever so slowly turning to night at the ballpark.

Some of us know when a cure is worse than the disease.

There is a reason baseball was famously the preferred sport of American literati in the mid-20th century. And the pitch clock wasn't part of the poetry.

RUBÉN MARTÍNEZ is a literature professor at Loyola Marymount University, the author of numerous books and co-creator and executive producer of the performance piece "Little Central America, 1984."



MATT CHASE For The Times

Friendship once ruled American politics (believe it or not)

By Jason Opal

IN THIS AGE of partisan rancor, when political rivals often describe each other as enemies, we easily forget that Americans once took a revolutionary pride in being friends.

People have always had friendly feelings for certain others. But the modern concept of friendship was unfamiliar in the colonial past. While friends today tend to be peers and equals, the pre-1776 world was built on coercive inequalities. Fathers and masters told their wives, children, servants and slaves what to do. Tenants cowered before landlords. The crown tried to boss the colonies around.

In British politics, in fact, a friend was not someone you liked, but an ally at court or in Parliament — a tool for the tiny minority who mattered. For everyone else, there were mostly just superiors and inferiors, neighbors and relatives.

It was America's good fortune to become independent during the Enlightenment, when people dared to imagine what the philosopher Joseph Priestley called "a totally new, and most wonderful and important" era of equality and amity.

By breaking free from the "dark and slavish" past, declared the revolutionary Thomas Paine in his famous 1776 pamphlet "Common Sense," Americans would "carry our friendship" to strangers and foreigners. He saw this amicable approach to the world as distinctively American, although neither he nor most Americans thought to include Africans and Native Americans in their expanding circles of friendship, among other inequities of the era.

No longer subjects of the British Empire, Americans touted their democratic form of togetherness. As Thomas Jefferson, newly

elected president, insisted in 1801, Americans were not members of one political faction or another, nor of different ranks in society. They were simply "fellow citizens," civic equals who were free to form authentic friendships with one another.

In the same spirit, early American leaders often described U.S. foreign policy as the quest for friendship (not hostility, but not dependence either) with other nations. And whereas colonial leaders had styled themselves "fathers of the people," early republican candidates claimed to be "friends of the people."

More than a political ideal or slogan, friendship was an apt descriptor of the new social relations that were emerging in the United States.

The country's early friendships could be emotionally intense. In 1804, one Virginian wrote that his "beloved" friend soothed his sorrows and bathed the world in a "soft and genial light." Many women of the time described their same-sex friendships as more satisfying than their marriages — even as husbands and wives such as John and Abigail Adams, seeking a more affectionate kind of matrimony, now referred to their spouses as their "dearest friends."

Post-revolutionary Americans moved more often and farther from their birthplaces than previous generations, meeting many strangers — and making new friends. Diaries and letters from this period brim with references to travel partners, classmates, Masonic lodge members and other peer groups who "cheered on" and befriended those far from home.

Then as now, most friends were similar in age, wealth and status. But since equality was such an important principle in early national life, friendliness spread widely through the culture, easing relations be-

tween rich and poor, rural and urban, locals and strangers.

Accustomed to chilly tensions between haughty aristocrats and sullen servants, European visitors were astonished at the warmth and candor with which Americans of different walks of life treated one another.

For example, farm owners and farm laborers in America took their meals at the same table, often talking politics while breaking bread. "If a man is good enough to work for me," ran a saying from Ohio, "he is good enough to eat with me." And by the mid-1800s, Americans no longer bowed or doffed their hats, as their grandparents once had. They shook hands, a simple but radical expression of mutual respect and basic goodwill.

No wonder that Abraham Lincoln turned to the ideal of friendship as the storm clouds gathered between North and South. "We are not enemies, but friends," he declared in his first inaugural address in March 1861. "We must not be enemies."

Of course, his plea fell short. Americans became enemies the very next month, and for the next four years they killed and hated one another on a ghastly scale.

Yet to focus on this fact is to treat history as a one-dimensional catalog of things that happened. The deeper purpose of studying the past is to gain perspective on all the things that might have happened, and thus to understand why events unfolded as they did, when they did.

Just as the American way of friendship had helped to keep the country together *until* 1861, it also enabled the United States to move on, however painfully, from the horrors of civil war and to become, however fitfully, a greater and more inclusive democracy.

We must not forget this usable past, especially during times like ours, which feel so angry and divided. We must start from the premise that we can get along, as past generations have, and remember that most Americans, most of the time, wish others well.

We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies.

JASON OPAL is an American professor of history at McGill University in Canada. In August he will join Ohio State University as dean and director of its Mansfield campus.

A mockery of Independence Day

JACKIE CALMES

PERHAPS ON THIS Fourth of July, the Alitos will fly the American flag properly, *not* upside down, at their Virginia or New Jersey homes.

It is after all the 248th anniversary of America's founders declaring their independence from a king. But I'm guessing Samuel A. Alito Jr. and his flag-loving wife, Martha-Ann, are celebrating that he and his fellow right-wing Supreme Court justices have made a king of our presidents, just when it seems more likely that Donald Trump could be restored to the throne.

The court's ruling Monday in the appropriately titled *Trump vs. United States* was a gift to the former president. Trump got just about everything he asked for despite the majority's specious attempts to make it seem otherwise: absolute or presumed immunity for official acts, which the court defined in a way that could encompass much of what the Jan. 6 criminal indictment alleges the former president illegally did to overturn the 2020 election.

Also, the court's delay — taking months to decide the case and, with its decision, imposing time-consuming pretrial proceedings to determine what is or isn't covered by the court's immunity notions — ensures that Trump will not be tried before the 2024 election for seeking to steal the previous one. The classified documents case in federal court in Florida, and the state case in Atlanta alleging Trump pressured Georgia officials to flip Joe Biden's 2020 win there, both already slowed for various reasons, will be further sidetracked as the justices' decision is parsed.

The ruling also threw into doubt Trump's recent conviction in the only criminal trial he has faced, in Manhattan. On Tuesday, Judge Juan M. Merchan delayed Trump's sentencing from next Thursday to Sept. 18 to weigh the ramifications. That case involved Trump's personal acts in fraudulently reporting hush-money payments to a porn star before the 2016 election, so not an official presidential act.



But his lawyers argue that some of the evidence that convicted Trump came from his time as president and thus should be off-limits, by the high court's holding.

"In every use of official power, the President is now a king above the law," Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote in a fierce dissent for the court's three liberals.

Happy Independence Day? Millions of us might be sorely tempted to fly *our* flags upside down in the universal sign of dire distress.

It was 50 years ago this month that a very different Supreme Court unanimously ruled in *United States vs. Nixon* (just 16 days after oral arguments in the case!) that President Nixon had to turn over Oval Office tapes to a special prosecutor. The recordings put him at the sordid center of the Watergate scandal and led to his resignation weeks later.

One phrase back then captured Americans' bipartisan consensus about the role of the press, the Senate hearings, the House impeachment inquiry, a special prosecutor's probe and the Supreme Court's expedited decision: The system worked.

Never would I have imagined, as a college student who closely followed Watergate, that a half-century later another Supreme Court would upend the legal underpinning of U.S. vs. Nixon: that executive privilege must give way to "the fair administration of criminal justice." In our time, the system — our leaders and institutions of government — has failed.

Remember that after the House of Representatives impeached Trump for provoking the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol, Senate Republicans blocked his conviction because Trump had become a private citizen. Mitch McConnell, the Senate Republican leader, assured us that Trump could be answerable in another way: "We have a criminal justice system in this country ... and former presidents *are not immune* from being held accountable." Trump's lawyers said the same during his Senate impeachment trial.

On Monday, the Supreme Court essentially told us otherwise.

This from a court with a Republican

supermajority, including three justices picked by Trump under controversial circumstances, and two, Alito and Thomas, who've refused to recuse themselves from Jan. 6-related cases despite their wives' public displays of sympathy for, and in the case of Ginni Thomas, connivance with the "Stop the Steal" insurrection.

During Watergate, neither the Supreme Court nor anyone else thought former presidents had anything like the criminal immunity suggested by the Republican justices Monday. As Sotomayor noted, both President Ford's pardon of Nixon and Nixon's acceptance letter explicitly assumed that he was liable for, as Nixon wrote, "any charges which might be brought against me for actions taken during the time I was President." Why else would there be a pardon?

The Watergate investigation delved into Nixon's abuse of the Justice Department, the FBI, the IRS and the CIA to target his political enemies. Sound familiar? Yet today's court says Trump's scheming post-election contacts with Justice Department appointees are protected official acts. Never mind that he urged them to falsely claim election fraud in battleground states Biden won. "Just say the election was corrupt and leave the rest to me and the Republican congressmen," Trump said in that "official act."

He's already given us reason to fear what he'll do in a second term. Here's one from the eve of the court's ruling: Trump reposted on social media a call for Liz Cheney to be tried for treason in a televised military tribunal. Thanks to the Supreme Court he created, Trump in a second term could run amok with little fear of criminal accountability.

John Dean, who was Nixon's White House counsel before he testified against him and went to prison for obstruction of justice, expressed his outrage at the decision by reviving an infamous Nixon quote: "When the president does it, that means that it is not illegal." Richard Nixon, 1974. Affirmed, US Supreme Court, 2024.

I'll let Dean have the last word.

@jackiecalmes

Some Oroville residents stay put as fire spreads

[Wildfire, from A1] ute to extreme fire behavior," according to the National Weather Service.

Nine new fires ignited in the region Tuesday, according to the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

The Thompson fire was the largest, followed by the Airline fire in San Benito County, which was 1,200 acres and 55% contained Wednesday morning.

Gov. Gavin Newsom on Wednesday declared a state of emergency for the Thompson fire, which he said was threatening "structures, homes, critical infrastructure, and health and congregate care facilities."

The fire broke out just before 11 a.m. Tuesday and is under investigation, with no cause yet determined.

"The conditions out there that are in our county this summer are much different than we've experienced the last two summers," Garrett Sjolund, Cal Fire unit chief in Butte County, said at a news conference Tuesday evening. "The fuels are very dense, the brush is dry, and, as you can see, any wind will move a fire out very quickly."

Butte County Sheriff Kory L. Honea said during the news conference that there have been four fires within the last couple of weeks, calling this "a bad fire season."

"I understand that people stay," Honea said. "If you stay, you need to make sure that you're paying attention to where the fire is going so that you can get out if necessary."

The sky was blue in many areas of Oroville on Wednesday, with a limited smell of smoke downtown. Businesses largely remained open, including the Wagon Wheel Market, located along Olive Highway.

Patrick Butler, 56, who runs the market with his brother Tom, said residents have "been through this numerous times."

He used a hose to wet down the store, he said, although there were no visible flames in the area Wednesday morning.

Outside, the air was a little smoky, and the roads were blocked east and west.



NOAH BERGER Associated Press

A HELICOPTER DROPS water over the Thompson fire on Tuesday as the blaze burns above Lake Oroville. It remains 0% contained.

"I would imagine we're under mandatory evacuation, if had to guess," he said in a brief phone interview. "We have a ton of defensible space. We have a generator, a ton of water here. We will just be here taking care of business."

The market has been in the Butler family since 1981. Most of those working Wednesday were immediate family members, including his brother, wife, daughter, son-in-law and grandkids, because his employees couldn't make it through the roadblocks.

That morning, they'd sold more sandwich makings than usual, along with breakfast burritos and water bottles.

"There's a lot of people within this evacuation zone that we're open to serve," he said. "We've got a lot of first

responders running around who need things."

Members of the Oroville Chamber of Commerce spent Wednesday morning contacting vendors to let them know that the Fourth of July fireworks celebration had been canceled.

"That's just been kind of a hometown tradition in our community. But with, obviously, the fire burning right into the city limits, everyone's just focused on addressing the safety emergency situation," said Eric Smith, president of the Oroville Chamber of Commerce. "It just wouldn't be responsible at this point."

Don and Linda Pederson were determined Wednesday not to be pushed around by the latest fire to encroach on their property.

"It's not the first time this has happened," said Don, 81.

But it is the closest a fire has come to their home of 50 years, which sits near Oroville Dam on an acre lot that has been in Linda's family since 1945. Don said he thinks the fire, at its closest, was about a mile away. But he said they don't plan to evacuate unless it crosses Highway 162, which serves as something of a firebreak.

The Pedersons' home is in an evacuation warning area, although he said the fire map puts his garage squarely in the mandatory evacuation zone.

"Even if our whole house was in the evacuation zone, we would not leave unless I knew it was on our side of the road and coming down the hill," he said, adding that they have power and, as a backup, a whole-house generator.

The day before, he said, "I

could actually see flames in the distance."

He said he is monitoring the fire with Linda, 79, from inside their home, with a few essential papers set aside in case they need to leave quickly. Their lot has been mowed to create a defensive space and protect against traveling embers. Their two vehicles are parked away from the house in case it caught fire. There are two fire hydrants next to their property.

"The breeze is not real strong, but it is picking up right now," he said. "And I have seen quite a bit of smoke."

He added that first responders have been working diligently since the fire broke out.

"Everybody really turned out for this," he said.

Mike Shorrock, a retired

Cal Fire battalion chief in Butte County, has been closely monitoring the flames from his home east of Oroville, just a couple of miles south of the blaze. He speaks in fire language, talking about containment lines, drainage and fire conditions as he feels the familiar tug to return to the job he held for 45 years.

Shorrock's home is in a mandatory evacuation area, but — at least for now — he said he's staying put.

"You get sort of in denial when you work in the business, like, 'Oh, that won't happen to me,' but I have lots of friends who lost houses in the Paradise fire," he said. "I feel comfortable staying because of my experience and sheltering in place to stay and defend. That's a personal choice everybody has to make."

Federal court orders Mississippi to redraw some legislative districts

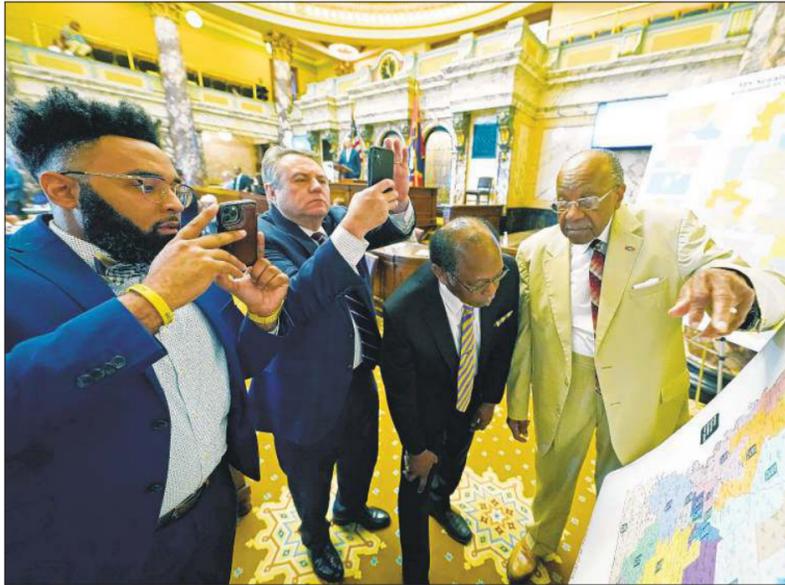
Parts of the current map unfairly dilute the power of the Southern state's Black voters, judges say.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

JACKSON, Miss. — Three federal judges are telling Mississippi to redraw some of its legislative districts, saying the current ones dilute the power of Black voters in three parts of the state.

The judges issued their order Tuesday night in response to a lawsuit that was filed in 2022 by the Mississippi State Conference of the NAACP and several Black residents.

"This is an important victory for Black Mississippians to have an equal and fair opportunity to participate in the political process without their votes being diluted," one of the plaintiffs' attorneys, Jennifer Nwa-



ROGELIO V. SOLIS Associated Press

LAWMAKERS review a proposed redistricting map at the Capitol in Jackson, Miss., in 2022. The ruling came in a lawsuit by Black voters and the state NAACP.

chukwu of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, said in a state-

ment Wednesday. "This ruling affirms that the voices of Black Mississippians matter

and should be reflected in the state Legislature."

Mississippi's population

is about 59% white and 38% Black.

In the legislative redistricting plan adopted in 2022, 15 of 52 state Senate districts and 42 of 122 Mississippi House districts have Black majorities. That amounts to 29% of Senate districts and 34% of House districts.

The judges have ordered legislators to draw majority-Black state Senate districts in and around DeSoto County in the northwestern corner of the state and in and around Hattiesburg in the south, and a new majority-Black Mississippi House district in Chickasaw and Monroe counties in the northeastern part of the state.

The order does not call for additional districts. Rather, it requires legislators to adjust the boundaries of existing districts, which could affect more districts.

The Mississippi attorney general's office was reviewing the judges' ruling on Wednesday, spokesperson

MaryAsa Lee said. It was not immediately clear whether the state would appeal it.

Legislative and congressional districts around the nation are updated after each U.S. census to reflect population changes from the previous decade. Mississippi's current legislative districts were in use when all of the state House and state Senate seats were on the ballot in 2023.

Tommie Cardin, an attorney for state officials, told the federal judges in February that Mississippi cannot ignore its history of racial division, but that voter behavior now is driven by party affiliation, not race.

"The days of voter suppression and intimidation are, thankfully, behind us," Cardin said.

Historical voting patterns in Mississippi show that districts with higher populations of white residents tend to lean toward Republicans and that districts with higher populations of Black residents tend to lean toward Democrats.

Lawsuits in several states have challenged the composition of congressional or state legislative districts drawn after the 2020 census.

In Louisiana, legislators redrew the state's six U.S. House districts in January to create two majority-Black districts, rather than one, after a federal judge ruled that the state's previous plan diluted the voting power of Black residents, who make up about a third of Louisiana's population.

And a federal judge ruled in February that Louisiana legislators had also diluted Black voting strength with the state House and Senate districts they redrew in 2022.

In December, a federal judge accepted new Georgia congressional and legislative districts that protect Republicans' partisan advantages. The judge said the creation of new majority-Black districts solved the illegal minority vote dilution that had led him to order that the maps be redrawn.

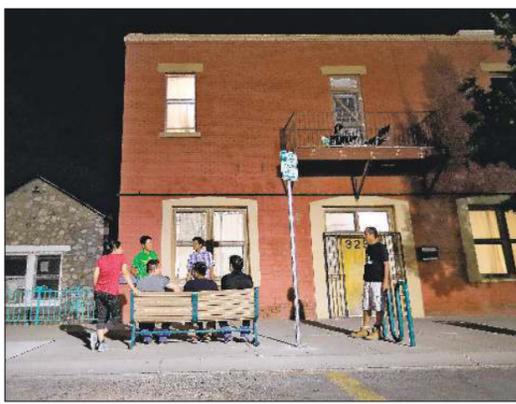
Ruling shields El Paso migrant shelter from closure by Texas

State attorney general violated the facility's constitutional rights in demanding records of its clients, judge finds.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

McALLEN, Texas — A Texas judge ruled against the state attorney general on Tuesday in his effort to shut down a migrant shelter in El Paso that he claimed encourages illegal migration.

Judge Francisco X. Dominguez in El Paso ruled that Atty. Gen. Ken Paxton's attempts to enforce a subpoena for records of migrants served at the Annunciation House violated the constitutional rights of the



MATT YORK Associated Press

THE JUDGE sided with Annunciation House, above, against what he called harassment and overreach.

shelter. His ruling prevents Paxton from seeking the records and protects the shelter from what Domin-

guez called "harassment and overreaching" by Paxton's office.

Texas is expected to

appeal.

Dominguez wrote that Paxton did not identify what laws he believed were being violated in seeking the documents.

"The record before this Court makes clear that the Texas Attorney General's use of the request to examine documents from Annunciation House was a pretext to justify its harassment of Annunciation House employees and the persons seeking refuge," the judge wrote.

State officials visited Annunciation House in early February demanding immediate access to records — including medical and immigration documents — of migrants who had received services at the shelter since 2022. Officials from Annunciation House, which over-

sees a network of shelters, said they were willing to comply but needed time to determine what they could legally share without violating their clients' constitutional rights.

Paxton alleged that by providing shelter to migrants regardless of their legal status, Annunciation House was facilitating illegal immigration, human smuggling and operating a stash house.

Investigators who sought to access records the day after requesting entry were not allowed inside the shelter. Jerry Wesevich, the attorney representing Annunciation House, said that corporations under the Constitution's 4th Amendment are protected from unreasonable searches and seizures by the government.

CALIFORNIA

THURSDAY, JULY 4, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/CALIFORNIA



WALLY SKALIJ Los Angeles Times

DECLARATION OF INCANDESCENCE

Fireworks light up the sky over the retired battleship USS Iowa in San Pedro last week during the Port of Los Angeles' annual "Cars & Stripes Forever!" auto show. The event helps kick off Fourth of July celebrations in Southern California each year.

NEWSOM REVERSES, SCRAPS CRIME MEASURE

Alternative to a GOP proposal fails to gain enough support from his fellow Democrats.

BY LAUREL ROSENHALL

SACRAMENTO — In a wild turn of events, Gov. Gavin Newsom and Democratic lawmakers backed away Tuesday from plans to put an anti-crime measure on the ballot, a day after they announced the proposal that had been the subject of protracted negotiations at the Capitol.

The abrupt cancellation capped half a year of political maneuvering on criminal justice policy, with Democrats zigging and zagging as they responded to a tough-on-crime initiative backed by Republicans, district attorneys and major retail stores. That initiative is still heading to the November ballot, asking voters to repeal parts of Proposition 47, the decade-old law that turned some nonviolent felonies into misdemeanors.

Newsom had hoped to offer voters an alternative measure, something that would address concerns about theft and fentanyl without being as punitive as the prosecutors' measure. Democrats spent days haggling over the alternative measure, and it was formalized in legislation Sunday night — in the final hours before the cutoff for lawmakers to draft a measure for the November ballot.

The measure backed by the governor and legislative leaders addressed repeat shoplifting by making the third petty-theft-related offense over a three-year period eligible for a three-year jail sentence. In cases involving multiple thefts, the of-

[See Crime bill, B2]

Tourist killed by would-be robbers at O.C. mall

Three are arrested after a high-speed chase from Newport Beach to South Gate.

BY RICHARD WINTON, JAMES RAINEY, NATHAN SOLIS, LILLY NGUYEN AND SUSAN HOFFMAN

A tranquil summer afternoon at the upscale Fashion Island mall in Newport Beach disintegrated into violence Tuesday, with a woman killed after a botched robbery attempt.

Two men accosted the 68-year-old tourist and her husband near the Barnes & No-

ble bookstore at the mall, authorities said. Shots were fired, but police said no one was struck by bullets.

The woman was identified as Patricia McKay, who was visiting from New Zealand, the Newport Beach Police Department announced Wednesday in a news release.

The couple had been walking at Fashion Island when they were approached by two men who attempted to rob them, according to Police Sgt. Steven Oberon.

A struggle ensued, and McKay was dragged into a parking lot and subsequently run over by a white Toyota Camry driven by a third suspect, police said. There were no other re-

ported injuries.

Heather Rangel, an LAPD spokesperson, said the gun was fired three times but no one was struck. Police declined to say which of the suspects fired the gun or drove the car, citing the ongoing investigation.

After the incident, police pursued the three men into Los Angeles County. Authorities reported that the Camry reached speeds of up to 110 mph as it sped north. A television news helicopter captured video of the car speeding on the left shoulder of the 105 Freeway and at one point grazing the concrete center median.

During the pursuit, police said, the getaway driver let

[See Robbery, B5]



SUSAN HOFFMAN For the Daily Pilot

POLICE investigate at Fashion Island mall, where a New Zealand woman, 68, was accosted and dragged into a parking lot, then run over by the getaway car.

Hey, Joe, you can bow out now with dignity

STEVE LOPEZ

If I were a relative or close confidant of President Biden, I'm pretty sure I'd give him a hug, thank him for his service, and tell him to seriously consider walking away.

I'd tell him that after a life of service, he can pass the torch with pride, with



dignity, and with grace.

Someone probably should have done this months ago, out of love or duty, and out of concern that Biden's health is likely to get worse in coming years.

But we're not very good at this sort of thing — at summoning the courage it takes to confront a loved one or a boss who's in decline and being totally honest about it. To be courteous but firm. I had trouble telling my own father it was

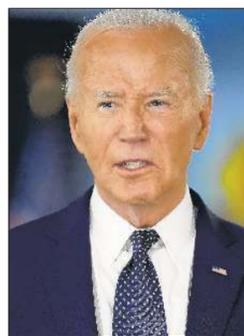
time to give up driving. He resisted, unaware of or unwilling to accept the reality of his obvious shakiness behind the wheel, and unwilling to surrender his keys or his pride.

By many accounts, people close to Biden have been aware of a decline but have not pressed him to step aside. The New York Times reported on Tuesday that in "the weeks and months" before last Thursday's presidential debate, "several current and former

officials and others who encountered him behind closed doors noticed that he increasingly appeared confused or listless, or would lose the thread of conversations." There are also reports that people are encouraging him to keep going.

There are some analogies to California's Sen. Dianne Feinstein, who died last year at the age of 90 after more than 30 years in office. If there was any

[See Lopez, B4]



EVAN VUCCI Associated Press

PRESIDENT BIDEN is working to reassure supporters that he can keep fighting. But should he?

State says plan for clean water will cost \$11.5 billion

That's the five-year estimate for ensuring small communities have safe supplies.

BY IAN JAMES

California has made significant progress helping small communities address problems of contaminated drinking water, but the cost of bringing safe tap water to hundreds of communities over the next five years will run more than \$11.5 billion, according to a new state estimate.

In a newly released report, the staff of the State Water Resources Control Board estimated that at the start of this year, about 913,000 Californians depended on public water systems that are failing to comply with drinking water regulations, while an additional 1.5 million people depended on water systems that are determined to be "at-risk."

Officials carried out the assessment nearly five years after the state established the Safe and Affordable

[See Water, B5]

A reminder of what I celebrate this Fourth



KENT NISHIMURA Los Angeles Times

HOUSE members-elect of the 118th Congress gather in 2022. Newcomers who want to better their lives are who we should celebrate on the Fourth of July.

GUSTAVO ARELLANO REPORTING FROM WASHINGTON

The air was muggy, and the afternoon sun baked the streets of the nation's capital. But when I visited last month, I made a point to walk the two miles from my hotel to the U.S. Capitol instead of taking an Uber, so I could see it in all its glory.

I didn't have much time for sightseeing, but a pilgrimage to the seat of American government was a must. Since Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of thousands stormed it to try to stop the electoral vote count that



would officially make Joe Biden president, the symbol of our democracy has stood as a reminder of how tenuous it is.

Before that wannabe coup, the U.S. Capitol was an abstraction for me, a series of images — that stunning dome, those imposing columns, but especially the magnificent steps — where a bunch of politicians passed laws but mostly grandstanded. Hell, I didn't even know there was a front and back entrance until I approached from Pennsylvania Avenue. I had been to D.C. before but hit the Lincoln Memorial, the Washington Monument and a few other landmarks, not the Capitol.

It's huge! The white

[See Arellano, B4]

SPORTS ON THE BACK: Lakers won't win title in James' final years, Plaschke writes. B10

Newsom reverses, cancels crime measure

[Crime bill, from B1] fenses could be prosecuted as a felony if the total value of stolen goods exceeded \$950. It also would have stiffened penalties for drug dealers who sold fentanyl without the buyer's knowledge.

Newsom touted the plan as "targeted reforms to Prop. 47" that reflected a "balanced approach." He said it would "put public safety first without reverting to outdated and ineffective policies of decades past."

But it fundamentally sought to do something that Newsom and legislative leaders had said for months that they did not want to do — ask voters to change Proposition 47, a pillar of the state's progressive criminal justice reforms that's meant to reduce incarceration.

Lawmakers were scheduled to vote on Newsom's measure Wednesday night, a plan that was already chaotic with members leaving Sacramento for the Fourth of July holiday and a one-month summer recess — and a deadline for Newsom to sign the legislation before midnight Wednesday to make the ballot.

Then Newsom decided to fly to Washington on Wednesday to "stand with the President," his campaign spokesman said, as Biden meets with Democratic governors in an attempt to shore up support for his reelection campaign.

Newsom blamed the tight timeline in a statement explaining his decision to pull the measure.

"We are unable to meet the ballot deadline to secure necessary amendments to ensure this measure's success and we will be withdrawing it from consideration," Newsom said in a statement. "I'd like to thank



GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM on Wednesday scrapped his newly unveiled proposal on reforming Proposition 47. Three fellow Democrats said his plan lacked support.

the Legislature and countless stakeholders who came to the table to work on meaningful reforms and I look forward to our work ahead."

Although Newsom said his measure had the necessary votes to pass, three Democratic lawmakers said it lacked support — an astonishing political miscalculation in a body where Democrats hold a sizable supermajority.

Its collapse marked a rare case of Democratic lawmakers standing up to the governor on one of his priorities — but also evinced a wobbly strategy by two inexperienced legislative leaders.

Assembly Speaker Robert Rivas took the helm last year in the lower chamber, and Senate leader Mike McGuire was sworn in to lead the upper chamber this year. Both made high-profile efforts to address theft through legislation and — like Newsom — said numerous times this year that they did not want to ask voters to reform Proposition 47.

Instead they advanced a package of anti-crime bills and used them to try to persuade the prosecutors to withdraw their measure from the ballot. Democrats tried to strong-arm negotiations by adding provisions to revoke their own anti-crime bills if voters passed the prosecutors' measure — a tactic that backfired after drawing broad condemnation from sheriffs and dis-

trict attorneys who convinced enough lawmakers to withdraw their support. It also caused uproar among Republicans, who yanked their support for what had been a bipartisan package of anti-crime bills. Democrats ended up repealing the controversial provisions just weeks after proposing them.

"For months, attempts were made to engage the California District Attorneys Association in this effort. They refused, opting to instead push a ballot measure that would revive policies from the era of mass incarceration and the failed War on Drugs," Newsom said in the statement.

After talks collapsed, Newsom and Democratic leaders came up with the plan to draft their own alternative measure. But it struggled to gain support — felled by opposition from progressive Democrats who oppose stiffer criminal penalties and want to avoid filling jails, as well as from moderate Democrats who value support from sheriffs and district attorneys backing the more conservative measure. Newsom's measure didn't have any support from law enforcement groups.

The Legislature's Black caucus opposed the measure, Assemblymember Lori D. Wilson (D-Suisun City) said during a hearing Tuesday morning, with concerns that it could disproportionately affect Black Californians. The bill passed a pro-

cedural vote on the Assembly floor Monday but didn't garner a majority of the full chamber, a rare occurrence for a bill backed by leadership.

Republicans blasted the legislation for including the phrase "Alexandra's Law" without an OK from the family of a 20-year-old from Riverside County whose parents have been advocating for stiffer punishment for drug dealers since their daughter died after taking a fentanyl pill that she bought from a dealer on Snapchat.

The whole saga marked a huge win for the California District Attorneys Assn., which has opposed Proposition 47 for many years and will see its measure on the November ballot without competing proposals.

"We are pleased the Governor and Legislature have dropped their countermeasure and welcome them to join our campaign to responsibly amend Prop 47 to deal with retail theft, the fentanyl crisis and homelessness," said a statement from Greg Totten, CEO of the California District Attorneys Assn.

Daniel Conway, a vice president of the California Grocers Assn., which supported both ballot measures, said, "I think with just one measure on the ballot, it's a much more clear choice for voters."

Newsom said he planned to "soon" sign the package of anti-crime bills, calling them "the most significant reform in decades."

Mayor Bass kicks off campaign for 2026 reelection

First-termer sends out a fundraising request, citing 'momentum' in her programs.

BY DAVID ZAHNISER

Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass kicked off her reelection bid on Monday, saying she is seeking a second four-year term while continuing to "deliver the change that Angelenos deserve."

In a fundraising email to supporters, Bass said her administration, which is less than 19 months old, has made major strides on homelessness, public safety, the delivery of city services and other issues.

"I am running for a second term because we cannot afford to stop our momentum," said Bass, who took office in December 2022.

Bass filed paperwork on Monday to form a fundraising committee for the June 2026 mayoral election. If she fails to obtain 50% of the vote in the primary, she would face an opponent in a runoff that November.

The mayor's pitch for donations went out three days after officials reported that the number of "unsheltered" homeless — those living in tents, vehicles and makeshift structures — went down by 10.4% citywide compared with the prior year. Many were moved into hotels, motels and other forms of interim housing as part of the mayor's Inside Safe initiative.

"Together with locked arms, we brought down street homelessness for the first time in years — bringing thousands more people inside last year than the year before," she said in her email.

Homelessness overall went down 2.2% — within the margin of error for this



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

L.A. MAYOR Karen Bass' fundraising email touted a reported drop in homelessness in the city.

year's homelessness count, which was conducted in January.

In her email, Bass also touted her work on Executive Directive 1, which is fast-tracking the approval of affordable housing, as well as a reduction in homicides and her efforts to work collaboratively with city, state and federal agencies.

The fundraising period for the 2026 primary election began on June 2 for city-wide offices — mayor, city attorney and city controller. Candidates for City Council in the 2026 election cannot begin raising money for their campaigns until December.

In the last election, Bass was massively outspent by her opponent, billionaire real estate developer Rick Caruso, who put in more than \$108 million — most of it his own money. That was over 10 times the amount spent by the Bass campaign, according to figures posted by the city's Ethics Commission.

A Caruso representative had no comment when contacted by The Times about the 2026 election. Last fall, Caruso told Politico he had not ruled out another run for public office.



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CITY & STATE

Signs of avian flu are detected in wastewater from the S.F. Bay Area

Samples test positive for the virus, but officials have yet to determine the source.

By SUSANNE RUST

Signs of H5N1 bird flu virus have been detected at three wastewater sites in the San Francisco Bay Area, according to sampling data.

Although positive wastewater samples have been found in seven other states, California is the only one that has yet to report a bird flu outbreak in a herd of dairy cows.

Genetic evidence of bird flu was detected in San Francisco wastewater on June 18 and June 26. Additional H5 “hits” were seen at a site in Palo Alto on June 19, and another on June 10 from the West County Wastewater facility in Richmond.

A statement from the state’s department of public health noted its staffers are working with the CDC and local health departments to determine the source of H5 in wastewater. It noted that they are looking at non-human sources, including domestic poultry and wild birds.

“As with the previous detections reported from before mid-May 2024, it is unclear what the source of H5N1 is, and an investigation is ongoing,” department officials wrote in a statement. “It is possible that it originated from bird waste or waste from other animals due to San Francisco’s sewer system that collects and treats both wastewater and stormwater in the same network of pipes.”

Health officials said the risk remains low for the general public.

The virus has not been identified in California cows, but it has been found in wild birds and domestic poultry in the state.

The finding “is concerning” because of their urban origin, said Devabhaktuni Srikrishna, an entrepreneur who is developing techniques for disease detection, and founder of Patient-KnowHow.com. “There are not many dairy or animal farms in San Francisco.”

There are also no dairy farms in Palo Alto or Rich-

mond.

Julie Weiss, Palo Alto’s watershed protection program manager, said her department’s role in the wastewater research “does not extend beyond providing wastewater samples to the research team.” Kate Gibbs, the spokeswoman for Richmond’s West County Wastewater facility, referred all questions to the state.

Although the samples from the Bay Area wastewater sites tested positive for H5, the testing was not specific to H5N1.

However, researchers say a positive genetic identification for H5 is suggestive of bird flu — whether H5N1, the virus that has been found in U.S. dairy cattle (and which has infected three dairy workers) or H5N2, the subtype implicated in the death of a man in Mexico City earlier this year.

Most human influenza A viruses are of the H1 and H3 variety.

The virus has been detected in 133 dairy herds across 12 states. It has also been found in wild birds and domestic poultry flocks throughout the U.S.

In recent weeks, H5 was also detected in wastewater samples in Idaho, among other states.

Although there is “no threat to the general public from the H5 detection in wastewater” at this time, said Christine Hahn, Idaho state epidemiologist, “we have determined that it is important that we work to understand these recent findings as much as possible.”

The state is working with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to investigate the issue.

WastewaterSCAN, the research organization that detected the virus, is an infectious disease monitoring network run by researchers at Stanford, Emory University and Verily, Alphabet Inc.’s life sciences organization.

A review of their data — which takes samples from 194 sites across the country — suggests H5 has also been detected at sites in Michigan, Texas, Minnesota, South Dakota and Iowa.

California is the only one of these states that has not reported H5N1-infected cattle.



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

HOT DOG

Wyatt, a British bulldog, takes a break from the heat on the lap of his human companion Kerry Stefan, 61, while visiting from Hollywood at the Third Street Promenade in Santa Monica last week.

Tree more than 13,000 years old takes stage in development battle

Jurupa Valley officials delay a proposal that may threaten one of world’s oldest plants.

By NOAH HAGGERY

JURUPA VALLEY, Calif. — After a contentious five-hour public meeting, environmentalists advocates have persuaded Inland Empire officials to delay development of a project within 400 feet of one of the oldest known plants in the state and the third-oldest in the world.

“Tonight has been a real learning process,” Jurupa Valley City Planning Commission Chair Penny Newman said at the meeting. “I think we all need time to process the information we’ve had here tonight.”

The commission voted unanimously last week to table the vote. Members said the developers must do more studies into the potential effects on the plant, a Palmer oak, and further explore protective measures.

Commissioners also requested more details on a plan to transfer ownership of the tree and surrounding land to a local tribe, who would oversee its conservation.

“We have discovered a treasure on the world stage here in our humble city,” lifelong Jurupa Valley resident Jennifer Iyer said at the meeting. “In a city known for its toxic waste dump, the worst air quality in the nation ... let’s have a plan that protects and celebrates something unique that makes us proud.”

The roughly 370-acre development would include residential housing, an elementary school, a business park and industrial buildings. It would leave the tree on a 27-acre rocky outcrop, but it would come within 400 feet of the plant.

Scientists and tribal members say the oak has been around for at least 13,000 years — surviving the last ice age and, more recently, the founding of the United States.

Members of the Shiihongna Tongva Nation, the Corona Band Of Gabrieleño Indians and the Kizh Nation, Gabrieleño Band Of Mission Indians have lived in



AARON ECHOLS California Native Plants Society

THE PALMER OAK in Jurupa Valley lived through the last ice age, scientists say. A tribal leader said: “It gives medicine. It gives oxygen. It gives life to the animals.”

the Santa Ana River Basin for millennia as well. Both groups regard the tree as sacred.

“We’ve known about this tree forever,” said Michael Negrete, chief and chairperson of the Shiihongna Tongva Nation. “It gives medicine. It gives oxygen. It gives life to the animals.”

Companies have been trying to develop the land since the early 1990s, with Richland Communities presenting the current plan in 2019. After discussions with the City Planning Commission and the public, it has replaced potential warehouses with light industrial space and a business park, increased the amount of open space, and committed to transfer ownership and conservation responsibilities of the land with the Palmer oak to a Native tribe or conservation organization.

Richland Communities announced at the meeting that it had reached an agreement in concept to transfer the land to the Kizh Nation and provide them with a \$250,000 initial endowment for conservation. Company executives also proposed requiring the agreement to be finalized before construction begins on the industrial and business sections, which are closest to the tree.

Commissioners want additional information on the plan’s details and how conservation of the land would be legally enforced. Richland Communities did not respond to a request for comment.

Compared with rugged

California live oaks, the Palmer oak looks more like a shrub and is made up of individual stems sprouting in a grove. It wasn’t until fairly recently that researchers determined its impressive age.

Mitchell Provance, a botanist and associate researcher at UC Riverside, first noticed the oak more than two decades ago and found it odd that it lived isolated from other members of its species in an area that was much lower and hotter than where the trees usually grow.

He began discussing the tree with his colleagues. They hypothesized that it was the last holdout from a time when the region was cooler and wetter — a much friendlier environment for the oaks.

To see if this was the case, the researchers collected samples from dead stems, which had identical DNA. Whenever the tree was damaged by a fire, it would resprout from the base of its trunk. By using tree rings to estimate how much the trunk can grow in a year, the team was able to calculate the tree’s age by measuring the grove’s diameter.

Today, the grove measures 80 feet wide, which led researchers to estimate that the tree is between 13,000 and 18,000 years old. It’s possible that the tree has been able to reproduce with itself, instead of just resprouting from the trunk to produce clones, but this is unlikely, experts say.

While the company has

worked with the environmental consultant First-Carbon Solutions to study the impact of construction vibrations on the tree and identify potential water sources, it has not mapped the tree’s root system or confirmed its direct water source — a process that would involve chemical testing of water at the oak’s roots.

Some also worry the proposed development would expose the aged oak to the urban heat island effect — a phenomenon in which developed areas can run 1 to 7 degrees higher than shaded, natural areas during the day.

Aaron Echols, the conservation chair of the Riverside/San Bernardino California Native Plants Society, said it was the duty of conservation groups to point out potential effects on the tree that haven’t yet been studied. “The burden to mitigate impacts ... that’s on the applicant and the consultant.”

The portion of the environmental impact review discussing the Palmer oak — including its exact location — has been redacted from public documents.

The city was required to do this by law, since the tree has sensitive cultural significance to the Native tribes.

Consequently, independent scientists have been unable to scrutinize the report.

The city said it would explore “creative ways” to legally allow a select few third-party experts to view and discuss the report.

More deputies to patrol Lancaster after spate of shootings over 24-hour period

Authorities blame gangs for violence that left four dead and several wounded.

By NATHAN SOLIS

The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department will deploy more deputies to Lancaster after a series of gang-related shootings that left four people dead and several injured over a 24-hour period, authorities said.

Gunfire rippled across the city June 25 and escalated a day later when seven people were shot just before 6 p.m. in what the Sheriff’s Department described in a news release as a gang-related attack.

Deputies arrived in the 800 block of East Avenue J-12 and found two wounded men, who were taken to a hospital where they were pronounced dead, officials said.

Shortly after, authorities received reports that five other gunshot victims had arrived together at another hospital.

Officials said the five were stable, but no other information was available on their conditions.

The attack was a retaliation

gang shooting carried out by people from outside the city who were armed with “assault weapons,” Lancaster Mayor R. Rex Parris said.

“It was a bloodbath,” he said. “They were shooting into homes. It was a war zone.”

On the previous night, deputies responded to shootings across the city.

A man was shot near Avenue J-8 and 30th Street West around 7:30 p.m. and taken to a hospital. About an hour later, a man was hit a few blocks away in the 45600 block of Sierra Highway. Deputies found the man with multiple wounds lying on the ground in a parking lot, according to authorities. He was taken to a hospital, where he died.

About 45 minutes later, around 9:20 p.m., deputies responded to a third shooting, in the 400 block of East Avenue L. The victim, described as a teenage boy, was struck multiple times by two men while he was standing at a gas pump at a Chevron station. The assailants drove away in a white sport utility vehicle, according to authorities. The teen was taken to a hospital and died, according to the Sheriff’s Department.

It’s unclear whether the shootings were linked.

The attacks “are concerning and threaten the safety of our community,” the Sheriff’s Department said in a statement. The agency said the Lancaster station will roll out more visible patrols and personnel to areas where the shootings occurred.

“The station will be engaging community members at various city events to discuss safety concerns and share ongoing efforts to improve public safety,” the statement said. “Additionally, we will be moving de-

partment specialized teams to target areas in Lancaster to enhance security.”

Homicide investigators believe that at least three of the shootings are gang-related.

Lancaster, with a population of roughly 188,000, contracts with the Sheriff’s Department for services. Parris said the county does not provide enough resources for his city. He said the sheriff’s station in Lancaster is understaffed and was unable to adequately respond to the recent homicides.

The department did not specifically respond to Parris’ comments.

In a statement, the department said it was “meeting [its] contractual obligations.” A spokesperson said Sheriff Robert Luna has been in contact with the mayor’s office.

A few weeks earlier, on June 7, a man was shot in the 44000 block of Gingham Avenue around 2:30 a.m., according to the Sheriff’s Department. The man was taken to a hospital and pronounced dead.

The Los Angeles County medical examiner’s office identified the man as Erick Monterroso McLaughlin, 19, of Lancaster.

The shooting remains under investigation. His family set up a GoFundMe page for funeral expenses.

Anyone with information about the Lancaster shootings is encouraged to call the Homicide Bureau at (323) 890-5500. Anonymous tips can be made to Crime Stoppers by dialing (800) 222-TIPS (8477) or at lacrimestoppers.org.

There's dignity in retiring while we have our health

[Lopez, from B1] inner-circle effort to persuade her to leave the Senate due to her obvious cognitive and physical decline, that effort failed. She died in office after announcing she would not run again.

In some cases, stepping aside is the right thing to do.

This might sound odd to those who've followed my Golden State column over the last 28 months. One of my driving principles has been to stand firm against the notion that we're incapable of contributing as we age, or that our value diminishes.

In recent columns, I've been pointing out, with the help of experts, that you can't diagnose dementia from afar, though many people have tried to do so in Biden's case, especially after his debate performance.

I've also written that whatever the cause of his foggy gaze and occasional meandering phrase (the medical possibilities are numerous), Biden seemed lost and unsteady. He may still have some gas in the tank, but time is working against him. A year from now, or two, or three or four, how will he be?

The world population is aging rapidly, and more people are staying on the job longer — and while the benefits are many, the risks are real. Bodies and minds break down. It's OK, when they do, to punch out and move on.

Since the debate, I've been thinking about something USC gerontology professor Caroline Cicero said to me last year, when I wrote about whether Biden or Feinstein should step aside.

"I'm very concerned about ageism in the workplace, but I'm also concerned about people who think they have to work forever," said Cicero. "Giving people permission to retire is something I think we need to do."

She picked up on that line of thinking this week.

"In recent decades, society has told us that we can have it all. In a battle against ageism, we tell people they can work as long as they want," she said. "In a battle to prove ourselves, we tell ourselves we can beat normal slowdowns that come with the passage of time."

But most of us can't. Mick Jagger and Paul McCartney, each north of 80, are still holding a tune, and Warren Buffett, at 93, seems to be doing OK. But that's the thing about aging,



SEN. DIANNE FEINSTEIN, right, died in office last year. "In a battle to prove ourselves, we tell ourselves we can beat normal slowdowns that come with the passage of time," says USC gerontologist Caroline Cicero.

as I've said before: You can be old at 60 and young at 85.

Biden has obvious strengths, chief among them experience, wisdom, decency, civility and the empathy that comes with crushing loss.

It may be that those in his inner circle, knowing what he's made of, can't bring themselves to question his strength and resolve, even in the face of obvious decline. Sure, his family knows him better than we do, but maybe they can't see what we see from afar.

Some of you might be wondering, right about now, that if I'm all about frank discussions on knowing when it's time to go, then how come I'm not bringing the Trump family into this.

I would, but their task is even harder than the Biden family's. What would be the point of saying to a convicted felon who continues to insist he won the 2020 election, "Hey Pop, the fact-checkers are still recovering from the workout you gave them in the last debate"? It takes a bit of humility to see the truth about yourself, and when you begin listing the qualities that define Donald

Trump, humility and truth do not make the cut.

Biden may be having trouble seeing himself as anything other than what he is now — a public servant at the top of the flowchart. You can't be president of the United States without a healthy ego, and in jobs that people are passionate about — that become their very identity — they often can't imagine what or who else they could be in retirement, provided they can afford to retire, which many cannot.

These people may not be able to imagine that anyone waiting in the wings is as up to the task as they are, and perhaps that's part of Biden's calculation. If he takes the next exit, who would take his place? And is there enough time for Vice President Kamala Harris or any of the other potential last-minute candidates to find traction?

It never should have come to this.

The late Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Gins-

burg comes to mind as Exhibit A for lessons on the price of stubbornly holding on. She refused to surrender her position as her health faded, and women's reproductive rights suffered a blow as a result.

"I see it with entrepreneurs who created a business and have hard time letting go," said Helen Denis, who started a support group called Renewment — combining the words "renewal" and "retirement" — 25 years ago for successful

women who had trouble imagining the next versions of themselves. The group now includes "teachers, nurses, doctors, several attorneys," all of them leaning on each other as they learn "how to navigate the next chapter."

Work is not life, and life is not work, USC's Cicero once said to me. That must be a foreign concept to a sitting president, but I'm thinking of former President Jimmy Carter as one of the best examples of those who have found ways to contribute after leaving office. He took up a hammer and went to work for Habitat for Humanity — and he won the Nobel Peace Prize for working on peaceful solutions to world conflicts.

"People often fear retirement because they don't want to be labeled as old, invisible or unimportant," Cicero said. And many of those who are "addicted to routine don't know how they will spend their time without the rigors of a work schedule," she added — but that "does not mean they need to keep working to have a satisfying later life."

Biden, after his debate stumble, was quickly back on the stump, telling supporters that when you're knocked down, you get back up and keep fighting.

But Father Time, as they say, is the one who's undefeated.

I'd remind Biden that the country and the world have problems neither he nor Trump can fix, and that if he's reelected he will be subjected to four more years of unrelenting judgments about his fitness to hold office.

I'd tell him that, at 81, when you're knocked down, you've earned a rest.

And there's no shame in that.

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Barricades and police don't tarnish my feeling of optimism for America

[Arellano, from B1] building gleams like a promontory of power, with trees from across the U.S. spread across the grounds below. Its magnetism was such that I paid no attention to the Reflecting Pool, the Ulysses S. Grant Memorial or the Peace Monument below it.

What broke the spell was the people around me.

Filipino men in barongs and Muslim women in hijabs. Argentines joking around in lilting Spanish and Australians with their distinctive garrulous accent. I'm not sure if they were foreign tourists or immigrants, but it was easy to distinguish them from the locals, who rushed toward the rest of their day uninterested in the splendor the rest of us basked in. We lookie-loos used the Capitol as the backdrop for group photos and selfies, paying little attention to the barricades and police officers blocking us from ascending the steps of the West End.

That scene is on my mind on the 248th birthday of this country, especially after the horror show that was last week's presidential debate between Biden and the man the insurrectionists wanted to keep in office, Donald Trump. All anyone talked about in the immediate aftermath was Biden's performance, with some, including Democrats, deriding it as akin to the Crypt Keeper from "Tales from the Crypt."

Biden was no silver-tongued Socrates — but he never has been, and the commander in chief improved as the night went along. Besides, I'll take his fuddy-duddiness over the dictatorial doom-and-gloom and lies Trump offered that night.

But Biden broke my heart, because he stayed mostly silent while Trump lambasted immigrants as the gravest threat this nation has ever faced. The convicted felon barely bothered to distinguish legal from illegal immigrants. He claimed Biden "open[ed] up our country to people that are from prisons, people that are from mental institutions, insane asylums, terrorists," going on to mention "mental institutions" two more times, as if mentally ill people are sub-human. He described the



UNLIKE the Trump-loyal Jan. 6, 2021, insurrectionists, it's immigrants and their descendants who have kept the embers of the American way from dying.

U.S.-Mexico border as "the worst ... in the history of the world" and "the most dangerous place anywhere in the world," which will come as news to residents of Gaza and those on the front lines of the Ukraine war.

When we needed someone to stand up for our nation's newcomers, to brag about how this country remains a beacon for the tired and poor huddled masses of the world instead of the "failing nation" Trump thinks we are (a point he repeated five times), Biden instead insisted he was far better at cracking down on illegal immigration than Trump made him out to be.

Trump's most damning line of the night — "I really don't know what he [Biden] said at the end of that sentence. I don't think he knows what he said either" — was in response to the president mumbling his way through a boast about increasing the number of Border Patrol agents and making it harder to claim asylum.

If Biden won't stand up to xenophobic bull spouted by a bully, who will?

I've lived my life hearing that unchecked immigration, legal or not, will ruin the United States. I've never seen this apocalypse come. Nah, it's been mostly native-born white Americans who keep whining that we're no

longer great, yet do little to make things better, other than moving to Tennessee or Idaho. It's immigrants and their descendants who have kept the embers of the American way from dying by emphasizing hard work, community and personal responsibility.

Newcomers who want to better their lives are who we should celebrate on the Fourth of July. Yet multiple polls show that a majority of Americans — even Latinos — feel our borders are under assault. The temperature around immigration is even nastier than during the days of Prop. 187, the ballot initiative that California voters passed 30 years ago in an attempt to make life miserable for undocumented immigrants. Back then, people banded together to fight back. Now? Few seem to care.

The weight of it hit me as I walked around the Capitol to see its official entrance, where the insurrectionists invaded on Jan. 6. The sun was setting right behind the dome, casting a long, frigid shadow even on a hot day. Police were everywhere. Metal barricades blocked people from climbing the steps that led to the House of Representatives and the Senate chambers, and the Rotunda. A few tourists lingered alongside me but quickly left.

I approached an un-

fenced area, and a police officer politely but firmly told me to move on. It felt like a crime scene — and the victims are us.

Both sides of the political aisle claim it's now evening in America, but I'll forever remain an optimist. What else can I do? This country exceeded the expectations of my Mexican immigrant parents, and mine. It's nowhere near perfect, but that's what makes it so great — the United States belongs to those who work it, those who hope.

The day after my Capitol visit, I walked past the tourist entrance to the White House. The free public tours didn't start until 9:30 in the morning, but the line to enter wound up and down the gate two hours before. Men in turbans stood next to college students wearing University of Wisconsin T-shirts. English and Spanish and Mandarin filled the air.

The American flags some people sported on their hats or as jewelry didn't come off as a political statement but rather a symbol of communion. The guards who stood sentry were jovial. There were no complaints, nothing but excitement at the shared joy of what they were about to see.

That is the America I celebrate this Fourth of July — and pray that remains, come election day.

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Joyce E Ashley

In her own words: On July 1, Joyce Ashley, after a long life full of love, adventure, and deep friendships with fascinating people, died at home of pancreatic cancer. She was 93 years old. Except for 15 years when she lived in Los Angeles, Joyce was a lifelong New Yorker. She leaves behind, with great gratitude, the love of her life, her daughter, Julie Leff (Charles Douthat), her cherished grandchildren Sarah Chostner (Ben), Anni Denzel (Christopher), Jenny Satinover (Alex Wilson), and great-grandchildren Aviva and Nathan Chostner and Mae and Sadie Denzel, her dear brother Lewis ("Buzzy") Hochberg, and the wonderful people with whom she had the good fortune to work during her rich years as a Jungian analyst. Her gratitude also goes to Edith Garcia for her many years of warm and caring service, and to the many people who helped her through the last two difficult years — Jerry Gliklich, MD, Eileen O'Reilly, MD, Paul Hamlin, MD, Therese Deierlein, AuD, and Ro Mosquera and the other wonderful nurses who took such good care of her.

In lieu of flowers, please make a donation to the research of Dr. Eileen O'Reilly at Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center. Services will be private.

Ron Barkham

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Los Angeles Times

State plan for clean rural water would cost billions

[Water, from B1]
Funding for Equity and Resilience, or SAFER, drinking water program. They said in the report that under the program, the state water board has since 2019 given more than \$831 million in grants for drinking water projects in disadvantaged communities, and that about 250 failing water systems serving more than 2 million people have come into compliance with drinking water standards.

“What our analysis has shown time and again is that the common denominator is size,” said Joaquin Esquivel, chair of the state water board. “Small systems struggle, especially in communities that have experienced discrimination and disinvestment, and their challenges will be amplified as weather grows more extreme, new contaminants emerge and costs increase.”

California declared access to clean, safe and affordable water a human right in 2012, but the state has faced significant challenges in developing policies and securing adequate funding to bring solutions for communities where people live with contaminated tap water.

In small rural communities across the state, the water pumped from wells contains harmful levels of contaminants including naturally occurring arsenic, bacteria from sewage leaks, nitrate from animal manure, fertilizers or other sources, and carcinogenic chemicals.

Not all systems that are deemed to be failing deliver water that is contaminated, but many of them have at least one contaminant at levels that violate safe drinking water standards.

According to state data, about 56% of the 385 failing water systems supply disadvantaged communities, and 67% of them supply majority communities of color.

“All of our current failing water systems are on track to come off the failing list,” said Kristyn Abhold, senior environmental scientist for the state water board. “They are working on long-term solutions, and our staff and funding resources are being targeted to the ones that are in most need.”

State water regulators have found that the vast majority of the failing water systems serve a small number of residents, while 98% of the state’s population receives water from sources and suppliers that meet drinking water standards.

For a water system to come into compliance with regulations, it takes not only funding but also planning,

engineering work and permits, Abhold said.

State officials have assessed other communities that are at risk by analyzing the potential for water quality violations or water shortages, among other factors.

The number of people affected has fluctuated in recent months as some water systems have come off the list and others have been added. The state’s latest estimates show that 738,000 people currently receive water from failing systems, while more than 1.8 million people depend on 548 systems with drinking water supplies determined to be at risk.

The state’s report includes estimated costs for infrastructure solutions such as installing treatment systems, drilling a new well, or consolidating by connecting one water system to another.

The estimated costs of solutions in the latest report were substantially higher than previous state estimates. In a 2021 report, the state water board included a range of estimated costs up to \$9.1 billion.

Officials said they used new methods and improved data this time, including more water systems and risks in their analysis.

According to the report, the estimated costs of long-term solutions for failing and at-risk public water systems total \$6.6 billion over five years, while the costs of solutions for “high-risk” small water systems and domestic wells total \$4.9 billion.

Those combined costs, totaling more than \$11.5 billion, would be significantly higher if loan repayment costs and operations and maintenance costs are included, the report said, pushing the total estimated cost of “achieving the human right to water” to \$15.9 billion.

Officials projected that \$2 billion in state grant funds will be available over five years, as well as \$1.5 billion in state loans, leaving a substantial gap in available funding. Officials said a large portion of the money to address the problems may need to come from “local cost share” funds collected through rates, fees and taxes.

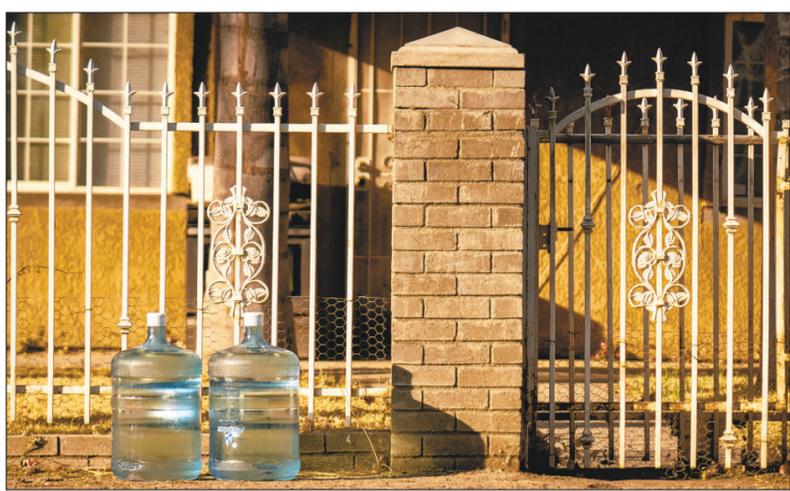
Citing recent cuts, more than 180 organizations, including environmental groups, wrote to state leaders urging them to approve placing a \$10-billion bond on the November ballot to provide “direct and meaningful investments in the California communities and natu-

ral resources most impacted by climate change.”

As part of that ballot measure, they called for including \$1 billion for drinking water and wastewater infrastructure for communities and tribes.

Leaders of the groups wrote that “recent and proposed cuts to funding for such programs have prompted consensus that additional bond funding is necessary to ensure priority programs continue beyond this year.”

Jennifer Clary, California director for the group Clean Water Action, said: “Drinking water infrastructure isn’t a luxury item. Without these projects, thousands of Californians will continue to lack access to safe and clean drinking water.”



BOTTLES of water sit outside a home in Tooleville, Calif. In small rural communities across the state, water pumped from wells contains harmful contaminants.

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Rentals San Gabriel/Pomona Valley

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The address of the court is: SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA County of Los Angeles County 300 East Olive Avenue Burbank, CA 91505 A copy of this Order to Show Cause shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county.
Dated: July 2, 2024
J. Calderon
Deputy Clerk
Published in the Los Angeles Times 07/04/24, 07/11/24, 07/18/24, 07/25/24

Name Change

Proposed Name
Hanaan Mehkai Persaud
THE COURT ORDERS that all persons interested in this matter appear before this court at the hearing indicated below to show cause, if any, why the petition for change of name should not be granted. Any person objecting to the name changes described above must file a written objection that includes the reasons for the objection at least two days before the matter is scheduled to be heard and must appear at the hearing to show cause why the petition should not be granted. If no written objection is timely filed, the court may grant the petition without a hearing.
NOTICE OF HEARING
DATE: August 30, 2024
TIME: 8:30 AM
DEPT: K
ROOM:
The address of the court is: SUPERIOR COURT OF CALIFORNIA County of Los Angeles Santa Monica Courthouse 1725 Main Street, Santa Monica, CA 90401 A copy of this Order to Show Cause shall be published at least once each week for four successive weeks prior to the date set for hearing on the petition in the following newspaper of general circulation, printed in this county.
Dated: July 02, 2024
David W. Slayton
Executive Officer/Clerk of Court
Published in the Los Angeles Times 07/04/24, 07/11/24, 07/18/24, 07/25/24

latimes.com/placead
To place an ad call 1.800.234.4444

Los Angeles Times

[Robbery, from B1]
at least one accomplice out in Cypress before he and another man sped on. The pair eventually jumped out of the car in South Gate, fleeing on foot around Harding and Hoover avenues, according to police and video of the chase shown on multiple news stations.

News video showed one bare-chested man being taken into custody minutes after he jumped from the driver's side of the car. One passenger was found in a residential backyard by police, who also found a firearm nearby, California Highway Patrol Officer Sonia Guzman said.

Eventually, three people were taken into custody, police said.

Authorities identified the suspects as 26-year-old Leroy Ernest Joseph McCrary of Compton; 18-year-old Jaden Cunningham of Lancaster; and 18-year-old Malachi Edward Darnell of Los Angeles. All three were booked on suspicion of homicide, robbery with a firearm and conspiracy.

McCrary, who also goes by the name LeRoy Ernest McCrary, has a history of crimes in L.A. County. He was arrested and charged in October 2022 with being a narcotics addict in possession of a firearm, a felony. He pleaded no contest to that felony charge the October of the following year.

McCrary also was charged in a robbery case in September 2023 and pleaded no contest. He received a concurrent sentence for both convictions and got two years of probation and three years in state

prison, with the sentence suspended.

McCrary also was arrested on suspicion of driving with a suspended license in both 2018 and 2021.

The shooting occurred just after 3:30 p.m. Tuesday at what is known as a usually peaceful shopping center that sits on a bluff above the ocean in the wealthy coastal community.

The Newport Beach Fire Department reported that a person was found dead in the parking lot adjacent to the bookstore.

Authorities notified residents to avoid the shopping plaza as they investigated. Police were seen guiding the public to safety, and helicopters were flying overhead.

A woman who was shopping in the area at the time described the situation as a “hullabaloo.” She said she was from Los Angeles and was thankful that police responded quickly. She declined to give her name.

A young man who asked not to be identified said he was at Cucina Enoteca in Fashion Island when the incident occurred. “About 20 people were running and screaming, ‘Someone’s shooting!’ They locked us in the restaurant,” he said.

“This doesn’t happen in Newport Beach,” Mayor Will O’Neill told KCAL-TV News. “Fashion Island is an incredibly safe place. This is a tragedy, and I’m furious.”

City News Service contributed to this report. Winton, Rainey and Solis are Times staff writers. Nguyen and Hoffman write for Times Community News.

love is...

...saying, 'Happy Birthday, America.'

TM Reg. U.S. Pat. Off. — all rights reserved © 2024 Minikim Holland B.V.

THE WEATHER

Today in Southern California

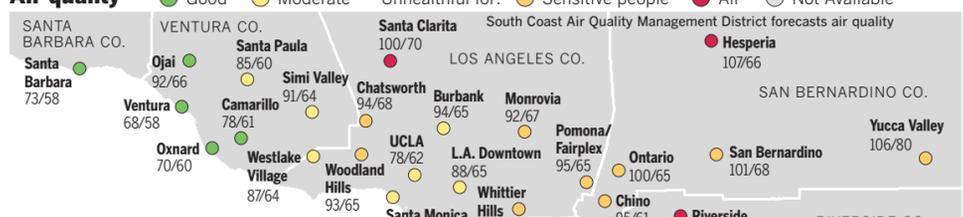
Building heat: Low clouds this morning will be minimal and brief along the coast. A dome of high pressure building and gradually enveloping more of California will increasingly pump up the heat across Southern California this week, aside from the immediate coast. The heat will not rise much Thursday from Wednesday but will become more dangerous Friday and Saturday.

5-day forecasts

High/low temperatures are average forecasts for entire zone.

	L.A. Basin	Valleys	Beaches	Mountains	Deserts
Today	88 65 Warm with sunshine	94 68 Sunny and very warm	74 63 Patchy fog, then sun	87 49 Sunny and warm	119 87 Very hot
Friday	Sunny and hot 92/65	Sunny; hot 99/73	Mostly sunny 75/64	Mostly sunny 88/54	Very hot 122/90
Saturday	Sunny; hot 94/67	Sunny; hot 96/67	Mostly sunny 78/66	Hot 91/60	Very hot 120/90
Sunday	Fog to sun 91/66	Very warm 94/65	Fog to sun 78/64	Very warm 90/60	Very hot 118/88
Monday	Mostly sunny 85/66	Sunny; warm 96/71	Partly sunny 76/63	Not as warm 90/57	Very hot 118/88

Air quality



Surf and sea

POINT CONCEPTION TO MEXICO
Inner waters: Wind light, becoming west 10-15 knots. Seas 3-6 feet. Swells mixed from the west at 3 feet and the south at 2-3 feet.

Surf zone: The risk of strong rip currents is high at L.A., Ventura, S.D. and Orange county beaches and moderate at S.B. County.

County	Height	Period	Direction	Temp
Santa Barbara	2-4'	12 sec	SW	60
Ventura	3-5'	12 sec	SW	60
Los Angeles	3-5'	12 sec	SW	68
Orange	3-7'	17 sec	S	67
San Diego	3-6'	16 sec	SSW	70

Tides

L.A. Outer Harbor, in feet.

Time	Height	Direction
Today 10:11a	3.7 Hi	3:29a -1.1 Lo
8:41p	6.6 Hi	2:23p 2.4 Lo
Fri. 10:52a	3.8 Hi	4:10a -1.2 Lo
9:23p	6.6 Hi	3:08p 2.4 Lo

UV index

Minutes to burn for sensitive people
Las Vegas, 10 Phoenix, 10
Los Angeles, 10 San Francisco, 10

California cities*

City	Wed.*		Today		Fri.
	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo	
Anaheim	87	63	--	86 63	90 66
Avalon/Catalina	82	61	--	77 65	82 70
Bakersfield	111	80	--	111 78	109 78
Barstow	114	82	--	113 83	116 82
Big Bear Lake	84	50	--	87 49	88 54
Bishop	106	59	--	105 57	108 58
Burbank	94	66	--	94 65	96 69
Camarillo	79	62	--	78 61	82 64
Chino	99	65	--	94 68	100 69
Chico	97	63	--	95 61	101 62
Compton	81	64	.02	81 64	87 68
Dana Point	73	64	--	76 65	78 67
Death Valley	122	92	--	126 94	129 95
Del Mar	75	65	--	71 66	72 67
Escondido	89	61	--	90 62	93 64
Eureka	66	52	--	69 63	66 51
Fallbrook	83	61	.01	90 62	92 64
Fresno	110	76	--	112 76	112 77
Hemet	88	65	--	88 65	87 67
Fullerton	104	64	--	100 63	105 65
Hesperia	101	71	--	104 68	107 66
Huntington Beach	73	65	.01	74 65	78 67
Idyllwild	91	71	--	92 70	100 72
Irvine	78	63	--	82 63	85 64

Sun and moon

Today's rise/set
Sun 5:47a/8:08p 5:46a/8:06p 5:50a/8:13p
Moon 4:13a/7:38p 4:12a/7:36p 4:16a/7:43p



Almanac

Wednesday Downtown readings

Temperature	Los Angeles	Fullerton	Ventura*
High/low	84/62	85/64	68/58
Normal high/low	81/64	83/65	73/57
High/low a year ago	80/60	78/60	66/56
Record high/date	100/1985	93/2003	88/1959
Record low/date	47/2019	60/2023	48/1949

Precipitation Los Angeles Fullerton Ventura*

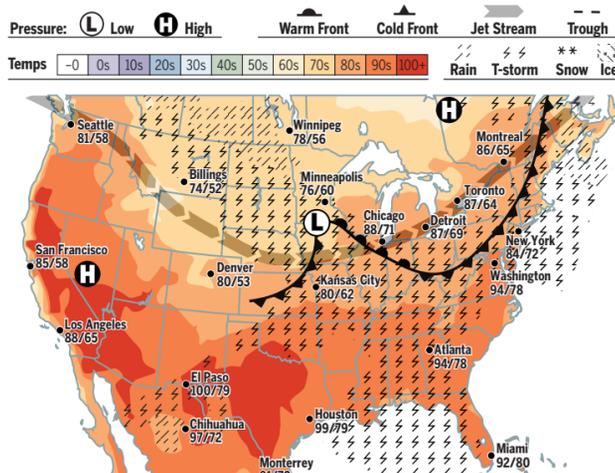
24-hour total (as of 2 p.m.)	0.00	0.00	0.00
Season total (since Oct. 1)	22.15	16.59	24.79
Last season (Oct. 1 to date)	28.03	21.35	27.06
Season norm (Oct. 1 to date)	14.25	11.80	16.03
Humidity (high/low)	96/72	96/47	96/70

City	Wed.*		Today		Fri.
	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo	
L.A. D'town/USC	86	64	--	88 65	92 65
L.A. Int'l. Airport	69	62	--	74 63	76 65
Laguna Beach	72	64	--	75 65	77 67
Lancaster	108	74	--	110 81	114 80
Long Beach	84	66	--	83 66	86 68
Mammoth Lakes	85	46	--	85 44	90 45
Mission Viejo	87	64	--	84 63	88 64
Monrovia	93	67	--	92 67	97 74
Monterey	76	54	--	72 56	74 54
Mt. Wilson	89	68	--	76 71	79 70
Needles	118	89	--	118 88	120 83
Newport Beach	70	65	.01	74 66	75 68
Northridge	102	63	--	93 65	99 68
Oakland	94	63	--	87 59	87 57
Oceanside	80	63	--	84 64	85 66
Ojai	93	61	--	92 66	100 73
Ontario	100	65	--	100 65	102 69
Palm Springs	117	82	--	119 87	122 90
Pasadena	90	67	--	89 68	93 73
Paso Robles	104	58	--	106 60	114 63
Redding	113	78	--	113 76	117 77
Riverside	100	63	--	100 63	104 66
Sacramento	110	67	--	107 64	109 65
San Bernardino	104	66	--	101 68	106 71

City	Wed.*		Today		Fri.
	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo	
San Diego	76	68	--	78 67	77 67
San Francisco	88	60	--	85 58	85 59
San Gabriel	90	66	--	94 67	96 71
San Jose	101	69	--	98 66	95 63
San Luis Obispo	87	61	--	87 59	96 63
Santa Ana	79	65	--	80 66	83 68
Santa Barbara	70	57	--	73 58	79 58
Santa Clarita	103	64	--	100 70	110 74
Santa Monica Pier	69	64	--	74 63	75 64
Santa Paula	83	60	Tr	80 60	95 65
Santa Rosa	103	55	--	95 52	95 61
Simi Valley	88	67	--	91 64	102 64
Tahoe Valley	88	47	--	88 48	91 49
Temecula	94	63	--	96 64	99 67
Thousand Oaks	84	60	--	85 61	93 64
Torrance	74	64	.01	75 65	75 69
UCLA	77	63	.03	78 62	83 65
Van Nuys	97	66	--	95 67	101 70
Ventura	71	59	.03	68 58	72 62
Whittier Hills	87	64	--	89 64	90 67
Woodland Hills	102	64	--	93 65	97 65
Wrightwood	88	72	--	88 70	91 70
Yorba Linda	90	63	--	88 61	92 64
Yosemite Valley	95	62	--	95 63	96 59

Today in North America

Severe thunderstorms: Thunderstorms will range from the Southeast to the northern Plains. Disturbances associated with a storm system and a couple of fronts from West Virginia to Oklahoma and north to Minnesota may produce damaging winds, hail and flash flooding.



U.S. cities

WEDNESDAY'S EXTREMES AS OF 2 P.M. FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES

High 115 in Needles, Calif. Low 26 in Pahaska, Wyo.

City	Wednesday*		Today		City	Wednesday*		Today			
	Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo		Hi	Lo	Hi	Lo		
Albany	84	64	--	82 67	Ts	Seattle	76	53	--	81 58	Su
Albuquerque	93	62	.12	97 66	Su	Tampa	93	79	.33	92 79	Ts
Anchorage	63	54	--	63 55	Cy	Tucson	103	78	--	104 80	Su
Aspen	76	42	--	76 40	Su	Tulsa	96	83	.32	97 71	Ts
Atlanta	91	77	.02	94 78	Ts	Washington, D.C.	88	70	--	94 78	Ts
Austin	95	73	--	99 75	Pc	Wichita	80	75	.97	86 63	Ts
Baltimore	87	68	--	94 75	Pc	World					
Boise	88	56	--	91 63	Su	Acapulco	89	76	.06	89 77	Pc
Boston	80	66	--	85 70	Ts	Amsterdam	63	50	.85	65 57	Pc
Buffalo	88	72	.09	85 66	Pc	Athens	90	77	--	85 69	Cy
Burlington, Vt.	84	61	--	86 67	Pc	Bangkok	90	81	.44	89 79	Ts
Charleston, S.C.	91	76	.02	94 75	Pc	Barcelona	75	68	--	79 66	Su
Charlotte	90	70	--	98 78	Pc	Berlin	66	54	.04	67 50	Sh
Chicago	87	73	.09	88 71	Pc	Cabo San Lucas	86	70	--	88 77	Su
Cincinnati	92	75	.38	81 71	Ts	Cairo	100	77	--	102 80	Su
Cleveland	90	71	.20	85 68	Cy	Dubai	106	90	--	104 88	Hc
Columbia, S.C.	92	69	--	99 76	Pc	Dublin	68	54	.31	63 49	Pc
Columbus	92	75	.60	85 72	Ts	Havana	90	77	--	92 77	Ts
Dallas/Ft.Worth	102	81	--	101 81	Su	Ho Chi Minh City	90	77	.64	88 78	Ts
Denver	93	59	--	80 53	Su	Hong Kong	93	84	.13	92 82	Ts
Detroit	86	69	Tr	87 69	Pc	Istanbul	90	73	--	83 71	Pc
El Paso	95	73	.24	100 79	Ts	Jerusalem	87	66	--	93 71	Su
Eugene	84	50	--	93 57	Su	Johannesburg	67	49	--	61 36	Su
Fort Myers	96	77	.38	94 78	Ts	Kuala Lumpur	94	77	.05	89 74	Ts
Hartford	87	60	--	87 70	Ts	Lima	64	57	--	66 60	Pc
Honolulu	88	73	Tr	87 76	Sh	London	67	55	.05	68 55	Pc
Houston	94	80	.08	99 79	Su	Madrid	93	61	--	100 67	Hc
Indianapolis	87	71	.77	80 71	Ts	Mecca	107	81	--	108 80	Su
Jacksonville, Fla.	93	78	.02	90 75	Ts	Mexico City	77	56	.51	77 56	Cy
Kansas City	80	69	.32	80 62	Ts	Montreal	84	66	--	86 65	Pc
Knoxville	91	70	--	95 77	Ts	Moscow	90	72	.07	92 66	Su
Las Vegas	114	87	--	112 86	Su	Mumbai	90	84	.06	89 83	Ts
Louisville	92	81	.38	87 76	Ts	New Delhi	93	84	.11	88 80	Ts
Medford	97	51	--	105 63	Su	Paris	70	55	.01	72 52	Cy
Memphis	98	76	--	95 78	Ts	Prague	65	55	.11	69 54	Oy
Miami	91	81	.04	92 80	Pc	Rome	75	68	--	81 65	Su
Milwaukee	88	67	.04	82 69	Pc	Seoul	79	73	Tr	86 74	Cy
Minneapolis	86	64	--	76 60	Ts	Singapore	86	79	.16	88 78	Ts
Nashville	95	79	--	94 77	Ts	Taipei City	93	79	--	97 79	Ts
New Orleans	91	81	.14	91 80	Ts	Tokyo	90	77	--	92 81	Pc
New York	83	69	--	84 72	Ts	Vancouver	70	54	--	73 58	Su
Norfolk	84	70	--	94 75	Pc	Vienna	73	61	.13	76 62	Pc
Oklahoma City	100	76	Tr	97 71	Ts						
Omaha	83	62	--	78 62	Ts						
Orlando	96	77	.01	93 76	Ts						
Philadelphia	84	65	--	91 74	Ts						
Phoenix	113	93	--	114 88	Su						
Pittsburgh	91	69	.03	84 71	Ts						
Portland, Ore.	82	55	--	91 63	Su						
Providence	81	58	--	81 68	Ts						
Raleigh/Durham	92	67	--	97 77	Pc						
Reno	99	63	--	101 67	Su						
Richmond	86	63	--	97 75	Cy						



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

LeBRON JAMES turns 40 in December and likely will finish his career in a Lakers uniform. But can he win?

Get ready for an era of futility

[Plaschke, from B10] feeling of hopelessness is the same. And the sense that the Lakers' future has been mortgaged to please one player is real.

You want some scary numbers? Using the Kobe Bryant scenario as a guide, the Lakers won't be contenders until at least 2028, eight years after their bubble title and 18 years after their last full-season championship.

Sure, it will be cool watching James, who turns 40 in December, finish his career in a Lakers uniform.

But if you'll remember, it was cool watching Bryant end his career in a Laker uniform. Cool, and yet, oh so destructive.

During those dark days, the Lakers couldn't convince any top free agents to join a team essentially run by Bryant. The Lakers didn't have a plan. The Lakers couldn't sell a culture. The Lakers never had a chance. Seemingly like now.

Remember all the stumbles? They couldn't talk Carmelo Anthony out of New York. They botched a meeting with LaMarcus Aldridge that went so poorly, they had to schedule a second meeting.

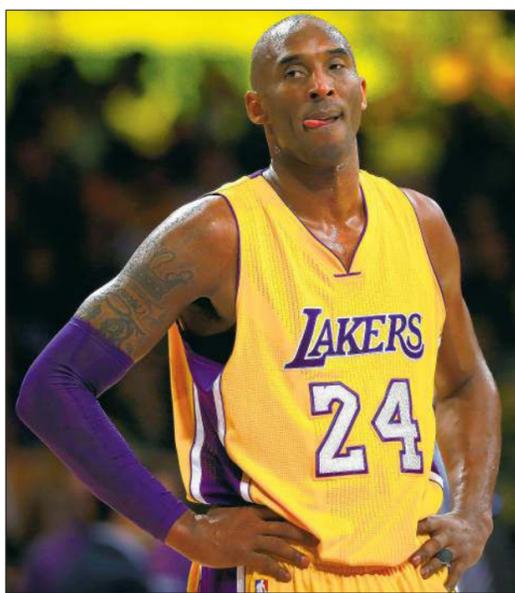
Kevin Durant wouldn't engage them. Isaiah Thomas and Kyle Lowry wouldn't listen to them.

The season after Bryant retired, they were led by D'Angelo Russell, Nick Young and Julius Randle and Jeanie Buss had finally seen enough.

In February 2017, she fired vice president of basketball operations Jim Buss and longtime general manager Mitch Kupchak and brought in Rob Pelinka and Magic Johnson.

A year later, James showed up. Three years later they won a championship.

But four seasons after



RICK LOOMIS Los Angeles Times

KOBE BRYANT, shown in January 2016, had to slog through difficult seasons as he neared retirement.

that, they're back to square one, which makes one wonder.

How long will Buss wait before making another Lakers-shattering move? Faced with an extended period of losing, how long before she shakes things up again? If the Lakers crumble around the final days of James like they crumbled around the final days of Bryant, can Pelinka survive?

You'll recall that Buss was unafraid to fire her own brother. Here's guessing she won't be afraid to fire Bryant's former agent.

Pelinka hasn't had a good summer. Barely one year after he was a hero for acquiring enough talent to take this team to the Western Conference finals, he is back in the familiar doghouse, and there's no telling when he will escape again.

Pelinka was rejected by his top coaching candidate Dan Hurley, a guy who

wouldn't even leave Storrs, Conn., for the Lakers because he saw no future here.

Pelinka then settled on a second-choice guy, JJ Redick, who has never coached at any level above youth basketball and whose main qualification seemed to be a friendship with James.

Pelinka won the first round of the draft by catching falling star Dalton Knecht, but then he risked plunging the upcoming season into chaos by succumbing to James' wishes in drafting his son Bronny.

The kid clearly isn't NBA ready, and Pelinka surely added more fuel to the fire by giving him a four-year deal worth nearly \$2 million a year.

The offseason was then capped by the most damning of sights — a player who was perfect for the Lakers refusing to sign here because they're no longer the Lakers.

That player was Klay Thompson, and the Lakers offered almost everything he could want — a reported \$80 million, a chance to play in games announced by his father, Mychal, and an opportunity to spend all year in his Orange County home.

And he still turned them down.

The one thing the Lakers couldn't offer was a legitimate chance at a championship, something the Dallas Mavericks were three wins from obtaining this past season. Thompson rejected the Lakers — even though their offer was about \$30 million above Dallas' offer — because of the perception that Dallas can win and the Lakers can't.

James even offered to take less money to make this happen, and do you know how rare that is?

Seriously, how far has this 17-championship franchise fallen?

The decision by Thompson said it all. The Lakers are mediocre when playing with James and Anthony Davis because they haven't added or kept the right kind of players around them. Pelinka tore apart the 2020 championship team to sign James' buddy Russell Westbrook and they haven't been the same since.

The 47-35 record and play-in tourney appearance last year? Run it back. The team will essentially be the same.

Their chance of winning a championship while James is still active? Slimmer than slim. They still don't have enough around him, and would need some sort of miracle in-season trade to become a legitimate threat.

The Lakers will thus enter the 2024-25 campaign amid charges of nepotism, incompetence and tarnished luster.

They've been here before. This is getting old.

James agrees to stay with Lakers on max contract

[Lakers, from B10]

had told the Lakers he would be willing to take a significant pay cut should the team be able to use the full mid-level exception or engineer a sign-and-trade to acquire another impactful player. The Lakers engaged in conversations with five-time All-Star Klay Thompson on the first night of free agency and, despite offering him more years and money, lost him to the Dallas Mavericks.

James, the NBA's all-time leading scorer, surprised some people around the league with the initial concession, a departure from the widely held belief that he would try to maximize his value in every contract (one of the reasons the Lakers always were considered to be overwhelming favorites to retain him).

But by Tuesday, when the team introduced its two draft picks, first-rounder Dalton Knecht and second-rounder Bronny James, some people within the organization were left feeling like LeBron James signing for the maximum was inevitable.

The Lakers have yet to make any free-agent additions, with D'Angelo Russell, Jaxson Hayes, Christian Wood and Cam Reddish all using their options to return to the Lakers. Max Christie re-signed for four years and \$32 million to avoid restricted free agency.

Wednesday, the Lakers signed Knecht and Bronny James to their rookie contracts, with James, as expected, getting a guaranteed deal.

The 19-year-old agreed to a four-year contract that could be worth nearly \$8 million, people with knowledge of the contract but not authorized to speak publicly confirmed to The Times.

The Lakers will have a team option for the fourth year of the contract.

James missed the start of his first college season at USC after going into cardiac arrest during practice last July and having surgery to repair a congenital heart defect. He returned in December and appeared in 25 games, averaging 4.8 points and 2.8 rebounds for the Tro-

jans.

The Lakers believe James can develop into a reliable rotation player who can influence the game with his shooting and defense.

"Bronny has earned this through hard work. And for us, prioritizing player development, we view Bronny as like, Case Study 1, because his base level of feel, athleticism, point-of-attack defender, shooting, passing," Lakers coach JJ Redick said Tuesday at James' introduction. "There's a lot to like about his game. And as we sort of build out our player development program holistically, he's going to have a great opportunity to become an excellent NBA player."

James will be the first NBA player to share a spot on a league roster with his father.

"I've already seen it on social media and stuff, and the internet and stuff and talking about that I might not deserve an opportunity," James said. "But I've been dealing with stuff like this my whole life. So it's nothing different. But it's more amplified, for sure. But I'll get through it."

Pressure remains on general manager Rob Pelinka to find ways to improve the Lakers roster, though that pathway probably will have to happen via trade, and while the Lakers have two future first-round picks to deal, they've repeatedly said new league rules like the second apron place a premium on developing their own young talent.

"If the right deal comes and we have to put in draft picks, we will," Pelinka said Tuesday. "I think we've talked about it before, we're now in the apron world. We've seen, you know, contending teams or championship-level teams have to lose players. That's a result of the apron world we're living in. So, does it make trades more challenging? Yes. Does it make good trades impossible? No.

"So, we'll continue to pursue upgrades to our roster."

Staff writer Broderick Turner contributed to this report.

Lakers hire McMillan and Brooks as assistants

By DAN WOIKE

The Lakers are hiring Scott Brooks and Nate McMillan as assistants for new coach JJ Redick, a source with knowledge of the situation not authorized to speak publicly confirmed to The Times.

The Times reported the Lakers were looking for two former NBA coaches to work with Redick, and in Brooks and McMillan, the Lakers got 2,363 combined games of coaching experience.

Brooks, who played two seasons at UC Irvine and earned a spot in the school's Hall of Fame, helped shepherd the rise of Kevin Durant, Russell Westbrook and

James Harden in Oklahoma City. Brooks, 58, also served as the coach in Washington before spending the last three seasons in Portland on Chauncey Billups' staff. McMillan, 59, has served as a coach for four franchises — Seattle, Portland, Indiana and Atlanta.

The Lakers still are working to fill out the rest of Redick's staff, including one front-of-bench assistant.

After hiring Redick, who has no coaching experience, some within the Lakers organization wanted to model his staff after the 2019-20 group that featured former coaches Jason Kidd and Lionel Hollins working under coach Frank Vogel and helped the team win a title.

NBA NOTES

Porter faces felony charge over his sports betting scandal

WIRE REPORTS

Former Toronto Raptors player **Jontay Porter** will be charged with a federal felony connected to the sports betting scandal that spurred the NBA to ban him for life, court papers indicate.

Federal prosecutors in Brooklyn filed what's known as a criminal information sheet Tuesday. The document doesn't specify a court date or the charge or charges, but it does show the case is related to an existing prosecution of four men charged with scheming to cash in on tips from a player about his plans to exit two games early.

The Associated Press sent voice and email messages Wednesday to Porter's St. Louis-based lawyer, **Jeff Jensen**. He said last month that Porter had been "in over his head due to a gambling addiction" but was getting treatment and cooperating with law enforcement.

An NBA investigation found in April that Porter tipped off bettors about his health and then claimed illness to exit at least one game, creating wins for anyone who'd bet on him to underperform expectations. Porter also gambled on NBA games in which he didn't play, once betting against his own team, the league said.

The four men charged last month appeared in court but haven't entered pleas. They're charged with conspiracy to commit wire fraud and were released on bonds.

A court complaint against those four — **Ammar Awawdeh**, **Timothy McCormack**, **Mahmud Mollah** and **Long Phi Pham** — accused them of using prior knowledge of an NBA player's plans so that they or their relatives could place winning bets on his performance. The complaint, filed in early June, identified the athlete only as "Player 1." De-



DAVID ZALUBOWSKI Associated Press

JONTAY PORTER of Toronto was suspended for life by the NBA, which accused him of betting on games.

tails about him and the game — and a quote from an NBA news release — matched up with the league's probe into Porter.

According to the complaint, the player owed "significant gambling debts" to

Awawdeh, who encouraged the athlete to intentionally exit games so bettors in the know could successfully wager on him falling short of what sportsbooks figured he'd do.

"If I don't do a special

with your terms. Then it's up," the player responded in an encrypted message this year, according to the complaint. "And u hate me and if I don't get u 8k by Friday you're coming to Toronto to beat me up."

The player told some of the four defendants that he would claim health problems to take himself out of games early on Jan. 26 and March 20, the complaint says. Porter played briefly on those dates before leaving the court, complaining of injury or illness. In both games, his points, rebounds and assists were below the betting line for his performance.

Mollah, McCormack and a relative of Awawdeh had bet the "under" and made out, though a betting company ultimately stopped Mollah from collecting most of his more than \$1 million in winnings on the March 20 game, according to the complaint.

After the NBA and others

began investigating, the player messaged Pham, Mollah and Awawdeh in early April that they "might just get hit w a rico" — an apparent reference to the common acronym for a federal racketeering charge — and asked whether they had deleted "all the stuff" from their phones, the complaint notes.

Also

Clippers center **Ivica Zubac** had 29 points and 16 rebounds as Croatia was able to secure a place in the Olympic qualifying semifinals despite a 90-86 loss to New Zealand that kept **Luka Doncic** and Slovenia in contention. ... Minnesota signed free-agent forward **Joe Ingles**. ... Free-agent forward **Kyle Anderson** and Golden State were working to complete a \$27-million, three-year contract, the Associated Press reported Tuesday night. ... **Kemba Walker** is returning to Charlotte as an assistant one day after retiring.

BASEBALL: TUESDAY FLASHBACK

Dodgers have a flair for the dramatic

STANDINGS

Through Tuesday

NATIONAL LEAGUE

Table with columns: Team, W, L, Pct., GB, L10. Rows include West (Dodgers, San Diego, San Francisco, Arizona, Colorado) and Central (Milwaukee, St. Louis, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago).

AMERICAN LEAGUE

Table with columns: Team, W, L, Pct., GB, L10. Rows include West (Seattle, Houston, Texas, Angels, Oakland) and Central (Cleveland, Minnesota, Kansas City, Detroit, Chicago).

Today's games

Table listing today's games with columns: Game, Time, Location. Includes Dodgers vs. Arizona, Angels at Oakland, New York (NL) at Washington, etc.

[Dodgers, from B10] the Diamondbacks in front of a sold-out Chavez Ravine crowd.

After leading by two runs early, starting pitcher Bobby Miller tipped around disaster in Arizona's two-run fourth inning. After the Dodgers regained the lead on a monstrous Shohei Ohtani blast in the seventh, the bullpen faltered repeatedly in the closing innings to hand the Diamondbacks a 5-4 edge.

With two out in the ninth, and shutdown Arizona closer Paul Sewald on the mound — the veteran right-hander had given just one run in 18 outings — it looked like that scoreline would stand.

But then, in the kind of sequence the Dodgers have produced time and again this season, the team flipped the script for a last-gasp win.

First, Will Smith lined a double off the wall. Then, even with first base open, the Diamondbacks elected to let Sewald pitch to Freddie Freeman, pushing the Dodgers to their last strike after the first baseman fell behind 0-and-2 in the count.

With chants of "Freddie-ie!" raining from the stands, Freeman turned on a 93-mph fastball over the outer edge of the zone, roping a game-tying double into the gap in right-center.

"We've done it before," Freeman said. "We've done it to other teams."

And once the dam broke, there was no holding the Dodgers back.

Moments later, Hernández ended the game with a bouncing single through the left side of the infield, easily scoring Freeman to send Dodger Stadium into delirium.

It might not have been as unlikely as their seven-run ninth inning in Colorado last month, or as jarring as their seven-run explosion in extra innings against the San Francisco Giants last week.

But in some ways, after they were down to their last strike, Tuesday felt like the Dodgers' most dramatic, heart-stopping, out-of-nowhere victory yet.

"I just think all night long, we fought and took good at-bats," Roberts said. "Just not relenting.



GABRIEL MORENO of the Diamondbacks beats the tag by Dodgers catcher Will Smith to score the tying run after a throwing error by reliever Blake Treinen in the eighth inning Tuesday night.

Just [so much] fight from the guys."

The game could've gotten away from the Dodgers much earlier in the night, when Miller's five-inning, two-run start nearly came unraveled in the fourth.

After giving up a leadoff single to Joe Pederson, Miller hung a two-strike slider to notorious Dodgers killer Christian Walker, teeing the Arizona slugger up for his 15th career home run at Dodger Stadium.

From there, Lourdes Gurriel Jr. and Gabriel Moreno bounced singles through the infield. Eugenio Suárez, who entered the night batting just .196, walked on a full-count fastball to load the bases.

With no outs, and the Dodgers' early 2-0 lead suddenly evaporated, Miller was on the verge of spiraling like he did in a five-run inning at Wrigley Field in April, or in two laborious frames against the Chicago White Sox last week.

"I tended to try and pinpoint a little too much," said Miller, whose velocity was slightly down in his third start back from a two-month shoulder injury. "Instead of just let-

ting everything rip, which is how I should normally be."

On the precipice of disaster, the 25-year-old flamethrower authored a different ending.

In just 10 pitches, he induced a strikeout, a popout and a groundout to retire the side. As he walked off the mound, he flexed his arms and let out a celebratory scream, having done just enough to keep the score tied.

"For me, that was all compete," Roberts said, calling Miller's escape a potential inflection point in the pitcher's season, after he entered the night with a 6.75 earned-run average. "It wasn't about mechanics, it was about trying to keep your team in the ballgame."

Said Miller: "I knew the game was close, and I knew our offense was going to do the job and get us back in it."

About an hour later, that faith came to fruition.

Ohtani landed the first blow in the seventh, giving the Dodgers a 4-3 lead by hammering his National League-leading 27th home run halfway up the right-field pavil-

ion.

Then, after the Diamondbacks tied the score on a Blake Treinen throwing error in the eighth, and went up 5-4 on Pederson's solo blast against Evan Phillips in the ninth, the Dodgers dashed their latest sprinkle of late-game magic.

Fittingly, it was Hernández — the offseason signing who has emerged as the team's most consistent high-leverage hitter — who walked it off by driving in his 56th run, trailing only Ohtani for most on the club.

"We're never going to be out of it, we're always going to be fighting until the last out," Hernández said. "When you have guys like Ohtani, Freddie, Smith, Mookie [Betts] when he's in the lineup; when you're behind those guys, all the big moments in the game are going to find you."

And, just as he and the club have been doing all year, Hernández and the Dodgers delivered when it mattered, causing their manager's heart to skip a beat as they poured out of the dugout in another dramatic win.

DODGERS 6, ARIZONA 5. Box score table with columns: Player, AB, R, H, BI, Avg. Includes stats for Carroll, Arzoo, Marte, etc.

Arizona vs. Dodgers. Summary table with columns: Team, Runs, Hits, Errors, Total.

Two outs when winning run scored. a-singled for Suárez in 8th.

WALKS—Arizona 4; Marte 1, Moreno 1, Suárez 1, Thomas 1. Dodgers 2; Hernández 1, Suárez 1, Thomas 2, Pederson 1, Walker 1, Gurriel 1, Ohtani 2, Ramírez 1, Freeman 1, Martínez 1, Phillips 1, Ohtani 2, Ramírez 1, Freeman 1, Martínez 1, Phillips 1, Ohtani 2, Ramírez 1, Freeman 1, Martínez 1, Phillips 1.

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OAKLAND 7, ANGELS 5. Box score table with columns: Player, AB, R, H, BI, Avg. Includes stats for Angels, Schanah, Rengifo, etc.

Angels vs. Oakland. Summary table with columns: Team, Runs, Hits, Errors, Total.

WALKS—Angels 3; O'Hoppe 1, Drury 2, Oakland 2; Rooker 1, Gelfo 1, Strikouts—Angels 5; Schanah 1, Rengifo 1, Ward 2, Calhoun 2, Moniak 1, Adell 2, Oakland 6; Langeliers 2, Soderstrom 1, Gelfo 1, Butler 2. LOB—Angels 7, Oakland 4. 2B—Moniak (9), Schanah (8), B.Harris (1). HR—Rooker (16), off Soriano; Butler (3), off Soriano. RBIs—Schanah 4 (30), Rengifo (25), Rooker (48), Butler 3 (11), B.Harris 2 (7), Bleday (30), SB—Rengifo (22), Schueman (6), Rooker (3). SF—Schanah. Runners left in scoring position—Angels 3 (Moniak, Ward 2); Oakland 2 (Langeliers 2). RISP—Angels 3 for 7; Oakland 3 for 5. Runners moved up—Soderstrom, Schueman, Rengifo, Mote. DP—Oakland 2 (B.Harris, Gelfo, Soderstrom; Soderstrom, Soderstrom).

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Two homers mar Soriano's return

A's tag him for four in the fourth, and even four RBIs by Schanuel can't rally the Angels.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Lawrence Butler and Brent Rooker hit home runs, Mitch Spence gave up one hit over 5½ innings, and the Oakland Athletics beat the Angels 7-5 on Tuesday night.

Brett Harris added a two-run double for Oakland, which had lost seven of its previous eight games and 17 of 21.

Nolan Schanuel had two hits and four RBIs for the Angels, who had won six of their previous seven games.

Butler and Rooker homered off Angels starter José Soriano in a four-run fourth inning.

"It's obviously great to see the young guys ... produce. It's been a while since we've hit a three-run homer, so that's always nice," manager Mark Kotsay said.

Rooker's 16th homer came on an 0-and-2 knuckle curve Soriano left over the plate. Butler's opposite-field shot barely grazed the left-field foul pole.

Kotsay attributed a mechanical adjustment to Butler's home run.

"It's going to process for him to be able to duplicate it, but that swing he took on the three-run homer, shorter, less head movement, more direct to the baseball, and thus the result happened," Kotsay said.

Harris' two-run double in the sixth highlighted a three-run inning in which Oakland extended its lead to 7-1.

The Angels closed to within 7-3 in the seventh on Schanuel's two-run single. He also doubled in a run off A's closer Mason Miller, who gave up two runs in the ninth in a non-save situation.

Spence (5-4) gave up one run and six hits to end a streak of five straight winless starts. He struck out five and did not give up a walk.

He has walked no more than one in seven straight starts.

Soriano (4-6) gave up four runs and three hits in four innings. The hard-throwing right-hander was activated from the injured list earlier in the day after sitting out three weeks be-



EAKIN HOWARD Associated Press

LUIS RENGIFO steals second base during the fifth inning of Tuesday's 7-5 loss in Oakland. Rengifo, who's vying for the AL batting lead, had two hits and an RBI.

A's request denied in legal case

Oakland team sought protection of interests in Las Vegas regarding funding for stadium.

BY BILL SHAIKIN

In February, the Oakland Athletics asked a Nevada court for permission to get involved in a lawsuit between a state teachers union and the state itself.

At issue: Did legislators violate the state constitution when they awarded \$380 million in public funding to the A's for a new Las Vegas ballpark?

The court denied the A's request, saying the state can handle the matter on its own.

"The presence of [the A's], a private party that only represents its own pre-

sumably profit-driven interests, will unduly expand the controversy," District Judge Kristin Luis wrote in a ruling issued last week.

The A's had argued they needed to intervene because "millions of dollars" would be at risk if the A's did not satisfy the development timelines enacted in SBI, the legislation that authorized the public financing.

However, Luis wrote that the A's intervention would be "likely to cause delay and increased costs" in resolving the litigation.

She also wrote that the team's interests would be represented by the state and associated local agencies, all of whom want the stadium built.

"The existing government defendants have the same ultimate objective as [the A's] — persuading this court that, contrary to plain-

tiffs' allegations, SBI is constitutional," Luis wrote.

The court has not yet set a hearing date to consider the state's request to throw out the case, although both sides have filed formal arguments.

The Las Vegas Stadium Authority is expected to discuss progress on the proposed stadium at its July 18 meeting.

Under SBI, the authorization for the public funding could expire if the A's have not executed a development agreement and lease agreement within 18 months of relocation approval, which was granted by MLB eight months ago.

The stadium, projected to open in 2028, is budgeted at \$1.5 billion.

A's owner John Fisher is responsible for financing all but the \$380 million of public funding.

cause of an abdominal infection.

He was on a 65-pitch limit.

Soriano's effort coming back from the injury was an encouraging sign for the Angels, manager Ron Washington said, noting Soriano

likely would have his pitch limit bumped up to 85 in his next start.

"He's back," Washington said. "We'll see where it goes from here, but I was pleased with the way he threw the ball.

"You always wish you

don't give up any runs, but it happens.

"I thought he handled himself very well out there."

Before the game, the Angels put right-hander Andrew Wantz on the 15-day IL because of right elbow inflammation.

PRO CALENDAR

	THU 4	FRI 5	SAT 6	SUN 7	MON 8
DODGERS	ARIZONA 6 SNLA	MILWAUKEE 7 SNLA	MILWAUKEE 4:15 Ch. 11	MILWAUKEE 1 SNLA	
ANGELS	at Oakland 1 BSW	at Chicago Cubs 11:15 a.m. BSW	at Chicago Cubs 11:15 a.m. BSW	at Chicago Cubs 11:15 a.m. BSW	TEXAS 6:30 BSW
SPARKS		LAS VEGAS 7 lon		PHOENIX 4 SpecSN	
GALAXY	LAF C* 7:30 Apple TV+			MINN. 7:30 Apple TV	
LAFC	at Galaxy* 7:30 Apple TV+			at Houston 5:30 Apple TV	
ANGEL CITY			NJ/NY GOTHAM 7 lon		

Shade denotes home game. *-at Rose Bowl

TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
AUSTRALIAN FOOTBALL		
2:30 a.m. (Fri.)	AFL, Collingwood vs. Essendon	TV: FS2
AUTO RACING		
4:15 a.m. (Fri.)	Formula One, British Grand Prix, Practice 1	TV: ESPNU
BASEBALL		
8 a.m.	New York Mets at Washington	TV: MLB
9:30 a.m.	St. Louis at Pittsburgh	TV: ESPN+
11 a.m.	Philadelphia at Chicago Cubs	TV: MLB
1 p.m.	Angels at Oakland	TV: BSW R: 830
1 p.m.	Baltimore at Seattle (game in progress)	TV: MLB
6 p.m.	Arizona at Dodgers	TV: SNLA R: 570, 1020
4 p.m.	San Francisco at Atlanta	TV: MLB
BASKETBALL: WNBA		
5 p.m.	Connecticut at Minnesota	TV: Amazon Prime
7 p.m.	Washington at Las Vegas	TV: Amazon Prime
CYCLING		
3:30 a.m. (Fri.)	Tour de France, Stage 7	TV: Peacock
GOLF		
1 p.m.	PGA Tour, John Deere Classic, first round	TV: Golf, Peacock
3:30 a.m. (Fri.)	World Tour, BMW International Open, second round	TV: Golf
HORSE RACING		
10 a.m.	America's Day at the Races	TV: FS2
SOCCER		
6 p.m.	Copa América, quarterfinal, Argentina vs. Ecuador	TV: 11, Univision, TUDN
6 p.m.	USL, Colorado vs. Tulsa	TV: CBSN
7:30 p.m.	Galaxy vs. LAFC	TV: Apple TV R: Galaxy stream; 710, 980
TENNIS		
3 a.m. (Fri.)	Wimbledon, third round	TV: ESPN, ESPN+, ESPND

SPORTS EXTRA

For late coverage of Dodgers, Angels and Sparks games and more, see our daily digital eNewspaper. Subscribers get free access to an exclusive "Sports Extra." View it on your phone, tablet or computer at latimes.com/enewspaper.



Kershaw, Dodgers insist it's sidetrack, not injury setback

No need for alarm as he pauses rehab and his return this season still remains on track.

BY JACK HARRIS

A week ago, Clayton Kershaw's recovery from off-season shoulder surgery was temporarily paused because of lingering soreness.

While discussing the situation for the first time Tuesday, the 36-year-old Dodgers pitcher smirked when asked what happened.

"Just some old-man shoulder, a little bit," he deadpanned. "There's some wear and tear in there. But nothing new."

The end of that answer was the most important development Kershaw shared with reporters, explaining away last week's soreness as less of a setback and more of a normal sidetrack in his recovery from shoulder surgery in November.

"I feel like the upward trajectory has been pretty steady up to this point," said Kershaw, who underwent surgery to repair his shoulder capsule and glenohumeral ligaments. "I just think it's just like getting your feet underneath you a little bit."

Kershaw had an MRI last week that confirmed no new damage in his shoulder, and also was given some shots to help alleviate the soreness he reported to team personnel following his first minor-league rehabilitation start on June 19.

This week Kershaw resumed playing catch in the outfield of Dodger Stadium. On Wednesday he was scheduled to throw a

bullpen session.

"He looks really good," manager Dave Roberts said. "I would argue that he looks even better than he did even when he was kind of making his way back a few weeks ago, at this point in time. So I'm really encouraged by it."

When Kershaw will rejoin the Dodgers' rotation is less clear.

The three-time Cy Young Award winner had been targeting a comeback in late July or August. He hopes that time frame hasn't been significantly altered by his week off from throwing.

"Having this little couple-day reset should help," Kershaw said, noting that he feels more comfortable trying to "push through stuff" now that he knows his shoulder is continuing to recover properly.

"Obviously, any time it doesn't feel good, you get worried just because you've been down that road," Kershaw said. "But it was a good outcome with everything. The timeline is still on our side. ... It could have been a lot worse, for sure."

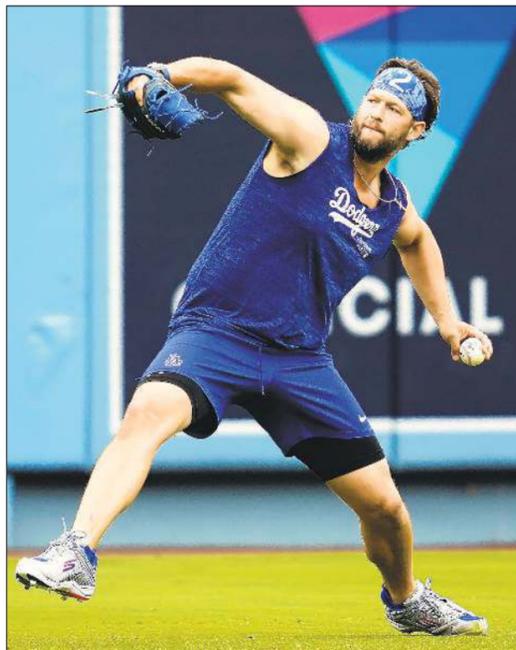
The closer Kershaw gets to returning, he said, the harder it has become for him to watch games from the dugout.

"I don't want to say it's been miserable, because I've gotten to spend time with my family and have a lot more family time and be able to hang out with them more," he said. "But I mean, yeah. You don't feel like you're doing what you're supposed to be doing."

"Kind of tasting being able to be back out there, each day is starting to be a little bit more tedious."

"I get it now. Rehab's not fun."

For the time being, at



ASHLEY LANDIS Associated Press

CLAYTON KERSHAW had to stop throwing amid some discomfort in his surgically repaired shoulder.

least, Kershaw's rehab is back on schedule, keeping him on track to return before the end of the season.

"I'm not going to be happy until I get to go back out there," he said.

More updates

More than two weeks since he strained his rotator cuff, Yoshinobu Yamamoto has not started throwing again.

But Roberts said he believed the pitcher was "pain-free" and hoped Yamamoto would resume playing catch "soon."

"He's getting worked on, he's doing a lot of shoulder exercises, non-throwing stuff," Roberts said. "But I don't know when that time is he's gonna pick up a baseball."

Walker Buehler seems closer to returning from the injured list.

Roberts said the hip issue that sidelined the right-hander last month has "calmed down" and Buehler is working with private pitching coaches in Florida

to refine his delivery after his struggles returning from his second Tommy John surgery.

"The plan is, as soon as we can, get him on a rehab assignment," Roberts said. "I just don't know when that's gonna be."

In the bullpen, injured reliever Joe Kelly began a rehab assignment with class-A Rancho Cucamonga on Tuesday night and threw a scoreless inning, though Roberts still didn't expect the right-hander to return from his shoulder injury until after the All-Star break.

"He could surprise me," Roberts said, "but I think that three or four [rehab outings] is totally the floor, reasonably."

Brusdar Graterol is "making some headway" in his recovery from a shoulder injury that has kept him out all season, according to Roberts.

Graterol is expected to begin throwing simulated games at the Dodgers' Camelback Ranch facility in Arizona soon.

October matters most to Ohtani

[Hernández, from B10] global scale," Roberts said.

Ohtani winning, or even just participating in, a home run derby could draw attention to baseball for a handful of days. Ohtani dominating the playoffs could reverse the trajectory of the sport's declining popularity.

The widespread enthusiasm over his potential entry in the derby was entirely understandable, considering his performance with the Dodgers.

Ohtani, who was named an All-Star starter Wednesday, entered the day leading the National League in homers with 27.

The most recent of them was hit in a series-opening 6-5 victory over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Tuesday night, with Ohtani launching a slider by Justin Martinez into the right-field pavilion after taking a 101-mph fastball for a ball.

"I don't understand how he was able to do that," first baseman Freddie Freeman said. "It's hard to imagine because I'm rolling that over."

The homer was Ohtani's 10th in 14 games entering Wednesday. The ball traveled an estimated 433 feet but was only his 10th-longest homer of the season.

Ohtani said last week he wanted to compete in the derby but cautioned that his participation was contingent on the approval of team officials, trainers and doctors because he still was rehabilitating his surgically-repaired right elbow.

In other words, the decision would take into consideration his anticipated return to the mound. The two-way player is expected to resume pitching next year. Future Octobers also were at stake.

Roberts acknowledged that his preference was for

Ohtani to skip the event. Ultimately, after what Roberts described as a "group discussion," Ohtani agreed.

"It's not solely his responsibility to carry Major League Baseball," Roberts said.

In addition to the rehabilitation of his elbow, Ohtani pointed to the number of swings he would have to take as a reason to not compete. New rules will permit hitters to take as many as 40 swings in each of the first two rounds and 27 in the final.

Ohtani was a derby contestant once before, in 2021. He crashed out in the first round but set a record for the most 500-plus-foot homers with six. "In any other normal situation, where he wasn't rehabbing, I think he would love to participate," Roberts said.

"But then you layer on something that is so unique to anyone, the volume of swings, the intensity of it, it would just be a real disappointment for not only Shohei, the Dodgers, and also the fans, if something were to happen during something like that, which is an exhibition, essentially."

Ohtani will be in Texas for the All-Star Game, as he has received more fan votes than any other NL designated hitter.

Nonetheless, his exclusion from one of the week's signature events will matter. Will a casual sports fan tune in to watch Gunnar Henderson in the derby? Does a casual sports fan even know who Gunnar Henderson is?

Ohtani has placed a significant wager on the Dodgers. He has gambled that they will make the necessary moves to give them a realistic chance to triumph in October. He has bet that he will perform once he is there.

SPORTS

THURSDAY, JULY 4, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/SPORTS

James agrees to remain with Lakers



Two-year, \$104-million max contract could be revisited in order to improve team's roster.

BY DAN WOIKE

LeBron James and the Lakers agreed Wednesday to a two-year contract that includes a no-trade clause and a player option for next season for either the maximum or close to it — a sign that his willingness to take a significant pay cut to aid the team's effort to build a better roster has expired.

According to people with knowledge of the talks but not authorized to speak publicly, the Lakers and James' representatives are discussing the possibility of taking money off the two-year, \$104-million maximum contract to keep the Lakers under the so-called "second apron" of team payrolls.

Crossing that threshold, which is at \$188.9 million, would severely limit the Lakers' ability to add to their roster by placing restrictions on the kinds of trades the team can make, including adding players during the season.

Whether it's through James' contract or restructuring other deals, someone familiar with the Lakers' situation but not authorized to speak publicly said the team will end up under the second apron.

The Lakers, who have a full 15-player roster, would need to shed salary elsewhere to be able to acquire players via sign-and-trade deals.

James [See Lakers, B7]

Get ready for another era of team futility

BILL PLASCHKE

The Lakers give an aging star a generous contract extension that ensures he will retire in their uniform.

The Lakers know this contract will restrict their ability to win a championship, but they give it to him anyway.



Sure enough, from the moment this contract is signed, the team endures six consecutive losing seasons, including one containing the fewest wins in Lakers history.

This was the final impact of the Kobe Bryant era.

And this will be the final impact of the LeBron James era?

It sure seems like it. It sure feels like it. It appears that the Lakers have been here before, and it's not a good look.

When James agreed to a two-year, \$104-million max contract Wednesday morning, it set the Lakers on a path toward several seasons of Kobe-tinged irrelevance.

Granted, James is a much stronger player than Bryant was during his final years. And, yes, this team has Anthony Davis; those teams had Timofey Mozgov. But the [See Plaschke, B7]

LAKERS forward LeBron James is reportedly discussing the possibility of taking money off a new two-year, \$104-million maximum contract to keep the Lakers under the CBA's second apron of team payrolls. The deal includes a no-trade clause.

If Ohtani is not in it, there's no point to home run derby

DYLAN HERNÁNDEZ

Major League Baseball might as well cancel the home run derby.



With Shohei Ohtani saying on Tuesday night that he is unlikely to compete in the annual swing-a-thon, what's the point?

"This time, I think it will move in the direction of me probably not participating," Ohtani said in Japanese.

What a loss for the event, which will be staged on July 15 at Globe Life Field in Arlington, Texas, one day before the All-Star Game.

What a loss for baseball.

Ohtani's decision shouldn't be considered a dereliction of duty to promote the sport, however.

This is a sacrifice. This is a calculated wager. This is a recognition of what is at stake. Ohtani wants to play in the postseason.

"The reason he came to the Dodgers," manager Dave Roberts said, "was to win a championship."

All-Star week isn't baseball's greatest stage.

October is.

Roberts said Ohtani is "very in tune with his responsibility" as the Face of Baseball.

"No player moves the needle in baseball more than Shohei, as far as on a [See Hernández, B9]



TEOSCAR HERNÁNDEZ drove in the winner in the ninth Tuesday after Freddie Freeman's double tied it.

Like it or not, these Dodgers have flair for the dramatic

Tuesday triumph over Arizona is their 18th comeback victory and third walk-off win.

BY JACK HARRIS

Dave Roberts cracked a smile, sighed a deep breath of relief, then started to laugh with a disbelieving shake of his head.

"You know what, I don't know," the Dodgers manager said of his team's recurring ability to stage unlikely late-game comebacks. "It doesn't help my quality of life, waiting for the seventh inning to come alive with the bats."

Roberts' heart might be

worse for wear, but his lineup's flair for the dramatic was once again for the best.

In a 6-5 win over the Arizona Diamondbacks on Tuesday night, the Dodgers scored twice in the seventh inning, then twice again in the ninth, rallying for their 18th comeback win and, thanks to Teoscar Hernández's game-winning single, third walk-off victory of the season.

"Better late than never," Roberts added, proudly, in his postgame news conference. "When it matters, they do come alive. They keep fighting... There was fight to the end."

Really, the Dodgers had to grind through the entire series-opening win against [See Dodgers, B8]

Pending Angel City sale sets milestone

Disney CEO Bob Iger and wife Willow Bay are close to completing deal to buy into women's soccer team. **A1**

Coco Gauff advances at Wimbledon

No. 2-seeded American beats qualifier Anca Todoni to reach the third round at the All England Club. **B6**

Sparks stumble to extend losing streak

After leading for most of the game, they can't hold off the Mystics, as L.A.'s skid reaches eight. **B6**

Los Angeles Times
SPORTS EXTRA

A TIMES E-NEWSPAPER EXCLUSIVE :: THURSDAY, JULY 4, 2024



GINA FERAZZI Los Angeles Times

THE DIAMONDBACKS' Jake McCarthy scores as catcher Will Smith receives the late throw during Arizona's 12-4 victory on Wednesday at Dodger Stadium.

Dodgers come out swinging, then fall flat

By JACK HARRIS

It was tough to tell what was more lethargic Wednesday night.

The mind-numbing pace of a 3-hour 23-minute game at Dodger Stadium.

Or the head-scratching performance of the Dodgers' offense after a four-run, first-inning outburst.

After surging in front with a quick four-spot against debuting Arizona Diamondbacks starter Cristian Mena, the Dodgers' bats came to a screeching halt in their 12-4 loss at Chavez Ravine, with the team's muted play mirroring the slow, meandering rhythm of their second-longest nine-inning game of the season.

The night couldn't have started better for the Dodgers.

With scheduled Diamondbacks starter Jordan Montgomery out because of a knee injury, Arizona

turned to Mena, a rookie right-hander, for his major league debut.

His big league welcome: a first-inning blitz from the top of the Dodgers' order.

Shohei Ohtani singled. Will Smith walked. Then, Freddie Freeman and Teoscar Hernández blasted back-to-back home runs, answering Arizona's run in the top half of the inning to jump out to a sudden 4-1 lead.

With breakout rookie pitcher Gavin Stone on the bump, and the Diamondbacks seemingly staring down a long night on the mound, all the pieces appeared to be in place for the Dodgers to cruise to a rout.

Instead, they squandered the early advantage without much of their typical fight.

Over the final eight innings, they managed just two hits, hit into three double plays, and rarely came close to scoring another run.

In the third, the Dodgers failed to capitalize on a two-on, one-out

opportunity, when Freeman was doubled off trying to score on a fly out.

In the fifth, another double play — this time a routine grounder from Hernández — negated Freeman's one-out walk.

The Dodgers finally put another runner in scoring position in the sixth inning, when Miguel Rojas doubled off the wall. But as suddenly as the opportunity arose, it was dashed nearly as fast. Pinch-hitter Kiké Hernández struck out. Chris Taylor grounded out to end the inning. And, with Arizona ahead 8-4, the Dodgers never threatened to come back again.

Stone didn't help the cause much. After giving up just one run from a bases-loaded jam in the first inning, he struggled to find a rhythm in his first start since last week's shutout against the Chicago White Sox. He put two batters aboard in the second inning, laboring to end that frame without any

damage.

In the third, he finally came unglued, giving up one run on a Eugenio Suárez double before serving up a game-tying, two-run home run to Gabriel Moreno.

While Stone's night ended after the third, the Dodgers' pitching problems persisted.

Christian Walker continued his dominance of the club by whacking his 16th and 17th home runs at Dodger Stadium. The first one broke a 4-4 tie in the fifth, a solo drive off Ryan Yarbrough. The latter served as insurance in the ninth, a three-run shot that made Walker the ballpark's all-time slugging leader (minimum 100 career plate appearances) with a .741 mark.

In between Walker's blasts, Arizona added another run in the fifth, then two more in the sixth on Lourdes Gurriel Jr.'s homer.

Along the way, the Dodgers also were victims of several self-induced miscues.

Freeman was easily thrown out on the third-inning sacrifice fly attempt, trying to score on a relatively shallow fly ball to right fielder Jake McCarthy.

An at-bat before Gurriel's back-breaking sixth-inning homer, Teoscar Hernández seemed to mistakenly think Walker had hit another home run to left field, pulling up at the warning track on a double that clanked off the top of the wall and might have been catchable.

Manager Dave Roberts didn't help the game's flow, either, making a seventh-inning pitching change in a 2-and-2 count after reliever Yohan Ramírez's pitch count climbed to 37.

By then, though, the result was already well in hand.

The Dodgers had blown their early lead. They'd slipped into a midgame malaise. And they quietly succumbed to one of their flat losses of the season.

Angels manage only five singles in getting shut out by the A's

ASSOCIATED PRESS

OAKLAND — Joey Estes pitched the first shutout by an Oakland pitcher in more than three years, and the Athletics beat the Angels 5-0 on Wednesday night.

Estes (3-3) threw 68 of his 92 pitches for strikes, limiting the Angels to five singles and a walk with four strikeouts in the first complete game of his career. The right-hander induced three double plays and struck out Taylor Ward swinging to end the game.

It was the 16th complete game in the major leagues this season, 10 of them shutouts.

The last Oakland pitcher to accomplish the feat was Sean Manaea, who blanked the Seattle Mariners on June 2, 2021.

Brent Rooker had three hits, including a homer for the second straight game, and Max Schuemann also homered.

The A's benefited from some shaky Angels defense to score two runs in the second inning. With runners on first and third, Brett Harris hit a comebacker that should have been an inning-ending double play, but pitcher Davis Daniel's low throw to second base ended up in center field, allowing Zack Gelof to score.

Later in the inning, Harris attempted to steal second, drawing a

throw from catcher Matt Thaiss. Lawrence Butler sprinted home before Harris was tagged out to make it 2-0.

Schuemann took Daniel deep in the fifth. Rooker connected for his 17th homer in the sixth. Harris added an RBI single in the inning.

Daniel (1-1) gave up five runs (four earned) and seven hits with a walk and three strikeouts in 5½ innings.

Notes

Angels third baseman Luis Rengifo exited with an apparent right hand injury after a foul ball in the ninth inning. Rengifo fouled the ball straight back, then shook his hand in pain. He was briefly examined by manager Ron Washington and a trainer before walking to the dugout.

Angels third baseman Anthony Rendon (left hamstring strain) is scheduled to face live pitching this weekend. Washington is hopeful he can return next week.

Athletics left-hander Kyle Muller (left shoulder tendinitis) threw 42 pitches in a rehab start for triple-A Las Vegas on Tuesday, giving up two runs in 2⅓ innings with five strikeouts. He returned to Oakland on Wednesday and manager Mark Kotsay said they would discuss how he felt before determining his next step.

A's right-handers Ross Strip-



GODOFREDO A. VÁSQUEZ Associated Press

ANGELS manager Ron Washington pats starter Davis Daniel on the back after removing him in the sixth inning of Wednesday's loss to Oakland. Daniel gave up four earned runs on seven hits.

ling (right elbow strain) and Paul Blackburn (right foot stress reaction) faced hitters in live batting practice Wednesday.

Kotsay said they would either face hitters again or begin rehab assignments.

Roansy Contreras (1-0, 3.82

ERA) makes his second start for the Angels on Thursday. The A's counter with JP Sears (4-7, 5.00), who has lost four in a row.

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ENTERTAINMENT

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AL SEIB Holocaust Museum L.A.

THE SOBIBOR AR exhibit projects a 3D model of the camp.

VFX helps museum tell story

Holocaust Museum L.A.'s new app immerses users in augmented reality.

BY JOSH ROTTENBERG

Holocaust survivor Harry Davids has dedicated his life to uncovering the story of the parents he never knew.

Born in Nazi-occupied Holland in 1942, Davids was just an infant when his parents were deported to the Sobibor extermination camp in Poland and murdered. After the war, he was raised by relatives in South Africa and spent decades trying to learn the details of his family's history, a task made more difficult by the fact that the perpetrators had dismantled Sobibor after the war and planted trees to cover up the site where at least 170,000 people had been systematically killed.

"The 10th and final stage of genocide is denial," Davids says. "The Nazis successfully got rid of the evidence at Sobibor and several [See Museum, E6]"

MOVIE REVIEW

'Beverly Hills Cop' sticks to formula

Eddie Murphy is game in the franchise's new film, but the heat is gone. Hello, nostalgia.

BY GLENN WHIPP

How to make a new "Beverly Hills Cop" movie? It's a question that has long vexed Hollywood. Brett Ratner tried for years to crack the case, though, judging from a 2010 Empire magazine interview, it's fair to wonder how much progress he ever made. "Like, where do we start?" he wondered.

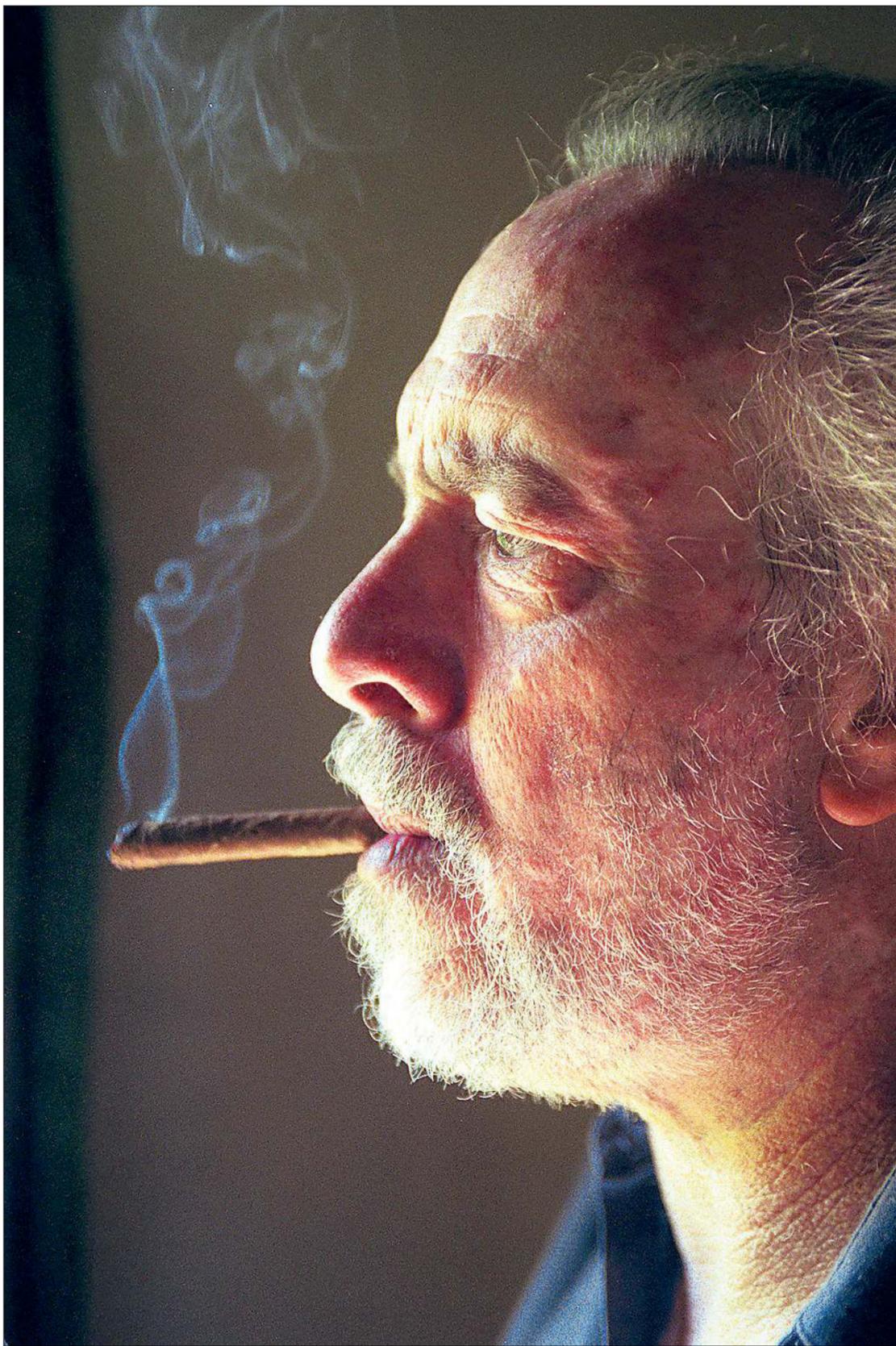
Like, where, indeed? Among the obstacles puzzling those who attempted to revive the franchise: Is Axel retired? Is he in Beverly Hills? Is he on vacation? Does Judge Reinhold reprise his role as Billy Rosewood?

In hindsight, this all seems unnecessarily complicated. From the moment the Don Simpson/Jerry Bruckheimer Films lightning bolt logo comes on the screen in Netflix's "Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F" (now streaming), followed by the wailing sax riff of "The Heat Is On," you realize that everyone involved understood [See 'Beverly,' E6]

'Despicable Me 4' packs it in

The animated sequel feels overstuffed at 90 eye-popping minutes, even as list of talents involved grows. **E3**

Comics **E4-5**
Puzzles **E5**



BOB CAREY Los Angeles Times

IN WRITING "Chinatown," Robert Towne said, he wanted to create "a crime that was right in front of your face."

ROBERT TOWNE, 1934 - 2024

Legendary script doctor

The Oscar winner's most impactful, enduring screenplay was 'Chinatown'

BY DENNIS McLELLAN

Robert Towne, the screenwriting icon who won an Academy Award for his original script for "Chinatown," died Monday at his home in Los Angeles. He was 89.

His publicist, Carri McClure, announced the news on Tuesday.

In a screenwriting career launched in 1960 as a writer for low-budget producer-director Roger Corman, Towne earned an early reputation in Hollywood as a sought-after "script doctor," stepping in to do uncredited work on troubled screenplays for movies such as "Bonnie and

Clyde" (1967) and "The Godfather" (1972).

Towne had yet to become a legend of the New Hollywood era of filmmaking when he saw a 1969 photo essay in West, the Los Angeles Times' old Sunday magazine.

Titled "Raymond Chandler's L.A.," it featured recently shot photographs of Los Angeles locales taken as if it were still the late 1930s and '40s heyday of Chandler's fictional hard-boiled private eye Philip Marlowe, including an evocative photo of a vintage convertible parked next to an old streetlight outside Bullocks Wilshire, the landmark Art Deco luxury department store on Wilshire Boulevard.

Towne, a Los Angeles native born during [See Towne, E2]

Determined to gaze far beyond their shoes

Diiv ponders its focus on the outside world, touring, new LP 'Frog in Boiling Water.'

MIKAEL WOOD
POP MUSIC CRITIC

Two days before they're due to play the first date of a headlining theater tour, the members of the rock band Diiv are sitting around a picnic table in the parking lot of a Burbank rehearsal studio, reminiscing about the arena shows they opened for Depeche Mode last fall.

They talk about the glittery jackets frontman Dave Gahan wore onstage (only to slip them off after a few minutes) and the moves



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

"WE'VE committed our lives to this band," says Diiv's Colin Caulfield, second from right, with Zachary Cole Smith, left, Andrew Bailey and Ben Newman.

he'd bust on a catwalk; they talk about the confidence they developed by playing in front of thousands of people who hadn't turned up to see Diiv (but who were open to being won over by the right performance).

Also, they talk about catering. "Man, I miss that," guitarist Andrew Bailey says as though lost in a memory of endless chafing dishes.

Diiv is going without many of the borrowed perks of A-list rock stardom on the road behind its latest album, "Frog in Boiling Water." After launching in early June, the tour stopped at the Wiltern in Los Angeles — Diiv's hometown, more or less, since three of the four members moved here from New York a few years ago — [See Diiv, E3]

The screenwriting icon behind 'Chinatown' dies

[Towne, from E1] the Depression, said in a 2008 Writers Guild Foundation interview that he was amazed that "you could still recapture the L.A. that I vaguely remembered by the judicious selection of locations around the city, many of which I knew."

"That got me started thinking."

Indeed, Towne often acknowledged that the photo essay was a catalyst for writing the critically acclaimed, influential screenplay for which he is best known: "Chinatown."

Directed by Roman Polanski and starring Jack Nicholson and Faye Dunaway, the 1974 film classic is set in 1937 Los Angeles and features Nicholson as private investigator J.J. "Jake" Gittes, who is hired to investigate a supposedly cheating husband but instead finds himself enmeshed in a dark mystery involving deception, murder and a vast water and land conspiracy in the San Fernando Valley.

Towne received rare public acknowledgment of his behind-the-scenes work in 1973 when "Godfather" director Francis Ford Coppola accepted a screenwriting Oscar for that landmark film and, "giving credit where credit is due," thanked him for writing "the very beautiful scene between Marlon [Brando] and Al Pacino in the garden" — a scene Towne wrote the night before it was shot that illustrates the transfer of power from the aged Mafia don to his son Michael and indirectly captures the love between the two characters.

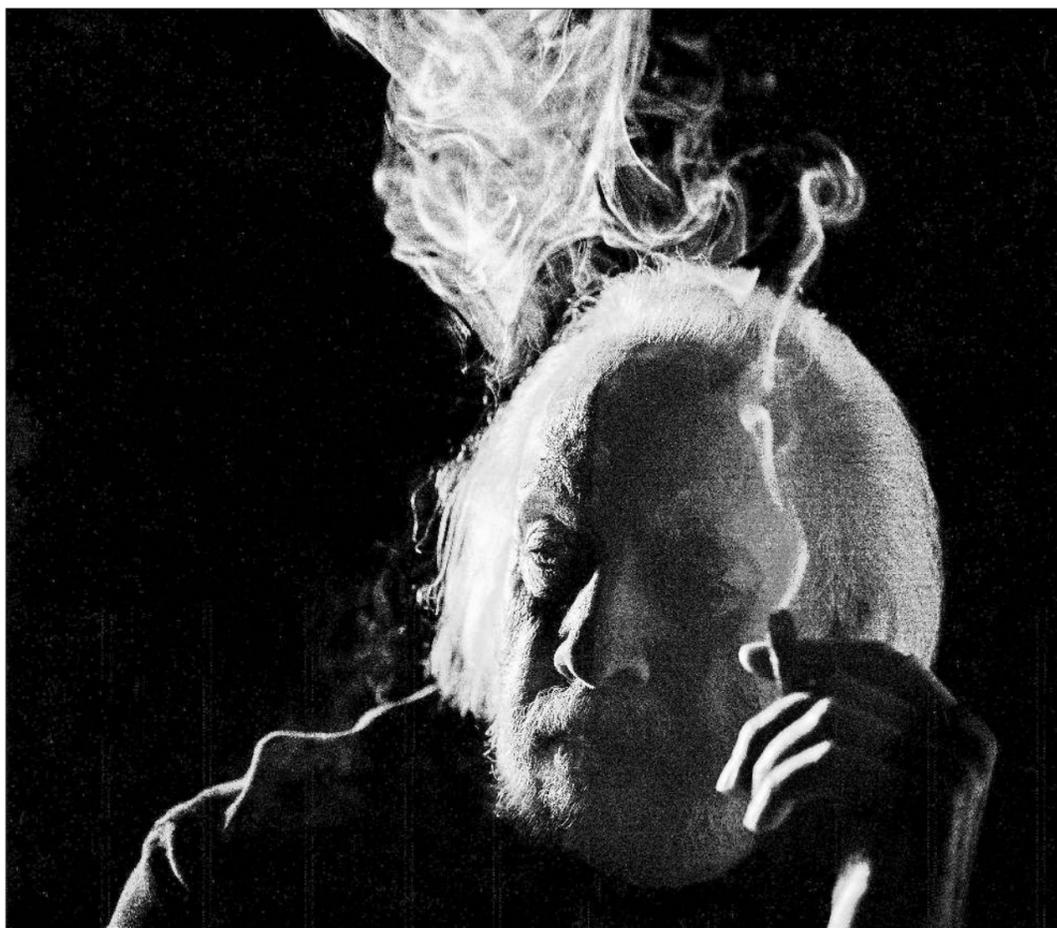
Two years later, the press was calling Towne "the hottest writer in Hollywood."

Bookending his Academy Award-winning script for "Chinatown" were Oscar nominations for his screen adaptation of the novel "The Last Detail" (1973), starring Nicholson as one of two Navy lifers escorting a young prisoner to Portsmouth Naval Prison; and for "Shampoo" (1975), which he co-wrote with the film's producer, Warren Beatty, who starred as a womanizing Beverly Hills hairdresser.

Among Towne's other screenwriting credits are "The Yakuza" (with Paul Schrader), "The Two Jakes" (a "Chinatown" sequel), "Days of Thunder," "The Firm" (with David Rabe and David Rayfiel), "Mission: Impossible" (with David Koepp) and "Mission: Impossible: II." As a frequent script doctor, Towne also did uncredited work on films such as "Drive, He Said," "The Parallax View," "Marathon Man," "The Missouri Breaks" and "Heaven Can Wait."

The tall, bearded and soft-spoken screenwriter who favored slim cigars became a director with the 1982 film "Personal Best," from his original screenplay about two female track stars. He later directed and wrote the screenplays for "Tequila Sunrise," "Without Limits" (written with Kenny Moore) and "Ask the Dust," set in Depression-era Los Angeles.

Towne also co-wrote the 1984 film "Greystoke: The Legend of Tarzan, Lord of the Apes," which was based on the Edgar Rice Burroughs novel "Tarzan of the Apes," a project Towne had



DAMON WINTER Los Angeles Times

ROBERT TOWNE had a "feel for the fine points of plot," wrote Peter Biskind in "Easy Riders, Raging Bulls."

been working on for many years. But Towne, who was originally slated to direct, was so unhappy with the finished film, co-written by Michael Austin and directed by Hugh Hudson, that he had his name replaced in the credits with a pseudonym: P.H. Vazak, the name of his Komondor, a Hungarian livestock guard dog, who then went on to share an Oscar nomination with Austin.

But none of Towne's screenplays attained the enduring stature of "Chinatown," which continues to be studied by writers and film school students and is considered one of the finest movie scripts ever written. Based on a vote of its members, the Writers Guild of America ranked "Chinatown" at No. 3 in its 2006 list of the "101 Greatest Screenplays," behind "Casablanca" and "The Godfather."

In presenting Towne with an honorary doctorate of fine arts degree at the American Film Institute's commencement ceremony in 2014, Coppola said, "You have in your script for 'Chinatown' provided the de facto blueprint for aspiring screenwriters, a platonic ideal of both structure and style taught as a template around the world."

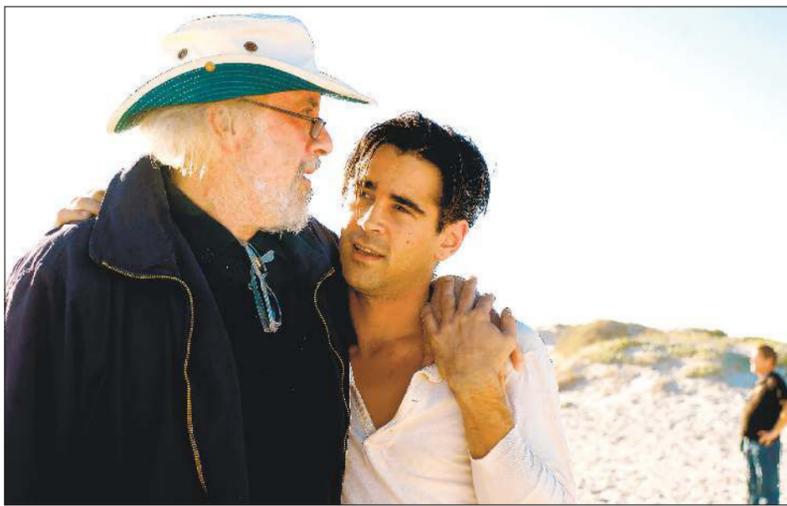
In the 2020 book "The Big Goodbye: Chinatown and the Last Years of Hollywood," author Sam Wasson revealed that one of Hollywood's best-known script doctors received uncredited help himself: For more than 40 years, Towne paid Edward Taylor, a longtime close friend, to help him with his scripts, including "Chinatown."

Taylor, who was Towne's literature- and theater-loving roommate at Pomona College and later taught sociology and statistics at USC, began secretly working with Towne on his scripts in the mid-1960s and, according to the book, apparently had no problem with re-



MARK J. TERRILL Associated Press

"CHINATOWN" assistant director Hawk Koch, from left, producer Robert Evans and Towne at 30th-anniversary screening of "Chinatown" in 2004 in Beverly Hills.



Paramount Classics

ACTOR Colin Farrell, right, receives direction from Towne in "Ask the Dust," for which Towne also wrote the screenplay. The story was set in Depression-era L.A.

maintaining anonymous. Towne, Wasson wrote, continued to consult with Taylor in person or by phone until Taylor's death in 2013.

Towne, who was not interviewed for the book, made a veiled public acknowledgment of his secret

collaborator in an introductory essay for a 1983 limited edition of the "Chinatown" screenplay: While writing "the heart" of the script on Catalina Island in the fall of 1972, Towne received periodic visits from his friend Taylor, whom he described as having been his Jiminy Cricket, Mycroft Holmes and Edmund Wilson since their college days.

Born Robert Burton Schwartz in Los Angeles on Nov. 23, 1934, Towne was 2 when his family moved to San Pedro, where his father bought a women's apparel store called the Towne Smart Shop. It wasn't long before Lou Schwartz was being called Mr. Towne.

"I think he liked that," Towne said of his father, who later became a successful real estate developer, in the Writers Guild Foundation interview. "By the time my brother [Roger] was born, he had legally changed his name." (Roger Towne later co-wrote the screenplay for the 1984 film "The Natural.")

The family later moved to Rolling Hills on the Palos Verdes Peninsula and then to Brentwood.

At Pomona College in Claremont in the 1950s, Towne studied philosophy. He also took a creative writing class in which one of his short stories, based on a recent stint working on a commercial tuna-fishing boat, "got everybody's attention," he recalled.

While in college, Towne considered becoming a jour-

nalist. But by the late 1950s, Towne, who served a stint in the Army, was in Hollywood taking an acting class taught by blacklisted actor Jeff Corey, whose students included James Coburn, Sally Kellerman and Richard Chamberlain. Another student was Nicholson, who became Towne's close friend.

"My training as a writer really came from seven years of improvising in that class, and coming to have a feeling for what was effective dramatically, what was effective in terms of dialogue and just what people could and couldn't say to be effective," Towne recalled.

His first professional break came when another student in the class, Corman, who as a quickie film producer and director was there to learn more about the creative process of actors, offered him a chance to write. "It was tough making a living writing for Roger," Towne said, "but at least he gave me a start."

Towne's first screenwriting credit was for Corman's "Last Woman on Earth," a 1960 science fiction film in which Towne played one of the three starring roles under the name Edward Wain. Under the same name, he also was one of the stars of Corman's "Creature From the Haunted Sea" (1961). For Corman, he also wrote the screen adaptation of the Edgar Allan Poe short story "The Tomb of Ligeia" (1964), starring Vincent Price.

In addition to his movie work, Towne wrote for television in the 1960s, including "The Man From U.N.C.L.E.," "The Outer Limits," "The Lloyd Bridges Show" and "The Richard Boone Show." Much later in life, he was a consulting producer on the popular television drama "Mad Men."

Towne's screenwriting career began its upswing when Beatty, the star and producer of "Bonnie and Clyde," and the film's director, Arthur Penn, needed help with a script written by David Newman and Robert Benton. For his contributions, Towne was listed in the acclaimed hit film's credits as "creative consultant."

As a screenwriter, Towne is described by Peter Biskind in his bestselling book on the New Hollywood era, "Easy Riders, Raging Bulls," as being "unusually literate" in "a town full of dropouts, where few read books."

"He had a real feel for the fine points of plot, the nuances of dialogue, had the ability to explain and contextualize film in the body of Western drama and literature," wrote Biskind.

"He had this ability, in every page he wrote and re-wrote, to leave a sense of moisture on the page, as if he just breathed on it in some way," producer Gerald Ayres told Biskind. "There was always something that jostled your sensibilities, that made the reading of the page not just a perception of plot, but the feeling that something accidental and true to the life of a human being had happened there."

In writing "Chinatown," with its plot revolving around a high-level water and real estate conspiracy, Towne was inspired by elements of the controversial history of the Los Angeles Aqueduct that brought water from the Owens Valley in the eastern Sierra Nevada down to L.A. earlier in the century.

"Everything about it ['Chinatown'] was an attempt to take an existing genre and imbue it with things from life," Towne told The Times in 2004. "Not to do an exotic movie about Maltese falcons and jewel-encrusted birds, but to take a crime that was right in front of your face, that was as basic as water and power. And a detective who was not a tarnished knight like Philip Marlowe, but kind of a sleazy, charming, dapper guy who would only take [divorce] cases because they made him the most money."

Before the filming of "Chinatown" began in 1973, Towne and Polanski argued constantly during the many weeks they spent condensing and revising Towne's lengthy screenplay.

Their biggest battle was over the ending.

Towne wanted Evelyn Mulwray (Dunaway), the widow of the murdered chief engineer of the Department of Water and Power, to kill her father, the rich and ruthlessly powerful Noah Cross (John Huston), who had raped her as a teenager and was the father of her young daughter, whom she was determined to keep away from him.

But Polanski, whose pregnant actress-wife Sharon Tate had been murdered by members of the Manson family in 1969, had something far more chilling in mind: He wanted Evelyn to die at the end and her daughter to fall into the hands of her father — evil triumphant.

The director had his way, and the film comes to its memorably shocking conclusion as Evelyn attempts to flee with her daughter in a car on a street in Chinatown.

A critically acclaimed box-office hit, "Chinatown" received 11 Academy Award nominations, including best picture, director, actor and actress.

And as Towne, the film's only Oscar winner, told The Times in 1999, he had since come to agree that Polanski "was right about the end."

In 1997, Towne received the Screen Laurel Award, the Writers Guild of America's highest award for screenwriting, which is given in recognition of a writer's body of work.

Towne had a daughter, Katharine, with his first wife, Julie Payne (the daughter of actors John Payne and Anne Shirley); the marriage ended in divorce. He also had a daughter, Chiara, with his second wife, Luisa Gaule.

McLellan is a former Times staff writer.

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MOVIE REVIEW

‘Despicable Me 4’ swirls with overplotted mania

‘White Lotus’ creator Mike White, Will Ferrell join the mix on animated sequel.

By GARY GOLDSTEIN

“Despicable Me 4” should come with a subtitle: “The Kitchen Sink.” That’s because this latest installment of Illumination’s mega-grossing animated franchise jams in a grab-bag of physical and visual gags and anything-goes action, plus a barrage of narrative dead ends, subplots and characters, as it strains to fill its 90 or so minutes of eye-popping, brain-draining mayhem.

Despite a few chuckles, some capable voice work and plenty of splashy color, it proves a largely empty and exhausting ride.

It’s doubtful that the average viewer — initiated or new to the series — will be able to recount a fully coherent summary of the film’s whirling-dervish plot, penned by Ken Daurio (a writer on all the “Despicable” entries) and Mike White (“The White Lotus”). The convoluted story won’t stop families from lining up for this one, but be forewarned:

Said plot involves “Despicable” series star Gru (voiced by Steve Carell),

that lovably hapless, curiously accented supervillain-turned-hero (he of the ovoid head and woodpecker-like nose), who’s forced into a sort of witness protection program after running afoul of his old childhood nemesis, the uber-evil Maxime Le Mal (Will Ferrell).

Le Mal, a eurotrashy Frenchman with an equally wicked and flamboyant girlfriend (an underused Sofia Vergara), has vowed revenge against Gru and his family, so steps must be taken. Although the origin story for their longtime feud is sure to go over the heads of any small fries in attendance, it’s hardly the stuff of do-or-die wars. But whatever.

Gru’s Anti-Villain League (AVL) boss, Silas Ramsbottom (Steve Coogan), whose own head resembles a malleable eggplant, sets up Gru and his family — plucky wife Lucy (Kristen Wiig), also an AVL agent; trio of adopted young daughters and feisty baby son — in the idyllic town of Mayflower under assumed identities. Gru becomes a solar panel salesman named Chet Cunningham. Lucy now must go by “Blanche” and, despite zero tonorial talent, work as a hairstylist (a labored story segue with little payoff).

There are neighbors: super-snooty, swoop-jawed car dealer Perry (Stephen Colbert), his socialite wife,



Illumination / Universal Pictures

GRU, his baby son and Minions watch teen evildoer-in-training Poppy Prescott.

Patsy (Chloe Fineman), and their teen daughter, Poppy (Joey King). The latter, an evildoer-in-training, quickly susses out Gru’s true identity and blackmails him into a dicey heist at Gru and Le Mal’s alma mater, the imposing Lycée Pas Bon, a high school for villains. The result is another haywire set piece and the theft of an erratic honey badger.

What else? Well, Le Mal can turn himself into a giant, ultra-destructive cockroach because why not? Gru’s two youngest daughters join a karate class led by an inexplicably hostile sensei (Brad Abelson). Oh, and Gru ends up over his head in a tennis game with Perry and his

country club friends but eventually shows them all who’s boss — to no great avail.

There’s a kidnapping (not the first in this series); a school principal in a wheelchair that transforms into a kind of monster truck; and a death-defying (read: consequence-free) climactic battle that feels Looney Tunes-ridiculous even for a movie like this.

Much more is stuffed into the proceedings, including the franchise’s famed Minions, those yellow, gibberish-babbling, capsule-shaped little pranksters (all voiced by their co-creator, Pierre Coffin), who largely exist to assist Gru. Yet they’re used

here more as a chaotic diversion than any vital plot propeller.

While Coogan’s Ramsbottom injects five of the creatures with a serum that affords them a nutty array of superhero-like powers, the rest of the Minions are stuck at Gru’s house where they’re continually at odds with a vending machine. Whatever their purpose in “4,” they remain yappy, annoying and rambunctious — even if the mighty, so-called Mega Minions can now (ineptly) decimate a city.

Directed by Illumination veteran Chris Renaud (the first two “Despicable Me” films, “The Lorax” and both “Secret Life of Pets” movies

‘Despicable Me 4’

Rated: PG, for action and rude humor

Running time: 1 hour, 34 minutes

Playing: In wide release

are all his), one can’t fault the movie’s speedy pace. The picture may be wearying, but it’s rarely boring. (Patrick Delage is credited as co-director.)

On the music front, Heitor Pereira returns to provide the film’s effective, at times eclectic score. Pharrell Williams’ past “Despicable” themes are reprised, plus Williams wrote and performs the catchy new original song “Double Life.” There are also several fun needle drops and a lively, late-breaking use of Tears for Fears’ “Everybody Wants to Rule the World.”

A tremendous amount of craft, talent, resources and, no doubt, affection goes into a film like this, all of which can’t be overlooked. One just wishes the final product evolved the series into something smarter and more dimensional and offered perhaps a timelier, more meaningful message for family audiences. Well, there’s always “Despicable Me 5.”

DE LOS

For Maria Garcia, story is personal

The host of the podcast ‘Mi Divo’ takes Juan Gabriel’s narrative to heart.

By ANDREA FLORES

As a queer woman born in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, journalist Maria Garcia always felt drawn to Juan Gabriel.

“It feels like his legacy provides me with the clues to figure out this tension inside of me between these two identities,” Garcia said of the legendary Mexican singer and songwriter. That tension is explored in “Mi Divo,” a new Apple TV+ podcast hosted and executive produced by Garcia, in which she uses Gabriel’s story as a guiding light for her own personal reconciliation with generational family trauma and her identity.

The eight-part series — Apple TV+’s first dual-language podcast — premiered on Monday, with the first two episodes available for nonsubscribers. New episodes of “Mi Divo” are released weekly.

The podcast delves into Gabriel’s flamboyant personality, which ruffled against the Mexican patriarchy and often prompted media speculation over his sexuality. One example included in “Mi Divo” is Gabriel’s now-infamous 2002 in-

terview with “Primer Impacto” reporter Fernando del Rincón, who asks whether the singer is gay.

“They say that what you see, you need not ask,” Gabriel responds curtly. Despite the constant probing, he never came out to the public. Garcia points out that he also never outright denied being queer, and would often challenge the questions presented altogether.

“But Juan Gabriel onstage? Honey, that was queer exuberance,” Garcia said.

At the height of his career, *el Divo de Juárez* would don purple fringed suits, bright pink vests and silky suits.

“In its most potent, authentic, liberated way, Juan Gabriel onstage was truly free,” she added.

The youngest of 10 children, Gabriel — his real name was Alberto Aguilera Valadez — was born in Paracuaro, Michoacan. When he was a young child, his mother moved the family to Ciudad Juárez after her husband was interned at a psychiatric hospital. She would eventually surrender Gabriel to a local orphanage.

In a 1999 profile with The Times, Gabriel said that his first memory was of being abandoned by his mother.

“You don’t know the word for ‘abandon’ at that age,” Gabriel told former Times



Photo illustration by HELEN QUACH De Los; photos by ETHAN MILLER Getty Images and MATT SAYLES AP

reporter Alisa Valdes-Rodriguez. “But you know what is happening. You know you want to be with your mother, and she is not there.”

Gabriel would harness his vocal gift and his ability to distill emotions core to the human condition into songs that have stood the test of time. Gabriel sold more than 100 million albums over his decades-long career, capturing the hearts of audiences on both sides of the border and of all types of sexual orientation with songs like “Así Fue,” “No Tengo Dinero” and “La Farsante.”

Valdes-Rodriguez says it was his “poignancy that is at an intersection of love and pain” that differentiated “JuanGa” from the rest.

“When you think about someone raised in an orphanage, abandoned, who rises to that level, that’s an exceptional soul, right?” He extended that strength to everyone and everything around him,” said Valdes-Rodriguez. “He saw the beauty in forgotten places and in the forgotten people.”

Gabriel eventually reunited with his mother, buying her a house soon after achieving fame. She served

as the inspiration behind “Amor Eterno,” the mournful ballad that has since become a staple of funerals.

“I don’t think he was in denial or unaware of what happened to him,” said Valdes-Rodriguez. “It’s that he was able to forgive and love at a level that most of us can only aspire to.”

Garcia says Gabriel’s ability to forgive his mother despite the abandonment helped her cope with her own familial trauma. Like Gabriel, Garcia’s own mother was abandoned — she was forced to marry someone she did not know

and was subjected to sexual abuse. As the podcast reveals, Gabriel was also the victim of such abuse.

“I saw both the pain and the resilience and the beauty of his healing, and I saw it in my mom. It was just a really cathartic moment,” Garcia said.

“Mi Divo” is intended to be a space of healing, Garcia says. By exploring the tragedies and triumphs surrounding the singer’s life, she’s been able to find comfort, peace and a sense of belonging. Her own narrative is as central to the story as Gabriel’s.

It’s a creative decision that was also taken in “Anything for Selena,” a podcast series that examines the cultural significance of slain Tejano legend Selena Quintanilla. “Anything for Selena” — produced through Futuro Media and Boston’s National Public Radio affiliate, WBUR — was named Apple Podcasts’ show of the year in 2021.

Garcia says she decided to “show her cards” to the listener by becoming part of the story on both series.

“To not include [my own narrative] is dishonest from my part as a journalist to the audience,” Garcia said. “I value radical transparency more than objectivity because objectivity doesn’t exist.”

And why focus on *el Divo de Juárez* this time around? “Because listeners began clamoring for it.”

“After I finished [‘Anything for Selena’], it felt like providence, it felt like the universe [was manifesting it], because there were so many people on social media who started messaging me, ‘So, is Juan Gabriel next?’”

A shoegaze band to believe in

[Diiv, from E1] last week.

Yet the musicians, all in their mid to late 30s, seem no less eager to be out playing their new songs; indeed, they say the music reflects the fact that “we’ve committed our lives to this band,” as bassist Colin Caulfield puts it, even minus the kind of “long-term infrastructure” that might appeal to people their age. Adds Caulfield, wryly: “No one’s matching our 401(k).”

Diiv’s determination is warranted. Easily the most impressive of the group’s four LPs, “Frog in Boiling Water” is probably also the best rock record released so far this year: a dense and luxurious set of hooky post-shoegaze guitar jams that evokes a dream-pop Nirvana.

With their layers of fuzz and their trippy yet propulsive grooves, songs like “Brown Paper Bag” and “Raining on Your Pillow” fit easily into the shoegaze revival that’s taken off lately on TikTok and introduced bands from the 1980s and ’90s such as My Bloody Valentine and Slowdive —

noisy but sensitive types known for staring down at their effects pedals — to a new generation of young fans. Yet Diiv pairs those immersive textures with songwriting much sturdier than what you’ll find on, say, Spotify’s popular Shoegaze Now playlist.

“When it comes to music in this genre, there’s a lot of trying to emulate what’s come before,” says Jasmine White-Gluz of the Montreal band No Joy, which has toured with Diiv.

“So you’re kind of just doing a ‘Loveless’ or doing a ‘Souvlaki’ — trying to fit in the box of what shoegaze is,” she adds, referring to the seminal albums by MBV and Slowdive, respectively. “Diiv doesn’t do that — they’ve got their own sound. They’re in the box, but they’re making the box bigger.”

Part of what distinguishes “Frog in Boiling Water” is the political thrust of singer Zachary Cole Smith’s lyrics, which ponder the brutality of late-stage capitalism and the deceptions of the military-industrial complex — ideas he says he was drawn to after he and his

wife brought their first child into the world about a year ago. (That his words about “rotating villains profit[ing] off suffering” are intelligible at all represents something of a break from a lot of shoegaze music, in which vocals serve as just one more instrumental component.)

“I think the record has a sense of hope,” Smith says, “despite all the evidence that we’re heading toward total f—ing collapse.”

Optimistic or not, the album’s focus on the outside world represents Smith’s effort to move beyond the personal demons that long defined Diiv. In 2013, Smith was arrested in New York with his then-girlfriend, singer Sky Ferreira, on suspicion of possession of heroin; he exhaustively detailed his experiences with addiction and recovery on Diiv’s 2016 “Is the Is Are” and 2019 “Deceiver.” Of the latter, Smith says his hope was that it “took the trash out a little bit, so that now we can talk about other things in our music.”

Yet a recent review of “Frog in Boiling Water” in Pitchfork made him wonder if he’s attained that leeway.



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

“I THINK the record has a sense of hope,” Zachary Cole Smith says of Diiv’s LP “Frog in Boiling Water.”

In a thread on X that went indie-rock viral, Smith wrote about seeing his music “met with an unwillingness to accept me as the person I’ve worked so diligently the last eight years to become”; he also lamented that his bandmates — Diiv’s fourth member is drummer Ben Newman — are “stilted at the mercy of a public tendency to root discussion of our band around a past that they personally suffered from as well.” (The review, which was positive, opened with a mention of Smith’s arrest.)

“These events in my life, I don’t get to decide when people stop talking about them,” Smith says. “But not including the rest of the

story or where it led me, I think that’s a damaging mind-set for people in sobriety. It makes me sad to think about somebody who’s experiencing addiction seeing that and being like, ‘Damn, I’m just always going to be this destructive force,’” he says. “People can change — profoundly.”

One effect of Smith’s change is a democratizing of Diiv’s creative process. During the band’s early days, the music was unquestionably a product of Smith’s vision, a situation he looks back at with complicated feelings.

“In my active addiction, I was selfish and ego-driven in a really unsustainable way,” he admits; recovery led him

to “want to retreat from a leadership role” and invite more participation from his bandmates at la Sonic Youth, to name one touchstone act with more than one person in a controlling role.

“I think that choice to open it up to being everyone’s band is what made the record great,” says Chris Coady, who produced “Frog in Boiling Water” and who’s known for his work with TV on the Radio and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs.

“As a producer, it was a bit of a nightmare,” he adds with a laugh, explaining that getting everyone to agree on every decision meant that the sessions at his studio in L.A. weren’t brief. “But all four of them are good at all kinds of stuff, and this allowed them to come together in such a cool way.”

That shared investment in Diiv — and in the belief that together, its members have hit a new artistic peak with “Frog in Boiling Water” — has buoyed the group after a long stretch of turmoil, even at a moment when making a living as a musician feels more precarious than many that it has in decades.

“All our eggs are in this basket,” Smith says as he heads back into rehearsal. “It’s scary — and thrilling.”

COMICS

LA CUCARACHA By Lalo Alcaraz



PICKLES By Brian Crane



CRABGRASS By Tauhid Bondia



BABY BLUES By Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



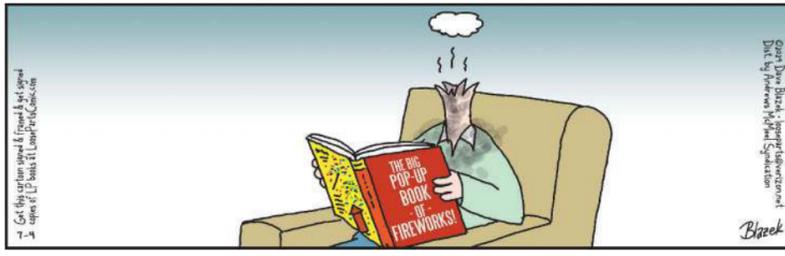
CANDORVILLE By Darrin Bell



CRANKSHAFT By Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers



LOOSE PARTS By Dave Blazek



JUMP START By Robb Armstrong



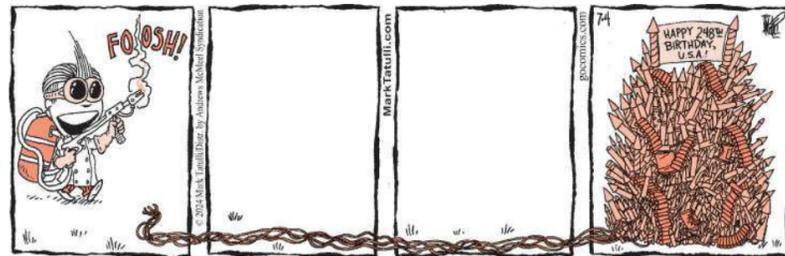
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE By Stephan Pastis



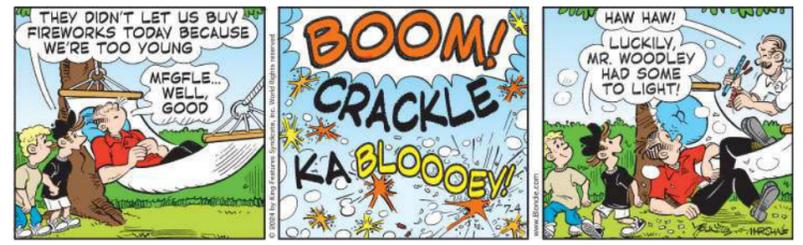
MACANUDO By Liniers



LIO By Mark Tatulli



BLONDIE By Dean Young & John Marshall



ZITS By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



BETWEEN FRIENDS By Sandra Bell-Lundy



TUNDRA By Chad Carpenter



BIZARRO By Wayno and Piraro



SIX CHIX By Mary Lawton



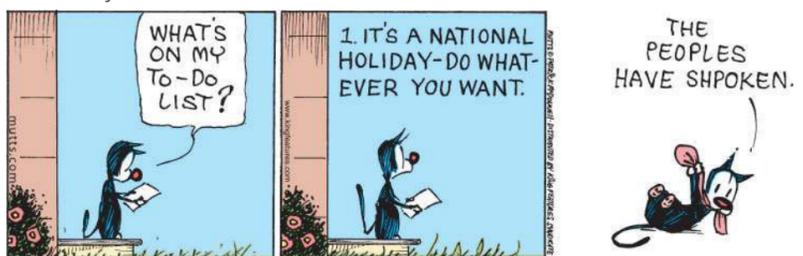
DRABBLE By Kevin Fagan



FRAZZ By Jef Mallett



MUTTS By Patrick McDonnell



NON SEQUITUR By Wiley



PEANUTS By Charles M. Schulz



COMICS

SUDOKU

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	2	6				1	5	
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		1	7					
5	8							3
	7	3			4			

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KENKEN

Every box will contain a number; numbers depend on the size of the grid. For a 6x6 puzzle, use Nos. 1-6. Do not repeat a number in any row or column. The numbers in each heavily outlined set of squares must combine to produce the target number found in the top left corner of the cage using the mathematical operation indicated. A number can be repeated within a cage as long as it is not in the same row or column.

EASY

2-	6x		9+
		3-	
36x	4	4+	

CHALLENGING

3-	54x		11+	1	3-
		2-		2-	
6+					1-
3-		11+	4-		
2-	2-		8+		
			3-		9+

PREVIOUS ANSWERS

3	2	1	4
4	1	3	2
2	3	4	1
1	4	2	3

HOROSCOPE

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS

Aries (March 21-April 19): You'll be in a position to speak to a problem while it's small and easier to remedy.
Taurus (April 20-May 20): It's better to have a new and different experience than to do something comfortable but ultimately forgettable.
Gemini (May 21-June 21): Don't drive yourself too hard or you'll only rebel against yourself later.
Cancer (June 22-July 22): You're a genius at steering interactions in a positive way and keeping the good vibes flowing.
Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): Tonight offers the chance to fix one small problem that will in turn fix or prevent many others in the days to come.
Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): It behooves you to get into construction mode as soon as possible. If you can't build

it today, what small step can you make today with the intent to bring it to life?
Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): The mind and heart have their own agenda. It will sync up nicely today, and this is nothing to take for granted.
Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): Nothing about you needs to change, except maybe your location. When you're in the right spot, everything falls in line and makes sense.
Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): You don't have to spend a lot of money to get what you want, but you will have to spend some. Choose quick and keep working.
Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Every emotion has something to teach you. Anger can motivate, jealousy can teach you your own values. Love opens up the world.
Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): When you share good news, you find out who your real supporters are. The ones who cannot immedi-

ately love and celebrate your success are probably not true supporters.
Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): There's only one thing that will show you what is really up, and of course that's doing the thing. You may not feel ready, but you're ready-ish, and that's ready enough.
Today's birthday (July 4): You're focused on others and you'll quest for the thriving of your people, community and world. It's fulfilling and you'll make a difference over and over. In the process you'll stumble onto happiness more often than not. Other highlights: A proud funding, celebrating dear relationships and three items checked from the bucket list. Virgo and Gemini adore you. Your lucky numbers: 7, 13, 2, 28 and 15.
 Mathis writes her column for Creators Syndicate Inc. The horoscope should be read for entertainment.

BRIDGE

BY FRANK STEWART

"Refrigerators should have glass doors," said Cy the Cynic. "Then I wouldn't have to stand there planning my next move with the door open, letting the cold out."
 Cy isn't great at planning as declarer: He tends to adopt the first line of play he sees. At 3NT, Cy ducked West's king of spades and won the next spade as East threw a heart. Cy next led a diamond to dummy's jack.
 East took the queen and led a heart. The Cynic won in dummy and took the A-K of diamonds, hoping for a 3-3 break, but when West showed out, Cy won only eight tricks.
 Cy's 3NT was as cold as an icebox. At Trick Three Cy gets an extra chance by lead-

ing a club to dummy's nine. East wins and leads a heart, and Cy wins in dummy, cashes the ace of clubs, returns a heart to his hand and takes the king of clubs. When West's queen falls, Cy has three clubs, three hearts, two diamonds and a spade.
 If the clubs didn't lie well, Cy could finesse in diamonds and get home with good luck, or he might well end-play East in diamonds.
 You hold: ♠ 8 6 3 2 ♥ A Q 6 ♦ A K J 2 ♣ A 9. The dealer, at your right, opens one club. You double, and your partner responds ("advances") one heart. What do you say?
 Answer: Your partner could have nothing — or as many as nine points. Game is possible. You shouldn't raise the hearts with only three-card support. Bid 1NT, showing 18 or 19 points.

Your double promised support for the other suits, so partner can suggest a different contract.

South dealer
E-W vulnerable

NORTH
♠ 8 6 3 2
♥ A Q 6
♦ A K J 2
♣ A 9

WEST
♠ K Q J 9 4
♥ J 5 4 2
♦ 8
♣ Q 5 3

EAST
♠ 5
♥ 10 8 7
♦ Q 10 9 7 3
♣ J 8 7 4

SOUTH
♠ A 10 7
♥ K 9 3
♦ 6 5 4
♣ K 10 6 2

SOUTH Pass
WEST Pass
NORTH 1 NT
EAST Pass
All Pass

Opening lead — ♠ K

Tribune Content Agency

ASKING ERIC

Editor's note: Amy Dickinson has retired her Ask Amy column. R. Eric Thomas will be giving out advice in a new syndicated column.

Dear Eric: I'm a self-published fiction author. I'm really struggling with jealousy and despair. Every time I see a published book or step into a bookstore, I feel this wave of sadness. I'm trying to get my books out there, get whatever reviews I can, and promote myself on social media but it feels impossible.
 A friend just told me she won't try out a new author unless they have thousands of good reviews on Amazon or GoodReads. My last book got about 20 good reviews after weeks of hustling. How do I keep going? How can I redirect my thoughts when the jealousy/despair hits?
 EXHAUSTED AUTHOR

where jealousy waits around every corner, but other people's success doesn't take anything away from us. You're not in competition with other authors, you're in competition with your own expectations. Ask yourself: If you got thousands of reviews, would that feel like enough? You are already enough so let's reframe your goals to help you feel that more often.
 Your friend is entitled to her own selection process but thousands of reviews is an unrealistic number. To get that, any author, needs the support of dozens, if not hundreds of people employed by the big publishing houses. Meanwhile, you worked your tail off and got those 20 reviews on your own. That's huge!
 If there's an author whose career you want to emulate, reach out to them to find out the nuts and bolts of how they got to where they are. As writer Freddie DeBoer recently pointed out in an issue of his Substack newsletter titled "Publishing Is Designed to Make Most Authors Feel Like Losers Even While the Industry Makes Money," "writing is also an intensely personal endeavor, and so rejection by the various apparatchiks who decide who's in and who's out can feel especially cruel." Have a good think about whose approval you want (hopefully your own)

and what you're trying to achieve.
 Lastly, I can't say enough about building relationships with independent booksellers and librarians. Get to know the ones in your area. Even if you're exclusively publishing e-books, these pros can help you understand the decision-making that leads readers to books, and eventually to those online review sites.
Dear Eric: I am in my mid-60s. Sometimes when I meet people I haven't seen for a long time, say from college, I hear "you haven't changed a bit." Back then I had shoulder length hair. Today, I'm bald and what hair I have left is cut very short. How do I respond to such nonsense while maintaining a good attitude toward them?
 HAIR YESTERDAY, GONE TODAY
Dear Hair: I understand your sentiment as a fellow member of the shaved head club (it's cheaper! It's cooler! But oh the sunburns!). Still, you should take the compliment in the spirit it's given. Of course you've changed physically, but maybe your energy is the same. If the mood suits say, "Oh, I've changed—I got even better."

Email questions to R. Eric Thomas at eric@askingeric.com.

CROSSWORD

Edited By Patti Varol
 By Tom Pepper & Zhouqin Burni

- ACROSS
 1 Cronies
 5 Bird in the National Audubon Society logo
 10 Above, in Augsburg
 14 With 43-Down, "M*A*S*H" star
 15 Writer Mary who specializes in popular science
 16 Party with glow sticks
 17 Hatha to Ashtanga?
 19 Change the locks?
 20 "I said ENOUGH!"
 21 Insta, X, TikTok, etc., informally
 23 Runs smoothly
 25 Wilson of Heart
 26 TMZ subject
 29 Stuffed teddies that look like a green Jedi master?
 34 Anxious feeling
 36 Headlight part
 37 Toe bean locale
 38 Play things
 39 In flight
 41 Mother of Clytemnestra
 42 Storefront sign abbr.
 43 Java spot
 44 "Yeah, there is a resemblance there"
 46 Tex-Mex snack that improves the performance of an Alpine singer?
 49 Anaheim team, to fans
 50 Condition often treated with ERP
 51 Flower at the center of a financial bubble in the 1630s
 53 Marshy habitat
 57 Artificial surface sports injury
 61 "lol 2 funny"
 62 Dice toss style named after a "Hamlet" jester?
 64 Dollar alternative
 65 Moved stealthily
 66 _ Spunkmeyer cookies
 67 Chaotic situation
 68 Mournful verse
 69 Unit that might be edited or spliced

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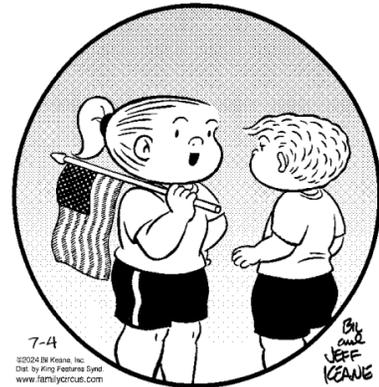
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64						65						66		
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- 5 Overthrow, e.g.
 6 Fall apart, as plans
 7 Operated
 8 Heart charts, for short
 9 James of "The White Lotus"
 10 Like Boo Boo and Smokey
 11 Slapstick prop
 12 Not good at all
 13 Gym count
 18 Gives the cold shoulder to
 22 Semi areas
 24 One-person project
 26 Like an easy job
 27 First calendario page
 28 "Bring it on!"
 30 Dict. entry
 31 Start to matter?
 32 Sirius business
 33 Whacks
 35 It's right there on the map!
 40 NCAA champion swimmer Thomas
 41 Jump ahead of
 43 See 14-Across
 45 Dodge
 47 Mercedes luxury line
- 48 Trip
 52 Like the number eight, in China
 53 "Kapow!"
 54 Icicle holder
 55 Big Board abbr.
 56 Woody of "Toy Story," for one
 58 Reusable shopping bag
 59 Lena of "The Reader"
 60 "Anyone _?"
 63 Regret

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

U	N	D	E	R	M	I	L	D	B	A	C	H	
P	E	E	L	E	A	E	R	I	E	A	H	H	
T	R	A	F	F	I	C	C	A	N	E	L	O	
O	D	D	L	A	O	M	U	S	I	C			
W	A	L	K	O	N	T	H	E	P	A	R	K	
T	R	U	E	R	R	E	D	S					
M	O	O	L	A	A	J	A	R	P	T	A		
H	U	N	D	R	E	D	A	C	R	E	W	O	O
O	R	G		S	O	N	Y		M	I	L	E	S
A	S	A	P										
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M	A	C											
A	S	H											

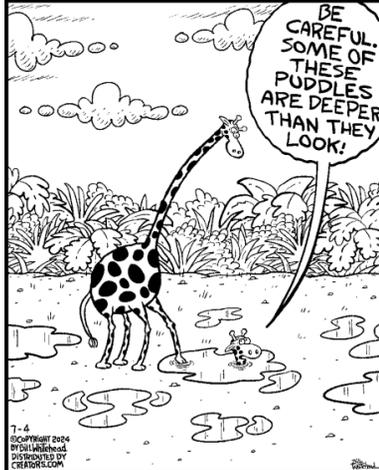
FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



DENNIS THE MENACE By Hank Ketcham



FREE RANGE By Bill Whitehead



MARMADUKE By Brad & Paul Anderson



BLISS By Harry Bliss



SPEED BUMP By Dave Coverly



Hollywood Bowl's rideshare plan a game changer

A triangle-shaped lot across from the venue makes drop-offs and pickups faster, easier.

BY ADAM TSCHORN

Being at the Hollywood Bowl to see a show is a magical experience. Getting there? Not so much, thanks to streets that get so clogged with traffic that it sometimes feels like every single one of the 17,000 people filling the storied venue to capacity is behind the wheel of their own car inching slowly up Highland Avenue.

Years ago, in an effort to make sure we got to the Bowl on time — reliably, every time — with a minimum amount of stress, my wife and I abandoned the idea of driving ourselves and parking on-site (a logistical nightmare) or taking one of the several shuttle buses from afar (an extra step that some swear by but that requires the patience of a saint), in favor of taking a rideshare, building in an extra hour and wearing comfortable shoes.

Once the traffic inching up Highland toward the



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

FANS pack Hollywood Bowl to see Kool & the Gang in 2021. Then, a rideshare to and from venue was a lesson in patience and perseverance. Now? Quick and easy.

Bowl slowed from a crawl to a near-complete standstill — which it absolutely always did with at least a quarter mile left to go — we'd disembark and make the rest of the way on foot.

On the return, we'd try to beat the congestion and demand by hoofing it all the way down to Hollywood Boulevard before hailing a

ride home. Neither of us particularly relished adding a mile-long walk to the end of the night, but the trade-off was avoiding the worst of the inevitable rideshare chaos.

Last time we went, though, things were different. Instead of heading up Highland and straight into the inevitable sea of Bowl-

bound traffic, our driver took a circuitous route through the hills, emerged onto Cahuenga Boulevard and headed south.

Sensing what seemed to be an epic blunder that would take us directly into the maw of vehicular misadventure, we exchanged nervous glances in the back seat and checked our watches.

Then he did something wholly unexpected. Instead of continuing south straight toward the Bowl, he crossed over the Hollywood Freeway (via Pilgrimage Bridge), then headed south, taking the graceful arc of a right turn onto Odin Street. A few minutes later, we found ourselves disgorged onto a triangular patch of land across Highland from the Bowl's entrance, which we could easily access via a pedestrian underpass.

After the show (James Taylor is still killin' it in concert, BTW) — instead of slog-ging a mile down Highland to call a car, we just retraced our steps back through the pedestrian tunnel to the magical triangle where fleets of recently hailed Ubers, Lyfts and the occasional Alto arrived — also via Odin — and slotted into numbered rows to make it easier to locate a driver.

Within about 15 minutes (lightspeed in Bowl terms), we were onboard, waded into a Highland southbound lane and on our way home. It was a game-changing, Bowl-going rideshare experience that shaved a good two hours and a 1.25-mile hike off our transit time.

That triangular space

used to be the Bowl's Parking Lot C, and its conversion into a streamlined rideshare hub was quietly announced on the venue's website in mid-March — along with plans to dedicate part of Lot B (the stacked-parking lot adjacent to the venue) to mass transit.

According to a representative of the L.A. Philharmonic, which manages the Bowl, the venue averages about 1,000 rideshare cars per night.

The new setup, which went into effect when the season kicked off April 11 (with the Jimmy Buffett tribute concert "Keep the Party Going"), resulted in cutting 350 of the venue's 1,700 available stacked-parking spots.

Although that was certainly bad news for anyone trying to snag one of those remaining 1,350 spots, I can tell you from firsthand experience that for the rideshare crowd, it's game-changing good news.

The Hollywood Bowl rideshare hub Lot C is at 6655 Odin St. Information on additional transportation options, including shuttle buses and on-site parking, can be found at hollywoodbowl.com.

App brings history into present

[Museum, from E1] other camps."

Now, thanks to a groundbreaking collaboration between Hollywood and Holocaust Museum Los Angeles, this lost history has been reimagined with 21st century technology. The oldest Holocaust museum in the U.S., Holocaust Museum L.A. has teamed up with the technology studio Magnopus, led by visual effects artists Craig Barron and Ben Grossmann — who earned Oscars for 2008's "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button" and 2011's "Hugo," respectively — to create a new educational app that uses augmented reality to bring Sobibor to virtual life.

The Sobibor AR exhibit, available for free download in Apple's app store, allows users to interact with a 3D model of Sobibor, with actor Ben Feldman serving as a holographic guide providing historical context and encouraging deeper exploration of the camp's layout and daily life. The app centers on the story of Polish survivor Thomas Blatt, who escaped from Sobibor during a famous 1943 uprising and created a detailed map from memory, including key locations such as the barracks, guard towers, gas chambers and mass graves.

The museum, which was founded in 1961 by a group of Holocaust survivors, houses a physical model of Sobibor based on Blatt's map. But Davids, who frequently speaks to young people about what happened to his family and the millions of other victims of the Holocaust, says the app allows for a more immersive experience.

"The glass that covers the original model is taken away and you sort of become part of the exhibit yourself,"

he says.

For the museum, which has already experimented with virtual reality technology in its exhibits, the app represents a new way to engage younger generations in the history of the Holocaust. The museum has created an accompanying guide for educators and, since the soft launch of the app last year, says it has trained 123 teachers to use it, reaching more than 150,000 students.

"We know we're at the point now where young people, when they come to the museum, think, 'Oh, this is ancient history,'" says Holocaust Museum L.A. Chief Executive Beth Kean. "We have to get their attention the minute they walk off the bus and make sure they understand why they're here. We need to make this history relevant and accessible to them and teach it to them on a level that they understand."

In 2019, the museum began partnering with the "cross-experience" company Magnopus to develop the app, leveraging artifacts and photos in its collection along with its physical model of the Sobibor camp.

"Most of us here at Magnopus work in the film industry in some capacity and we tell fantasy stories," says Barron, the company's creative director, who has done VFX work on such films as "Raiders of the Lost Ark," "Batman Returns" and "Titanic." "This was an opportunity to tell a real-life true story. Thomas Blatt's map was basically a witness to his experiences that we could add value to and bring forward beyond the walls of a physical museum."

For everyone involved, it was critically important that the app be firmly

grounded in firsthand historical documents and artifacts. "The ethos of our museum is that we believe that primary sources and survivor testimony are crucial to Holocaust education and fostering empathetic responses to history," says Jordanna Gessler, Holocaust Museum L.A.'s chief impact officer. "The Sobibor model felt like the perfect object to launch this initiative around because it embodies so much of this history and what this institution believes in."

In its research for the project, the team at Magnopus pored over primary sources, including home movies of Blatt visiting the Sobibor site, Nuremberg trial testimonies and a photo album left behind by the camp's commandant. Blatt himself died in 2015 at age 88, but his daughter helped give input to the project.

"It all starts with a script — you know, it is Hollywood — and we go back and forth with the museum and look at it for accuracy," says Vince Beggs, museum experience specialist at Magnopus, who has worked on hundreds of museum exhibits and programs. "If we deliver the wrong information, we're going to fail. We spent a lot of time on: What's the story? A lot of people have memories of being at Sobibor and we've seen those published, but this is specifically Thomas' perspective."

While Magnopus has an array of eye-popping virtual reality and AR tools at its disposal, including some developed in collaboration with Epic Games, the goal was always to approach the app as an educational tool rather than a piece of gee-whiz tech. "Anything that felt like a computer game, we stepped away from," says



TAMARA LEIGH Holocaust Museum L.A.

VISITORS take in Holocaust Museum L.A.'s physical model of the Sobibor camp.



AL SEIB Holocaust Museum L.A.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE Beth Kean watches student interns use the museum's new app on an iPad.

Barron. "We had to treat the subject matter with utmost respect and not try to make it theatrical. The fact that prisoners escaped is a compelling enough story, so we just had to depict it as accurately as possible."

For Holocaust Museum L.A., which is currently closed as it undergoes an expansion that will double its footprint in Pan Pacific Park, the app offers a way to continue its mission at a

time of rising antisemitism fueled by ongoing conflict over the war in Gaza. According to an audit conducted by the Anti-Defamation League, antisemitic incidents in K-12 schools jumped 135% in 2023 over the prior year. "When you look at what we're facing, the statistics are horrific," says Kean.

Against that backdrop, Magnopus is exploring other ways it can collaborate with

the museum on cutting-edge educational tools, including an app in which users would enter the pages of a Nazi children's propaganda book to learn about how German youth were indoctrinated with antisemitism. "Reaching out to subvert children is heinous, but it's something that we have to not turn away from but rather delve into and share with others."

Having spoken about the Holocaust to thousands of young people over the years, Davids is encouraged by the fact that future generations will have new ways to engage with this tragic chapter of history.

"It's very heartening for people like me to know that these new techniques come along that will foster this education," says Davids, a photograph of whose mother is included in the app. "We don't simply learn about history — we learn from it. After people like me are gone, somebody has to speak for us. Who speaks for us? Whatever is left, whatever can be preserved."

Warm nostalgia in Axel's return

['Beverly,' from E1] the assignment. The solution to creating a new "Beverly Hills Cop" movie was to simply make the first one all over again.

"Beverly Hills Cop" came out 40 years ago, an anniversary that will alarm the segment of moviegoers who remember seeing it in theaters, and perhaps astound some just now realizing that Murphy was only 23 when he made it. The movie topped the box office 13 weeks running, selling 67 million tickets and, adjusted for inflation, still stands as the highest-grossing R-rated film of all-time. Coming on the heels of his work on "Saturday Night Live," "48 Hrs." and "Trading Places," it certified Murphy as a movie star.

You had to be there. And if you weren't (but especially if you were), "Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F" has been designed to function as a carefully calibrated time machine to take you back to the

days when synth pop ruled the airwaves, you could disable a car by putting a banana in its tailpipe and a suite at a swanky Beverly Hills hotel went for \$235 a night. (The price, we learn in "Axel F," has gone up considerably.)

The formula for making a "Beverly Hills Cop" movie goes like this: You start in Detroit, Axel's hometown, and spend a good chunk of time and money on a chase involving cars and trucks and, in the case of "Axel F," a snow plow. Axel is operating outside the police rule book, and when this opening scene is over, after a great deal of mayhem and destruction, his shouting boss lets him know that this time, he has really gone too far. And he'd better not do anything like that ever again! (This time it's Paul Reiser reading him the riot act.)

But the reprimand doesn't really register because Axel was right. He's always right. In fact, he's never more right than when every-



MELINDA SUE GORDON Netflix

JOHN ASHTON, from left, Eddie Murphy and Judge Reinhold are back in director Mark Molloy's "Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F," the franchise's fourth film.

one tells him he's wrong. That's part of the character's appeal.

Then something happens that necessitates a trip to L.A., specifically the 90210. In "Axel F," it's a call from Billy Rosewood (Judge Reinhold), still lovable and now in danger because he's close to learning the truth about a police cover-up. And Billy's not the only one in peril. Axel's estranged daughter, Jane (Taylour Paige), is entangled in this mess too, thanks to her job as a criminal defense attorney.

Stakes established, Axel heads to Beverly Hills, where he shrewdly talks his way out of trouble, shares a scene with Bronson Pinchot's excessively accented Serge,

'Beverly Hills Cop: Axel F'

Rated: R, for language throughout, violence and brief drug use

Running time: 1 hour, 55 minutes

Playing: Streaming on Netflix

teaches the local policies a thing or two about police work and, on occasion, demonstrates a sly understanding of racial relations in America. (Told not to reach for his ID by a police officer in "Axel F," Axel replies, "I've been a cop for 30 years. I've been Black a whole lot long-

er. Trust me. I know better.")

Then there's a final showdown, showcasing the need to remove your sunglasses while operating a submachine gun, a little more bopping around to Harold Faltermeyer's synth-pop ditty "Axel F," the equivalent of a group hug between Murphy, Reinhold and John Ashton (returning as Det. Taggart, Billy's partner and cranky BFF) and roll credits.

You might not remember this, but the first "Beverly Hills Cop" movie earned an Oscar nomination for original screenplay. Were voters aware that Murphy improvised most of his dialogue to the point that his co-stars could not keep from breaking? Maybe this was a hat tip. Murphy was that good.

You also might not know that there was a third "Beverly Hills Cop" movie, the 1994 entry Murphy has called "garbage." One of the best lines in "Axel F" comes when Joseph Gordon-Levitt, a newcomer to the franchise playing a Beverly Hills police detective, leaves through Axel's file and says, "And then, '94. Not your finest hour." The first two movies, along with "Axel F," are streaming on Netflix. The third is not.

Promoting "Axel F," director Mark Molloy is advertising the fact that he gave Murphy free rein to improvise. (Three writers — Will Beall, Tom Gormican and Kevin Etten — share screenplay credit. Props to whoever came up with the "not your finest hour" line.) Murphy is effective, even if the tone has shifted from a brash swagger to nostalgic cheer. The heat is gone.

But you know that. Murphy is content to act his age, and the movie spends some time focusing on Axel's attempts to reconnect with his daughter, a woman as headstrong as her father. And it's hard to validate feelings when they're drowned out by machine gun fire.

While it's easy to view "Axel F" as a calculated cash grab, it's clear that Murphy possesses an affection for the title character. From the get-go, Murphy's portrayal angled on Axel's ability to warmly connect with everyone he meets. Even the villains like him. As Axel drives his blue Chevy Nova through the streets of Detroit during the new film's opening credits, the city's residents smile and wave (and sometimes flip him off) when he cruises by. They're happy to see him. And so are we.