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Democracy Dies in Darkness

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2024 • \$5

Putin sorry but shirks blame in plane crash

Evidence points to Russia's downing of the craft, White House says

BY MARY ILYUSHINA

Russian President Vladimir Putin has apologized to the leader of Azerbaijan for the crash of a passenger airliner following an unspecified "tragic incident" in Russian airspace, the Kremlin said Saturday.

Neither Putin nor his government has taken responsibility for downing the Azerbaijan Airlines flight that crashed in Kazakhstan on Christmas Day. The White House said Friday that evidence suggests the plane was brought down by Russia.

Thirty-eight passengers and crew were killed; 29 survived.

Azerbaijan Airlines Flight 8243 departed from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, with 67 people on board shortly before 8 a.m. local time Wednesday, for Grozny, the capital of Chechnya in Russia. It was diverted from Grozny mid-flight and later crashed near Aktau in southwestern Kazakhstan, about 270 miles east across the Caspian Sea.

Putin and Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev discussed the repeated attempts by the on-schedule plane to land at the Grozny airport, the Kremlin said in a summary of the call. Putin told Aliyev that the area had been attacked by Ukrainian drones that activated Russian air defense.

"Vladimir Putin apologized in connection with the fact that the tragic incident occurred in Russian airspace, and once again expressed deep and sincere condolences to the families of the victims, wished a speedy recovery to the injured," the Kremlin said.

The Azerbaijani government, in its own readout of the call, said Putin "apologized for the fact" that the Embraer-190 "was subjected to external physical and technical impact in Russian airspace, which resulted in a tragic incident."

Aliyev, the Azerbaijani government said, "emphasized that there are numerous holes in the fuselage of the plane, passengers and crew members, while still in the air, were injured by foreign particles that pierced the skin and entered the cabin of the plane, and that the testimonies of the surviving flight attendants and passengers of the plane con-

SEE CRASH ON A15

Joe Biden's lonely battle to sell his vision of American democracy

Earlier this year, Rep. James E. Clyburn met President Joe Biden at the White House to deliver a stern message: Biden had to find a way to revitalize his flagging campaign. Clyburn, who had been pivotal to Biden's 2020 victory, also made a confession about his own long-standing belief that substance is more important than style in politics.

"I have come to the conclusion in recent days that I'm wrong about that," the South Carolina Democrat, 84, remembers telling Biden. "The new environment that we currently live in — style seems to carry the day more than substance."

"Your style," he told the president, "does not lend itself well to the environment we're currently in."

BY TYLER PAGER

How Biden Leads: This story is part of a four-part series scrutinizing Biden's leadership style and the way he ran the most complex government in the world. The first three installments were published while Biden was seeking a second term.

Clyburn's conclusion — which was shared by anxious Democrats in the months before the president ended his reelection bid — undermined Biden's theory of presidential leadership. After Donald Trump's ascent, Biden believed that he just needed to show Americans that traditional democracy still worked — by listening to experts, working with Republicans, passing popular policies — and

voters would rally around him.

He succeeded in Phase One of his plan, enacting legislation, much of it bipartisan, to reshape the nation's infrastructure, revive the semiconductor industry and fight climate change. But Phase Two never happened. The truth of Biden's presidency is that he failed in what was by his own account his most important mission: making

SEE BIDEN ON A8

THE TAKEOVER



NADÉGE MAZARS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Cocaine boom defies years of work

The drug lord had already escaped the law in three countries, and he planned to do it again.

In less than a decade, Dritan Rexhepi had built a smuggling business that ran from the fields of Colombia to the ports of Ecuador and on to the streets of Europe, Italian and Latin American investigators said, rivaling the influence of Mexico's powerful cartels. His brand, carved into cocaine packages, was "Bello" — beautiful.

The Albanian's rise from gunman in his home country to transatlantic kingpin is part of a global explosion in the cocaine industry, a trade that is far bigger and more geographically diverse than at any point in history. South America now produces more than twice as much cocaine as it did a decade ago. Cultivation of coca

Despite tens of billions spent in drug war, the trade is far larger and has gone global

BY SAMANTHA SCHMIDT, ARTURO TORRES AND ANTHONY FAIOLA IN GUAYAQUIL, ECUADOR

Colombian police Lt. Jonnathan Gil inspects types of coca: in his right hand, a branch of the Erythroxylum novogranatense type, and in his left, the Erythroxylum coca type.

crops in Colombia, the origin of most of the world's cocaine, has tripled, according to U.S. figures, and the amount of land used to grow the drug's base ingredient is more than five times what it was when the infamous drug lord Pablo Escobar was killed in 1993.

And production keeps soaring. A record 2,757 tons of cocaine was produced worldwide in 2022, a 20 percent increase over 2021, according to this year's global drug report from the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime.

"It's going up and up and up," said Thomas Pietschmann, a research officer at the UNODC. "A few years ago, people were

SEE COCAINE ON A12

Cocaine superhighway: A South American waterway is a primary artery to Europe. **A10**

A spate of abandoned newborns unsettles Texas

Desperation is a common thread. Critics cite strict abortion ban, poor health care for women.

BY MOLLY HENNESSY-FISKE IN HOUSTON

The call came in on the fire truck's radio on a blazing hot summer afternoon: "Baby in a dumpster."

"It didn't specify alive or dead," Patrick Pequet remembers.

He and fellow firefighters arrived within minutes, pulling into the rear parking lot of an apartment complex in the southwest quadrant of this sprawling city. Police were already there, as were several residents who had frantically summoned them, standing near a blue dumpster crowded by discarded boxes,

scattered trash and garbage bags.

In one of those bags, a baby had been crying. Now, only silence.

"They didn't want to touch it," Pequet says. "It was very still."

A quarter-century ago, prompted by a spate of abandoned babies in Houston, this state became the first in the country to pass a safe haven law allowing parents to relinquish newborns at designated places — without questions or risk of prosecution.

Yet "Baby Moses" surrenders remain rare in Texas, and another series of abandoned infants

SEE TEXAS ON A6



ILLUSTRATION BY HIROTOSHI IWASAKI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

METRO

D.C.'s effort to redo the American University ANC election fails in court.

SPORTS

A highlight of the 10 moments of 2024? Olympic excellence.

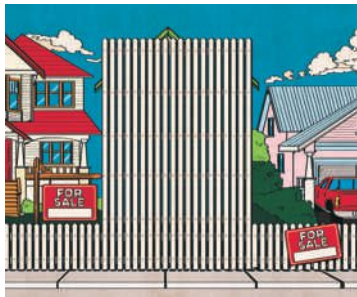


ARTS & STYLE

Kanye West predicted pop's future. It's here, and he isn't a part of it.

OPINION

Post columnists answer questions they posed when the year began.



BUSINESS

A real estate battle over secretive off-market listings is heating up.

TRAVEL AND BOOK WORLD

The special sections are taking a break and will resume in the new year.

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Trump backs H-1B visas, aligning with Musk in GOP fight

President-elect calls it ‘a great program’ but has flip-flopped on the issue

BY WILL OREMUS

President-elect Donald Trump on Saturday threw his weight behind H-1B visas, taking the side of Elon Musk in the squabble among conservatives over the program that allows foreigners with technical skills to temporarily work in the United States.

“I’ve always liked the visas, I have always been in favor of the visas,” Trump told the New York Post in a phone interview. He added: “I have many H-1B visas on my properties. I’ve been a believer in H-1B. I have used it many times. It’s a great program.”

The comments come amid an online clash that has revealed a rift in Trump’s coalition ahead of his January inauguration. Musk and other business leaders see

the visa program as essential for the U.S. tech industry, but anti-immigrant hard-liners such as right-wing activist Laura Loomer and former Trump adviser Stephen K. Bannon say the system lets companies exploit cheap foreign labor at the expense of Americans.

While Trump said he employs H-1B workers, past reporting has found he employs workers under the H-2A program, which covers temporary visas for agricultural workers, and the H-2B program, for seasonal workers in sectors such as tourism, hospitality and landscaping. The Trump transition team did not respond to a request for comment on Saturday.

Still, Trump’s words send an important signal, said Sophie Alcorn, an attorney in Silicon Valley who specializes in business immigration.

“The president’s statement that he supports immigration and visas for highly skilled workers allows tech workers in Silicon Valley and the companies that

employ them to breathe a huge sigh of relief in what has been a tumultuous several months,” Alcorn said.

Trump’s latest statements mark an early win for tech and business leaders who have aligned themselves with him in a bid for influence in his administration. But experts said it is unlikely to be the last word on the topic from the president-elect.

Trump’s stance on H-1B visas has shifted several times over the years, belying his claim that he has “always been in favor” of them. In a March 2016 statement, for instance, he vowed to “end forever the use of the H-1B as a cheap labor program, and institute an absolute requirement to hire American workers first for every visa and immigration program.”

In fact, the H-1B program continued under his first administration, although it closely scrutinized H-1B applications as part of an approach it called “extreme vetting,” making the process

more onerous for workers and employers. In the final year of his first term, Trump issued an order in 2020 that temporarily blocked new visas, including H-1Bs.

“In the first Trump term, he went after H-1B,” said Muzaffar Chishti, senior fellow at the Migration Policy Institute, a non-partisan think tank. But Trump’s most recent presidential campaign focused on stemming illegal immigration. That stance could be a boon to Musk and other tech industry leaders, whose businesses rely on software programmers and other skilled workers in the country legally on H-1B visas.

Amazon was the largest sponsor of H-1B visas in 2024 with 9,265, according to the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website, while fellow tech giants Google, Meta, Apple and IBM all rank among the top 10. Musk, who was born in South Africa, has said that he was on an H-1B visa at one point before he became a U.S. citizen.

Although only Congress has

the power to end the program, the president can change the way it is implemented, Chishti said. One idea that has been floated is to award the visas to the workers making the highest salaries, rather than by lottery — a change that would probably benefit large tech companies.

But Trump’s comments on Saturday, in which he appeared to conflate H-1B visas with the H-2B program, suggested he lacks a firm grasp on the specifics of the policy, Chishti added.

“Just because he says something to the New York Post doesn’t make it a reality in the world of immigration,” Chishti said.

Immigration issues have led to a schism among Trump’s advisers, some of whom believe that supporting legal immigration is key to building support for a crackdown on illegal immigration, while a more fervently nationalist group that includes Bannon argues for making immigration of all kinds more difficult.

Earlier on Saturday, Bannon, Trump’s former chief strategist, slammed Musk’s defense of the program in a post on the social network Gettr, calling him a “toddlr” in need of a “wellness check” from Child Protective Services. He was responding to an X post in which Musk used an expletive to insult H-1B opponents and threatened to “go to war on this issue.”

“The Trump White House has the danger of turning into a snake pit when different factions within Trump’s world compete for his attention,” said Tom Warrick, a senior fellow at the Atlantic Council who worked at the Department of Homeland Security under both Trump and Barack Obama. “Many people during the first administration feared that whoever talked to Trump last before he made a decision, that’s what he would do. I can say firsthand this actually does happen.”

Cat Zakrzewski contributed to this report.

Invasive green crabs defied removal, but scientists found an otter way

BY KYLE MELNICK

An invasive species had taken over ecosystems across the West Coast and was threatening to dominate another one in Monterey County, California, when ecologist Rikke Jeppesen began her research two decades ago.

Jeppesen was seeking solutions for the havoc green crabs had caused — damaging sea grass beds in multiple states, eating small prey crucial to other species’ survival and persisting despite frequent efforts to remove them. One state even spent millions of dollars to protect its waters from the crabs, which are native to Europe.

But to her surprise, Jeppesen learned there was a much simpler way to remove the crabs in the

slough she studied: furry and hungry sea otters.

Sea otters are rare in most ecosystems after they were hunted to near extinction in the 18th and 19th centuries. But at California’s Elkhorn Slough, a reserve where about 120 southern sea otters live, the cute apex predators have led to green crabs’ demise by eating up to 120,000 of the invasive species as a group per year.

The researchers said their findings, published in the Biological Invasions journal this month, show the importance of protecting otters and other native predators at a time when there are about 1 million plant and animal species at risk of extinction.

“Sea otters are the assistant managers of the slough in helping us keep invaders in check,” Jeppesen, who now works for the reserve, told The Washington Post.

Green crabs became a major threat to coastal ecosystems on the West Coast in the late 1980s after they were unintentionally introduced in the San Francisco Bay — possibly by trade ships, the researchers said.

Washington state said in September that it plans to spend about \$12 million to manage its green crab population. Oregon has encouraged harvesters to remove 35 green crabs per day from its waters. Scientists said in 2021 that they failed to eradicate green crabs from an estuary in Stinson Beach, California, after years of efforts.

Jeppesen was a graduate student at the University of California at Santa Cruz in the early 2000s when she first set fish traps — baited with raw anchovy or sardine — across Elkhorn Slough to study green crabs.

She sometimes captured up to 100 green crabs in a single trap. But in the following years, Jeppesen said, she nabbed fewer crabs.

So instead of studying why green crabs were successful — like they had been at other estuaries — she wondered why they were no longer thriving in Elkhorn Slough. She knew one of the largest shifts at the reserve over those years was the sea otter population.

Sea otters, which had long been hunted for their thick and soft fur, have slowly rebounded on the West Coast since the early 1900s. They were believed to be extinct until a small population was discovered off the rocky coast of Big Sur in 1914. They received federal protections in the 1970s.

The first male sea otters arrived in Elkhorn Slough in the 1990s, said Kerstin Wasson, a research coordinator for the reserve. When female otters came in the early 2000s, Wasson said, they began having babies. Plus, the Monterey Bay Aquarium released some of its sea otters into the slough.

Some improvements in the ecosystem came quickly. Sea otters



MICHAEL YANG

Sea otters eat up to 120,000 green crabs a year at Elkhorn Slough in California. “Sea otters are the assistant managers of the slough in helping us keep invaders in check,” ecologist Rikke Jeppesen said.

ate multiple crab species, allowing snails, which crabs eat, to thrive. The snails then ate more algae that had blocked sunlight from reaching the sea grass. More sea grass provided protection for young fish and food for migratory birds.

The otters’ impacts on the green crab population became apparent around 2010, Jeppesen said. In 2014, a researcher was grabbing crabs from traps when he witnessed a sea otter consume about 30 green crabs in an hour.

The researchers said they worried the green crabs’ population decline could’ve been a fluke, but the trend continued over the following decade. While there are other animals in Elkhorn Slough that eat green crabs, such as sharks, rays, wading birds and

larger crabs, green crabs only decreased when the otter population increased.

“We sort of think of restoration usually more from a bottom-up perspective — we need to plant the trees that have been lost or ... plant the salt marshes,” Wasson said. “But at the same time, that’s not enough, and we also need to restore the food webs.”

Unlike other marine mammals that keep warm with blubber, such as whales and seals, sea otters stay warm by eating up to 25 percent of their body weight each day, according to the Monterey Bay Aquarium. Otters eat a variety of animals, such as clams, sea urchins and mussels, but they still fit green crabs into their diets in Elkhorn Slough.

There are about 3,000 south-

ern sea otters in California, down from the tens of thousands that once ranged down to Mexico. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has considered an otter reintroduction plan on the Pacific Coast, which the federal agency said would cost between \$26 million and \$43 million over 13 years.

The California researchers said their study proves otters can provide unexpected benefits when returned to their natural habitats. Now when researchers set traps, Jeppesen said, they usually catch fewer than 10 green crabs in each.

“That is really a win-win if you can help protect those native species,” said Jeppesen. “It may benefit your ecosystem in multiple ways, including protecting against invaders. No one loses out in that case.”

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Judge strikes down Arkansas law that threatens librarians

Measure, punishable by prison, deemed to violate First Amendment rights

BY ANUMITA KAUR

A federal judge on Monday struck down key parts of an Arkansas law that threatened librarians and booksellers with pris-

onment if they were found to have provided “harmful” content to a minor.

U.S. District Judge Timothy Brooks ruled that two parts of Arkansas Act 372 — which Republican Arkansas Gov. Sarah Huckabee Sanders signed in 2023 — are overly broad and vague, and violated librarians’ booksellers’ and patrons’ First Amendment rights.

The two parts of the law that were struck down would have established a criminal misde-

meanor, punishable by up to a year in prison, for librarians and booksellers who distribute “harmful” material to a minor. It also would have required local governments to create oversight boards to review challenged content, which often deal with themes of race and sexuality. The ruling, which is likely to be challenged, comes as a growing number of GOP-controlled statehouses have considered similar laws that threaten librarians with prison.

“Up until the passage of Act 372, it appears that Arkansas’s more pressing concern with respect to librarians was that they be insulated from meritless claims and time-wasting prosecutions,” Brooks wrote. “Times have changed.”

If the statute’s purpose “was to protect younger minors from accessing inappropriate sexual content in libraries and bookstores, the law will only achieve that end at the expense of everyone else’s

First Amendment rights,” said Brooks, who was appointed by former president Barack Obama. “The law deputizes librarians and booksellers as the agents of censorship; when motivated by the fear of jail time, it is likely they will shelve only books fit for young children and segregate or discard the rest.”

The state plans to challenge the decision. “I respect the court’s ruling and will appeal,” Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin said Monday. Sanders’s office did not respond to a request for comment Thursday; the governor has said to local media that the law “is just common sense: schools and libraries shouldn’t put obscene material in front of our kids” and will work with Griffin to appeal the ruling.

Librarians, booksellers and their advocates celebrated the victory — they argue that such a law amounts to censorship and would have a chilling effect on libraries and bookshops in the state.

At least 27 states considered 100 bills that restrict library materials or threaten librarians with jail time or thousands of dollars in fines this year. At least three of those have become law, The Washington Post found. That added to nearly a dozen similar measures enacted over the past three years across 10 states.

Lawmakers who propose these bills contend that they are necessary because school and public libraries contain graphic sexual material that should not be available to children.

Arkansas state Sen. Dan Sullivan (R), who introduced Arkansas Act 372, said at the time that the law protects children and doesn’t harm librarians unless they’re doing something awful. “If they don’t knowingly violate

[the law], they’re free and clear,” Sullivan said.

But others say bills like Sullivan’s are ideologically driven censorship cloaked as concern for children, noting that as book challenges spiked to historic highs over the past two years, the majority of objections targeted books by and about LGBTQ+ people and people of color, including “All Boys Aren’t Blue” by George M. Johnson and “Gender Queer: A Memoir” by Maia Kobabe.

“Our libraries and bookstores are critical spaces for learning, exploration and connection,” John Williams, legal director for the ACLU of Arkansas, said in a statement. “By striking down these provisions, the court has safeguarded the right of every Arkansan to access ideas and information without fear of censorship or prosecution.”

After Sullivan’s bill was signed into law, a coalition of organizations, including the Arkansas Library Association and various bookstores, challenged it in court. Brooks, the federal judge, temporarily blocked the law’s provisions to punish librarians and booksellers and establish oversight boards from taking effect while the lawsuit wound its way through the court.

Brooks’s final ruling Monday was pivotal in the fight against nationwide book ban attempts, advocates argue.

“This decision sends a strong message that censorship and government overreach have no place in our libraries or our democracy,” John Chrastka, executive director of advocacy group EveryLibrary, said in a statement.

“It’s a win for librarians, for the right to read, and for the Arkansas library communities who have fought tirelessly to protect access to books and ideas.”

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POLITICS & THE NATION



Michael Bartholomew climbs through what's left of the home he lived in with his wife Oct. 11 in Lakewood Park, Florida, after a tornado from the outer bands of Hurricane Milton destroyed it. Milton was one of three hurricanes to slam the state this year.

2024 had some wild weather. Here's why.

Hurricane and tornado seasons were 'hyperactive' in the U.S., thanks largely to La Niña conditions

BY MATTHEW CAPPUCCI

If it feels like the weather was a bit much this year, you're not imagining things. The United States dealt with "hyperactive" hurricane and tornado seasons, and a burgeoning La Niña is in large part to blame.

The term "hyperactive" may seem hyperbolic, but it's actually a meteorologically defined threshold. And while tornadoes and hurricanes are vastly different phenomena, they have one thing in common: a developing La Niña weather pattern that helped increase the frequency of tornadoes and hurricanes in 2024 — even as the pattern hasn't materialized exactly how scientists expected.

For a hurricane season to be hyperactive, it has to churn through 159.6 units of "accumulated cyclone energy" — a metric that gauges how much energy a season's storms churn through. That's about 65 percent more than the 1991-2020 median.

The 2024 Atlantic hurricane season, which produced 18 named storms, expended 161.6 units. Five hurricanes struck the Lower 48 — Beryl, Debby, Francine, Helene and Milton. Three of them slammed Florida.

For tornadoes, records are a lot shakier. Data technically goes back to 1950, but most tornadoes

back then were missed or not reported. It wasn't until about 1990 that cataloguing tornadoes became routine and reliable, and only in the past decade have cellphones provided documentation of events that otherwise would have been overlooked.

Still, January through November featured 1,762 preliminary tornado reports. That falls just shy of the top spot. In 2004, 1,787 tornadoes were tallied by the start of December.

The 1991-2020 average during this same time frame is 1,187 tornadoes nationwide — putting this year just over 48 percent ahead of average.

How La Niña conditions can make their mark

La Niña is the opposite of El Niño, both phases of an alternating weather pattern that begins

A clear link exists between La Niña and hurricanes. The sinking air in the Pacific is counteracted by rising air in the Atlantic.

in the tropical Pacific. In the case of La Niña, cooler-than-average water temperatures prevail in the eastern Pacific. That cooling chills the air above, causing it to sink and driving pressure higher, which in turn affects weather features in the atmosphere and triggers downstream effects in North America and beyond.

A clear link exists between La Niña and hurricanes. The sinking air in the Pacific is counteracted by rising air in the Atlantic. (After all, if the air is sinking in one place, it needs to be rising in another.) That upward motion makes it easier for hurricanes to form.

When the winds are too strong, fledgling storms can be torn apart before they ever become hurricanes. That's usually not an issue during La Niña years. The ongoing conditions have also allowed hurricanes to survive longer, which in some cases meant they could drift far enough west to affect the United States.

With tornadoes, the relationship is more nuanced. There is research to suggest that the Great Plains sees at least some uptick in tornadoes during La Niña years because the climate pattern shifts the position of the jet stream or a river of winds in the upper atmosphere. The wavier jet stream favors the formation of low-pressure systems in the Rockies, which draw warm, humid air north across the Plains and set the stage for rotating thunderstorms.

One catch is that this year, La Niña conditions did not begin to emerge until the autumn. For tornado season, the pendulum was swinging through the "neutral" category from El Niño to La Niña.

But there's emerging research to show that quick swings between El Niño and La Niña, which happened between March and May, can result in booming, busting tornado barrages across the Corn Belt and Nebraska in particular, with enhancement elsewhere on the Plains.

Iowa and Nebraska in particular this year saw repeated onslaughts of destructive tornadoes, and the entirety of the U.S. Great Plains, often dubbed "con-

ventional Tornado Alley," roared to life in a way it hadn't for years.

And there's no telling what next year's weather might bring.

At first glance, if La Niña conditions weaken in the spring and shift back again toward El Niño, it could lead to near average or slightly below average hurricane activity — though any decrease in atmospheric favorability might be offset by anomalously warm ocean waters.

For tornado season in the spring, the Deep South may see a bit extra activity in February or March under these same conditions, with increased tornado activity in Kansas and Oklahoma in April. For May, a near or slightly above normal stretch of tornado activity is probable.

Trump asks justices to delay TikTok ban so he can try to 'save' the app

BY LISA BONOS

President-elect Donald Trump in a legal filing Friday asked the Supreme Court to delay a potential ban on Chinese-owned social media app TikTok due to take effect in January to allow time for him to negotiate a way to "save the platform."

Trump's intervention follows his campaign promises to keep the popular social media app accessible to its more than 170 million U.S. users if he won. His brief was filed as a friend-of-the-court, not siding with either party to the case.

The Washington Post previously reported that advisers to the president-elect expected him to intervene on TikTok's behalf if necessary, despite Trump previously attempting to ban TikTok himself, citing national security concerns about its Chinese ownership. President Joe Biden rescinded that order when he entered the White House in 2021.

Steven Cheung, the president elect's communications director, said in a statement Friday that Trump sought to delay the impending ban to allow him "the opportunity to resolve the issue in a way that saves TikTok and preserves American national security once he resumes office as President of the United States on January 20, 2025."

Trump suggested at a rally in Arizona Sunday that his recent popularity on TikTok had encouraged him to consider attempting to push back on the ban threatening the app. "We had billions of views, billions and billions of views," he said. "They brought me a chart, and it was a record, and it was so beautiful to see. And as I looked at it, I said, 'Maybe we got to keep this sucker around a little while.'" TikTok became a key part of Trump's online campaign this year, with his account featuring celebrity cameos and unscripted behind-the-scenes moments with the candidate.

The app is particularly popular with younger adults, the Pew Research Center found in a 2024 survey, with 59 percent of adults under 30 saying they use the app. Only 32 percent of U.S. adults support a government ban on TikTok, Pew found in a separate survey this year, down from 50 percent in March 2023. TikTok did not respond to a request for comment.

TikTok's owner, ByteDance, faces a Jan. 19 deadline to divest the platform to a company based outside China or see the app banned in the United States under a law passed in April with strong bipartisan support. Its backers said the platform could be used by China's government to manipulate or collect data from U.S. citizens.

Trump's new stance on TikTok puts him at odds with senior Republicans who supported that law, including Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Kentucky) and Sen. Marco Rubio (Florida), Trump's pick for secretary of state. "We must ban this potential spyware before it is too late," Rubio wrote in a 2022 op-ed in The Post.

The Supreme Court earlier this month agreed to take up TikTok's challenge to the potential ban as unconstitutional after it was rejected by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit. The social media app said that banning U.S. users from using the app violates their First Amendment rights.

Trump's filing on Friday said that moving back the deadline would allow the incoming president time to work through the "unprecedented" tensions the case presents between free-speech rights and foreign policy and national security concerns.

Although the filing said Trump "takes no position on the merits" of the dispute between TikTok and the U.S. government, it also suggested he wanted the platform to continue serving U.S. users.

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear oral arguments in the case Jan. 10.



A school photo of Bruce Dockery, seen Oct. 23 in Swannanoa, North Carolina, which was hammered by Hurricane Helene.



Angela Olivia Guillory waits in line to buy ice at a grocery store in Houston on July 8 in the wake of Hurricane Beryl. Five hurricanes struck the Lower 48 this year.

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MARTIN BERNETTI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

TRUMP FROM A1

woman Anna Kelly said in a statement. “When he officially takes office, foreign nations will think twice before ripping off our country, America will be respected again, and the whole world will be safer.”

An overarching mission of countering Russia and China is the common thread tying together Trump’s comments about Canada, Mexico, Greenland and Panama, a Trump transition official argued. Trump himself has not explicitly made that argument.

“This isn’t just slapdash, there’s a coherent connective tissue to all of this,” said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the matter publicly. “Trump knows what levers to pull and what guardrails there are, and he’s in a position of power to utilize those levers.”

Earlier this month, Canadian officials announced a plan to increase spending on border security and use canine teams and artificial intelligence to intercept illegal drugs. The transition team has pointed to that announcement as an early indication of the success of Trump’s strategy.

Not everyone is convinced. Former Rep. Carlos Curbelo (R-Florida) told MSNBC this week that Trump’s messages could “deteriorate” relationships between the United States and other countries, which could make it more difficult to build international alliances in the future. “These kinds of insults could provoke them into a confrontation with the United States,” Curbelo said, noting it’s unlikely that it would be a military conflict. “There is a risk here even if it is a negotiating tactic.”

Trump’s focus on the Western Hemisphere, as opposed to Russia and China directly, indicates that he is “less convinced we can determine national security outcomes in other theaters of the world,” where the U.S. has less influence, according to Ryan Berg, the director of the Americas Program and head of the Future of Venezuela Initiative at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, a nonpartisan Washington-based nonprofit group that specializes in national security issues.

On Sunday, while announcing Ken Hovory, a co-founder of PayPal and former U.S. ambassador to Sweden, as his pick for ambassador to Denmark, Trump emphasized his desire to take ownership of Greenland, the semiautonomous Danish territory where the United States maintains its northernmost air base.

“For purposes of National Security and Freedom throughout the World, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity,” Trump wrote on his social media network, Truth Social.

Trump has actively pursued the idea of buying Greenland since at least 2019, when the then-president pushed his top aides to look into the process of acquiring the world’s largest island, whether buying it would be legal and where money to purchase the vast, icy landmass might come from. The

Trump advisers say his braggadocio has a larger strategic purpose



SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

TOP: Employees of the Panama Canal at Lake Gatun, near Colón, Panama. President-elect Donald Trump has talked about bringing the waterway back under U.S. control. ABOVE: Trump has mused about taking over Greenland from Denmark.

idea came from an old friend of Trump, Ronald Lauder, an heir to the Estée Lauder cosmetics fortune, who pitched him on the plan at the outset of his first term.

Although it sounds “a bit hilarious,” the island’s strategic importance has been a long-standing issue in U.S. foreign policy, and Trump’s announcement was “not unexpected” based on his past positions, said a former Danish diplomat who dealt with the issue during the first Trump administration, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive international issue. Mike Pompeo, Trump’s second secretary of state, visited the region in June 2020 shortly after the U.S. reopened its first consulate in Nuuk, Greenland, for the first time since 1953. Pompeo highlighted America’s presence in the Arctic, and took aim at Chinese and Russian efforts to gain a foothold in the resource-rich island.

“Something is probably going to happen with Greenland over the next 10 to 15 years,” the former diplomat added. “They might go independent which is why the U.S. is hedging for all futures. They are moving in the direction that the U.S. sees as a part of its zone of influence.”

In a separate series of social media posts last weekend, Trump escalated his threats to retake control of the Panama Canal, accusing Panama of “ripping off” the United

States with high shipping rates and allowing Chinese soldiers to operate the waterway — claims that Mulino denied.

“There are no Chinese soldiers in the canal, for the love of God,” Mulino said during a briefing last week, addressing Trump’s post directly. “It’s nonsense. There is not a single Chinese soldier in the canal.”

But Berg said there is some validity to the idea that China’s global-port influence — including on both sides of the Panama Canal — is expanding.

“There is worry about Chinese influence of the canal and the reliability of U.S. operations,” Berg said. “It could be one of the main routes to deploy U.S. naval vessels from the Atlantic to the Pacific in a contingency situation where we have national security interests — such as Taiwan.”

Trump’s obsession with the Panama Canal is long-standing, according to John Feeley, who served as Trump’s ambassador to Panama. Trump felt that President Jimmy Carter made a “historic mistake” by signing two treaties that relinquished American control over the canal, Feeley said — an echo of Ronald Reagan’s position that the U.S. was the “rightful owner” of the canal. When Trump raised the matter during his first meeting with then-president Juan Carlos Varela in 2017, Varela responded with a non sequitur about Syria, managing to avoid an escalation of the

topic, according to Feeley.

“The tiger doesn’t change its stripes. He’s got history with these ideas — these are not coming out of nowhere,” Feeley said. “And Donald Trump thrives on chaos. He loves to be the agent of chaos. He feels that this kind of disruptive approach to international affairs makes him and the United States strong.”

“It’s very much the Richard M. Nixon uncontrollable madman theory,” Feeley continued, referring to the Nixon administration’s strategy of cultivating an image of a volatile and unpredictable president to intimidate and destabilize adversaries.

Trump’s expansionist rhetoric harks back to a time when a state’s power was defined by the land it controlled, rather than the more diffuse forms of influence — military, economic, cultural and diplomatic — that U.S. presidents have pursued since the conclusion of World War II, said Daniel Immerwahr, a Northwestern University history professor and author of “How to Hide an Empire,” a history of American imperialism.

“None of this would have sounded weird in the 19th century,” Immerwahr said, adding that Trump has embraced a more forceful approach to U.S. diplomacy, appearing to lack the patience for the “sinuous blend of cooperation and consent” that has defined U.S. diplomacy for much of the last century.

Trump’s focus on the Panama Canal is ironic because the passageway historically was the focal point of a shift in U.S. policy away from territorial expansionism toward a more “informal empire,” said Jonathan Katz, a foreign correspondent and author of “Gangsters of Capitalism,” a biography of Smedley Butler, a decorated Marine and veteran of America’s foreign wars in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

“It’s really in Panama where America makes this turn to ‘we’re not going to formally colonize this place, but we’re going to create a de facto colony and control the strip in the middle,’” Katz said.

Trump’s expansionist visions may appear to contradict the anti-interventionist promises he made on the campaign trail, as he argued the United States should limit spending to defend Ukraine and bashed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. But his positions echo the early foreign policy of Woodrow Wilson, one of the first politicians to run on the catchphrase “America First.”

Wilson is largely remembered for his efforts to advance international order through the creation of the League of Nations. But he ran for office on the slogan, “He kept us out of war,” as he vowed to keep the United States out of World War I. Katz noted that the people of Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Mexico would have disagreed with that

motto, given U.S. intervention in those countries during Wilson’s first term.

“When we’re talking about what is retrospectively looked at as isolationism, we’re really talking about staying out of European wars while then doing war and effectively annexation everywhere else,” Katz said. “In a lot of ways it’s not that different.”

Although many of Trump’s allies brush off Trump’s threats as part of his normal negotiating playbook, some in his orbit have real concerns about whether he will cross the line from harsh rhetoric and economic warfare to military intervention. Trump has threatened a 25 percent tariff on Mexican imports to stop the flow of illegal drugs, and privately discussed the idea of firing missiles into Mexico to try to take out cartels. Instead of ruling out the idea, which Mexican officials have warned would destroy all security cooperation between the two countries, several Republican presidential candidates during the 2024 GOP primary indicated support for using military force to stopentanyl trafficking.

A conservative foreign policy adviser with insight into the president-elect’s transition process said that while he believed that Trump’s position was “mostly posturing,” that the unanimous agreement during the Republican primary to make war on the cartels was troubling and a “hazardous approach.”

“Given the fact that this has already been through the ideas machine and spit out the other end, articulated by everybody from [Vivek] Ramaswamy and [Ron] DeSantis, as something they are all willing to do Day 1, it makes me a little more concerned,” said the foreign policy adviser, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to be more candid.

Trump’s early appointments of Latin American experts to high-ranking positions could signal his intent to focus on the Western Hemisphere. Trump tapped Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Florida), a foreign policy hawk, for secretary of state; Christopher Landau, his first-term ambassador to Mexico, for deputy secretary of state; and Mauricio Claver-Carone, who served as deputy assistant to the president and senior director for Western Hemisphere affairs at the National Security Council under Trump and is known for his hard-line policy preferences, as special envoy to Latin America.

Some of Trump’s picks, such as Rubio and Rep. Michael Waltz (R-Florida), who has been tapped to serve as Trump’s national security adviser, would not be out of place in any Republican presidential administration. But other Trump choices, such as Claver-Carone and Richard Grenell, whom Trump named as presidential envoy for special missions, are more controversial figures, even within conservative circles, the conservative foreign policy adviser said.

“You have a cast of characters that runs the gamut on what sort of advice they’ll be proffering,” the conservative foreign policy adviser added. “Trump goes beyond ‘Team of Rivals,’ to welcoming the thunder dome in some ways. ... A lot of this seems paradoxical by design.”

Someone in California has won \$1.22 billion Mega Millions jackpot

BY ANDREW JEONG

Someone in California is holding the winning ticket for the estimated \$1.22 billion jackpot in the Mega Millions lottery.

Mega Millions said that the winning numbers of the Friday night drawing were 3, 7, 37, 49 and 55, and the Mega Ball was 6. A spokesman for Mega Millions said the winner won't be known until that person comes forward.

The winner can accept the prize in a single cash lump sum worth roughly \$550 million — the most common choice, a Mega Millions spokesman said — or defer most of the winnings by taking the money in annuities spread across three decades.

Winners of the two most recent jackpots worth more than \$1 billion have opted for the cash lump sum option, including the recipient of the biggest-ever Mega Mil-

lions jackpot, an individual in Florida who won \$1.6 billion in August 2023.

Last week's jackpot swelled to more than \$1 billion after 30 drawings since the last jackpot — \$810 million in September — passed without a winner. A lottery player must hold a ticket matching all five winning numbers and the Mega Ball number to become the jackpot's winner.

The Mega Millions lottery is sold in 45 states, D.C. and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The odds of winning any prize — including lower-tier prizes that range between \$2 and \$1 million — are 1 in 24. The odds of winning the jackpot are 1 in 302,575,350, according to Mega Millions.

People wait in line to purchase Mega Millions lottery tickets in Hawthorne, California.



FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Winners may be better off taking annuity over lump sum, experts say

Most people go for the immediate payout, but installments may help curb impulsive spending

BY ANDREW JEONG

The winner of Friday's Mega Millions lottery drawing will receive an estimated \$1.22 billion — the fifth-biggest jackpot in the game's history — but only if they forgo the immediate lump-sum payment and choose the annuity.

Most winners go for the immediate payout — in Friday's drawing worth \$549.7 million — but experts say they could be making a mistake.

When a winner accepts the annuities plan, the prize is spread out in payments across three decades, with each annual payment increasing by about 5 percent to protect against inflation. Both options are subject to income taxes — although some states such as California exempt lottery earnings. The annuity option spreads out the tax burden in addition to the payments.

Annuities generally pay out a larger sum in the long run and shield winners from the temptation of spending lavishly and going broke, personal finance experts say. Lottery operators fund the annual payouts by investing the money in secure government bonds that pay lower interest than stocks or funds but are considered ultrasafe.

"In addition to being a relatively safe investment, the annuity gives the winner time to adjust to dramatically new financial circumstances," said Terrance Odean, a finance professor at the University of California at Berkeley's Haas School of Business — and learn from any initial mistakes they make.

tional Bureau of Economic Research showed that 15.7 percent of retired NFL players had gone bankrupt within 12 years of retirement.

There is little evidence, however, that shows lottery winners tend to go bankrupt. One 2020 study by researchers in Sweden and the United States said "lottery wealth dissipates slowly" and was "robustly detectable for well over a decade" after the lottery win. In 2018, the National Endowment for Financial Education said that it had no data to back the frequently mentioned statistic that says around 70 percent of lottery winners end up bankrupt in just a few years.

Although annuities are generally the wiser option, experts noted some exceptions.

Javier Estrada, a professor of finance at the IESE Business School in Barcelona, said lottery winners should take into account their age when deciding whether to accept their jackpot in annuities. "All else equal, the older the person, the less convenient the annuity," he said in an email.

Mega Millions winnings can be passed on to beneficiaries in case of death. But annuities may complicate that transfer of wealth, Estrada said.

For recipients of inheritances or legal settlements, Estrada advised that if the recipient is a retiree with their future financial needs covered, they should take the money in a cash lump sum, because that would enable the person to "do some things on the 'would be nice if I can afford it' list."

Michael Finke, a professor of wealth management at the American College of Financial Services, said annuities and structured settlements are for "anyone who might otherwise be vulnerable to prematurely spending down savings because of either a lack of patience or financial sophistication."

Finke pointed to how current and former professional baseball players including Bobby Bonilla, Ken Griffey Jr. and Shohei Ohtani have opted to receive their millions in annuities, protecting them against the possibility of indulging in their riches too quickly.

Research has shown some pro athletes who made millions went bankrupt soon after retiring. A 2015 study published by the Na-

Annuity.org, a website that connects potential buyers of annuities to sellers, said lump-sum cash options are better tailored to those who are prudent investors and can generally repress impulses to overspend. Annuities — despite the stability — are inflexible and could interfere with accessing cash in emergencies.



Any winner of a big lottery jackpot should consult a licensed professional, said Yuval Dan Bar-Or, a professor at Johns Hopkins University's Carey Business School. That might include a lawyer, accountant or financial adviser.


At the end, there's no right or wrong answer, he said. "The good news is that, with very large jackpots, either choice yields huge, life-changing windfalls," he said.



FREDERIC J. BROWN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES


A person fills out a Mega Millions ticket in Hawthorne, California, on Friday. The jackpot was the fifth-biggest in the game's history.






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No state funding to raise awareness of safe haven law

TEXAS FROM A1

since spring in the Houston area has prompted much soul-searching.

In June, a baby boy was left next to a clothing donation bin on the city’s southeast side and a baby girl in some bushes in Katy, a western suburb. Both were saved.

By August, two other babies had been found: in an industrial ditch in north Houston and in a trash truck’s compactor in a far northwest neighborhood. Both were dead.

“There apparently has been ... a little bit of an epidemic on this,” a Harris County sheriff’s official noted during a media briefing near the ditch where the infant girl’s partially clothed body was discovered in August by a landscaping crew.

Statewide, according to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, at least 18 babies have been abandoned this year. The latest occurred just before Christmas at a Whataburger in San Antonio. A decade ago, the number was seven.

Whether there’s a pattern or common link in these tragedies is not clear. But they’re happening in a state with one of the nation’s most restrictive abortion bans — with no exceptions for rape or incest — and one of the highest birth rates.

Critics argue that’s no coincidence. Texas is ranked next to last for women’s health and reproductive care, according to the nonprofit Commonwealth Fund, which supports independent research on such issues. And with legislators having repeatedly cut funding for that care, the percentage of women without health insurance is higher here than in any other state. This year, Gov. Greg Abbott (R) ordered Texas public hospitals to track the cost of treating immigrants who are in the country illegally, potentially deterring women from seeking care for fear of being turned over to authorities.

“All of these intersectional things could be leading to this,” said Blake Rocap, a lawyer with the Sissy Farenthold Reproductive Justice Defense Project at the University of Texas at Austin. The chilling effect of the near-total abortion ban, he believes, is compounded by “abysmal” access to prenatal care, “particularly for people without private insurance, particularly for people without immigration status.”

And for all the angst every time a newborn is found, Republican leaders who control state government have long declined to fund an awareness campaign so that new mothers know where to turn should they decide that they cannot keep their baby.

In his 2½ years as a Houston firefighter and paramedic, Pequet has responded to several abandoned baby calls. Each child had been left in a dumpster. None survived.

He expected another grim outcome as he knelt on the ground that July afternoon in the apartment complex parking lot, a scene filmed by a resident on a cellphone.

The dark-haired newborn was still covered in the waxy substance that had protected him in the womb, and his umbilical cord was still attached. Pequet gently lifted him out of the trash bag and swaddled him in a small blanket another firefighter had ready. The moment felt intense. Pequet wondered whether the woman responsible would ever be located.

“We were probably the first people to hold the baby with any kind of good intentions,” he said later.

The infant, whom officials named Gabriel after the archangel protector of children, would live.

Gabriel’s mother, a Guatemalan migrant teen named Everilda Cux-Ajtzalam, was arrested a few days after his rescue.

How that came to be widened the circle of those affected by his abandonment — from first responders like 25-year-old Pequet and neighbors like Faustina Salazar to investigators and prosecutors, including Assistant District Attorney Steven Belt, who initially handled the case against Cux-Ajtzalam as she was charged with felony child abandonment.

As it turned out, the baby’s delivery and the immediate aftermath were captured by a parking lot security camera. While the prosecutor declined to share the video, citing the ongoing case, he described what’s on it:

Cux-Ajtzalam first appears coming out of a taco truck parked in front of the brick apartment complex.

“Traffic’s going by,” Belt says. “At one point, you can see people walking by.”

The food truck, which Cux-Ajtzalam was running solo for the owner, blocks any street view as she kneels and gives birth next to the vehicle. “It was amazing no one heard her screams,” he says, before reconsidering since the video has no sound. “Maybe she wasn’t screaming.”

Cux-Ajtzalam then takes trash bags to pick up the newborn without ever touching him. “She doesn’t even look at the child while it’s laying on the ground. Literally scoops it,” Belt says. She pours water from a jug onto the parking lot, washing away the afterbirth. Then she picks up the bags, places them in a small trash can and “goes to the dumpster and drops it there.”

Salazar came by on her way back from taking her wash to the community laundry room. “I walked about 10 steps when I heard the baby,” she recounted recently in Spanish. She saw Cux-Ajtzalam, whom she didn’t know, standing in front of the dumpster and asked if she heard the crying.

Yes, the young woman replied, without seeming alarmed. Salazar began to panic — “Where is it? Maybe it’s in the trash!” she remembers saying — and told Cux-Ajtzalam to get the complex’s manager. When she instead walked away, Salazar called her son in her apartment. He phoned 911 and rushed out to help.

They were the first to see the baby, Salazar untying the bag so he could breathe: “He put his hand out, like ‘thanks.’ I will never forget it.” The 72-year-old house cleaner would become a critical link for police, whom body-camera footage shows getting to the scene moments later. After an ambulance left with the newborn, Salazar told a detective about the young woman she had seen at the dumpster.

Gabriel soon was placed with local foster parents. The prosecutor went to visit him, and he marveled at his tiny head, the soft spot where his skull was still forming, his hands with “the longest little fingers” that always seemed to work their way out of his wrap.

The couple gave Belt a photo that he keeps on his desk at work: Gabriel in a yellow-striped onesie, hair a fluffy black helmet, mouth a tiny pink bow. His foster parents captioned it, “Treasured beyond measure.”

Police have identified a parent in four of the six abandoned-baby cases in the Houston area this year, though only one other individual has been charged as of mid-December. In the other cases, one autopsy was inconclusive and the second remained pending, so authorities still didn’t know whether either child was born alive.

No matter the circumstances,



ILLUSTRATIONS BY HIROTOSHI IWASAKI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

“At first, the sanitation guy thought it was a doll. He goes over and touches it and realizes it was a real baby. When we got there, it’s still in the trash truck. It was horrible.”

Lt. Mike Santos, veteran sheriff’s homicide investigator

desperation is a common thread.

The 28-year-old woman who gave birth next to the clothing donation bin in late June had been living at a homeless camp around the corner, a witness said; court records show a lengthy criminal record that includes arrests for assault, prostitution and drug possession.

And the 22-year-old woman whose newborn ended up in the garbage truck’s compactor told investigators she had passed out while showering, then awakened to find she had delivered. When she realized the infant was dead, she said, she panicked and put the body in the trash. A trash crew making its rounds through a neighborhood discovered the body.

“At first, the sanitation guy thought it was a doll. He goes over and touches it and realizes it was a real baby,” said Lt. Mike Santos, a veteran sheriff’s homicide investigator. “When we got there, it’s still in the trash truck. It was horrible.”

Even with a record \$32.7 billion budget surplus, state lawmakers here have not committed any money to raise awareness in hopes of preventing babies from being abandoned. Instead, they’ve allocated \$165 million this fiscal year to programs offering alternatives to abortion, including crisis pregnancy centers that claim to provide women unbiased guidance but have been accused of deceptive practices. The appropriation included at least \$2 million for an initiative promoting adoption, with targeted messages that detractors consider misleading.

The South Texas Republican who authored the safe haven law

doesn’t take issue with those decisions. “The problem is, if you do state funding, then you’re tied to it,” Rep. Geanie Morrison explained recently when asked about an awareness campaign. “Better to have it be a local issue.”

By contrast, Nebraska recently updated its safe haven law to add a hotline and \$75,000 for educational measures this year and next. Virginia has allocated \$50,000 annually since 2022 for a safe haven website, billboards, public service announcements, a bilingual state hotline and a training program for providers. Illinois requires public schools to teach students about its safe haven law and provides free curriculum, posters and brochures.

Leah Kiple, assistant director of the National Safe Haven Alliance, met with Texas legislators last year to advocate for an awareness campaign like ones she said helped reduce abandonments in other states. The Arizona-based nonprofit reached out again after the recent spike in Houston-area cases.

“We’re all just reeling at the tragedies in Houston and hoping we can make some meaningful changes to prevent this,” Kiple said. “It just shows you the lack of awareness in vulnerable communities, like the undocumented. This is a law that we have that protects human life, and this needs to be shared. If it’s not shared, how will they know there’s help?”

Last year, Texas joined several other states passing laws that allow communities to install Safe Haven Baby Boxes. The climate-controlled, padded drawers are installed in fire stations’ exterior

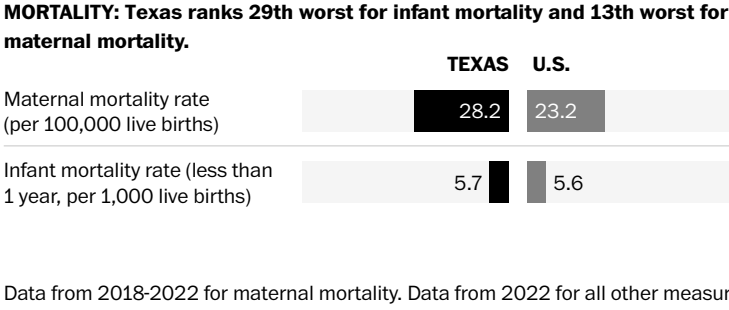
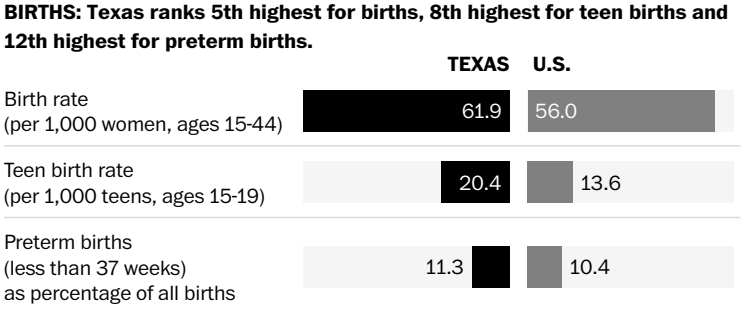
“This is a law that we have that protects human life, and this needs to be shared. If it’s not shared, how will they know there’s help?”

Leah Kiple, National Safe Haven Alliance assistant director

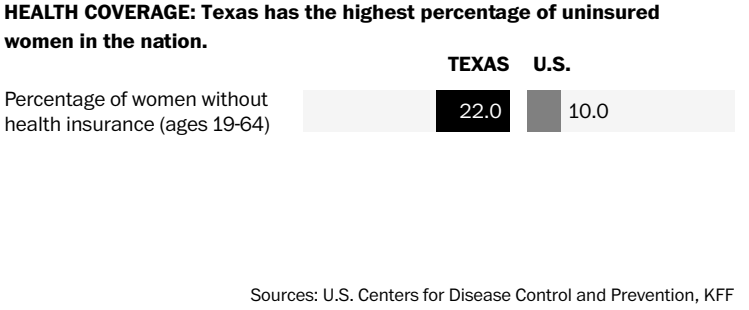


Pregnancy and birth in Texas

How Texas compares to other states on key health measures.



Data from 2018-2022 for maternal mortality. Data from 2022 for all other measures.



Sources: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, KFF



ILLUSTRATION BY HIROTOSHI IWASAKI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

walls at a cost that can approach \$20,000. They allow someone to leave a baby safely and anonymously, with a silent alarm alerting first responders. This year, residents raised money to buy boxes in Abilene and Lubbock, communities in deep-red West Texas deemed by local ordinance to be “sanctuary cities for the unborn.”

Officials in The Woodlands, a wealthy suburb of Houston, planned to install a box before year’s end in response to what the township board director calls an “explosion of abandonments.” Shelley Sekula-Gibbs, an outspoken opponent of abortion, believes the state should also fund a hotline and an awareness campaign in English and Spanish.

“Women don’t know what to do,” she said. “We have to educate, to give them more choices, to give them a chance to provide a loving home for their child.”

Conservative lawmakers are

divided about the boxes’ utility. Rep. Morrison said she opposes them because the people lobbying hardest for them run the companies that stand to profit.

Two days after Lubbock blessed its baby box at Fire Station 9, a passerby found a newborn in a dumpster on the other side of the city.

For weeks after baby Gabriel was abandoned, the prosecutor handling his mother’s case would look at his photo and think, “I will make sure that child is safe and that justice is done.”

Yet it was hard to figure what justice required for Cux-Ajtzalam, who entered this country illegally and faces deportation after the resolution of the felony charge.

Belt is a military veteran and the father of five daughters and one son. He grew up Mormon but

“Women don’t know what to do. We have to educate, to give them more choices, to give them a chance to provide a loving home for their child.”

Shelley Sekula-Gibbs, official in The Woodlands, Texas

left the church because of its views on LGBTQ rights. During the first Trump administration, he spent a year as a federal prosecutor on the Texas border, prosecuting migrants separated from their children.

The experience was so harrowing, he almost quit. Instead, he returned to Houston and began focusing on child abuse. In pursuing a case against Gabriel’s mother, he first sympathized with her desperate circumstances, then decided that she had to be held accountable.

“I cannot sit here as a prosecutor in my community and not try to do something to deter this from happening,” Belt said this past fall. “It’s hard to know if our actions have an effect. But I’ll be damned if I can’t stop people from disregarding the life of a child.”

Salazar, the neighbor who first heard Gabriel’s cries by the dumpster, has a different perspective. Decades ago, she crossed into Texas from Mexico. She understands what it’s like to live in fear of authorities.

Not that she excuses Cux-Ajtzalam’s actions. “She lacked information,” Salazar speculates. “She didn’t know what to do.”

Behind a glass partition at the county jail, legs shackled, dark hair pulled back into a ponytail, the person at the center of all this looked far younger than her 18 years. During two conversations with The Washington Post in August and September, Cux-Ajtzalam talked about her life before and after she came to the United States.

The before was growing up in the mountains of rural Guatemala, where her family spoke the Indigenous language Quiché, her father farmed, and she went to school only until she was 12. The after was once she followed an older brother to Houston, where she stayed with relatives, found the job in the taco truck and sent money home to her family.

Cux-Ajtzalam spoke in Spanish, saying she didn’t know English. There were other things she also said she didn’t know, having never had any sex education. It wasn’t until seven months after she claims a relative entered her room one night and raped her that she realized she was pregnant, she said.

“I never told anyone anything. I was ashamed,” she said, crying.

(The man denied wrongdoing during an interview with The Post. He has not been charged.)

As for seeking care, Cux-Ajtzalam didn’t think she could chance it. She said she had heard about Texas officials deporting undocumented immigrants: “I was afraid to go to a clinic.”

She had no idea what she would do when she went into labor, much less after the baby was born. She knew nothing about a safe haven law.

“It’s not the baby’s fault,” she said.

Houston attorney Fitzgerald Eze, whom Cux-Ajtzalam’s boyfriend hired this fall to represent her, said prosecutors appeared open to hearing details of her story “that contextualize this event and help to counter the tendency to see Everilda as a heartless monster.”

He has met with her several times at the jail, where he said she “often struggles to remember the details of the traumatic event that led to her arrest.” According to Eze, there is evidence she was unaware the baby was alive at birth. He would not address prosecutors’ account of the apartment complex security video.

“She wants to be in [his] life,” Eze said. “She’s a first-time mother and, notwithstanding the circumstances that led to her pregnancy and subsequent arrest, Everilda loves her son.”

Justice here would be forgiveness, the lawyer believes — and a reunion. His client has now named her son Nathaniel. “I don’t want them to be apart too long,” he said.

His client remains jailed as her case progresses. Her next court hearing is scheduled for late January; she has not yet entered a plea. If convicted, she could face up to 20 years in prison.

Maybe that will be doing right by baby Gabriel, the prosecutor thinks. He wishes Texas would expand health care for women, especially the most vulnerable. But that’s beyond his control. In a state where policies ban, exclude and threaten, Belt admits he is far from sure about what he can do to keep the next troubled young woman from abandoning her newborn.

“There’s got to be a better way,” he said. “It cannot be so callous as putting a baby in a trash bag. It just can’t.”



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ILLUSTRATION BY CHLOE CUSHMAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

In his final act, Biden rethinks his decisions

BIDEN FROM A1

Trump's presidency seem like an aberration.

"He governed through traditional processes and institutions," said Julian E. Zelizer, a presidential historian at Princeton University. "It didn't change the picture of where he started, this anger in the electorate toward institutions, this support for a pretty radical conservative vision that Trump embodied. It didn't do anything to end the very intense polarization that exists in this country."

Previous articles in this series examined the pillars of Biden's leadership — how he absorbs information, makes decisions and communicates with Americans. They showed that Biden, even at the peak of his power, struggled mightily to communicate his decisions and vision. This article, based on interviews with more than two dozen people close to Biden, reveals the ways in which his theory of how to succeed in an era of American politics dominated by Trump fell apart in the final phase of his presidency — and how he has been publicly and privately rethinking whether he should have handled some decisions differently.

Even some of his closest advisers, without faulting Biden, conceded recently that his style of governing did not always mesh with today's politics.

"The president has been operating on a time horizon measured in decades, while the political cycle is measured in four years," Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, said in an interview.

Sullivan added that Biden's accomplishments by their nature will take a long time to bear fruit. "How to govern at this moment to set the U.S. up for long-term success has one answer, and how to govern to deal with midterm and presidential elections in the very short term might have a different answer," he said. "The president went with doing the things that really put America in a strong position."

As his presidency — and his 50-year political career — wind down far faster than he wanted, Biden has taken to acknowledging some strategic mistakes, both big and

small. Many of those missteps resulted from his determination to restore the age-old rules of the American presidency after Trump's term, a determination that many of his supporters, in retrospect, consider a politically fatal error.

Earlier this month, in a speech on his economic legacy, Biden admitted he was "stupid" for not putting his own name on the pandemic relief checks his administration sent out in 2021. Trump, by contrast, made a point of signing his own relief checks in 2020, and Biden suggested that Trump got more credit for the economic recovery because of it.

Biden acknowledged that he had "screwed up" in his June 27 debate against Trump, as he struggled to put together sentences and defend his policies as his rival held forth with a series of falsehoods and called him a criminal. (He does not regret participating in the debate — just his performance that night).

He has also mused on changes in the media, arguing that he did not get enough credit for his accomplishments, especially on the economy. But in citing examples like Richard M. Nixon's 1960 debate against John F. Kennedy, Biden has suggested that, like Nixon, he has struggled to adjust to a new media landscape.

"We pick what news we want to hear — it's a totally different deal," Biden said in a podcast interview this month. "We've got to figure out how we deal with this significant technological change. If Nixon was more accustomed to television, he wouldn't have perspired so much, and he would be president when he'd beat Kennedy. I know that sounds silly. But think of the changes taking place. Where do you go? What is true? We have no evidence anymore. I'm not sure how that gets resolved."

The president and his aides have acknowledged that they struggled to communicate about the administration's efforts to lift the country out of the pandemic, frustrated that even as the United States fared better than other countries, Americans did not feel those impacts psychologically.

In private, Biden has also said he



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should have picked someone other than Merrick Garland as attorney general, complaining about the Justice Department’s slowness under Garland in prosecuting Trump, and its aggressiveness in prosecuting Biden’s son Hunter, according to people familiar with his comments.

During the 2020 presidential transition, Biden’s attorney general selection pitted some of his closest aides against each other. Former senator Ted Kaufman (D-Delaware) and Mark Gitenstein, both longtime friends of Biden, advocated for the president naming then-Sen. Doug Jones (D-Alabama) as attorney general, arguing that as a politician, he would be better able to navigate the bitterly partisan moment.

But Ron Klain, Biden’s incoming chief of staff, pushed for Garland. He stressed that Garland — a federal judge with a sterling reputation for independence and fairness — would show Americans that Biden was rebuilding a department badly shaken by Trump’s political attacks.

Biden was persuaded, and some Democrats believe the decision had devastating results. Had the Justice Department moved faster to prosecute Trump for allegedly seeking to overturn the 2020 election and mishandling classified documents, they say, the former president might have faced a politically damaging trial before the election. (Others blame the Supreme Court and a Trump-appointed judge in Florida for repeatedly siding with the former president and delaying the cases; the Justice Department declined to comment.)

The White House declined to make Biden available for an interview for this series.

Biden’s aides, in praising his tenure, often contend that history will remember him kindly, an assertion that provides little comfort to Democrats now staring at an additional four years of Trump. Some Biden allies point to a recent survey of historians that ranked Biden the 14th-best president in American history while putting Trump last. Yet it is Trump, not Biden, who is preparing for his second inauguration on Jan. 20.

“He accomplished a hell of a lot in a very difficult situation,” Kaufman said in an interview, noting that Biden pushed through several monumental bills at a time when the Senate was split 50-50 with Vice President Kamala Harris



CRAIG HUDSON FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

President Joe Biden departs in Marine One from the White House on his way to Florida and Georgia to survey damage from Hurricane Helene on Oct. 3.

breaking tie votes. “Coming in after Trump with a bad economy, he still pulled people together. He did all this on infrastructure, and all the stuff he did with a one-vote majority in the Senate. Joe Biden did it with one vote.”

Biden and some of his aides still believe he should have stayed in the race, despite the rocky debate performance and low poll numbers that prompted Democrats to pressure him to drop out. Biden and these aides have told people in recent days that he could have defeated Trump, according to people familiar with their comments, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to describe private conversations. Aides say the president has been careful not to place blame on Harris or her campaign.

But many Democrats blame Harris’s loss on Biden’s insistence on staying in the race so long that by the time he withdrew, Harris had little more than three months to campaign. Others contend that Biden undermined his own message by trying to hold onto the presidency rather than pave the way for a younger group of anti-Trump Democrats who could take the country into the future.

“Biden ran on the promise that he was going to be a transitional president, and in effect, have one term before handing it off to another generation,” Sen. Richard

Blumenthal (D-Connecticut) said. “I think his running again broke that concept — the conceptual underpinning of the theory that he would end the Trump appeal, he would defeat Trumpism and enable a new era.”

In some ways, historians say, Biden’s presidency echoes that of George H.W. Bush, who modeled his presidency on Dwight D. Eisenhower and struggled to adapt to a political culture driven by media-savvy figures like Rush Limbaugh, Pat Buchanan and Newt Gingrich. Bush’s Democratic challenger in 1992, Bill Clinton, better grasped the cultural moment, playing saxophone on late-night television, appearing on MTV and gracing the cover of People magazine.

Biden has often looked to Franklin D. Roosevelt as a model, while governing in an age dominated by pop culture figures like podcast host Joe Rogan, tech billionaire Elon Musk and Trump himself.

“The job of a president is reading where the country, where the politics is, and winning in it. And winning includes not having your party being defeated by the person you essentially promised to expunge from American politics,” Zelizer said. “President Biden and his supporters often yearn for a world that disappeared. You can’t actually govern the way you did in the 1970s in 2021.”

Substantively, few analysts deny Biden’s accomplishments. He mobilized the government to vaccinate Americans against covid-19, bringing the country out of a devastating pandemic. He avoided a recession that many economists had considered inevitable. He rebuilt the transatlantic alliance, rallying the world to help Ukraine battle Russia’s invasion.

On the morning after the election, Biden gathered his closest aides in the Oval Office to assemble a message to the broader staff. He wanted to communicate that progress happens on a long arc, he said; during his 50-year career, he’d seen that on every issue from climate to civil rights.

In the end, his comments to the staff sought to emphasize that their accomplishments would benefit America “for decades to come.”

But Biden’s critics fault him for failing to grasp that his record itself was not enough, that he needed to tell a story that would resonate in a tribal America. The president was so convinced that voters’ top priority was American democracy that he often made it his central campaign message.

In the run-up to the 2022 midterm elections, for example, many Democrats urged Biden to focus on the economy, especially inflation, and on the threat to abortion rights — issues more central to Ameri-

cans’ daily lives. The midterms were the first national elections since the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol, and some Biden advisers believed ignoring that sweeping attack on democracy would make the president seem small.

Biden struggled with the decision. In August 2022, he invited a group of historians to the White House to discuss the rise of totalitarianism around the world and the threat to democracy at home.

Some of the scholars connected the current political moment with the turmoil of 1860, when America was coming apart ahead of the Civil War, and 1940, when isolationism and bigotry proliferated in advance of America’s entry into World War II. The discussions were described by people familiar with the meeting, speaking on the condition of anonymity to discuss a private conversation.

With such momentous stakes, Biden settled on a midterm message focused on the threat to democracy.

Not all Democrats were happy with that decision. White House aides remember sitting in the West Wing in the hours before Biden was to deliver a major speech on democracy and watching Faiz Shakir, who had managed Bernie Sanders’s 2020 campaign, criticizing their message on NBC News. “I hope there are some people at the White House watching,” Shakir said. “You think about the address that he’s about to give tonight — I hope that they’re rewriting it and focusing on cost of living.”

They were not rewriting it. “We must vote knowing what’s at stake is not just the policy of the moment, but institutions that have held us together as we have sought a more perfect union are also at stake,” Biden said in the speech six days before the midterms, speaking from Union Station in Washington. “We must vote knowing who we have been, what we’re at risk of becoming.”

When Democrats outperformed expectations in the midterms, Biden and his aides felt vindicated. And he pressed the democracy message forward into 2024.

Shakir, in a recent interview, said he feels “even stronger now” that Biden — and then Harris — made a fatal mistake in not prioritizing voters’ everyday concerns about the economy. He pointed to Harris’s decision to deliver her campaign’s “closing argument” at the Ellipse, the site of Trump’s rally before the Jan. 6 attack, as evidence

that Biden’s misguided view of the political landscape seeped through the Democratic Party.

Biden’s aides stress that the president spoke extensively about the economy, holding events around the country to tout “Bidenomics.” But in a sweeping prime-time address at Philadelphia’s Independence Hall and with increasingly hard-hitting rhetoric — he said Trump’s movement represents “semi-fascism” and “threatens the very foundation of our republic” — the president left little doubt about his core message.

Blumenthal, a Biden supporter, conceded that the president seemed to misjudge the political landscape in assessing his strengths.

“Being bound by a generational outlook or mindset or experience has to constrain anyone,” he said. “Even though people can be flexible and accommodate to new times, we are all a product of our growing-up years. Those years include, for him, being in the United States Senate for so many years, dealing with a generation where compromise was not only possible but valued and where people were open to agreement, seeking the common ground.”

The final chapter of Biden’s presidency offers perhaps the sharpest challenge to his embrace of American tradition, as he grapples with the victory of a rival who revels in flouting it.

To show that he respects the peaceful transfer of power, Biden is welcoming Trump, who openly challenged that transition. Biden has repeatedly directed his aides to do all they can to help Trump assume the presidency, after years of calling Trump unfit for high office.

When the president-elect visited the White House shortly after the election, Biden spent nearly two hours with him in the Oval Office, repeatedly waving off aides who told Biden he had other events scheduled, according to people familiar with the matter, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss a private conversation. In the prep session for that meeting, Biden pressed his aides on what other information Trump might need to succeed.

The ultimate farewell to Biden’s presidency, and perhaps to his way of politics, will take place on Jan. 20, when Biden attends his successor’s inauguration, disregarding that Trump skipped Biden’s four years earlier.

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THE TAKEOVER

Down a South American waterway flows a cocaine superhighway — to Europe



PHOTOS BY SEBASTIÁN LÓPEZ BRACH FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The Paraguay-Paraná waterway connects five countries and serves as a transit route for goods. Every year, millions of tons of cargo move south on the waterway to Argentina before heading across the Atlantic.

BY SAMANTHA SCHMIDT,
JON GERBERG,
JÚLIA LEDUR
AND SEBASTIÁN LÓPEZ BRACH

It was envisioned to be the Mississippi River of South America. The Paraguay-Paraná waterway runs about 2,100 miles, connects at least 150 ports in five countries and serves as the most important commercial river route on the continent. In 1992, the five countries — Brazil, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina and Uruguay — agreed to establish the two natural rivers, which meet at the Paraguay-Argentina border, as a transit route for goods, dredging them to allow commercial traffic. Every year, thousands of container ships, barges and other vessels use the waterway’s brown, bustling waters to carry millions of tons of cargo south to Argentina and from there across the Atlantic. But this crucial artery has a new function. It has become a primary route for shipping record amounts of cocaine to Europe.

The explosion in the global container shipping business has allowed drug traffickers to take advantage of a waterway that just years ago would have seemed illogical — heading south, instead of north, from airstrips in Bolivia to ports in Paraguay to Argentina’s Río de la Plata estuary. It now feeds Europe’s and the world’s growing appetite for cocaine. Since the pandemic, some of the largest drug busts in Europe have arrived on containers that first traveled down this river. Cocaine seizures linked to the Paraguay-Paraná system shot up five-fold between 2010 and 2021, according to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). To take one example: Last year, after departing Asunción, a ship with more than 12 tons of cocaine slipped undetected down the Paraguay River. One of its containers, carrying black sesame seeds to conceal the drugs, left the Paraguayan capital in May 2023 and traveled south to Uruguay, where it was loaded onto a different ship to Europe.

The drugs were found in the port of Hamburg in early July. It was the largest seizure outside South America in all of 2023. Nine days before the container of sesame seeds was loaded in the port in Asunción, Paraguayan officials had thrown a parade to celebrate the arrival of five new scanners, four of them donated by Taiwan and made in the United States. “With this powerful fleet of high-tech equipment,” the country’s customs officials said in a post. “Paraguay is no longer a river transit country for organized crime.” The massive seizure in Hamburg hit the Paraguayan government like “a bucket of cold water,” one government official said,



Paraguay’s antidrug agency conducts an operation to inspect a suspicious shipment of chia seeds destined for Poland. Since the pandemic, some of the largest drug busts in Europe have arrived on containers that first traveled down the Paraguay-Paraná waterway.

Trying to seize drugs on the waterway is an “eternal game of cat and mouse.”

Nicolás Benza, head of UNODC’s container program for the Southern Cone

speaking on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss the case. “It was a huge embarrassment.” High-end technology, officials realized, was not a panacea. “It’s the eternal game of cat and mouse,” said Nicolás Benza, head of UNODC’s container program for the Southern Cone. “They have unlimited resources, while our resources are limited.”

A new cocaine transit hub For generations, drug smugglers focused their business on the American consumer, trafficking cocaine from Colombia to Central America and the United States. The Brazilian port of Santos often served as an alternative departure point from South America. But today, as the cocaine industry has boomed and as security officials have cracked down on traditional

ly vulnerable ports, criminal groups have carved out new routes and new markets. Paraguay became an appealing transit point. It’s one of the world’s largest exporters of soybeans, beef and organic sugar. A landlocked country of less than 7 million people, it now boasts the third-largest barge fleet in the world, behind only the United States and China. Just this year, about 78,000 con-

tainers have left Paraguayan ports on their way south to Argentina or Uruguay and across the Atlantic, according to customs figures. But the country’s law enforcement was not built to combat transnational organized crime. Paraguay, unlike its neighbors, has virtually no air radars. This makes it easy for traffickers in Bolivia to fly drugs — cocaine produced in either Colombia,

Peru or Bolivia — onto illegal airstrips in the northern part of Paraguay, one of the most sparsely inhabited areas on the continent. From there, the drugs are taken by truck to warehouses, where they are concealed in containers bound for the river. “The evolution of organized crime has been faster than the evolution of the security forces,” said Oscar Chamorro, head of

Cocaine seizures along the Paraguay-Paraná waterway since 2018



Paraguay's coast guard.

Every container that leaves a Paraguay port is now required to pass through a scanner. But drug traffickers are increasingly finding their way around the technology, investigators said, mixing cocaine in liquids, powders and other materials to disguise the substance. In June, Paraguayan authorities found more than four tons of cocaine stashed inside bags of sugar in a container in Asunción, bound for Antwerp, Belgium. It had passed through a scanner undetected.

"We have our doors wide open," said Deny Yoon Pak, the prosecutor overseeing the sesame case. "How much cargo has been shipped and we had no idea?"

Earlier this month, Paraguay's antidrug agency announced it would be halting cooperation with the United States, jeopardizing some of the most important investigations into cocaine smuggling in the country. One of those cases involves the search for Sebastian Marset, the fugitive drug kingpin who hid as a professional soccer player and is believed to control much of the trafficking down the Paraguay river. Some former Paraguayan officials argued the move was an attempt to protect top Paraguayan politicians with ties to drug trafficking.

Following a story in *The Washington Post* that reported on the planned end to cooperation, the Paraguayan government reversed its decision, saying it plans to strengthen collaboration with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration.

A ship departs after a final search

Night fell over the port just south of Asunción as a crane lifted one container after another, slowly lowering each one onto the Josamo ship as it prepared to depart.

“Not yet, not yet!” shouted one of the crew members, wagging his finger and waving for the crane operator to keep going, then stop, before the container landed squarely in a spot below, with a loud bang.

In just a few hours, the captain and crew of the Josamo would begin their journey south to Uruguay, carrying containers that would be reloaded onto larger vessels heading to Europe and around the world.

The crew had never discovered any cocaine on board. Still, the



PHOTOS BY SEBASTIÁN LÓPEZ BRACH FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

FROM TOP: After being loaded with cargo and thoroughly checked for contraband by a crew member, the container ship *Jasamo* moves down the Paraguay River as it travels to Montevideo, Uruguay. A small altar of virgins in the captain's cabin of the *Josamo*.

captain, as he always does, instructed one of his crew members, this time Hector Medina, 37, to do a final round of checks throughout the ship. Carrying a flashlight, Medina crawled through dark

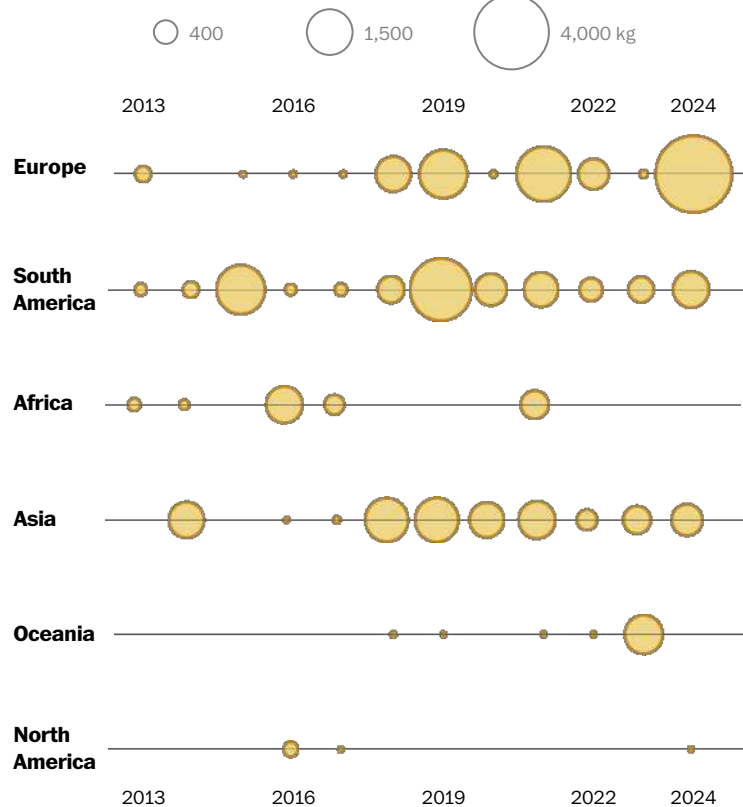
tunnels and peered into cracks between containers, searching for hints of contraband. (The owner of the ship allowed Post journalists to travel partway down the waterway on the Josamo.)

Hours later, as dawn approached, the captain announced that they would be setting sail.

The Josamo left with 292 containers and 12 crew members.

The floor vibrated with the

Cocaine seized in Paraguay by destination in kilograms



humming of the motor as he turned the ship away from the shore and began heading downstream.

A gateway to the Atlantic

The narrow river was lined by marshes and farmland, sprinkled with occasional horses and cows. There were few lights. The following day, one river flowed into another — the Paraguay becoming the Paraná — and the Josamo reached Argentina.

The ship would pass by the industrial city of Rosario, the hometown of soccer great Lionel Messi and the birthplace of Marxist revolutionary Che Guevara. The third-largest city in Argentina, it also ranks among the top agricultural ports in the world.

The river is deep enough in Rosario for seagoing ships. Cargo traveling from Paraguay must transship here, or in other ports farther south, before reaching the ocean.

It has become a hub for moving cocaine to places as far away as Australia.

In August 2022, authorities

seized more than 1.5 tons of cocaine in a warehouse in Rosario. The packages, which were found inside bags of corn pellets, were branded with the Louis Vuitton logo and earmarked for Spain, investigators said.

The warehouse — a nondescript garage — is located in one of the city's most dangerous neighborhoods, where local gangs battle for control and have helped turn Rosario into Argentina's most violent city.

The government of Javier Milei, a radical libertarian and ally of President-elect Donald Trump, has directed a crackdown on the gang control of Rosario's streets and prisons.

His government has deployed resources to the area, including an Israeli-made combat vessel to patrol for drug traffickers operating in the waters outside the city.

Farther downstream is Buenos Aires, the Río de la Plata estuary and the open ocean. After passing through the channel, the ships turn northeast — to Rotterdam in the Netherlands, Antwerp and Hamburg.

2,757 tons of cocaine produced in 2022

COCAINE FROM A1

saying the future is synthetic drugs. ... Right now, it's still cocaine.”

For decades, cocaine consumers were primarily Americans, and interdiction was a U.S. government priority. But despite the tens of billions of dollars spent in the U.S. war on drugs in Latin America, the industry has not only grown, it has globalized, with new routes, new markets and new criminal enterprises.

Nearly every one of Latin America’s mainland nations has become a major producer or mover of the drug, with Ecuador now one of the most important cocaine transit points in the world. Demand is soaring in Europe, which rivals the United States as the world’s top cocaine destination. Cocaine seizures in E.U. countries grew fivefold between 2011 and 2021, and exceeded those in the United States in 2022. While the United States remains a huge market, cocaine use has declined by about 20 percent since 2006, according to UNODC.

Balkan, Italian, Turkish and Russian criminal groups have all swept into Latin America for a piece of the action. Few have managed to muscle their way into cocaine trafficking quite like Albanian criminal networks, investigators and analysts say.

“We know there’s not only one channel for cocaine,” said Marco Martino, a senior Italian police official in charge of coordinating counternarcotics operations. But “the Albanians,” he said, “are the best and the biggest.”

As cocaine production was exploding, investigators said, Albanian criminal networks rode the opportunity it presented. They were critical to getting the drug to Europe and fueling consumption across the continent.

Rexhepi, 44, built much of his empire from an Ecuadorian prison cell, fostering connections with Latin American gangs and turning his cell block into an executive suite. A lawyer representing him in Albania declined to comment. Rexhepi, in a 2015 appeal, denied any involvement in drug trafficking, “either as a perpetrator, accomplice or accessory.” But in 2021, Italy sought his extradition, warning the authorities in Ecuador in a letter from its embassy in Quito that Rexhepi was the “undisputed leader” of an Albanian drug-trafficking network with global reach and access to “infinite quantities of cocaine.”

Rexhepi’s emergence as a feared power broker within a federal prison in Cotopaxi province was symptomatic of the collapse of government control in Ecuador. But with the authorities in Rome seeking to imprison him for drug trafficking, he decided it was time to move again.

A local judge, citing a medical need, ordered him into home detention in an upscale neighborhood here in the port city of Guayaquil in August 2021, according to Ecuadorian officials.

Then, predictably, Rexhepi vanished.

This investigation into the global expansion of the cocaine business and the rise of Albanian drug traffickers is based on interviews with more than two dozen current and former officials in Ecuador, Colombia, Europe and the United States, gang members in Ecuador, and thousands of pages of court documents from Ecuador, Albania and Italy. It reveals how criminal networks led by Albanians infiltrated Ecuador’s ports, judiciary, prison system and security forces to gain control of key parts of the cocaine supply chain and trigger a deluge of the drug in Europe — a more than \$12 billion annual cocaine market, according to the E.U. Drugs Agency.

“With these profits, these organizations manage to permeate all public and private institutions, corrupting any structure,” said Ecuador’s former anti-narcotics director, Gen. William Villarreal, in an interview.

Drug-trafficking entrepreneurs from Albania, a country of only about 2.8 million people, have begun to rival the world’s most powerful cartels by working with them, not against them, transforming how the trade is run. The new networks, investigators say, are often criminal coalitions of disparate and independent groups, rather than hierarchical, violently competitive cartels.

Europol is aware of dozens of “Albanian-speaking” clans or or-



NADÉGE MAZARS/HANS LUCAS STUDIO

A view of Micay Canyon in Cauca, Colombia. Here, the mountain is almost completely covered with coca, which can be recognized by the plants’ light-green color.



Drug kingpin Dritan Rexhepi in 2023, the day he was arrested in Istanbul by Turkish authorities.

ganized criminal networks currently operating in Europe, Robert Fay, the head of Europol’s drug unit, said in an interview.

“It’s not about how many people you have,” said Fatjona Mejdini, an Albanian analyst with the Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime. “It’s about the right alliances you can form.”

From his prison cell in Ecuador, Rexhepi paved the way. He befriended leaders of Ecuador’s most powerful gang, Los Choneros, who were already working for Mexico’s Sinaloa cartel, according to one of the gang’s founding members, who, like some others interviewed for this article, spoke on the condition of anonymity because of security concerns.

That led to strategic partnerships with both South American traffickers and gang leaders across Europe. His goal was simple, investigators and analysts said: sell as much cocaine as possible with abundant profit for all parties to the deals.

“Rexhepi is the pioneer,” Mejdini said.

Soaring cocaine production

The explosion in cocaine production can be traced back to the demobilization of Colombia’s largest leftist rebel group, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). A historic peace deal with the country’s government in 2016 ended the longest-running civil conflict in the hemisphere, a conflict in which the United States played a critical role.

Since the start of the counternarcotics and security package known as Plan Colombia in 2000, the United States has sent about \$14 billion in funding to Colombia, at least 60 percent of it for the military and police. The plan focused in large part on combating the country’s cocaine production and export, which the FARC controlled, using the proceeds to



DANIEL VITE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Security forces display the 22 tons of cocaine seized in an operation at a pig farm in Quevedo in Ecuador’s Los Ríos province on Jan. 22.

fund its insurgency and secure territory.

When the guerrillas laid down their weapons, a proliferation of smaller armed groups, driven by profit rather than ideology, swept into coca-producing areas.

These drug traffickers “no longer have political interests,” said Leonardo Correa, the head of the UNODC mission in Colombia. “What they want is to get the drug out as fast as possible, to make the most money possible.”

Instead of sourcing coca leaves from fields in the center of the country, Colombia’s cocaine producers have created “enclaves” near the country’s borders and coasts, to more easily export the drug. These enclaves became a one-stop shop for a process that was previously dispersed — now, the cultivation, extraction and refining of the drug all happen in the same area before it is moved across nearby borders. Three of the four most productive enclaves border Ecuador.

Producers have even improved the plant itself, creating remarkably productive hybrid crops that extract more alkaloid from the same quantity of leaves. The government of Gustavo Petro, Co-

lombia’s first leftist president and a fierce opponent of the U.S.-led “war on drugs,” has vowed to dismantle drug-trafficking networks but shifted its focus away from the eradication of coca crops. Analysts say this has only further fueled cultivation, and could draw harsh criticism from the incoming Trump administration.

The amount of land used to plant coca in Colombia grew by 10 percent in 2023, but the productivity of that land exploded: Cocaine production grew by 53 percent, according to the UNODC. As a result, these enclaves — making up 14 percent of Colombia’s territory with coca crops — produce about 40 percent of the country’s coca, according to the UNODC. This has left other areas of the country struggling to sell their coca crops.

As Colombian criminal groups industrialized their systems, European mafias offered the prospect of new routes to avoid intensified U.S. patrols along Colombia’s coast. Cocaine started to move in ever bigger quantities through countries including Ecuador, Costa Rica and Paraguay and onto ships bound for Europe.

In Ecuador, a country that does not produce cocaine, authorities seized more of the drug in 2023 than the combined total seizures of Peru and Bolivia, the second- and third-largest production countries. This year, through mid-December, Ecuador seized 251 tons of cocaine, up from 197 last year. More than 81 tons were destined for Europe, compared with only about 18 that were intended for the United States and Mexico.

For just one kilogram of cocaine, worth \$2,000 or so in Colombia, drug traffickers could earn \$25,000 by smuggling it to the United States but at least \$31,500 if it reached Europe, according to U.N. and E.U. officials.

In 2022, for the sixth year in a row, E.U. states reported a record number of cocaine seizures, with Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands registering the most. Almost 70 percent of those drug seizures were from container ships that arrived from Latin America.

A crucial transit point

It was one of the world’s largest single cocaine seizures on record — and authorities stumbled upon

it by accident.

In late January, Ecuadorian military officers followed a lead about a cache of weapons and explosives hidden at a pig farm in Los Ríos province. Instead, in an underground cellar, they found 22,000 bricks of cocaine — 22 tons in total, a haul valued at more than \$660 million on the European market. The packages were labeled with airline logos: Iberia, KLM, Qatar, Jet2.

The cache belonged to an Albanian criminal group, according to intelligence officials and Ecuadorian court records.

For an Ecuadorian government that had nearly collapsed due to drug violence, it was hailed as a major blow to the country’s cocaine trade. It also confirmed Ecuador’s global role as a crucial transit point and logistical hub for the world’s most powerful drug traffickers.

Wedge between the cocaine-producing countries of Colombia and Peru, Ecuador became an ideal location for traffickers, investigators said. It had limited coastal surveillance, fragile institutions that were corruptible, lenient visa policies allowing long-term residence for foreigners, and a robust pool of local gangs eager to team up with European groups to transport drugs.

The country also boasted a thriving shipping industry. Ecuador is the principal exporter of bananas to Europe, and a free-trade agreement with the E.U. led banana exports to grow by 40 percent since 2017, according to E.U. figures. The banana shipping business, making up more than two-thirds of exports leaving Ecuador, provided an ideal form of transit, investigators said.

In 2023, about half of the cocaine seized in containers in Ecuador before departure to Europe were hidden in banana shipments, according to Ecuadorian authorities.

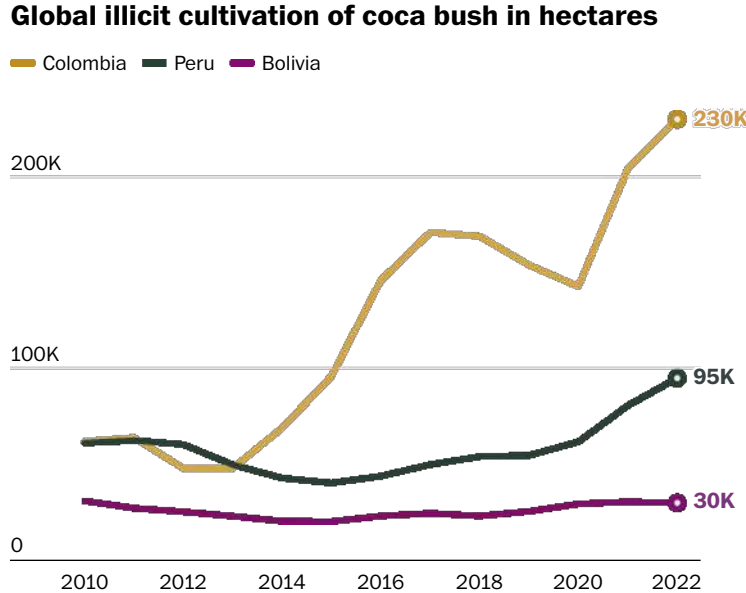
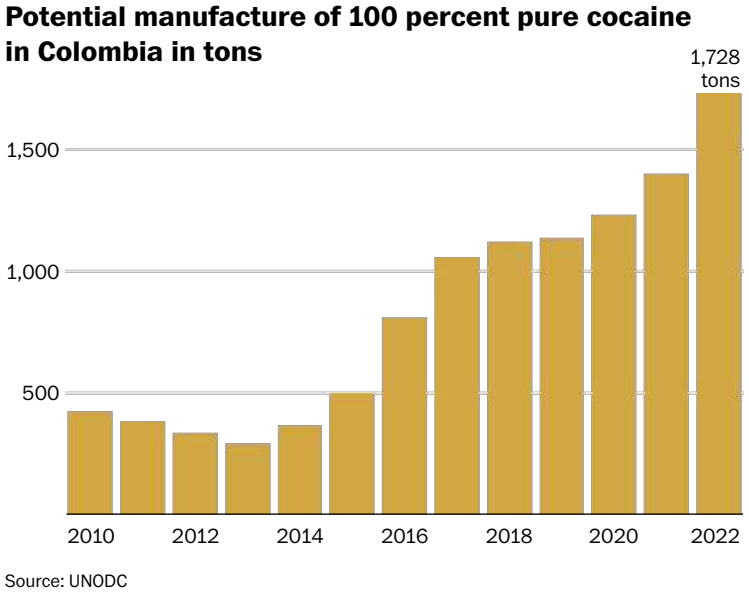
The January seizure at the pig farm also illustrated the Albanian trafficking model, intelligence officials said, with third-party associates contracted for each link in the cocaine supply chain.

Colombian armed groups handle the production and transport across the border, and Ecuadorian gangs take it from there. To move the 22 tons of cocaine, for instance, one gang, Los Lobos, transported the drugs to the underground cellar, according to an intelligence official with knowledge of the case. Another, Los Choneros, was tasked with guarding the drugs, while a third, Los Lagartos, was supposed to smuggle the drugs into the port. Finally, Los Chone Killers, were to ensure that it left hidden on a designated container ship.

The escape artist

Rexhepi arrived in Ecuador around 2011, part of a wave of Albanians, many of whom had deep ties to criminal groups in Europe, investigators said. Ecuador was beginning to emerge as a transit hub in the cocaine trade, residency was relatively easy to acquire and there was little difficulty for foreigners in acquiring property and setting up companies, Ecuadorian officials said.

Rexhepi, who had multiple false identities, landed as a Greek





GERARDO MENOSCAL/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

An armored vehicle is seen during a police and military operation in Guayaquil in March.

businessman, investigators said.

The son of grape farmers in Velce, an Albanian mountain village, Rexhepi came of age as Ponzi schemes in the late 1990s sparked a devastating economic collapse in Albania. Military armories were pillaged, leading to the rise of criminal gangs that made parts of the country lawless.

“Everyone had guns in the village,” said Rexhepi’s uncle, Arben Jaupaj, 64, who runs a bar in Velce. “The adults and the kids.”

Rexhepi quickly rose within the ranks of one network with continent-wide ambitions, Albanian officials said. He was arrested in 2006 in the slayings six years earlier of two police officers and a bystander. In an act that turned Rexhepi into a household name in Albania, he escaped on the day of his arrest from a police station in the seaside city of Durrës by simply opening a door with a faulty lock in a basement interrogation room. He waltzed out, telling police officers he encountered that his interview was finished.

“He’s seen as smart, brave and willing to take risks,” said an Albanian law enforcement official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly.

In the years that followed, Rexhepi became one of Europe’s most-wanted criminals, pursued from one country to another. He was arrested on drug-trafficking charges in the Netherlands and extradited to Italy, where he was sentenced to 13 years in prison. In 2011, he and two other Albanians broke out of a jail near Milan after using contraband saws to file down bars and repelling out of a window on an impromptu rope made from tied bedsheets. Months later, he was arrested in Spain but extradited to Belgium, where he was wanted for his role in a violent robbery years earlier. But the low-security Belgian prison was no match for Rexhepi. Once again, he escaped, this time by scaling a prison wall.

But staying in Europe was becoming increasingly untenable because of the risk of another arrest, and Rexhepi fled to Ecuador.

Rexhepi built his network by making use of legitimate front companies, according to Italian prosecutors. He started establishing ties to Ecuadorian businesses that would help him build up his smuggling operations and launder money. One of his associates, an Albanian diplomatic vice consul in Ecuador, held large shares in food and cannabis companies, according to public records and an Ecuadorian intelligence analyst who has studied the network.

In just a few years in the city of Guayaquil, Rexhepi and his cohorts built a sophisticated drug logistics system, buying off port staff and shipping companies that allowed them almost free access to containers heading to Europe, investigators said. He formed alliances across the spectrum of criminal groups in the country, they said, by selling Europe as a new, open market where everyone could profit.

The law, however, caught up with Rexhepi again, and in 2014, he was arrested in Guayaquil,



charged with drug trafficking and eventually sentenced to 13 years in prison. The prison system in Ecuador was largely run by the gangs, and Rexhepi continued to build his business, investigators said.

His uncle, Jaupaj, said his nephew claims he was falsely accused, and that he was simply running a seafood business in Ecuador.

In a 2015 appeal, Rexhepi — using the fake name Murataj Lulezim — accused Ecuadorian authorities of confusing him with another man and depriving him of his freedom “in an unjust way, without a single piece of evidence against me or a single photo that proves any trace of participation.”

“My only sin, so to speak, is that I am an Albanian citizen, and I came to this country because of the publicity abroad, promoting investment.”

Descent into lawlessness

In September 2020, following a five-year investigation, hundreds of officers across Europe conducted a large sting against Rexhepi’s operations — arresting 20 individuals in Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Greece, Romania, Hungary, Spain, Albania and Dubai.

Italian authorities sent a series of letters to Ecuadorian officials, urging them to begin extradition proceedings against Rexhepi. In one 2021 letter from the Italian

Embassy, which was reviewed by The Washington Post, diplomats warned that Rexhepi organized transatlantic drug shipments and ordered the murder of rivals “thanks to a dense network of complicity and corruption, from

prison, using all types of communication systems.”

But Rexhepi had his own plans. In August 2021, a Guayaquil judge, Diego Poma, granted Rexhepi house arrest for “medical reasons” with an ankle monitor,

according to the court order. Days later, the judge ordered the removal of the ankle monitor and instructed Rexhepi to report to the authorities every 15 days. (The judge was later dismissed by the country’s judiciary council, which found that he had violated the independence of judicial servants in several decisions benefiting powerful drug lords.) Poma, in his disciplinary process, denied wrongdoing and said he followed all legal protocols in making his decisions.

In 2023, his release was denounced publicly by presidential candidate Fernando Villavicencio as another example of Ecuador’s descent into lawlessness; several months later, Villavicencio, who promised to take on the country’s narco gangs, was assassinated.

By then, it had become clear just how much power Albanian drug traffickers wielded in Ecuador. Another prominent Albanian drug trafficker, Dritan Gjika, had established a sprawling web of business and political connections, investigators found, allegedly under the protection of Ecuador’s head of police. Some European intelligence officials said they suspect Gjika may be part of Rexhepi’s network.

In January, Ecuadorian gangs unleashed a wave of violence that targeted the country’s institutions and media. The country’s new president, Daniel Noboa, responded by declaring a state of internal armed conflict against the gangs, mobilizing the military to bring control to the country’s cities and prisons. The government has since touted an 18 percent drop in the murder rate, but kidnapping and extortion have continued to rise, and human rights organizations have accused the government of arresting thousands with little evidence or due process.

The drop in killings, said Renato Rivera, coordinator of Ecuador’s Organized Crime Observatory, “is not a response to the militarization, but rather to the peace processes and criminal alli-

ances” between gangs. Despite the president’s declaration of internal armed conflict, the country’s most powerful criminal structures — such as the Albanians — remain “exactly the same,” he added.

“These transnational groups have not really been affected,” Rivera said.

New markets in Africa and Asia

And the cocaine lords continue to adapt, diversify and flourish.

As law enforcement authorities in Europe have intensified interdiction operations, particularly at major ports in Northern Europe, drug traffickers appear to be shifting to other points of entry. The Netherlands and Belgium, home to the largest ports in Europe, seized about half as much cocaine in the first half of 2024 as they did in the same period last year.

Spain, which has continued to seize record amounts of cocaine, appears to be surpassing Belgium and the Netherlands as Europe’s most important gateway for cocaine. Sweden and Norway also reported record cocaine seizures at ports in 2023, according to the E.U. Drugs Agency. Germany saw its cocaine seizures more than double between 2022 and 2023, according to the UNODC.

Traffickers are increasingly using labs in Europe to process cocaine or to separate it from other materials used to conceal it. The E.U. reported dismantling 39 cocaine laboratories across member states in 2022, up from at least 16 in 2019; one lab, discovered by authorities in Spain in 2023, was turning out 200 kilograms (almost 450 pounds) of cocaine every day.

New markets beyond Europe continue to open up in response to the surfeit of cocaine. Australia and New Zealand reported the highest annual prevalence of cocaine use in the world, according to the UNODC, though wastewater data suggests most cocaine consumers still use the drug occasionally. Earlier this month, Australian authorities seized over two tons of cocaine, the country’s largest-ever seizure of the drug. Just days earlier, the Colombian navy announced the capture of six “narco-sub” carrying more than 225 tons of cocaine, including one carrying five tons of cocaine to Australia.

While data for Asia is limited, cocaine consumption and seizures are rising in China and Japan, the UNODC reports. It has also noted increases in seizures in India, Malaysia and the Philippines, suggesting they could emerge as growth centers for traffickers. If Asia’s rates of consumption were to someday align with Europe’s, the number of regular cocaine users there could shoot up from 2 million to over 40 million, according to the UNODC.

“It’s the kids of the upper classes who take it,” Pietschmann, the UNODC research officer, said. “The potential is there. ... There is a young generation there, the young generation has money, and the young generation goes to parties.”

Cocaine seizures have also reached record levels in Africa, where the Brazilian criminal group Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) has expanded its presence and used several countries, including Mozambique, Angola and Cape Verde, as stopovers for shipping cocaine to Europe, according to the UNODC.

Albanian criminal groups have reportedly begun establishing networks in Australia, exploiting weaknesses in the country’s immigration system and capitalizing on a burgeoning market with high cocaine prices, according to Australian officials.

The Albanians have perfected their operation just about anywhere, Mejdini said.

“There’s no limit for them anymore,” Mejdini said. “The model they have created, to forge alliances, to cooperate with other foreigners, it helps them go everywhere. Wherever there is demand, they are going to be the delivery guys.”

Some analysts speculate that Turkey, where officials reported a 45 percent increase in cocaine seizures between 2020 and 2021, could become a crucial corridor for moving the drug east.

That’s where authorities found Rexhepi in November 2023, two years after he was released from prison in Ecuador. He was arrested in response to extradition requests from Italy and Albania.

The kingpin had traded one life of luxury for another, after arriving in Turkey on a Colombian passport, under the alias Benjamin Omar Perez Garcia, and settling into a white villa in a seaside suburb of Istanbul, authorities said.

He remains behind bars in Turkey — for now.

Faiola reported from Tirana, Albania, and Rome. Fjori Sinoruka in Tirana and Stefano Pitrelli in Rome contributed to this report.



ILIR TSOUKO FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Arben Jaupaj recalls his nephew Dritan as a precocious, curly-haired boy who excelled at school.



PHOTOS BY THOMAS DÉVÉNYI/HANS LUCAS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Fakhri Abu Diab in front of the ruins of his home in East Jerusalem. Abu Diab's effort to save homes in the city's al-Bustan neighborhood from being razed worked for a while. But that changed with the war in Gaza, he said. The city says the homes are being demolished because they were constructed illegally in an area zoned for green space.

BY REBECCA TAN IN JERUSALEM

When Israeli police and bulldozers arrived in al-Bustan early on Nov. 5, few residents in this Palestinian neighborhood in East Jerusalem expected them to go to Fakhri Abu Diab's home. The retired accountant, with a head of white hair, was the neighborhood's most prominent resident and de facto spokesman. For two decades, Abu Diab, 62, led the fight to protect local homes from demolition, drawing support from the United States, which condemned Israel's destruction of part of his home earlier this year. So when three dozen Israeli officials, including police escorts, showed up with heavy machinery and plowed through Abu Diab's gate, the neighbors watched not only with shock but fear. A chilling message was sent across Palestinian communities in East Jerusalem, residents said: No one is safe. Municipal authorities demolished seven buildings in al-Bustan that day, according to the city, including Abu Diab's home. They have since destroyed at least eight more houses, as well as the local community center, Al-Bustan Association, residents

After decades fighting demolitions, Palestinian sees own home wrecked

Residents said the destruction sent a chilling message to East Jerusalem's Palestinian communities



and rights groups said. It's "to send a message to the neighborhood," said Qutaiba Odeh, the association's director. "To say, 'We're coming. You're done.'" The official reason for the demolitions was that the buildings, many of which have been there for years, were constructed illegally in an area the municipality had zoned for green space. A spokesman for the city, Udi Shalom Maymon, said the homes and other structures were razed to advance "urban renewal plans" he described as "tailored to meet the needs of the local population." The vision for al-Bustan — which is nestled within East Jerusalem's larger Silwan neighborhood — includes a mixed-use tourism and housing development with archaeological sites, a park, hotels and souvenir shops. Officials say it's part of a broader

attempt to build up tourism infrastructure around the Old City, which includes religious sites holy to Christians, Muslims and Jews. But underlying the project, Israeli and Palestinian rights groups say, is Israel's decades-long effort to secure a Jewish majority in the city and push Palestinian residents to leave — one that has accelerated over the past year, according to the United Nations, as Israel's right-wing government ramped up the demolition of Palestinian homes across East Jerusalem. "We have an Israeli government that is operating with no guardrails," said Shaina Low, spokeswoman for the Norwegian Refugee Council, which provides legal services to Palestinians facing displacement. Virtually every house in al-Bustan is at risk of being razed "at any time," she said. Both Israelis and Palestinians claim Jerusalem as their capital, and on the eastern side of the city, which Israel annexed from Jordan in 1967, about 350,000 Palestinians live alongside roughly 200,000 Israeli settlers. Since capturing East Jerusalem, Israeli authorities have used a mix of laws, zoning regulations,

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



The Silwan neighborhood in East Jerusalem, which houses al-Bustan. The pace of demolitions in Silwan has doubled in the last year, according to Israeli monitoring and advocacy group Ir Amin.

Kremlin does not take responsibility for downing Azerbaijan Airlines flight

CRASH FROM A1

firm the fact of external physical and technical impact.”

If Russian fire brought down the aircraft, it would be the second such incident linked to the country’s war in Ukraine. In 2014, Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 was shot down by a surface-to-air missile over eastern Ukraine. All 298 passengers and crew members on board were killed.

A Dutch court in 2022 convicted two Russians and a Ukrainian who held senior roles in separatist militias of murder for their roles. The court determined that the missile launch was probably intentional, though it was unclear whether the defendants knew that they were firing at a civilian aircraft. Russian authorities have repeatedly denied responsibility.

Russian investigators have opened a criminal case in the downing of the Azerbaijan Airlines flight, the Kremlin said, including into whether there were violations of traffic safety and air transport operation rules. “Primary investigative actions are being carried out; civilian and military specialists are being interrogated,” it said. Russian officials initially blamed the crash on weather and a collision with a flock of birds.

Before the call, Putin held a session of the Security Council to discuss the “interaction with partners in the Caspian region.”

Kanat Bozymbayev, the head of the Kazakh commission probing the crash, said authorities had appointed “a comprehensive ballistic, explosive and trace evidence examination” to learn

“when the explosion occurred and why.”

The Russian flight regulator Rosaviatsia said Friday that conditions at Grozny Airport were “complicated” by a Ukrainian drone attack and thick fog, Russian state news agency Tass reported. Security measures required all aircraft to leave the area near Grozny Airport, the agency’s head said.

Some Azerbaijani lawmakers have pressured Aliyev’s government to “be more principled” in demanding an apology from Moscow and urging Russia to end its war in Ukraine.

The United States has “seen some early indications that would certainly point to the possibility that this jet was brought down by Russian air defense systems,” National Security Council spokes-

man John Kirby told reporters Friday. He said the evidence went beyond widely circulated images of the damaged aircraft, but he did not provide details. The U.S. government has offered to assist Kazakh and Azerbaijani officials in the investigation, Kirby said.

Azerbaijan Airlines said Friday that preliminary findings showed the plane crashed “due to external physical and technical interference.”

Rashad Nabiyeu, the country’s transport minister, cited “the appearance of the plane’s wreckage on the ground and eyewitness testimony,” according to Azerbaijani media. He said passengers and crew were injured by “various cutting objects”; some, he said, “reported hearing three explosions over Grozny.”

“The sounds of explosions

could be heard from outside,” he said, “after which something hit the plane.”

Flight attendant Aidan Rahimli told Azerbaijan’s Xezer Xeber news website that she felt three loud blows as if something was impacting the plane from outside.

“After the first impact, the oxygen masks fell down in the cabin, and we rushed to check what had happened,” Rahimli said. A second impact then wounded a fellow flight attendant, she said. As she bandaged his left hand, she said, they felt a third impact.

Upon crashing, the plane broke into two parts. The tail remained largely intact, but the nose immediately caught fire. Pilots Igor Kshnyakin, the flight captain, and Aleksandr Kalyaninov, the first officer, were killed.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said he also spoke to Aliyev and “expressed condolences to him and the people of Azerbaijan regarding the tragic crash.”

“Russia must provide clear explanations and stop spreading disinformation,” Zelensky wrote in a post on X. “Photos and videos clearly show the damage to the aircraft’s fuselage, including punctures and dents, which strongly point to a strike by an air defense missile. We will support Azerbaijan in this situation with all necessary means and call on other countries to assist as well.”

Turkmenistan’s national carrier suspended flights to Moscow for a month. El Al, FlyDubai, Qazaq Air and Azerbaijan Airlines have also suspended at least some flights to Russia.

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE

court orders and other rules to prioritize settlement building and restrict development in Palestinian neighborhoods, lawyers and housing rights advocates say. The measures include thousands of demolition orders for Palestinian homes and other structures over the years, most on the premise that they were built without appropriate permits, according to the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In Silwan, the pace of demolitions has doubled in the last year, according to Ir Amim, an Israeli monitoring and advocacy group, while the United Nations said more structures have been destroyed in the neighborhood this year than any other year since it began collecting data in 2009.

The increase followed the Hamas attack on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, an assault that killed around 1,200 people, ignited the war in Gaza and fueled a rise in settler attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank. But city officials say the East Jerusalem demolitions are not aimed at punishing Palestinians.

“Demolitions are done when buildings were built illegally and there’s no legal way to legalize it,” Maymon, the spokesman, said. “It is by no means a punitive measure.”

But when Abu Diab stepped outside that morning in November, to meet the officials who had already knocked over his gate, it was hard for him to believe he wasn’t being punished for speaking out, he said. He had defended this house for decades and he wasn’t ready to stop.

“What,” Abu Diab said to the crowd, “are you doing here?”

‘I knew they would come back’

Abu Diab was born in al-Bustan in 1962, five years before the start of Israel’s occupation. His earliest memories, he said, are of gardening with his mother at home — dusting dirt off mint leaves and running after chickens. He left al-Bustan only briefly to attend the University of Jordan in Amman, where he met his wife, Amina. Together, they moved back into his family home in 1983.

The house was just two rooms at the time, Abu Diab said. To pay for a renovation, Amina sold her dowry of gold rings and bangles, and he saved as much as he could from his income as an accountant. Soon, the house grew noisy with the couple’s five children. “It was beautiful,” said Abu Diab, remembering this period of his life.

Under the surface, however, cracks were forming.

Abu Diab and his neighbors

applied for permits for their homes and renovations but the municipality rejected them. By the early 1980s, the city had already designated al-Bustan as an open, public space where residential development was prohibited.

At the same time, Palestinians grew frustrated with the occupation and erupted into protests, leading to negotiations under the Oslo accords in the 1990s. But Israel continued to build settlements and in 2000, peace talks stalled, resulting in a new round of violence between the two sides.

It was around this time — in 2004 and 2005 — that Abu Diab and other residents began finding demolition orders plastered to their front doors.

For the next 20 years, Abu Diab, as head of the local residents’ committee, would fight a wide-ranging legal and public relations battle to save al-Bustan and its roughly 100 homes from destruction.

And for a while, at least it seemed, the strategy worked.

By his estimate, Abu Diab hosted hundreds of diplomats, activists, lawyers and journalists at his house to discuss the planned demolitions, helping to coordinate what were called “solidarity walks” through the neighborhood.

He shook the hand of former president Jimmy Carter when he

visited in 2010 and met dozens of other U.S. officials, he said. With his neighbors, he filed lawsuits opposing the demolitions and negotiated with the municipality, including presenting an alternative plan for the area, which officials rejected.

During this period, the city served demolition orders in al-Bustan but never enforced them. That all changed, Abu Diab said, with the outbreak of the Gaza war.

Almost immediately after the conflict started, from October to December 2023, demolitions across East Jerusalem jumped 70 percent compared with previous months, according to Ir Amim. In February, authorities made their move into al-Bustan, razing an extension of Abu Diab’s home that for years had been marked for demolition.

The Biden administration slammed the decision. “We condemn the demolition of Fakhri Abu Diab’s home,” State Department spokesman Matt Miller said at a news conference.

“These acts obstruct efforts to advance a durable and lasting peace and security that would benefit not just Palestinians, but Israelis,” he said. “They damage Israel’s standing in the world.”

At the time, Abu Diab welcomed the U.S. statement, but said he’d seen Israel’s military

reduce entire cities in Gaza to rubble. “I knew it wouldn’t matter to them now,” he said, referring to Israeli authorities. “I knew they would come back.”

The walls come down

As he waited, Abu Diab spent the spring and summer trying to rebuild. He put a small prefab container home on a corner of his lot as a precaution. Then he began renovating the main body of the house to make more space.

When authorities returned in November, Abu Diab said he argued with the demolition crew, asking for more paperwork and calling lawyers and diplomats. But it was too late, he said. The walls were coming down.

First went the outside sitting area, where he and Amina would start their days drinking tea and listening to the birds. Then it was the two sitting rooms where his grandchildren would sit hunched over their homework after school.

Eventually, the excavators took down the kitchen, a place he loved most at dusk, when it was heavy with smoke and the smell of cooking.

The demolition crew didn’t give the couple time to save their belongings, so mixed in with the broken pieces of concrete and rebar was most of everything they owned: Clothes, photo albums, birth certificates. The only items

he managed to save were two portraits of Amina in her 20s and a blue oil lamp that belonged to his late mother.

“Forget the furniture,” said Abu Diab, closing his eyes. “They destroyed our history.”

Amina, 58, interjected. “They split apart the family,” she said.

The demolition displaced most of the household, with two of Abu Diab’s sons and their families moving in with in-laws or into rented apartments. Amina and Abu Diab stayed behind in the container home.

It’s too small for the whole family to gather, said Amina, and some of her grandchildren no longer visit because they hate having to pass the ruins of the old house. “Who can blame them?” she said.

One night in late November, Abu Diab returned to his container home after dark and slumped into a plastic chair. Their children had asked them to move out of al-Bustan, and Ziad Kawar, a lawyer representing some of the residents, said all legal options were exhausted.

Abu Diab said he knew it was a matter of time before the municipality returned to tear down the container home. But he felt like he’d already lost too much.

“No, no,” said Abu Diab, shaking his head wearily. “The only thing left to do is stay.”

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THE WORLD

A wall of silence around a massacre collapses

Survivors had dared not speak of the horrors of Hafez al-Assad’s brutal 1982 crackdown in a western Syrian city until now

BY LOUISA LOVELUCK

HAMA, SYRIA — For more than four decades, the Assad family made sure that the horrors it committed here stayed unspeakable — killing tens of thousands of Hama residents over a savage month-long siege, then hunting those who carried the memory.

Few in this western Syrian city ever dared describe how, in February 1982, they peered through their curtains to see soldiers separating men from women for execution. They tried to forget the packs of dogs that roamed the streets long after they had pulled the bodies apart.

It was in Hama that Hafez al-Assad, the father of now-deposed president Bashar al-Assad, cemented the dynasty’s brutal rule by crushing an uprising led by the Muslim Brotherhood. This month, the family’s reign here, and the wall of silence they had enforced for so long, came tumbling down in a matter of days.

Rebel forces who had fought a years-long war against the Syrian government led a lightning charge from their northern stronghold to the capital, overpowering a demoralized army and seizing power in Damascus as the president fled to Russia.

On a pine-covered hilltop near Hama, where government troops lost their final battles with Islamist rebels, dugouts were strewn with green fatigues and the food troops carried with them to the front. Their bodies were twisted in the grass where they fell.

In the city down below, residents were still adjusting to the sudden close of a chapter they had despaired would never end. Estimates for the number of people killed during the 1982 military offensive range from 10,000 to 40,000. Most were civilians.

The sheer scale of the loss was magnified by the hidden trauma, which hollowed out the spirit of Hama, residents said.

In many ways, Hafez’s crackdown here was the blueprint his son would use to crush anti-government demonstrations in 2011, plunging the country into civil war. Although most Syrians never learned the details of what happened here, they understood that Hama was a byword for massacre, and a warning that death or imprisonment were the price of dissent.

Before the notorious terrors of Sednaya prison, there was Tadmour, where men from Hama were jailed and executed. One former inmate, a poet, later described it as a “kingdom of death and madness.”

Mayssa Zaloukh was born in 1982 in the shadow of the government siege. Her father had once been warm and social, her aunt told her, but the man who raised her had no friends at all. Those he grew up with had been killed or disappeared. “He was so fearful that he didn’t trust anyone,” Zaloukh said.

The first time she saw him cry, she said, was when rebels entered the city on Dec. 5, and he finally understood that the regime was about to fall.

“It was just unbelievable, he was so happy,” Zaloukh said. “He said he had thought there were only seven wonders in this world, but now this was the eighth.”

On a park bench close by,



SALWAN GEORGES/THE WASHINGTON POST

Amina Baradeh, at home in Hama, Syria. Baradeh's husband and six sons were executed in the month-long siege in February 1982 when Hafez al-Assad, the father of ousted president Bashar al-Assad, crushed an uprising, creating a blueprint for repression.

Hamed Shaaban, 54, and his friend, Hassan, looked at each other and laughed when asked about the first time they had spoken openly about the crackdown 42 years ago.

“Right now,” both said.

From their perch, they could see the public square that had buzzed with demonstrators in

2011, dancing, chanting and demanding political change. Security forces opened fire on them, then formed “investigation committees” to arrest an ever-widening circle of civilians for alleged involvement in the protests, whether real or imagined.

“I just watched from afar back then,” Shaaban said. “We knew

the cost of rising up, and we were just too scared.”

In the Kilaniya neighborhood, just across the river from the city’s famous water wheels, passersby stopped to listen as their neighbors began to share the memories they had kept bottled up for so many years.

The 12,000-strong force sent to

Hama in 1982 was led by Rifaat al-Assad, Hafez’s youngest brother, and his soldiers shelled entire districts to rubble. A siege on the city meant there was no chance of escape. Then came the “cleansing” operations, residents said.

One signaled to the empty space where his family home had stood, as he recounted watching

the gunmen go from house to house. Another pointed to a rooftop where he said a young child had been shot as he cried out for food.

“It’s just hard to believe this is happening, to be honest,” said one man, who said he was still too scared to share his name. “We just never imagined it. We thought they built a regime that would last forever.”

Even within families, discussing the killings was viewed as so dangerous that most parents warned their children never to speak of them.

So when Abdelaziz Shamah, 57, began taking photographs of rebuilt neighborhoods in 2011, he chose to post them on social media using a pseudonym. Over time, he grew braver, he said, and started to interview the city’s residents about what they had seen.

On Dec. 14, after Assad was gone, he posted a video of his mother-in-law, Fatma Mahmoud Mantash, who was able for the first time to share her full story.

“She used to start speaking, but she couldn’t continue,” Shamah said. “She wouldn’t be able to finish.”

Soldiers came to her home and took two of her sons and one of her daughters, she told the camera. They beat the remaining family and ransacked the house, stealing money as they left. She never heard anything of her missing children. She sought respite by sitting with other women from the city who knew her pain, she said. When she prayed, she did not know whether to ask that the boys and their sister, Rouah, be released alive, or that their souls be allowed to rest in death.

“I used to cry every night and day,” she said. “I wish I could still see them. Even if they’re dead. I want to see them dead.”

Shamah then addressed the camera. “To all mothers who saw their boys taken, even though they had no weapons,” he said. “They weren’t terrorists, they were people of the Sham,” he said, using the Arabic term for greater Syria.

“We want to get these stories out there, everyone here has a story,” he continued.

Many of those who were adults when regime troops entered the city in 1982 are dead now. Shamah’s aunt, whose husband Mohammed and six sons were executed, has developed Alzheimer’s, he said. She has good and bad days.

When reporters visited her in the family home this month, Amina Baradeh, 88, was bed-bound, wrapped in thick blankets to block the winter cold. Syria’s electricity grid was on its knees after decades of corruption, war and economic crisis, but in Baradeh’s mind, it was still the 1980s.

She frequently mistook the sound of the front door opening for her then-youngest, 11-year-old Mokhlis, returning from school. “Where are they?” she would cry out for the boys at night. “Why won’t they come home?”

Shamah approached the bed and stooped gently to kiss her cheek as she wrapped her arms around his waist and hugged him tight. “It’s okay,” he kept telling her, “it’s okay.”

“You can rest now.”

Ali Rahabi contributed to this report.

COLOMBIA Year proved damaging to Amazon rainforest

The year 2024 was brutal for the Amazon rainforest, with rampant wildfires and extreme drought ravaging large parts of a biome that’s a critical counterweight to climate change.

A warming climate fed drought that in turn fed the worst year for fires since 2005. And those fires contributed to deforestation, with authorities suspecting some fires were set to more easily clear land to run cattle.

The Amazon is twice the size of India and sprawls across eight countries and one territory, storing vast amounts of carbon dioxide that would otherwise warm the planet. It has about 20 percent of the world’s fresh water and astounding biodiversity, including 16,000 known tree species. But governments have historically viewed it as an area to be

exploited, with little regard for sustainability or the rights of its Indigenous peoples, and experts say exploitation by individuals and organized crime is rising at alarming rates.

“The fires and drought experienced in 2024 across the Amazon rainforest could be ominous indicators that we are reaching the long-feared ecological tipping point,” said Andrew Miller, advocacy director at Amazon Watch, an organization that works to protect the rainforest. “Humanity’s window of opportunity to reverse this trend is shrinking but still open.”

There were some bright spots. The level of Amazonian forest loss fell in both Brazil and Colombia. And nations gathered for the annual U.N. conference on biodiversity agreed to give Indigenous peoples more say. “If the Amazon rainforest is to avoid the tipping point, Indigenous people will have been a determinant factor,” Miller said.

— Associated Press

BELARUS Lukashenko pardons 20 more prisoners

Belarus’s authoritarian leader, Alexander Lukashenko, pardoned 20 more people whom rights activists describe as political prisoners, according to a statement on the president’s website Saturday.

The announcement came amid persistent oppression in the run-up to presidential elections next month that are likely to extend Lukashenko’s decades-long rule.

Belarusian officials did not provide the names of those released, but the statement posted on the website of the president said that all had been convicted of “crimes of an extremist nature.”

The statement said the group included 11 women and 14 of those pardoned suffered from chronic illnesses.

“All of those released repented for their actions and appealed to the head of state to be pardoned,”

the presidential administration said in a statement, using wording familiar from a series of previous group pardons in the past six months.

Saturday’s announcement marks the eighth such pardon by Lukashenko since the summer. In all, 207 political prisoners have been freed, according to Belarus’s oldest and most established human rights group, Viasna.

Most were jailed following mass anti-government protests in 2020, when Lukashenko secured his sixth term in a vote widely condemned as fraudulent.

According to Viasna, more than 1,250 political prisoners remain behind bars.

— Associated Press

SWEDEN Burial associations acquiring more land

Burial associations in Sweden are looking to acquire enough land for something they hope

they’ll never have to do: bury thousands of people in the event of war.

The search follows recommendations from the Church of Sweden’s national secretariat, which reflect crisis preparedness guidelines from the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency (MSB) and the Swedish Armed Forces.

The preparedness guidelines have been put in a new light by Sweden’s decision to join NATO and tensions with Russia in the Baltic Sea region.

According to the Church of Sweden provisions, supported by legal paragraphs in Sweden’s Burial Act, burial associations are responsible for ensuring the availability of enough land to bury roughly 5 percent of the population within a parish, if needed.

The Gothenburg Burial Association, which operates in Sweden’s second-largest city, is currently trying to navigate the challenge of acquiring at least 10 acres (40,470 square meters) of land to ensure it can handle

urgent casket burials for some 30,000 dead in case of war. That is in addition to 15 acres (60,700 square meters) of land needed for building graveyards for regular use in Gothenburg.

“The [recommendations] mean that we need more land for burial grounds, and this is a phenomenon in the big cities, and a problem in the big cities, where land resources are scarce to begin with and not always sufficient to meet burial ground needs even in times of calm and peace,” said Katarina Evenseth, senior adviser at the Gothenburg Burial Association.

Together with the local municipality, which has a monopoly in making decisions about land usage in Gothenburg, the burial association has identified a vast area appropriate for building a large-scale cemetery for the intended purpose. But a lengthy approval and building process means it could take 10 years to complete, posing further challenges in uncertain times.

— Associated Press

DIGEST

Deal to avert shutdown stripped IRS of another \$20B

Republicans have now clawed back half of \$80B investment in agency

BY JACOB BOGAGE AND SHANNON NAJMAADI

Congress revoked an additional \$20 billion from the Internal Revenue Service this month when lawmakers averted a government shutdown, a cut that may undo many of President Joe Biden's efforts to improve customer service at the tax agency and train fresh scrutiny on wealthy tax cheats.

Biden and congressional Democrats gave the IRS \$80 billion in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, but Congress rescinded \$20 billion as part of a 2023 budget deal. Shortly afterward, Republicans vowed they'd be back for more IRS cuts.

And because of the way lawmakers extended government funding into March, an additional \$20 billion in cuts came automatically.

When Congress approved a stopgap funding bill, called a continuing resolution, all the existing policy from the previous fiscal year was carried forward unless new text was specifically added to the bill to change it. There was no language in the bill to undo last year's cut, so it repeated in the new law.

Critics of the IRS were pleased. "We obviously think the increased money from the [Inflation Reduction Act] for IRS agents was a declared shakedown on taxpayers to pay for Democrats' spending," said Michael Palicz, director of tax policy for the anti-tax group Americans for Tax Reform. "Republicans have taken a huge chunk out of this before, and we have a chance to do that again."

IRS funding will not be affected through March 14, when the new stopgap funding law expires. At that point, the Republican-controlled Congress could vote to permanently rescind the funding. Democrats would probably try to reinstate the money as part of funding bills for the rest of the 2025 fiscal year.

But Biden administration offi-



SARAH SILBIGER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

The Biden administration had secured an extra \$80 billion for the IRS in the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act.

cials said the additional cuts would add \$140 billion to the national debt over the next decade by hamstringing the agency's ability to audit wealthy individuals and large corporations.

The agency will conduct 400 fewer audits of major businesses each year, Biden administration officials said, and 1,200 fewer audits of high-income individuals.

More cuts would also force the IRS to dramatically reduce customer service for taxpayers, Deputy Treasury Secretary Wally Adeyemo said last month. By 2026, the IRS would have enough resources to answer only two of every 10 phone calls to customer helplines, and wait times would increase to 28 minutes on average.

"Not only would you be in a position where we don't have the money to go after the people who are trying to deliberately cheat and not pay their taxes, but we also wouldn't have the resources to help the people who are trying

to pay their taxes and make it more efficient," Adeyemo said.

The new money from the Inflation Reduction Act vastly improved the IRS's operations, according to the agency's inspector

"Siccing the IRS on people is not politically popular."

Michael Palicz, director of tax policy for Americans for Tax Reform

general. Before the additional resources kicked in, the agency had a mountain of 24 million backlogged paper tax returns; within a year of receiving the funding boost, that was almost eradicated, the agency reported.

In the 2022 filing season, months before Congress approved the law, only 10 percent of

taxpayer phone calls were ever connected to a live representative — if callers stayed on the line through sometimes hours-long waits. The IRS now answers more than 85 percent of taxpayer calls with a wait of less than three minutes, Adeyemo said.

"To the extent that you cut the funding, you make it harder for taxpayer service to work. People can't get through on the phones, they can't get answers," John Koskinen, the IRS commissioner from 2013 to 2017, said this month. "I'm famous for saying that underfunding the agency is just a tax cut for tax cheats."

But the Biden administration had already agreed in earlier budget fights to sacrifice some of the IRS funding in exchange for preserving other priorities. So Republicans, who had opposed the extra money over worries it could lead to increased audits of middle-class taxpayers, were eager to push for more cuts.

"It is a landmark thing that you are getting Democrats to open up Biden's signature legislation. And the reason they keep going back to the well on it is because they know it's a political liability for them. Siccing the IRS on people is not politically popular," Palicz said.

Congressional Democrats had hoped to preserve the IRS's resources during innumerable rounds of negotiations around the government shutdown, Rep. Rosa DeLauro (Connecticut), the top Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee, told The Washington Post. But stripping the funding proved to be one of Republicans' top issues, she said.

"I was one of the folks who in the last go-round ... who said, 'They're coming back for more [IRS cuts],' " DeLauro said. "I fought very hard on this issue. You have to get the votes to be able to move forward. ... If you're in a negotiation, you have to negotiate on these things."

U.S. nears limit on debt ceiling, Yellen warns Congress

BY JEFF STEIN

The U.S. government has less than three weeks to raise its debt limit before it will need to take "extraordinary measures" to sustain federal operations, Treasury Secretary Janet L. Yellen said Friday.

In a letter to members of Congress, Yellen said the government is beginning to run out of money to finance its debt obligations, reflecting one of the challenges facing the incoming Trump administration.

Yellen's letter stated that "extraordinary measures" are expected to be needed starting between Jan. 14 and Jan. 23, which is actually somewhat later than originally anticipated. Those measures would probably give Congress several months to act before hitting the borrowing limit.

"I respectfully urge Congress to act to protect the full faith and credit of the United States," Yellen wrote.

Congress tells the Treasury Department how much it can borrow, a limit known as the "debt ceiling." Failing to lift it could have catastrophic consequences for the global economy, as the U.S. government has never before defaulted on its debt obligations.

President-elect Donald Trump tried to get congressional Republicans to suspend the debt limit for two years — or abolish it altogether — in negotiations over funding the government this month. That effort failed, however, and House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana) approved a funding package without changes to the debt limit.

President Joe Biden and former House speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-California) agreed to suspend the debt limit for two years in a bipartisan deal in the spring of 2023.

If GOP leaders try to approve an increase without Democratic support, they would have the narrowest of margins in the House to do so without defections among their right flank. But cutting a deal with Democrats to lift or suspend the debt limit could infuriate the right, whose support Johnson needs to remain speaker.

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SUNDAY OPINION

DANA MILBANK

Out: Trump’s campaign pledges. In: War with Denmark.

For a guy who hates to exercise, President-elect Donald Trump has been uncharacteristically active over the past few weeks. His fitness regimen: a grueling circuit of backpedals, climbdowns and walkbacks.

He said, in his victory speech, “I’m not going to start wars — I’m going to stop wars.” Now he is repeatedly threatening to take Greenland from Denmark, seize the Panama Canal and annex Canada.

He declared on Dec. 20 that “we should never make a deal” on government spending that doesn’t eliminate or extend the debt ceiling. Later that same day, more than 70 percent of House and Senate Republicans voted for a spending bill without a debt-limit extension — and Trump didn’t object.

He promised throughout the campaign to bring prices down. Now he says doing so could be “very hard.”

He promised to round up and deport 20 million migrants. Now his appointee to be “border czar,” Tom Homan, tells The Post’s Nick Miroff that “I don’t see this thing as being sweeps and the military going through neighborhoods.” Instead, he says it will be a “targeted” operation aimed at the much smaller number of migrants who have criminal records.

Trump promised to have the war in Ukraine “settled in one day, 24 hours.” In a news conference at Mar-a-Lago this month, he called the Ukraine-Russia conflict a “tough one” that would be “more difficult” to resolve than the fighting in the Middle East.

He vowed to let vaccine skeptic Robert F. Kennedy Jr. “go wild” with the nation’s health policy. Now, Trump says RFK Jr. is “going to be much less radical than you would think” — while offering a personal endorsement of the polio vaccine, invented in the early 1950s: “Dr. Jonas Salk did a great job.” Amazing job, Jonas! You’re being recognized more and more.

He persecuted transgender people at virtually every campaign stop and in a famous campaign ad. Now he says “it’s a very small number of people we’re talking about” and told a Time magazine interviewer he agrees there are more important issues than which bathroom a transgender member of Congress will use.

The next event in Trump’s backpedaling decathlon: his beloved tariffs. His pick for commerce secretary, Howard Lutnick, has already called Trump’s oft-threatened tariffs a mere “bargaining chip” to start negotiations. “When you’re running for office, you make broad statements so people understand you,” Lutnick told CNBC. And Trump, after a campaign of China-bashing, is back to exalting Xi Jinping. “He’s an amazing guy,” Trump said of the Chinese dictator. “The press hates when I say that, but he’s an amazing person.”

Trump’s demanding routine of rhetorical reverse-lunges has worried MAGA hard-liners, particularly when it comes to his signature promise to carry out “the largest deportation operation” in U.S. history. “Trump Allies Fear Watered Down Deportation Efforts,” announced the Wall Street Journal. These allies are apparently shocked to discover that Trump does not always keep his word.

Trump’s post-election moves to distance himself from his campaign promises probably reflect less a change of heart than a nod to reality. For all his dubious claims about a “mandate” and a “landslide” (he won less than 50 percent of the popular vote and beat Kamala Harris by only 1.5 percentage points), his prospects for success simply aren’t that bright.

As the recent spending-bill debacle in the House shows, this Republican majority can’t even handle the basic function of keeping the lights on without lurching into crisis — and Trump’s term will begin with an effective GOP House majority of a single vote. The \$2 trillion in annual spending cuts promised by Elon Musk, the replacement of renewable energy with “drill, baby, drill,” and Trump’s call for the biggest tax cut in history simply aren’t going to happen. At the same time, it’s a safe bet that Trump won’t shock the economy by deporting millions of people, nor will he launch a trade war with across-the-board tariffs of 100 percent. That’s because the thing Trump prizes almost as much as his own vanity is the stock market; his slate of relatively conventional Republican economic advisers suggests he won’t *intentionally* blow things up.

This is all of little comfort, however, because the menace of Trump is less in the policies he has announced than in the impulsive and inexplicable things he will do, without forewarning or any apparent forethought. The greatest danger is in the chaos, in the constant stream of needless crises he creates. He doesn’t govern by ideology; he governs by whim.

Few, for example, had “war with Panama” on their bingo cards before this past week — just as almost nobody had “government shutdown” on their cards before Trump’s ubiquitous sidekick, “President Musk,” sent us to the brink of one. Musk, fresh from the crisis he fabricated on Capitol Hill, moved on to endorse the far-right Alternative for Germany party, an anti-Muslim and antisemitic extremist organization, in German elections. (It was only the latest flirtation with the extreme right by Musk, whose maternal grandfather in Musk’s native South Africa



DUSTIN FRANZ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

A man dressed as a Revolutionary War soldier rides his horse to attend a campaign rally for Donald Trump in Indiana County, Pennsylvania, on Sept. 23.



MATIAS DELACROIX/AP

A cargo ship passes through the Panama Canal on Sept. 2.

was an apartheid proponent. As Mediaite reported, Musk is a paid subscriber to a ferociously racist South African account on X.)

Trump commenced verbal hostilities with Panama the day after the shutdown crisis. On social media, he accused Panama of “ridiculous” canal fees, a “complete ‘rip-off’ of our Country,” and warned that he might “demand that the Panama Canal be returned to us, in full, and without question.” The Panamanian president replied that Panama controls “every square meter” of the canal, to which Trump replied: “We’ll see about that!” Where did this out-of-the-blue standoff with Panama come from? Online troll Laura Loomer, an occasional Trump campaign adviser, took credit: “I posted in February that he should take back the Panama canal, and I even told Trump so in person.”

Trump is apparently preparing to fight a two-front war, because he also declared on social media that “the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity”—a renewal of one of his more bizarre first-term obsessions. (Or maybe it’s a three-front war, if one takes seriously his more jocular remarks, most recently in his “Merry Christmas” message, about making Canada the “51st State.”) The prime minister of Greenland, a Danish territory, responded: “We are not for sale and will never be for sale.” Tell that to the 2nd Fleet!

These were on top of the ordinary, day-to-day outrages of the past few weeks:

He exploited the birth of Jesus to enrich himself, hawking a Bible (licensed by the same Trump-owned business that earns him money from sales of books and footwear) as “The perfect gift for this Christmas. ... Also available are signed copies.” The promo he posted did not specify whether the Bibles were signed by him or by God.

He suggested he wants the FBI to go after Liz Cheney, one of his most prominent critics, who has “done egregious and unthinkable acts of crime” — by participating in the congressional probe into the Jan. 6 insurrection.

He took the stage at a MAGA convention shortly after a comedian announced that “women are not

qualified to be in charge of the Secret Service,” that “January 6th really was the FBI guided tour of the Capitol,” that “I’m just not sure Haiti is sending us their best cat-eating, rapist cannibals,” and that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky “is obviously a cokehead” who is “always saying delusional s---.”

The president-elect told the crowd at the same convention that “woke is bulls---.” He proclaimed a nonexistent 300-fold increase in autism and overstated fentanyl deaths by a factor of four. He announced that he “won by 36 points with young people” (he lost young voters). And he defensively insisted that he had not “ceded the presidency to Elon Musk.”

At a news conference this month, Trump displayed his startling lack of curiosity about the world, even after four years as president. “I spoke to over 100 countries. You wouldn’t believe how many countries there are,” he said. (I believe there are 195.) He claimed “small business optimism took a 41-point jump” since his election. (Actual jump: eight points.) And he alleged that the Biden administration, in an “almost criminal act,” was trying to thwart him by selling off construction material for the border wall. (The sale was required by the National Defense Authorization Act — supported by Republicans.)

These are all minor kerfuffles compared with what’s coming in the new year. First, House Speaker Mike Johnson (R-Louisiana) will try to retain the speakership as hard-liners threaten a repeat of their humiliation of Kevin McCarthy in 2023. Then come the Senate confirmation battles over Trump’s exotic cast of nominees: conspiracy theorist Tulsi Gabbard to be director of national intelligence, hard-drinking Fox News host Pete Hegseth to run the Pentagon, anti-vaxxer RFK Jr. to be health secretary and Trump avenger Kash Patel to run the FBI.

Matt Gaetz, Trump’s first choice to be attorney general, said last week that his doomed nomination “moved the Overton window just a bit” and made Gabbard, Kennedy and Patel seem more acceptable by comparison. He might be right about that. On Monday, the House Ethics Committee released its much-anticipated report finding that Gaetz regularly

paid for sex, including from a 17-year-old girl in 2017, possessed cocaine and ecstasy, and violated House rules and state and federal laws governing prostitution and statutory rape.

Trump certainly knew the general allegations against Gaetz, if not all of the salacious details, when he tapped the former Republican congressman from Florida to run the Justice Department. But he did it anyway.

That is the danger of Trump. On a whim, he taps a moral reprobate to be the nation’s highest-ranking law enforcement official. On another impulse, he calls for a government shutdown. In yet another moment of caprice, he threatens Denmark and Panama. This is how we will live for the next four years: Crisis is always going to be a tweet away.

Democrats have been in a slough of despond in the weeks since the election. Trump has been enjoying the sort of honeymoon he didn’t have in 2016. Foreign leaders and business titans have been flocking to Mar-a-Lago, where Trump marveled that “everybody wants to be my friend.” Polls show Trump’s favorability improving and a majority approving of his handling of the transition. A cowering ABC News agreed to pay \$15 million rather than test Trump’s defamation claims in court. There has been no sign of the “resistance” that pushed back against Trump’s excesses eight years ago. Democrats have been pointing fingers at Biden and Harris and drafting manifestos on how to save the party.

Doug Sosnik, a veteran Democratic strategist, has a word of advice for his demoralized comrades: Relax. The transformation of the party will happen “organically,” he told me. “It’s not going to be a bunch of elite, elected officials and operatives sitting around a conference table in Washington figuring out how to get these people in America to like us.” Rather, Sosnik sees the party developing into an “outsider, populist party” from the grass roots.

In some ways, it’s the mirror image of what happened after the 2008 election, in which the outsider tea party movement, and ultimately Trump, emerged as a backlash against President Barack Obama. At first, Republicans were reeling from their losses, which were far heavier than Democrats’ were this year. But congressional GOP leaders, particularly House Minority Whip Eric Cantor (Virginia) and Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (Kentucky), met secretly even before Obama was sworn in to hatch plans for a comeback — based entirely on opposing everything the new president did. “If he was for it, we had to be against it,” then-Sen. George Voinovich, an Ohio Republican, explained in Michael Grunwald’s 2012 book on the era.

Democrats needn’t oppose Trump reflexively and mindlessly, as Republicans did Obama. They just need to hold the line when Trump does something truly egregious, as he did when, with Musk, he blew up the bipartisan spending bill. House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-New York) maintained impressive unity: All but three House Democrats stood against the Trump-ordered scheme to suspend the debt ceiling; then, when Republicans returned to something like the original deal, Jeffries delivered the “yea” votes of all but one Democrat.

“In the short term, Democrats have lost control of their own destiny,” Sosnik argued. “The opportunity in the short term is largely or entirely based on what the Republicans do.” Luckily for the opposition party, Trump has already shown what Republicans are going to do: make a mess.

Even during the transition, Trump’s mess-making has been so consuming that it has stolen all attention from the sitting president. This has produced grumbling from some Democrats, which in turn has produced a spate of Biden-is-invisible reports.

The New York Times observed that Biden has “absented himself from the debate convulsing the country.” The Washington Examiner opined on “Biden’s disappearance.” Britain’s Telegraph reported that “Joe Biden has vanished.” The Hill’s headline described Biden as “AWOL.”

Much of this appears to be the product of circular reasoning. Media outlets have been covering Biden less as they (understandably) focus on Trump’s daily outrages. Then, based on the lack of coverage Biden is receiving, they conclude that he has disappeared. In fact, the missing-in-action Biden negotiated a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, visited the Amazon rainforest and Angola, hurried more funds out the door under the infrastructure bill and the Chips and Science Act (two of his administration’s signature achievements), and implemented a flurry of rules covering obesity drugs, wages for the disabled and more.

At the White House holiday party for the press on Dec. 20, the invisible president and the first lady stood for hours to shake hands and pose for photos with some 300 journalists and their guests. In what was either a technical error or a cheeky gesture, the White House then sent each of the 300 photographs to all of the attendees — irrefutable evidence of the president standing with representatives of the very news organizations that have reported him missing.

ALEXANDRA PETRI

Good news! 2025 will be full of AI!

Artificial intelligence and the year 2025: two things that are being inflicted on us whether we want them or not!

Some people are grumpy about how AI seems to be everywhere. “Let it stick to identifying cancer cells, and leave us alone,” they grumble. But not I! I, for one, am excited to be relieved of the burden of doing things myself.

Here are just a few of the frustrating, painful tasks that AI is going to take care of for us in the coming year, freeing us to spend more time on what really matters.

Write Letters to Your Favorite Athletes and Other Icons: AI will handle this. It’ll make certain that your letters are now full of thrilling typos and confident but incorrect pronouncements about how many R’s are in “strawberry.” People hate to hear from others, so this will save both you and your favorite athlete precious time — which she can spend practicing and you can spend increasing your social isolation! This will give you more time to read.

Read: Actually, why read? AI will summarize things for you! Much easier than reading, and a good way to prevent new thoughts from getting into your head, which could be dangerous and lead to discontent with the present state of the world. Plus, think of the time you’ll save — time you can spend dating and getting to know people.

Date and Get to Know People: Even better news! Dating apps will soon be incorporating AI into their interfaces, helping you become known and beloved for witty ripostes that you did not write! Don’t worry, this worked out well for everyone in “Cyrano de Bergerac,” and I can’t imagine it going worse for you. Plus, your new significant other will probably be using AI as well. This will add a delightful element of surprise to your relationship because each time you meet in person, it’ll feel like you hardly know each other! Have things in common? Who knows! What matters is that you stay together for your respective AIs. (If this makes you feel glum, don’t worry: You can make art about it.)

Make Art: Why bother making art, though? Stick it, prehistoric cave painters! Art is not a primal urge of the human soul — you should feel ashamed for even typing a sentence like that. It is something to be automated away. Are your drawings less than perfect? Unable to make your sketches match what is in your head? Just delegate it to AI. That won’t quite look how you wanted either, but at least you won’t get better at making art in the process. Plus, this buys you more time to create value for your employer.

Create Value for Your Employer: Uh oh! Your employer went to a conference where somebody said that AI was the future, and now she refuses to stop incorporating it into everything, whether people want it or not. Now she is training AI to do your job! Oh well, in your unemployment, you will be able to message your friends!

Message Your Friends: On third thought, why waste time communicating with other useless bags of meat? Let AI take care of this. Trying to respond to your friend’s newly posted photos of her baby? AI will free

you from the onerous burden of having to say how chubby those cheeks are or how great that smile is. You can rest assured that it will leave a much more productive comment like, “Not enough fingers!” Now, use the extra time to bone up on your knowledge of trivia!

Learn Trivia: Unfortunately, any time you ask a smart device a question about anything, you can’t assume it won’t give you a response tainted with AI hallucinations! We can no longer know for sure if Canada even exists, and this uncertainty is kind of stressful! Hope the stress doesn’t cause you to have any medical emergencies that send you running to Google in search of an answer.

Have a Medical Emergency That Causes You to Google Something: Uh oh! You’re having a medical emergency and Googled something, and AI included in its summary of the results something that is medically unsafe and you should not do! Well, at least you got to enjoy all the good parts of being alive.

All the Good Parts of Being Alive: AI will handle this.

OPINION

The big unknowns of 2024? Let’s revisit them.

Seven Post columnists began the year with a question each. Here’s how they answer them now.

KAREN TUMULTY

Who we are

David Axelrod, who was Barack Obama’s chief political strategist, likes to say that presidential campaigns are “MRIs for the soul.” He means they reveal the character of the candidates, but the same can be said of the character of the electorate.

At the beginning of the year, I raised the hoary phrase that we hear so often from politicians when the darkest currents of the American nature surface: “This is not who we are.” I wrote that, given the starkness of the presidential alternatives, no election in recent memory would show the nation’s values so clearly.

I stand by that. Donald Trump is returning to the White House having prevailed not only in the electoral college but also as just the second Republican in 36 years to win the popular vote. He did not hide who he is or how he intends to govern.

And unlike the first time he was elected, no one could have been under the illusion that he would grow in office. Voters knew that Trump would return to the White House even less inhibited, more dangerous to democratic norms.

It turns out a plurality in this country — or, at least, a slim one of those who are engaged enough to vote — actually welcome an authoritarian turn in how they are governed. Or, at least, they do *now*. They have lost faith in what democratic institutions have delivered, especially when it comes to their economic well-being and their hopes for the future of their children and grandchildren.

Republicans, however, should keep in mind that the White House has changed hands three times in the past decade; control of the House and the Senate has swung twice in that time. Because this is who we are: angry, disillusioned and impatient for results.

COLBERT I. KING

A stress test for D.C.

Let’s cut to the chase. The D.C. government’s best hope is that the incoming Trump administration will make such a mess that Congress will be too busy straightening things out to bother attending to its Article I constitutional authority over the District. Short of that fortuitous development, it’s fair to say the D.C. government faces tough sledding in the coming years with our nation’s capital controlled at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue by Republicans.

I posit this because at this time last year, I wrote that the biggest question facing the city in 2024 was whether the current crop of D.C. elected leaders was up to the job of governing this city. The year-end answer is self-evident: The government is still standing and is not headed toward abject failure. But some things remain terribly wrong. And the 2025 issue is whether Mayor Muriel E. Bowser (D) and a D.C. Council led by Chairman Phil Mendelson (D) are up to tackling long-festering problems while under the watchful eyes of President Donald Trump — who said at a January campaign rally that if elected again, he would “take over our horribly run capital.” Yes, candidate — now president-elect — Trump said: “We’re going to federalize it. We’re going to have the toughest law enforcement in the country.”

Where Trump and the GOP Congress will stand on D.C. come Inauguration Day is an open question. The city is likely to end the year with key violent crime statistics — homicides, assaults, robberies — pointing downward. But neighborhoods are still being swallowed by crime, juvenile offenders are getting younger, and city leaders talk more — without doing anything — about a youth rehabilitation and services department that neither rehabilitates nor properly serves young people.

Millions of public dollars are shoved out the door in the name of public safety. The only certainty is that money is being spent. On what and on whom are D.C. questions for the ages. Multimillion-dollar contracts and grants to meet social and housing needs are steered and administered by a bureaucracy for which there is scant accountability.

On top of that looms Trump White House budget office scrutiny of D.C. spending that must ultimately win congressional approval. It is safe to say, though, that with a new sheriff in town in the form of a Trump-appointed U.S. attorney, and Trump-appointed judges to the D.C. Superior Court and the D.C. Court of Appeals, 2025 will be a stress test for the D.C. government. That test will determine the health and strength of self-governance.

DAVID IGNATIUS

Year of carnage

This was a year when the world shuddered at the horror of war but did nothing to stop it. The bodies piled up in Gaza and Ukraine, where cameras could see them, while still more people were dying in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, mostly invisible.

The “big question” that troubled me a year ago was whether the spread of war could be stopped. The answer a year later is a resounding, sickening “no.” Deterrence isn’t working; the conflict-resolution tools of the United Nations seem useless; the “rules-based order” championed by the United States is a lawless mess. Donald Trump was the only major presidential candidate who protested the spread of war in 2024. He was right about that.

These wars have been among the bloodiest of my lifetime. In Ukraine, Russia has lost more than 600,000 dead and wounded, according to a recent U.S. report. Ukraine said in December that its dead and wounded total more than 400,000. That’s more than 1 million people dead or wounded. The Biden administration’s strategy has been to help Ukraine sustain this terrible attrition “as long as it takes.”

Israel’s wars to avenge the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attack roll on. In Gaza, the health ministry now counts more than 45,000 dead and over 107,000 wounded from the relentless campaign against Hamas. The majority are almost certainly civilians. Israeli operations in Lebanon had killed more than 3,700 by late November, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry, and more than 1 million Lebanese were displaced from their homes.



WASHINGTON POST ILLUSTRATION; WASHINGTON POST STAFF; GETTY IMAGES; AP

Those are the wars that we see. Far from the cameras, the nightmare in Sudan has killed more than 60,000 people over the past 14 months, according to a November study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. Saudis and Emiratis are pumping money to different warlords in this conflict. Even people who follow Sudan closely have trouble explaining what it’s about.

And then there’s the war in Congo, with a level of human suffering and death that dwarfs even these other terrible conflicts. A recent Amnesty International report estimates that more than 6 million people have died since 1998 in the endless fighting there. Many have died of famine and disease; more than 1.5 million women have been raped.

Peace is a universal human aspiration. We pray for it in every faith and language. But we need to look in the mirror and admit that in 2024, the world failed miserably in containing the scourge of war.

RUTH MARCUS

The legal system’s epic fail

“Donald Trump has made a career of manipulating the legal system to his advantage, evading responsibility for alleged misconduct and deploying litigation as a weapon against adversaries,” I wrote as 2024 dawned. “This could be the year the tables turn — if the courts rise to the occasion.”

My optimism, though guarded, could not have been more misplaced.

Trump began the year confronting two federal indictments and a pair of cases brought by prosecutors in New York and Georgia. He ended it a felon — but also the president-elect.

If the question at the start of the year was whether Trump could be held legally accountable for his actions, and whether that could be accomplished in time for voters to weigh the result, the answer was a resounding “no.”

For the legal system, this was an epic failure. The chief responsibility for the dismal outcome rests with the Supreme Court’s six conservative justices. Not only did Trump evade responsibility — with conservatives’ help — but he also created a once-unimaginable and remarkably broad zone of immunity from criminal liability for himself and future presidents. The court rose to the occasion, all right, but on Trump’s behalf.

And so, the federal cases against Trump, instead of being brought to trial as they should have, limped along. In D.C., the Jan. 6 election interference case against Trump stalled while the immunity issue was being litigated. In Florida, U.S. District Judge Aileen M. Cannon bent over backward to tank the case against Trump over mishandling classified documents and obstruction of justice. With the election, both prosecutions fizzled because the Justice Department has a policy against prosecuting sitting presidents.

Meanwhile, the Georgia election interference case against Trump effectively self-destructed in a seamy sideshow starring Fulton County District Attorney Fani T. Willis and the lawyer she brought in to oversee the prosecution — with whom she was also romantically involved. The coup de grâce was a Georgia appeals court ruling this month disqualifying Willis and her office from prosecuting the case.

A jury did convict Trump of 34 felony counts in the one case against him that went to trial, involving hush money payments to adult-film actress Stormy Daniels and alleged falsification of business records concerning those payments. Ironically, this case was the weakest of the lot. And Trump is maneuvering now to have the conviction overturned and any sentencing delayed.

Legal consequences for Trump? The lesson of 2024 was clear: Don’t hold your breath.

CATHERINE RAMPPELL

Clean energy’s uneven advance

We’re still a ways off from knowing whether we’ll turn away from fossil fuels in time to curb climate

change, as I asked at the beginning of the year. But the United States took some encouraging steps, suggesting clean-energy technologies are becoming increasingly cost-competitive.

Among the highlights: Of all the new energy capacity added in the United States in the first half of 2024, 91 percent came from solar, wind and battery storage. All three probably continued ramping up in the latter half of the year, the U.S. Energy Information Administration reports.

In fact, solar capacity additions this year are expected to set an annual record (37 gigawatts, nearly double 2023’s total). Utilities are also anticipated to add a record amount of battery storage capacity in 2024, with Texas and California leading the way. Meanwhile, coal and natural gas plants are slowly being retired as they age and become less cost-competitive.

Electric and hybrid autos are gaining U.S. market share, too, reaching about one-fifth of U.S. auto sales in the third quarter of 2024. Similar trends are expected globally, especially since Chinese automakers have become spectacularly efficient at producing high-quality, low-cost EVs.

This progress is partly thanks to government subsidies (here, in China and elsewhere). But much of the credit goes to human ingenuity and technological innovation. “Overall, renewables are on a steady path towards outcompeting traditional fossil fuel sources,” wrote Amhed Jameel Abdullah, senior research analyst at Wood Mackenzie, in a research release this fall.

Now for the less good news: Despite technological progress, it remains infuriatingly difficult to build the clean-energy infrastructure that America needs for this transition. Bipartisan talks on permitting reform have again collapsed. State and local governments have added more obstacles. And as recently as this month, President Joe Biden, a major climate champion, announced yet another round of tariffs on solar imports. This will make expanding solar *more* expensive, not less.

Then there was last month’s U.N. Climate Change Conference, known as COP29, which was generally considered a failure.

In the long run, you still can’t beat the economics of renewables. After all, once you build the solar array or wind farm, the sunshine and wind are free, and battery advances are solving the intermittency problem. But government policies can either speed up this transition or slow it down, and it’s discouraging that even climate-conscious leaders often can’t get the incentives right.

Meanwhile, President-elect Donald Trump is trying to slow the clean-energy transition. He has tried to prop up coal and threatened to repeal Biden-era clean-energy subsidies. These subsidies have been a major windfall to Republican districts, so maybe — just maybe — the GOP will discover that clean energy is in its interests.

LEANA S. WEN

A shifting paradigm in health care

The class of drugs that includes Ozempic and Mounjaro, known as GLP-1s, is more popular than ever. A recent KFF poll found that about 1 in 8 American adults have taken them. Four in 10 with diabetes have tried them, as have more than 1 in 5 with obesity or who are overweight.

Can these medications transform American health, as I asked at the start of the year? It seems so. The surge in use comes as a flurry of studies has demonstrated additional health benefits in cutting the risk of cardiovascular death, alleviating osteoarthritis, and treating liver and kidney disease. Some research suggests these drugs could help with opioid and alcohol addiction and even delay Alzheimer’s dementia.

More and more primary-care physicians have embraced the “obesity first” approach, recognizing that if they treat obesity aggressively, other chronic conditions often go away. This is a paradigm shift and an acknowledgment that obesity is both a disease in its own right and an underlying cause of

many others.

The Biden administration, recognizing the emerging science and changing medical practice, proposed a rule last month that would allow Medicare and Medicaid to cover GLP-1s to treat obesity. This would dramatically cut out-of-pocket costs for millions of Americans using the drug. But it’s uncertain whether the incoming Trump administration will implement this change.

Donald Trump’s pick to lead the Department of Health and Human Services, Robert F. Kennedy Jr., has railed against GLP-1s, calling them symptomatic of America’s addiction to prescription drugs and arguing that they lead to suicidal ideation (though both the Food and Drug Administration and European regulators have concluded that the evidence doesn’t support his claim). Instead, he has vowed to address obesity and other chronic diseases by reforming the food industry.

Kennedy is correct to emphasize prevention of these diseases. I just hope the incoming administration will not leave behind patients who already have them and are benefiting from effective treatments.

DAVID VON DREHLE

The American song goes on

My big question a year ago had to do with a seeming paradox: One of America’s defining creations and most influential exports — our popular music — has roots in some of our most difficult and even shameful history. I held up Ray Charles as a model of this disturbing and wonderful alchemy:

“Born in Jim Crow Georgia, orphaned in segregated Florida, blind from childhood, the man reportedly dubbed by Frank Sinatra as ‘the only true genius in show business’ was a great conglomerator of sounds and rhythms. He inhaled the Delta blues, Appalachian folk music, Chicago jazz, Texas swing, Sunday morning gospel and Tin Pan Alley tunelessness — and exhaled the roots of soul.

“All those traditions express, in one way or another, the shadows of oppression and inequality, as well as the sunlight of joy and creativity.”

Two words — Taylor Swift — end any doubts about the continuing grip of American music on the world. Her recently concluded Eras Tour comprised 149 shows on five continents, with gross receipts in the billions. But another event of 2024 spoke even more directly to the redemptive, connective power of this grassroots art.

“The Greatest Night in Pop,” a documentary from director Bao Nguyen, took viewers into the studio for one of the most extraordinary sessions in music history. An American music hall of fame sang together from night until dawn in 1985 to record the fastest-selling pop single in history.

Conceived by Harry Belafonte, produced by Quincy Jones, written by Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie, “We Are the World” was created to raise money and awareness for African famine relief. The impulse behind the phenomenon was not exclusively American; British stars had already done something similar with “Do They Know It’s Christmas?” But no fan can watch the film (streaming on Netflix) without marveling at the sheer creative genius of U.S. culture. Stevie Wonder is in the house, and so are Bob Dylan, Diana Ross, Bruce Springsteen, Paul Simon, Dionne Warwick, Willie Nelson, Tina Turner, Smokey Robinson, the Pointer Sisters, Kenny Rogers, Bette Midler, Al Jarreau, Cyndi Lauper, Huey Lewis — gotta stop now because we’re keeping this short.

Oh, and Ray Charles, greeted on his arrival in the studio as “the Statue of Liberty.”

Though I could not help but feel wistful at a glimpse of Charles and the reminder of Jackson’s ineffably sweet voice and the sight of the seminal Jones at the mixing board, the film was not a relic of time long gone. The years since have added at least as many stars to the firmament as they have extinguished. Besides: Thanks to recording technology, the stars live on.

One hears America singing through Nguyen’s film.

OPINION

The Washington Post
AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER



JOE LAMBERTI FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



NIC ANTAYA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST



JOHN WESSELS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



JUSTIN TALLIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

EDITORIAL

Democracy in 2024
was noisy and chaotic.
It was also resilient.

IN JAPAN, the long-ruling Liberal Democratic Party suffered its worst defeat in over a decade, and Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba became leader of a minority government. In South Korea, the autocratic-leaning president declared martial law in an attempt to sideline the opposition-led parliament but was forced to retreat six hours later, impeached and temporarily removed. France is in political paralysis with its fourth prime minister this year and no party with a majority in Parliament. Germany faces a period of political uncertainty after Chancellor Olaf Scholz lost a confidence vote, and with new elections next year, the far right is expected to make gains.

In the United States, voters chose Donald Trump for a second term with popular-vote and electoral-vote victories, despite dire warnings from his critics that his return to the White House would threaten America's democratic norms and institutions.

Autocrats are no doubt watching the political upheaval in the world's most prominent democracies with a mix of triumphalism and glee. The recent apparent chaos seems to confirm the autocrats' view that the U.S.-led Western international order is in inexorable decline. Even democracy's proponents might be forgiven for feeling dismayed by the past year and disillusioned about what next year might bring.

But angst and despair are not warranted. Democracy overall faced a major test this year, or a series of tests, with about half the world's population in more than 50 countries going to the polls in national elections for presidents and parliaments (including votes for the European Parliament in all 27 European Union countries). Many of this year's contests brought surprises and upheavals. But by and large, the institutional guardrails have held. In most places where the voting was free and fair — and there are obvious exceptions — incumbents who lost accepted their defeats. Post-election violence was largely kept to a minimum.

Democracy, when it was allowed to function, worked exactly as it always has: It was messy and noisy and sometimes produced muddled outcomes with power divided and no clear winners and losers — in other words, a reflection of the polarized state of many modern societies.

To be sure, voters were in a foul mood this year and punished incumbents across the board. But the discontent was not ideological, as ruling parties of the left, right and center were pummeled at the polls.

Voters in Britain turfed out the Conservative Party



ALASTAIR PIKE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Top left: An election watch party is held at Love City Brewing in Philadelphia on Nov. 5.
Top right: Election workers assist voters in Dearborn, Michigan, on Nov. 5.
Middle left: A voter casts his ballot during Senegal's parliamentary elections on Nov. 17.
Middle right: British Prime Minister Keir Starmer steps out of 10 Downing Street on July 9.
Above: Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te, center left, and Taiwanese Vice President Hsiao Bi-khim, center right, outside the headquarters of the Democratic Progressive Party in Taipei on Jan. 13.

after 14 years and a revolving door's list of prime ministers in favor of Prime Minister Keir Starmer's Labour Party. In France, President Emmanuel Macron's centrists lost to parties of the far left and the far right, leaving Parliament hamstrung with no working majority. American voters rejected President Joe Biden's chosen successor, Vice President Kamala Harris. And voters in Canada appear to have tired of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau after nine years in power and multiple scandals; he has lost support even within his ruling Liberal Party.

Voters in Africa turned against ruling parties and voted for opposition parties and candidates in Senegal, Ghana, Mauritius and Botswana. In all of those cases, the humbled incumbents accepted the will of the voters, demonstrating that a peaceful transfer of power after an election is not just a European or North American concept.

In South Africa, the African National Congress, the continent's most storied liberation movement, lost its parliamentary majority and was forced to enter into a coalition with the moderate, reform-minded Democratic Party. Similarly, in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party suffered a surprise loss of its majority and was forced into a coalition to retain power.

Voters, when given a real choice, opted for greater freedom and closer ties with the West and rejected attempts at intimidation, manipulation and disinformation. In Taiwan, they brushed aside China's attempts to sow fear and instead elected President Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, whom Beijing excoriated as an independence advocate. In Georgia, the ruling pro-Russian, anti-E.U. Georgian Dream party held on to power in a disputed contest that opponents say was rigged. And results in Romania, in which a pro-Russian presidential candidate won the first round, were canceled by the courts amid allegations of Russian interference.

It's difficult to draw firm conclusions across countries and continents with differing histories and political traditions. But one is that democracy is proving more resilient than its critics — and even many of its advocates — had thought.

Democracy can be chaotic and cumbersome. Across the world, people want their democratic governments to work better at solving problems, and they are willing to turn out incumbents who don't deliver. But as brave South Koreans showed when they defied soldiers in the middle of the night and stood up against the short-lived martial law decree, people prefer democratic systems above all the alternatives — and rightly so.

OPINION

DAVID IGNATIUS

What strange things does 2025 have in store? Take my quiz to find out.

It's New Year's, and foreign and domestic leaders are lining up to say nice things about Donald Trump from sea to lake — or “Mar-a-Lago,” as the Spanish say. But Mr. President-elect, before the roller coaster ride begins, a cautionary word from the late, great New York Times columnist William Safire: “The right to do something does not mean that doing it is right.”

My friend Safire began a tradition 41 years ago of a year-end quiz about what's ahead in the new year, and I've tried to keep the franchise going for the past decade. So here are eight questions about the year ahead that combine “humint,” “rumint” and just plain nonsense.

I invite you to try to figure out which is which below. (No “right” answers here; just best guesses.)

- 1. The big surprise in Ukraine in 2025 will be:**

 - A. A ceasefire that suspends the war with Russia without a formal peace agreement.
 - B. French and British troops enter Ukraine to provide a “security guarantee” separate from NATO.
 - C. Russia withdraws from all territory it has seized since its full-scale invasion in February 2022.
 - D. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky flies to D.C. to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin for peace talks at Camp David.
 - E. Zelensky is replaced as president after massive public protests against giving up any territory as part of a settlement with Russia.
 - F. None of the above.
- 2. The Trump administration will be shocked in 2025 when:**

 - A. Military, FBI and CIA officers resign because of what they say is political interference with their oaths to serve the Constitution.
 - B. The Supreme Court rejects a Trump Justice Department attempt to prosecute former special counsel Jack Smith.
 - C. Europe retaliates for big tariff increases by increasing its high-tech cooperation with China.
 - D. The Senate rejects Trump's nominees for Defense, the FBI, and Health and Human Services.
 - E. Democrats support Trump's trade, defense and border policies.
 - F. None of the above.
- 3. The biggest Middle East news of 2025 will be:**

 - A. Iran's supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, steps down because of ill health and is replaced by his son Mojtaba.
 - B. Syria's deposed dictator, Bashar al-Assad, fatally falls down the stairs of a Moscow hotel.
 - C. In the turmoil following Israel's annexation of the West Bank, King Abdullah of Jordan moves to the United States.
 - D. Syria's new ruler, opposition leader Ahmed al-Sharaa (formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Jolani), proves to be a Middle Eastern “golden unicorn”: an Arab-Muslim democratic leader.
 - E. Trump hosts Saudi leader Mohammed bin Salman and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the Rose Garden to celebrate the Saudi normalization “deal of the century.”
 - F. None of the above.
- 4. The “China surprise” of 2025 will be:**

 - A. The resignation of Chen Yixin, minister of state security, after infighting with his predecessor, Chen Wenqing, now the Politburo's security chief, amid



The 2025 New Year's numerals are displayed in New York's Times Square on Dec. 18.

- rising domestic social unrest.
- B. Publication of a secret memoir dictated by Qin Gang, former foreign minister, who was arrested in June 2023.
- C. Coup rumors in Beijing as top military leaders turn on President Xi Jinping because of his purge of the army's leadership and removal of the military's “special status.”
- D. Alibaba's AI system, called Qwen, emerges as the world's most popular large language model, beating out OpenAI's ChatGPT, Meta's Llama, Google's Gemini and Anthropic's Claude.
- E. China steps up preparations for a military assault on Taiwan as Trump feuds with Taiwanese President Lai Ching-te.
- F. None of the above.

- 5. The breakout bestseller of 2025 will be:**

 - A. Barry Diller's memoir of his life as a media mogul, “Who Knew.”
 - B. Rick Atkinson's second volume of his trilogy about the Revolutionary War, “The Fate of the Day.”
 - C. Robert Wright's “The God Test: Artificial Intelligence and Our Coming Cosmic Reckoning.”
 - D. Graydon Carter's “When the Going Was Good,” his memoir about editing Spy and Vanity Fair.
 - E. Ron Chernow's biography “Mark Twain.”
 - F. None of the above.

- 6. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un will stun the world in 2025 by:**

 - A. Hosting Trump in Pyongyang and ordering his army to play “YMCA” when Trump arrives at Sunan Airport.
 - B. Mending fences with Japan's prime minister, Shigeru Ishiba, and challenging him to a “friendly” sumo wrestling match.
 - C. Firing missiles at U.S. military bases in South Korea and Japan and launching a drone attack on Guam.
 - D. Meeting Trump in Singapore and signing an unverifiable “agreement” to limit his country's nuclear weapons program.
 - E. Traveling to the United States and visiting both Disney World and Universal Studios theme parks in

Orlando — and suggesting a bidding war about which one will open a branch in Pyongyang.

F. None of the above.

- 7. The world will move closer to nuclear war in 2025 when:**

 - A. The United States shoots down on launch Russia's Sputnik S, a killer satellite designed to destroy all satellites in low Earth orbit with the radiation from a nuclear explosion.
 - B. China responds to U.S. military deployments in Taiwan with a cyberattack that temporarily disables communications, electricity and water facilities across the United States.
 - C. Iran attacks the U.S. naval base in Bahrain as American and Israeli planes strike Iran's nuclear facilities deep underground at Fordow.
 - D. Russia counters America's plan to build an AI-driven shield of directed energy weapons, developed by OpenAI and Anduril, with an orbital bombardment system that can launch missiles from space.
 - E. None of the above.

- 8. The big economic news of 2025 will be:**

 - A. Bold action by the Trump administration to reduce the U.S. deficit, triggering a surge in the stock and bond markets.
 - B. A stock market sell-off triggered by Trump administration tax cuts, increased defense spending and other steps that sharply increase the deficit.
 - C. A steep rise in food and construction prices triggered by the Trump administration's deportation of immigrants who work in those sectors.
 - D. A sharp increase in unemployment as AI begins to replace tens of millions of jobs across the U.S. economy.
 - E. The European Union fragments as the Trump administration applies selective trade policies to help countries it likes and punish those it doesn't.
 - F. None of the above.

Here's what I think: 1. a; 2. all true; 3. a; 4. d; 5. b; 6. d; 7. e; 8. b.

My son was murdered in Israel. I finally found a reason to live.

BY MICHAL HALEV

On the evening of Oct. 11, 2023, just days after the tragedy of Oct. 7, my world came to a standstill. I learned that Laor, my beloved only child, was one of 364 concertgoers killed at the Nova festival where he was celebrating life, music and the companionship of his friends.

At that moment, I entered a chapter of life I had never imagined: being the living mother of a dead child.

Since then, I have embarked on a journey to search for meaning and for a reason to live in a world without my child. He was 20, over 6-foot-4 — our “Gentle Giant,” you could always pick him out in a crowd. He was a loving and gentle young person, a generous friend always caring for the well-being of others, who loved music and began his career as a DJ. I began to ask: How could his death not be meaningless?

I only started to peek out of my den of pain once I connected with new friends: the extended family of the bereaved — a family none of us chose to belong to. I then met peers from the Parents Circle-Families Forum, a group of more than 750 bereaved Palestinians and Israelis who have lost an immediate family member to the conflict — and, perhaps most notably, have found solace in their shared belief that Israelis and Palestinians must speak with one voice to bring an end to violence, to find reconciliation and to make peace.

In September, the forum asked me to speak publicly for the first time about Laor's death. I hesitated but realized I wanted to do it. I wanted to share my story — and his story.

My peers and I spoke at a rally in Union Square in New York. We traveled more than 5,000 miles from where I lost my son. We came together to talk freely about ending the war and returning hostages. And when I finished speaking, still trembling from the experience of exposing my pain in front of strangers, a fellow bereaved Palestinian approached me and asked permission to embrace in a hug.

His name was Arab Aramin, and he



ANN KIERNAN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

wanted to give me a hug from son to mother. At that moment, a shiver of excitement ran through me from the closeness and from his courage. His decision to bestow such a simple yet priceless gift made me realize I have not stopped being a mother for a moment. This is an enormous power, and I have full control of when I choose to use it.

Weeks later, I joined an online meeting of the forum's women's group. One of the Palestinian women stopped mid-sentence to say she had just heard an explosion near her house. She did not know where her son was. She apologized and left the meeting to look for him.

My heart was with that Palestinian mother. I was thrown back to the excruciating days when we did not know what

had happened to Laor — endless terror and chaos, vacillating between hope and despair.

For me, those moments ended with the news that no mother, Israeli or Palestinian, should hear.

I sent the Palestinian mother a message in the hope that she would know that there is a Jewish mother who is praying for the safety of her son and the wholeness of her heart.

And in that moment, I began to find the answer to my question. The reason for living as a mother to a son who is gone.

I believe that the way to make real change in the world is through people: through humanity and empathy, and through encounters that bring hearts

closer together. In the end, our painful experiences can teach us purpose and lead us to commonality and eventually peace.

Before another year closes, before more innocent lives are lost, I encourage everyone to listen from your heart and support an end to the suffering of innocent civilians in Gaza and the release of Israeli hostages. The sanctity of human life is more important than any conflict. Support the healing process. Support mothers and sons and fathers and daughters. Support an end to the war now. Support peace.

The writer is an Israeli American and former facilitator of women's circles and emotional counseling.

GEORGE F. WILL

Thanks for the laughs, 2024

Viewed in a bemused spirit, 2024 provided (in Mark Twain's words) “not merely food for laughter,” but “an entire banquet.” Begin with the Texan who, preparing to run for president, changed his name to Literally Anybody Else. John F. Kerry, the Democrats' 2004 nominee and, in 2024, the State Department's designated climate worrier, said people would “feel better” about the war in Ukraine if Russia would “make a greater effort to reduce emissions.” War criminals should minimize their carbon footprints.

A whistleblower charged that a federal supervisor directed workers responding to Hurricanes Helene and Milton to “avoid homes advertising Trump.” Miss Sassy, the Springfield, Ohio, cat police were told might have tempted hungry Haitian immigrants, was found healthy in her owner's basement. Online applicants for some positions in Kamala Harris's campaign were invited to say whether they are “he/him,” “she/her,” “they/them,” “xe/xem,” “ze/hir,” “ey/em,” “hir/hir,” “fae/faer” or “hu/hu.” At a post-election seminar, a senior official of the campaign pronounced it “flawless.” The day after the election, various universities provided milk, cookies, coloring books, Legos, “reflection spaces” and “distress sessions” for young adults “struggling” with the election results.

A Page 1 New York Times headline announced a discovery: “Progressive Ideals Losing a Grip on the Country.” The story did not disclose when the country was in this grip. Rwanda, unlike America, evidently is not polarized: Paul Kagame, president since 2000, won reelection with 99.18 percent of the vote. South Dakota Republican Gov. Kristi L. Noem, asked about her memoir claiming that she had once met with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, said this “anecdote” has since been “adjusted.” According to Democratic vice-presidential candidate Tim Walz, socialism is “neighborliness.”

Cuba, where neighborliness is strict, cut from 80 grams to 60 grams (2.1 ounces) its subsidized daily ration of bread. When German troops volunteered to help Poland recover from flooding, Poland's prime minister told his nation, “If you see German soldiers, don't panic.” It was learned that in 2023, Amtrak lost \$1.7 billion but scraped together “incentive” bonuses of more than \$200,000 each for 14 executives.

In his 1867 poem “Dover Beach,” noting the decline of religion, Matthew Arnold evoked “the sea of faith” retreating with a “long, withdrawing roar.” In 2024, the ersatz religion of “diversity, equity and inclusion” emitted a long, withdrawing whimper. Many corporations (e.g., Walmart, the nation's largest private-sector employer) reconsidered the employee indoctrination and racial spoils system dictated by DEI orthodoxy. Even academia, always the last to learn, awakened to the obvious: Wokeness, including mandatory statements of DEI groveling by faculty applicants, is incompatible with intellectual freedom. A federal judge handling litigation concerning the crashes of two Boeing 737 Max jets that killed 346 people was unamused by the Justice Department's “diversity and equity” provisions when choosing the monitor of Boeing's compliance with its plea deal. Eighty-four percent of San Francisco voters supported restoring algebra to middle schools, it having been banished to serve “equity.” A Virginia school district paid \$575,000 recompense to a teacher fired for mispronouncing. When the New York-New Jersey region experienced an earthquake, the Green Party candidate for Senate in New Jersey said: “We never get earthquakes. The climate crisis is real.”

Illinois' legislature passed a bill renaming some “offenders” as “justice-impacted individuals.” Five crime-busting Mississippi cops arrested a 10-year-old for peeing behind his mother's car. He was sentenced to three months' probation, with drug tests at his probation officer's discretion. Embracing today's rule “Never miss an opportunity to criminalize something,” an Ohio legislator, incensed not by the rioters but by their excuse for rioting, proposed legislation making it a felony to plant a visiting team's flag at the center of Ohio State's football field. Elsewhere in education, Chicago's teachers unions (a.k.a. the city's government) pronounced it “misogynistic” to report that 4 in 10 Chicago public school teachers (median salary: \$95,000) were “chronically absent.”

Brooklyn's PS 261, where the “Arab Cultural Arts” program is funded by Qatar, had a map of the Middle East with Israel omitted. An Amnesty International report this year began: “On 7 October 2023, Israel embarked on a military offensive ...” One wonders why. The New York Times reported that on Oct. 9, 2023, “senior administrators at Harvard University” removed the word “violent” from the description of Hamas's attacks because a dean explained that it “sounded like assigning blame.”

In Bolivar, Missouri, Bill Pool, who was born when his father was 80, will turn 100 in January. Bill, reportedly the last living son of a Civil War veteran, survived 2024, perhaps laughing all the way.



The Washington Post | LIVE


A LOOK BACK ON CLIMATE & ENERGY IN 2024

Conversations focused on the climate crisis and strategies for a sustainable future from guests including:


Cristina Mittermeier, Photographer & Co-Founder, SeaLegacy, **James Manyika**, Senior Vice President, Research, Technology & Society, Google, **John Podesta**, Senior Advisor to the President for International Climate Policy, **John Kerry**, Former U.S. Secretary of State and Inaugural U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, **Maryland Gov. Wes Moore** (D), **Kristalina Georgieva**, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund, **Jennifer Morgan**, German State Secretary and Special Envoy for International Climate Action, **Rajiv J. Shah**, President, The Rockefeller Foundation, **Tim Latimer**, CEO & Co-Founder, Fervo Energy, **Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala**, Director General, World Trade Organization, **Wanjira Mathai**, Managing Director, Africa & Global Partnerships, World Resources Institute, **Bill Weir**, Anchor & Chief Climate Correspondent, CNN, **James Balog**, Environmental Photographer, Filmmaker & Explorer & more.

To revisit these conversations, visit **wapo.st/wplclimate** or scan QR code:







8 a.m.
55°



Noon
62°



4 p.m.
63°



8 p.m.
59°

High today at approx. 3 p.m.
65°
Precip: 80%
Wind: SSE
10-20 mph

RETROPOLIS

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OBITUARIES

Read about the lives of residents of the D.C. area at [washingtonpost.com/obituaries](https://www.washingtonpost.com/obituaries).



OBITUARIES

Arlene Croce, 90, a renowned dance critic for the New Yorker, provided provocative analysis. [c3](#)

After their Pride flag is taken, they forgive

Couple and defendant meet through restorative justice program in Va.

BY ELLIE SILVERMAN

All they knew was that the facilitators of the restorative justice program said the man charged with repeatedly tearing down the Pride flag outside their home was “ready.” A meeting was set. Now the couple were walking into a community center to talk to him.

Michelle Logan and Jenna Burnett said they sat in chairs set up in a circle inside the Arlington Mill Community Center in late September and began explaining to Matthew Henshaw how hurtful it was for them to see their Pride flag forcibly removed after they finally came out and moved in together. They said they told him that his actions made them feel unsafe in their own home — and that they wanted him to understand why.

The conversation was part of the Heart of Safety Restorative Justice Conferencing Program, which includes a meeting between the people charged in criminal cases and the victims of the alleged crimes, in hopes of providing a pathway for young adults to be held accountable outside of traditional legal proceedings.

Logan and Burnett said they could not detail everything that occurred, but Logan said “we felt he was sincerely remorseful and that we were being heard.” Later, the couple assigned Henshaw to do “certain things that we thought would be helpful for his learning and for being a better ally,” Logan said, and he did them.

As a result, Arlington prosecutors on Monday dismissed all charges against Henshaw, who was arrested this year and charged with three counts of bias-motivated unlawful entry and three counts of petit larceny.

“He’s just a young man who went through this unfortunate incident, and he’s grown from it,” said his attorney, Damon D. Colbert, who declined to make his client available for an interview. “He did everything that was asked of him, and he’s moved on.”

Henshaw is among the 13 people who have successfully completed the Heart of Safety Restorative Justice Conferencing Program since it launched in 2023, Arlington Commonwealth’s Attorney Parisa Dehghani-Tafti said.

This case seemed like a good fit
[SEE PRIDE FLAG ON C2](#)



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL A. MCCOY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Army forges on with makeover of Arlington funeral caisson unit

BY KELSEY BAKER

ALDIE, VA. — Standing beside the indoor horse arena, Army Lt. Col. Jason Crawford waved down the spotless barn aisle, where a few friendly noses poked out from stalls. Behind him, a young woman in a pink helmet trotted a stocky black gelding in the ring. One room over, another horse plodded along, splashing in an aquatic treadmill. Six others exercised outside on soft rubbery footing.

The farm usually caters to regional

Horse deaths, disrepair of stables prompt military to seek expert intervention

ABOVE: Army Pfc. Joshua Allen, with the 3rd Infantry Regiment Caisson Detachment, checks in with one of his charges.

BELOW: Soldiers and horses train on “postilion” riding at the NOVA Equestrian Center in Aldie.

high-dollar competitive dressage or jumping horses. But for now, the Army has exclusively leased this equine rehabilitation facility as it attempts to overhaul its troubled caisson unit, the soldiers and horses that bring deceased troops to their graves in Arlington National Cemetery.

The program was paused for what was supposed to be six weeks in April 2023 after the deaths of four Army horses highlighted neglectful living conditions in the Army stables.

[SEE HORSES ON C2](#)



Amtrak apologizes after stranding holiday travelers at Union Station

BY RACHEL WEINER

Amtrak apologized Friday for leaving passengers stranded at D.C.’s Union Station the night after Christmas, saying a “miscommunication” caused a train headed for New York to leave them behind.

The last train of the night from Roanoke to New York was set to leave Union Station at 10 p.m. on Thursday. But a passenger, who shared his experience on Reddit, wrote that the doors to the train platform were never opened and no staff could be found to open it. The poster provided a copy of their ticket to The Washington Post and confirmed they had made the posts online but declined to speak on the record.

The train was initially delayed 12 minutes, the poster said, and then it disappeared from signs announcing departures. So he and other passengers assumed the delay had increased without an announcement. Instead,

checking the Amtrak website, they saw the train marked as having already departed. The passenger said it took until about 11 p.m. for an employee to explain to them what had happened. In a video he took, the crowd is told that the train left, “possibly thinking that there was no one getting on.”

Amtrak ridership is at an all-time high, both nationally and at Union Station; almost half of the 33 million riders in the past fiscal year were on the Northeast Corridor between New York and D.C.

Amtrak spokeswoman Kimberly Woods confirmed in a statement that the train “departed Washington Union Station before all passengers were able to board.” She added: “Amtrak sincerely apologizes for the miscommunication that resulted in customers missing their train. We provided customers service on the next train, food and beverages, hotel accommodations and full refunds.”

The Amtrak boarding process in D.C., where people wait in long lines to get to the tracks, has been a source of rider frustration for years. Amtrak has said it wants to expand seating and recently added a temporary waiting area in Union Station.

The passenger said on Reddit that a customer service representative told him 110 people were affected, and that he got a refund, credit for future trips and a ticket on an Acela train the next morning. Other expenses, he said he was told, could be filed with Amtrak’s corporate office.

It’s one of a few holiday snags for Amtrak’s Northeast service. On Sunday, downed overhead power wires led to service suspensions and delays. The next day, several more trains were canceled because of signal power issues. Holiday flights were treacherous too — there were delays at Reagan National Airport on Christmas Eve when a technical glitch grounded all American Airlines planes.

D.C. police investigate Chipotle fracas

Viral video of customer, workers fighting over her food order brings inquiry

BY JASMINE HILTON

D.C. police are investigating an alleged assault after a Chipotle employee had food flung at him by an irate customer in an incident recorded on camera, according to a police report.

In a viral video posted to X, a woman pushes and shoves employees behind the counter while yelling, “Watch out!” She then scoops toppings into a bowl before hurling the bowl into the face of the employee who tried to grab the food.

In the video, the woman appears to say something about employees earlier taking her food.

Chipotle consulted with D.C. police, and a police report has since been filed involving the guest, according to the company. The incident occurred Dec. 21 at

its Rhode Island Row location on Washington Place Northeast in Brentwood, according to the police report.

Police said in a statement Friday that the case is under investigation and that they have not identified a suspect.

The report, filed on Christmas Eve, lists an offense of simple assault, naming the employee who had food thrown at him as a victim and the weapon as “other: food.”

A second offense of second-degree theft is also in the report. Two “bowls of Chipotle” are listed as stolen property, and Chipotle is named as a victim. The bowls were valued at \$40. At that price, the bowls would probably include extras such as double meat, guacamole or cheese sauce.

Chipotle has brought security to the restaurant during the investigation, the company said.

“At Chipotle, the health and safety of our employees is our greatest priority. We are grateful for their hard work every day and do not condone guests who mistreat our teams and fail to give

them the respect they deserve,” Laurie Schalow, chief corporate affairs officer, said in a statement.

Efforts to reach the employee Friday were unsuccessful.

In an interview with WUSA9, the employee said the customer had demanded a refund after claiming her delivery order was wrong.

When the store employees explained the refund had to be given through the delivery service, he said, the woman took matters into her own hands.

The woman, who was not identified by reporters, told WUSA9: “I’m not saying what I did was right, and I’m not saying what I did was wrong.”

She claimed employees took her delivery order without giving it back after she asked them to remake her food, which led to her going behind the counter. The woman claimed she was also assaulted by employees. Someone is seen pushing her in the video.

According to the police report, the woman left the store with a full bowl of food.

BALLOTS AT ISSUE IN TWO RACES AT AU

Court rejects D.C.’s effort to redo elections for ANC

BY AARON WIENER

A court declined Friday to throw out the contested election results for two Advisory Neighborhood Commission seats representing American University’s campus, ruling that the city election board’s assertion that some students had probably been given the wrong ballots was not enough to redo the race.

Adah Nordan, 20, a candidate for one of the seats, had challenged the November election results because she suspected some voters in her district, 3E07, had mistakenly received ballots for the other American University district, 3E08, as she herself had. The D.C. Board of Elections asked a court this month to void the results for both districts and call new elections.

But on Friday, the D.C. Court of Appeals rejected that motion, concluding that Nordan and the board had not proved that significant mistakes had produced erroneous results.

ANC commissioners in D.C. are unpaid but can wield meaningful influence over neighborhood issues such as construction projects and liquor licenses. The 3E07 and 3E08 districts are composed entirely of American University students.

In response to the ruling, Nordan said, “I accept this answer, of course, but I think that the system in which these things are decided is flawed.” She added, “I believe the Board of Elections made a very large mistake.”

The elections in the two districts consisted only of write-in candidates. When Nordan received her ballot, she realized it was for the wrong district and was able to get the right one. The results showed her getting only one vote — her own — although several voters had filled in 3E08 ballots with her name, meaning they didn’t count in 3E07. She suspected they’d been given the wrong ballots.

Meanwhile, another 3E07 candidate got two votes but hadn’t filed the paperwork to run and was deemed ineligible, so no winner was declared.

The Board of Elections asked
[SEE RULING ON C2](#)

D.C. court rejects bid to call new elections

RULING FROM C1

the appeals court to void both elections. But on Friday, three judges on the court ruled that they could void elections only if there was “act or omission, including fraud, misconduct, or mistake serious enough to vitiate the election as a fair expression of the will of the registered qualified electors voting in the election,” and if the petitioners could prove that the wrong election result was the outcome. They said the board had acknowledged that it could not determine whether and to what extent voters had cast ballots in the wrong district.

A Board of Elections spokesperson did not respond to a request for comment.

Nordan was frustrated by the ruling but said this wasn’t the end of her effort to win the seat. She hopes for an election soon to fill the 3E07 vacancy and aims to gather the signatures needed to run.

“I’ll go ahead with that and try my best to fill the vacancy,” she said.

Man facing charges is held accountable through conversation

PRIDE FLAG FROM C1

for the program, Dehghani-Tafti said, because Henshaw was 20 at the time of his arrest — placing him among the program’s target age group — and he was facing allegations of causing serious harm to Logan and Burnett. The couple were also willing to give it a try.

The purpose of the program, Dehghani-Tafti said, is to create a safer community with an alternative to incarceration that both reduces recidivism and is healing for victims.

“This whole process is about radical truth-telling, and it’s about taking accountability. But it’s also about transformation,” Dehghani-Tafti said. “And transformation really requires the hard work of figuring out: ‘Why did I do this, and what does it take for me not to do it again?’”

When Logan and Burnett first hung up their Pride flag, in June 2023, it was a way to celebrate moving in together. The two had met on a blind date in February 2021 at Red Bear Brewing Co. in Northeast Washington after Logan said she told a friend: “I think I want to try to date women.”

And as soon as Burnett walked in, Logan said she thought: “I am down bad for this girl!”

They said they both had struggled with coming out, but by the



time they were unpacking their bags in their new Arlington home, they were comfortable being themselves. And they were so happy to be taking this next step together in their relationship.

Then, at 2:35 a.m. on Sept. 16, 2023, their Ring camera caught someone tearing down their Pride flag. They put a new one up, but it kept happening — five times in all from that September

A Pride flag at Michelle Logan and Jenna Burnett’s Arlington home. Matthew Henshaw was charged with six counts after allegedly tearing down their flag repeatedly, but the charges were dismissed after he completed a restorative justice program that launched in 2023.

through January, Logan said. “We felt pretty violated at first and also just really, like, not safe in our own home,” Logan said. “It was just a huge blow to both of our psyches.”

Eventually, police arrested Henshaw, who at the time was an active-duty soldier assigned to Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall and a member of the 3rd Infantry Regiment. Maj. John Strickland, a spokesman for the Army, said Friday that Henshaw was involuntarily separated from service in October.

Once Logan and Burnett learned about the restorative justice program, they thought that it sounded like a way to have a more meaningful impact than putting someone behind bars.

“When you’re 20, your brain is still developing,” Burnett said. “There’s a lot to learn.”

Logan added: “We’re not just a house with a Pride flag; we’re two people who are here and living a life and trying to be good people, just like everyone else. And so both of us were sort of like, it would just be a great way to sort of try to create change in the community, rather than just having an hour or so court session.”

Henshaw was referred to the program in March, and he completed it in November, Dehghani-Tafti said. Although each case is different in terms of needed

hours, sessions and tasks, Henshaw completed 23 hours and signed a contract with the victims outlining next steps for him to take to continue learning from this experience.

“Saying sorry is one thing, but doing sorry is entirely another,” Dehghani-Tafti said.

While Logan and Burnett said most of what was discussed in the three-hour meeting was confidential, they shared that they covered topics including their past and growing up, what they felt defined them as people, their values, and the harm done through his actions.

“Throughout the process, we sort of saw like a shift in him,” Logan said. “It started off as, I think, nerves, and then it was just, [it] felt like a lot of shame. I think when someone sees someone face to face, they really get a grasp of who they are and what they actually did in terms of how it affected us.”

By the end of the meeting, Logan and Burnett were mentally tired and needed to decompress over a couple of days. Eventually, the couple would forgive him.

Logan said Henshaw wrote them a letter after that meeting that left them feeling as if he truly listened to what they said — and was learning from it.

Finally, she said, they felt relieved.

Army overhauls equine unit for Arlington funeral caissons

HORSES FROM C1

But the temporary stoppage of horse transport at Arlington has given way to a total makeover of the caisson unit. Military officials have solicited help from public and private equestrian experts, including an Olympic gold medalist equestrian and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to help train the horses and soldiers as they look for a new facility and devise a new maintenance program. Among the plans: purchasing an \$8 million farm, though not the one here in Aldie, and a new rest and conditioning program for the horses housed there.

“It’s not as easy as, ‘Hey, we’re just going to run out to Virginia horse country and buy some horses,’” said Crawford, an Army veterinarian brought in to boost efforts.

The overhaul has come with a cost, financial and otherwise. Some families have put funeral plans on hold until the unit returns to its ceremonial duties. In May, a military news outlet cited as many as 66 families waiting for burials. But others are proceeding with hearses; as of Friday, only 29 had pending services, according to a cemetery spokesperson.

And critics contend that even if care of the horses can be improved in the short term, they doubt if the Army can keep the unit from falling apart again down the line. Highly trained horses are expensive to maintain. They, and the novice soldiers assigned to them, require years-long training programs that just a handful of people are capable of offering, experts say.

Such a program would require enduring funding from the Pentagon, beyond the more than \$30 million over five years the Army has requested to revamp equine welfare, and at a time when the Army faces repairs to dilapidated barracks and trouble ensuring that some soldiers are adequately fed. But the unit isn’t going anywhere; Congress barred the Army from disbanding it last year.

“I would like to see the program stick around,” said an Army veterinarian with knowledge of the platoon who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak publicly. “But if I’m being realistic, I don’t think it’s sustainable.”

Problems with the caisson unit first came into public view in 2022, when an Army investigation found the horses’ living conditions in stables neglectful, contributing to four equine deaths. A report released this month put the horse death toll at 11 over an eight-year period. Earlier reports found horses bore scars from ill-fitted tack, too tight for their bodies. One was recorded collapsing under light pressure from a veterinarian’s hands.

The investigation determined that the overworked horses lived



Sgt. Natalie Silva, assigned to the 3rd Infantry Regiment Caisson Detachment, and a mount train at the NOVA Equestrian Center in Aldie, Virginia. Each horse in a caisson unit must perform in its individual spot within the team’s social hierarchy.



Army veterinarian Jason Crawford says the program’s overhaul isn’t as simple as purchasing some new horses.

in cramped stalls and micro-paddock, rife with contaminated feed and parasites. A necropsy of one horse found 44 pounds of gravel in its gut, a result of unsanitary living conditions.

After a year of physical rehab efforts for the roughly five dozen horses the investigation centered on, all were quietly retired, too old and too broken to continue working.

Part of the problem is funding,

officials said, and making the military’s notoriously convoluted contracting process flexible enough to hire the right civilians or purchase particular brands of nutritional supplements. Horses are expensive to feed, house and train properly, said Maj. Gen. Trevor Bredenkamp, who oversees the caisson unit, part of the Army’s Military District of Washington. “If we’re going to maintain them to the high level of

fitness that they need to be able to do this mission and not be injured, then that’s another part of the investment,” he said.

Despite their historical battlefield utility, horses are also delicate animals — a small bruise in a hoof can prompt lameness. Many are prone to ulcers and some to problems brought on by changes in weather. Some become seriously injured by getting stuck between stall walls when lying down.

And the right horse to participate in ceremonies at Arlington is a special one, said Chester Weber, a world champion competitive carriage driver who has been hired to oversee equine training.

What’s required: A horse whose back isn’t too long nor legs so straight as to create health ailments down the line. One that arrives somewhat trained in three specialties — riding, wagon pulling and a special form of guided walk called neck-reining. It must be a black gelding, a neutered male. And finally, it must be able to tolerate the stimuli of a state funeral through the streets of Capitol Hill when necessary.

There aren’t many readily available, especially within the Army’s budget, which starts around \$25,000 per horse, a modest sum for a pretrained horse that’s forgiving enough to handle novice soldier riders’ mistakes, Weber said.

“You’re looking for a needle in the haystack,” he said.

A team of caisson horses is an intricate system. Six pull the wagon, based on those used for cannons and ammunition in World War I. Each is trained to perform in its individual spot, with a unique position in the team’s social hierarchy, and cannot be mixed on a whim.

Plans for the new caisson program are grand enough to make any savvy equestrian salivate — tens of millions of dollars in funding, training from Olympians, custom-fitted saddles for each horse and specialized equine conditioning programs.

Officials stumbled for a year to find such a path, learning that most equine enthusiasts lack the deep expertise needed for the overhaul, found only in the highest echelons of the obscure performance horse world.

The service has hired a team of acclaimed civilian consultants, in addition to Weber. David O’Connor, a 2000 Olympic gold medalist equestrian, has revamped the soldiers’ new riding program, and Jim Westbrook, an expert in Clydesdale and Percheron draft breeds, scours hours of videos of sale horses to find suitable prospects for purchase.

“I think in three years, it’s going to become a program the likes of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or the British, that other [similar] programs

want to come and emulate,” Weber said.

Once a week, Martin Kohnen, retired riding master for the RCMP, flies in from Ottawa to train squads in “postilion” riding, an antiquated form of wagon pulling that the caisson platoon performs for each funeral. Three horses on the left are ridden while those on the right remain unmounted, meaning riders must get their own mounts and the horse next to them to walk in the same direction.

“It takes years to become proficient,” Kohnen said of the postilion work. “Here, they’ve got weeks.”

On a recent chilly morning at the leased facility, Kohnen coached a newly formed caisson squad through an arced path of cones. As the team rounded the bend, the wagon’s wheels cut the turn early, splintering a cone into pieces.

Getting rid of riders and swapping to straightforward wagon pulling could halve the number of horses needed and eliminate complex postilion training requirements, according to the recent report outlining how the unit can improve long-term operations. But it’s unclear whether Army officials are considering such a change.

As the Army continues to renovate the program, Bredenkamp suggested that some jobs held by new civilian experts could fall again to troops at some point, an idea that some say would hinder lasting success. Soldiers assigned to the unit come from across the Army, rarely with any equine experience, and rotate out every three years.

“I believe the Army sincerely desires to fix most of the issues now facing the program,” Jon C. Kreitz, a retired Navy admiral and U.S. Equestrian Federation board member, told Congress last month. “But it will not succeed without a core group of permanently assigned military officer equestrian experts.”

But perhaps the biggest problem is that the Defense Department lacks any standardized policy about its equines — including donkeys and mules — which the Army veterinarian estimated to number between 250 and 350, to ensure that adequate care is provided. Last year, Military.com reported widespread problems with military equine health across bases, not limited to Arlington. On Dec. 19, the Army released a memo directing the creation of an equine policy, but it’s unclear how such a governing policy will be implemented, or how long it may take.

Army officials declined to provide a date the unit would be ready to perform again, though the hiatus is expected to last at least through June 2025.

“Once we start, we don’t want to have to stop,” Bredenkamp said.



The Guide to Offers
The Washington Post

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IN MEMORIAM
BUDA-OKREGLAK



DR. EDWARDA M. BUDA-OKREGLAK M.D.
December 30, 1949 - May 6, 2024
Happy Birthday from your loving family and friends.
May you rest in eternal peace.

WASHINGTON



DOROTHY E. DAVIS WASHINGTON
January 7, 1922 - December 29, 2011
She will never be forgotten.
For she is always in my heart.
With my love,
Millicent E. Warren, Devoted Daughter

DEATH NOTICE

BEREZIN

RONNA MARGOLIS BEREZIN
Ronna Margolis Berezin of Vacaville, CA passed away peacefully on December 25, 2024.
Born August 25, 1939 in Washington, DC, Ronna graduated from Wilson High School and Penn State University. She was the daughter of Frances and Sidney Margolis (deceased). She is survived by her son and two daughters; her brother Richard; her sister Vivian, two grandchildren and nieces and nephews. No services are planned at this time.

CROWE

VIRGINIA CROWE
January 18, 1929 - December 21, 2024
Virginia Crowe, 95, of Clifton, VA, passed away on December 21 peacefully in her sleep.
Virginia was born on January 18, 1929, to Arthur and Mary Robinson in Greensburg, Pa. After Virginia graduated from Greensburg High School in 1947, she went on to study at the Mercy School of Nursing in Pittsburgh and graduated in 1950. After graduating, she started her first job at Mercy Hospital as a Registered Nurse in the Emergency room.
Virginia met and married Francis Gigliotti in 1950 and had her first children, Barbara and Frank. Francis passed after a long illness in 1957. In 1960, Virginia met Dr. Walter G. Crowe at Mercy Hospital. After marrying, Walter adopting Barbara and Frank and they relocated to Northern Virginia. Virginia and Walter went on to have their two children, Gary and Geoffrey.
In addition to raising her family, Virginia continued working in health care as the office manager in her husband's practice. After he moved on from his private practice, Virginia retired and spent her time gardening, knitting, and enjoying her family.
Virginia was predeceased by her husband Walter in 1991. She is survived by, and will be greatly missed by her sister Carole, daughter Barbara, sons Frank, Gary, and Geoffrey and their respective wives Wendy, Jennifer, and Sara. She is also survived by eight grandchildren and seven great grandchildren.
Virginia will be bid farewell in a private service with her family.
Her memory will be a blessing to all who knew or met her, and we are all better for the time we were lucky enough to share with her.
www.everlyfuneralhome.com

CUNNINGHAM



MARGARET THERESA CUNNINGHAM "Peggy"
November 30, 1935-December 16, 2024
On Monday, December 16, 2024 Margaret Theresa Cunningham of Chevy Chase, Maryland and known to everyone as Peggy passed away shortly after surgery. Her devoted daughter Mary Torrence and son Tom Cunningham were with her in her last moments. She is survived by her daughter Mary of Wellesley, MA, and her four children Sarah Shapleigh, her husband Michael, Allie Torrence, Will Torrence, and Jack Torrence as well as her son Tom Cunningham of Hobe Sound, FL, his wife Lilo, and their three children, Katie Parker, her husband Chris, Halter Cunningham, his wife Jackie, Charlotte Harris, and her husband Hunter. Also survived by four great-grand children, many other relatives, and friends. She is preceded in death by her husband T. Halter Cunningham. There will be a private burial, and further arrangements to be made known at a later date.

When the need arises, let families find you in the Funeral Services Directory.

To be seen in the Funeral Services Directory, please call paid Death Notices at 202-334-4122.

The Washington Post

DEATH NOTICE
GRIMES



DONNA TOLIVER GRIMES
Donna Maria Toliver Grimes entered eternal rest on the morning of December 10, 2024, at Washington Hospital Center after complications from triple bypass open heart surgery. Born April 5, 1956, in Washington, DC, she was the eldest of four children born to James and Phyllis Toliver. Her husband, Herbert Grimes, preceded her in death. She leaves behind her father, three children Nyle, Kamau, and Ayinde Grimes; two brothers Mark and Dwayne Toliver; one sister, Victoria Whaley; many nieces, nephews, and friends.
Her funeral home service will be held on Friday, January 3, 2025, at St. Teresa of Avila Catholic Church, 1401 V Street SE, Washington, DC 20020. Viewing is 10 a.m. and Mass at 11 a.m. interment will follow at Cedar Hill Cemetery. Service <https://www.mcfaysonfirm.com/obituaries/donna-grimes>

HAMBRIGHT

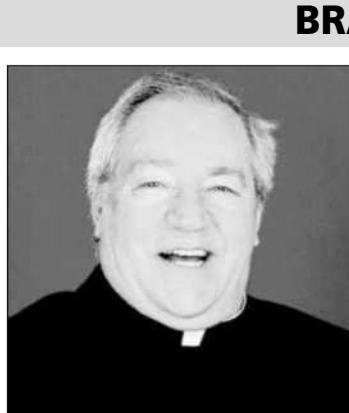
DIANE GAINES HAMBRIGHT (Age 89)
Diane Gaines Hambright of Easton, Maryland, passed away peacefully on December 24, 2024 surrounded by family.
Born on September 19, 1935, in Washington, D.C., Diane's vibrant spirit and love of dancing were defining traits of her early years. Her life took a romantic turn when she met a tall, handsome man, Harold (Ted), whom she married before accompanying him to France during his service in the Army. Together, they built a life filled with love, family, adventure, and cherished memories of summers in Ocean City and trips with their close friends. Diane was known for her warm heart, many friendships, and burning the toils at Thanksgiving. She exercised her creativity by designing costumes and helping choreograph ballet recitals and found immense joy in crafting family stories with her writing club. Diane inspired others with her creativity and passion for life. She is survived by her devoted husband, Ted; her sister, Dorothy; her five children: Kenneth, Paul, Douglas, Melissa, and Robert; her 13 beloved grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren, (two more on the way). A celebration of her life is being organized in the Olney area. Donations may be made in her memory to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. Diane's legacy of love, laughter, and inspiration will live on in the hearts of all who knew her. She will be deeply missed and lovingly remembered.
www.COLLINSFUNERALHOME.com

When the need arises, let families find you in the Funeral Services Directory.

To be seen in the Funeral Services Directory, please call paid Death Notices at 202-334-4122.

The Washington Post

DEATH NOTICE



REV. YVON DAVID BRAULT (Age 77)
Father Yvon David Brault passed away on Saturday, December 21, 2024 at the St. John XXIII Residence for Priests, where he was



JERELINE EWING
Educator and Youth Advocate Dies at 90
Jereline Blacknell Ewing, a distinguished educator whose career spanned continents and inspired countless colleagues and students, died peacefully on December 17, 2024, at her home in Coconut Grove, Florida. She was 90.
Born Breacya Jereline Blacknell on September 26, 1934, in Deland, Florida, she was known to all as Jerri or Bre. She descended from one of Coconut Grove's founding Bahamian families and was the daughter of Ruth Johnson Blacknell, an influential educator, and Rev. John Benjamin Blacknell, a respected Florida clergyman.
A precocious student, Jerri graduated from Dorsey High School in Miami at just 16. She earned her bachelor's degree in biology from North Carolina Central University in 1955, where she played on the women's basketball team and studied alongside classmates like director Ivan Dixon and legendary coach Herman Boone. She later completed a master's degree in education at George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia.
Her professional career began overseas at Baumholder American High School in Germany, serving U.S. military families. She joined the Fairfax County Public Schools in northern Virginia in 1970, working as a teacher, administrator, and substance abuse prevention specialist. She taught at Hayfield Secondary School in Alexandria, W.T. (former) Woodson H.S. in Fairfax, and Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke. Her direct yet compassionate approach left a lasting impact, empowering students to take ownership of their future and navigate challenges with resilience and integrity. She was not just a mentor but a steadfast advocate, shaping lives with equal measures of guidance and accountability. Certified in conflict resolution and mediation, she focused her efforts on empowering students and families with the tools and

DEATH NOTICE
JEREMIAH

MAUD VICTORIA JEREMIAH
Peacefully passed away on December 11, 2024. Born on May 27, 1930, in Brooklyn, New York, to the late Abraham and Lanora McLeod. She married the late Rev. Samuel Jeremiah and made Washington, DC, her home. She leaves behind her three surviving children, Lloyd, Sharon, and Ruth, along with grandchildren, great-grandchildren, one sister, a brother-in-law, four sisters-in-law, other loving family and friends. Viewing will be held on Saturday, January 4, 2025 at Maranatha Gospel Hall, 4910 - 14th Street NW at 10 a.m., followed by Home-going service at 11 a.m. Interment, George Washington Cemetery.
www.mcguire-services.com

JONES

DR. SIDNEY ALEXANDER JONES
Dr. Sidney Alexander Jones of Silver Spring, MD passed away on Wednesday, December 11, 2024. He was the beloved husband of the late Virley Maria Harris Jones and the father of Raquel Maria Jones and Erika Andrea Jones.

Sidney had deep faith and was thankful to God for the blessings in his life. His life touched many—his wife and children; family and friends from his birthplace of Dominica; colleagues and students from his many years as head of the OB/GYN department at DC General Hospital and participating in the training of the next generations of doctors coming out of the Howard University community; so many patients treated and babies delivered; and neighbors and friends throughout the DMV area—just to name a few. He was a member of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. In his 90 years of life, Sidney served as father, "Uncle", teacher, healer, gardener, friend, confidant, and advocate for those in need of help.

Relatives and friends may call at Collins Funeral Home, 500 University Boulevard West, Silver Spring, MD on Monday, December 30, 2024 from 10 to 11 a.m., where a funeral service will be held at 11 a.m. Burial at Union Cemetery, Burtonsville, MD.
www.COLLINSFUNERALHOME.com

KELLY

WILLIE A. KELLY (Age 84)
On December 15, 2024 Willie Arthur Kelly transitioned to be with the Lord. He was born in Saluda, South Carolina on September 5, 1940 to the late Albert and Essie Kelly. Willie leaves behind; his loving wife Margo Kelly of 50 years; six children, Lisa Kelly, Linda Cherry, Cynthia Cherry, Curtis Cherry Jr. (Angie), Donna Cherry, and Ronald Dickerson (Kenneth); six grandchildren, Malik Hodge, Curtis Cherry III, Breanna Cherry, Dominique Cherry, Kanisa Cromer (Ronald), and Kenneth Dickerson Jr.; seven great-grandchildren, Sierra Cherry, Dominique Cherry Jr., Sanaa Cherry, Ronald Cromer III, Rheagan Cromer, Roman Cromer, and Ronel Cromer. He is also survived by sister Pauline K. Lewis; sister-in-law Jean Kelly; seven nieces and seven nephews. Great nieces, nephews, cousins, a devoted mentee, Tim Beards, and a plethora of loving and devoted friends. Family will welcome friends Monday, December 30, 2024 at Woodstream Baptist Church, 9800 Lottsford Road, Bowie, MD 20721, Visitation at 10 a.m. until time of service at 11 a.m. Interment Cheltenham Veterans Cemetery.

MUISE

LOUISE A. MUISE
Washington, DC resident died on December 13, 2024 at 89 years of age. Mrs. Muise was a high school English teacher in the DC public schools. Her obituary can be seen here: <https://www.pumphreyfuneralhome.com/>. The family is planning a celebration in the Spring of 2025.

BRAULT

in hospice care. He was born on December 18, 1947, in Quebec, Canada. He was ordained a Roman Catholic priest on May 14, 1977 and served in many parishes in the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington, including as founding Pastor to Our Lady of the Presentation, Poolesville, MD, Pastor to St. Mary's of Piscataway Parish, Clinton, MD and St. John the Baptist Parish, Silver Spring, MD. A viewing will be held on Thursday, January 2, 2025 at Our Lady of the Presentation Parish, Poolesville, MD, from 3 to 7 p.m., with the Vigil Mass at 7 p.m. A second viewing will be held on Friday, January 3, 2025 at Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church, Silver Spring, MD, from 3 to 7 p.m., with the Vigil Mass at 7 p.m. A Mass of Christian Burial will be offered on Saturday, January 4, 2025 at 11 a.m. at Saint John the Baptist Catholic Church, Silver Spring, MD. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions in memory of Father Brault may be made to "Wounded Warrior Project." Wounded Warrior Project, P.O. Box 758516, Topeka, KS 66675-8516.
www.collinsfuneralhome.com

EWING

skills needed to resolve disputes—whether through peers or within families—through dialogue and mutual understanding. After retiring in 2000, Jerri worked as an educational consultant, advising organizations such as USAID and school systems both internationally and across the United States. Jerri's faith was a cornerstone of her life. A lifelong Episcopalian, she was an active member of Christ Episcopal Church in Coconut Grove during her youth, Saint James Episcopal Church in Alexandria, and St. Timothy's Episcopal Church in Washington, D.C. She was also a devoted member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority and believed fervently in upholding its principles of Sisterhood, Scholarship, Service, and Social Action. She instilled in her children values of education, respect, self-reliance, and service. In 2017, her family established the Jereline Blacknell Ewing Endowed Fellowship at Carnegie Mellon University's Tepper School of Business, providing support to MBA students with leadership potential and a commitment to diversity.
Her passions extended beyond education. She actively campaigned for Barack Obama during his 2008 presidential bid and celebrated his election as a watershed moment in history. Her love of music was as broad as it was dynamic, spanning the genres of Mahalia Jackson and James Cleveland, the calypso rhythms of Harry Belafonte, and the unapologetic boldness of Millie Jackson—reflecting a harmony of devotion, defiance, and deep love.
Jerri was predeceased by her husband, 8th-generation Nashvillian MSG Russell C.B. Ewing, whom she married in 1965; her older brother, John Benjamin Blacknell, who died early in childhood; and her cousins, Susan Washington and Anne Mena Johnson, with whom she shared a sibling-like bond. She is survived by her children, Dr. Ruth Y. Ewing (Ronald Dyer) and Russell Ewing (Vani Mania); her grandchildren, Mena Ewing-Williams, Rohan Ewing, and Marali Ewing-Dyer, and many beloved nieces, nephews, cousins, and godchildren, including Francine (Washington) Lawrence, Breacya (Washington) Parker, Teresa Washington, Dianne Washington, Ronald Johnson, and Dr. Lois Underman.
Mrs. Ewing will be cremated, and her ashes will be interred alongside her husband's at the historic Greenwood Cemetery in Nashville, TN, honoring her wish to be reunited with the love of her life.
The family deeply appreciates memorial contributions to the Alzheimer's Association, the Alpha Lambda Chapter Endowment of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc., the Jereline Blacknell Ewing Endowed Fellowship at Carnegie Mellon University, or another charitable organization of your choice.

DEATH NOTICE
RABINOVITZ

MARTIN RABINOVITZ
Ever friendly, funny, warm, and optimistic despite living with devastating effects of MS, Marty finally succumbed at the age of 78 after a valiant 40 year struggle on Saturday, December 28, 2024.
Marty grew up in Milwaukee (parents Jack and Julia Tannenbaum Rabinovitz) and spent most of his adult life in Chicago before relocating to the Washington area last June to be closer to family.
His beloved wife Kathy (Katherine Bayer) passed away in 2002. Survivors include his devoted sons Joshua (Dr. Rachel Adams) and Daniel (Diana Huang); and dear sister Lana Steinberg (the late Hal Steinberg). His four grandchildren Jay, Sadie, Hannah, and Jack were the light of his life. Grave-side services will be at 12 Noon, King David Memorial Gardens, Tuesday, December 31, 2024.

RIDLEY



WINSTON C. RIDLEY JR. PASTOR, DMIN.
On Tuesday, December 17, 2024, the beloved husband of First Lady Bonita LuRose Lee Ridley. Also surviving are his sister Rob-in Caroline Ridley, his sister-in-love Kim Lee Robinson, aunts, uncles a host of loving relatives and friends. On Saturday, January 4, 2025, at The Greater First Baptist Church, Mt. Pleasant Plains, 2701 13th Street NW, visitation will be held from 9 a.m. until time of service at 11 a.m. Interment will be held Monday, January 6, 2025, at Restland Memorial Cemetery, Monroeville, PA. In lieu of flowers donations may be made to Daughters of Zion-GFBC Women's Ministry, 2701 13th Street NW, Washington, DC 20009.
<https://www.mcguire-services.com/>

SEUBERT

ROBERT WILLIAM SEUBERT (Age 57)
Robert William Seubert, age 57, of Silver Spring, Maryland, passed away peacefully on December 24, 2024. He is preceded in death by his father, Robert F. Seubert. He is survived by his loving wife, Carol Ries Seubert; daughter, Sara A. Seubert; mother, Alda L. Reeves; and brother, John F. Seubert. A memorial service will be held at St. Bernadette Church in Silver Spring, MD, on December 31, 2024, at 11 a.m. in lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the National Kidney Foundation (kidney.org).
www.COLLINSFUNERALHOME.com



SUSAN ANN HOFFSTEIN SENTER
Susan Ann Hoffstein Senter, 75, of Arlington, Virginia, passed away peacefully on December 22, 2024, in the intensive care unit at Virginia Hospital Center in Arlington, with her husband Meredith and son Brandon by her side. She had struggled for over six weeks with complications from pneumonia.
Susan, the eldest and favorite child of Eli and Lila Gordon Hoffstein, grew up in Natick, Massachusetts, with her three younger siblings, Joanne, Gordon and Lee Michael. After graduating Natick High School, Susan attended MacMurray College and Dean Junior College before transferring to the University of Michigan where she graduated in 1971 with a B.S. in Special Education. Her concern over people with special needs continued throughout her life.
Susan taught from 1973-1980 as a learning disabilities specialist at Cardinal Forest Elementary School in Springfield, Virginia, and earned a master's degree from the University of Virginia (M.Ed. Special Education 1978). While still teaching, she enrolled as a night student at the Georgetown University Law Center (J.D. 1982).
In 1982, Susan joined the law firm of Colton & Boykin where she worked on real estate syndication deals. She left the firm in 1989 to spend more time with her son. But in 1994, her former boss, Ken Peters, convinced her to join him at Freddie Mac, where she worked on bespoke financing transactions until her retirement in 2020.
Despite her demanding legal career, Susan's life was always centered on her family and friends and pets. In 1980, Susan met Meredith by happenstance, and they married in 1985. Two years later, their beloved son Brandon arrived. Susan was an ever patient and nurturing mother and best friend and champion to Brandon. She was her Meredith's rock.

WELLS



MAJOR J WELLS SR. (Age 93)
Major J. Wells, Sr., affectionately known as "Bo" was born on October 29, 1931 in Dillsboro, NC, to the late James and Katherine Love Wells and passed away on Thursday, December 19, 2024.

DEATH NOTICES

MONDAY-FRIDAY 8:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.
SATURDAY 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
SUNDAY - SELF - SERVICE ONLY

To place a notice, call:
800-627-1150 ext 4-4122
EMAIL:
deathnotices@washpost.com

Email and faxes MUST include name, home address & home phone # of the responsible billing party.
Email deadline - 3 p.m. daily
Phone-in deadline
4 p.m. M-F
3 p.m. Sa-Su

CURRENT 2024 RATES:
(PER DAY)

MONDAY-SATURDAY
Black & White
1" - \$160 (text only)
2" - \$370 (text only)
3" - \$525
4" - \$575
5" - \$725

SUNDAY
Black & White
1" - \$191 (text only)
2" - \$405 (text only)
3" - \$580
4" - \$610
5" - \$790

6"+ for ALL Black & White notices
\$160 each additional inch Mon - Sat
\$191 each additional inch Sunday

MONDAY-SATURDAY
Color
3" - \$670
4" - \$725
5" - \$885

SUNDAY
Color
3" - \$710
4" - \$810
5" - \$985

6"+ for ALL color notices
\$268 each additional inch Mon - Sat
\$299 each additional inch Sunday

Notices with photos begin at 3"
(All photos add 2" to your notice.)

ALL NOTICES MUST BE PREPAID

MEMORIAL PLAQUES:
All notices over 2" include complimentary memorial plaque

Additional plaques start at \$26 each and must be ordered.

All Paid Death Notices appear on our website through www.legacy.com

LEGACY.COM
Included in all death notices
Optional for In Memoriams

PLEASE NOTE:

Notices must be placed via phone or email. Photos must be emailed. You can no longer place notices, drop off photos and make payment in person.
Payment must be made via phone with debit/credit card.

The Washington Post



DEATH NOTICE

SENER

Susan was famous in the neighborhood for tucking whimsical "critters" around the yard and loved watching children (and adults) discover them. She embraced every holiday, but especially Thanksgiving—always spent with extended family—and Christmas. Every December, she filled the house with her nutcracker collection and invited colleagues and their children to decorate gingerbread houses in her dining room—it was chaos but great fun.
Susan traveled extensively, but her favorite destination was Figure Eight Island, NC, where she vacationed for over 40 years. During her few short years of retirement, Susan read voraciously, redecorated her house, replanted and rearranged her flower gardens, trained her puppy Loka, attended OLLI classes at American University and encouraged her wide circle of girlfriends to do the same. In the final months of her life, she supervised the renovation of her son's town home, which her girlfriends promise to help complete.
Susan had a wonderful sense of humor. But most of all, she was a loving, warm, generous, caring, and kind person, attuned to the interests, concerns and needs of family and friends.
Susan dealt with lupus and its challenges for most of her life. She managed it with dignity and determination. Ultimately, however, the treatment left her severely immunosuppressed. As time passed, it took her longer to recover from an infection, and despite her strength, toughness and will to live, the last infection proved impossible to cure. The family thanks the dedicated team in the ICU. Susan would also want to acknowledge Bob Brown, who has managed Susan and Meredith's household for over 40 years and helped raise their son, and Kim Kruse, their trainer and Susan's confidant for 26 years.
Susan is survived by Meredith and Brandon; siblings Joanne (Bruce, deceased), Gordon (Judy) and Lee Michael (Michelle); and her nephews and nieces Corey (Lauren), Jenna (Toby), Kyle, Taylor (Chris), Craig and Kayla; and her aunt Margie (Brent). She was just as much a member of Meredith's family: his brothers Max (Liz) and Michael (Nancy); and nieces and nephew Katie (Iris), Kenan and Mathilde. And she will be missed by her sweet puppy Loka. She loved and looked out for every one of them.
In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in Susan's memory to the Vth Health Foundation, designated to the ICU, vhhealthfoundation.org/give. Even better, Susan's family asks that, while you can, you remind the special people in your life how much you love and cherish them.
A celebration of Susan's extraordinary life will take place at a future date.

Major attended elementary school in Dillsboro, NC before relocating to Washington, DC and graduating from Dunbar High School. Following high school, he matriculated to St. Paul's College in Lawrenceville, VA where he would earn dual bachelors' degrees in Math and Science. Major married Shirley Moss, a fellow alumnus of St. Paul's College.

He leaves to cherish in his memory: a devoted wife, Shirley Moss Wells; a son, Major James Wells, Jr. (Deidra); a grandson, Major James Wells III "Trey"; a sister, Maryle Wells-Harley (Ernest), a sister-in-law, Helen Moss; two nephews, Marlon K. Beck (Yvonne) and Greg Wells (Sabrina), and a host of great nieces, nephews, cousins, as well as many other relatives.

Viewing and visitation will be held on Friday, January 3, 2025 from 10 a.m. until time of service 11 a.m. at Matthews Memorial Baptist Church, 2616 Martin Luther King, Jr. AVE. SE, Washington, DC 20020. Interment at: Moss's Family Cemetery, Bumpass, VA. Arrangements by LYLES FUNERAL SERVICE, Serving Northern Virginia, Eric S. Lyles, Director. Lic. VA/DC/MD, 1-800388-1913.


POST YOUR
CONDOLENCES

Now death notices on washingtontpost.com/obituaries allow you to express your sympathy with greater ease. Visit today.

The Washington Post

DEATH NOTICE

BANKS



SHARON P. BANKS
Sharon P. Banks of Washington, DC, died on December 11, 2024, at age 82, after a prolonged illness. A graduate of Morgan State University (1964) and Howard University School of Law (1967), Attorney Banks' long career embodied public service, advocacy, higher education and student mentorship, beginning with Neighborhood Legal Services and concluding with her retirement from Howard University's Office of General Counsel. Sharon is survived by her son, Christopher Banks Carr; sister, DeAnna Ban P. Beane; niece, Songhay Beane; and great-nephews, Shaka Barrett and Tarik Barrett. Sharon's nephew, Mark Beane, preceded her in death three days earlier. A memorial service for Sharon and Mark will be held on Saturday, January 4, with Family Hour at 10 a.m. and Service at 11 a.m., at Asbury United Methodist Church, 926 11th St. NW, Washington, DC 20001. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial gift to Howard University School of Law (202-238-2340).

DEATH NOTICE

CLARK



SAVANNA VAUGHN CLARK
March 10, 1927 - December 14, 2024
Savanna Clark, an educator, philanthropist and socialite died at home in DC. She was 97. She was the widow of Dr. Charles Warfield Clark. She had a teaching career that included institutions such as Southern University, Baton Rouge; Langston University; North Carolina Central College, Durham; and the University of the District of Columbia.
She was an active contributor to a number of organizations: organizing the Capital City chapter of The Links, Inc.; a founding member of the Women's Committee of the National Museum of Women in the Arts; a founding member of the Kennedy Center Friends and Volunteers, Golden Circle and Honors Committees; Vice President of the Women's Committee of the Washington Ballet and Chairperson for the Howard University School of Communications Scholarship. Homegoing services were held on Friday, December 17, 2024, Internment, Sunny Slope Cemetery, West Point, VA. www.mcguire-services.com

DEATH NOTICE

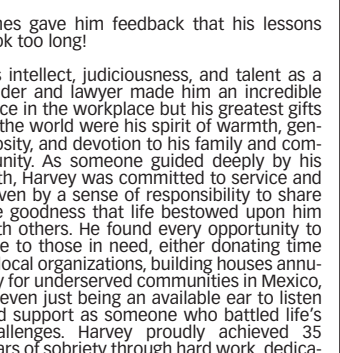
ANDERSON



HARVEY JAMES ANDERSON II
Harvey James Anderson II – proud father and husband, accomplished lawyer, dedicated sponsor and mentor, cherished friend, avid surfer – led his life with love and light and it is with profound sadness that we share his sudden passing on December 19, 2024, at the age of 61. He leaves behind his loving family, mother Joan Fowler Anderson, wife Denelle Dixon, and their sons Cole Anderson, Luke Anderson, Dylan Thayer, Trevor Thayer, and Jax Thayer. In death, he joins his father Harvey James Anderson I.
Born in Washington, DC, Harvey was raised by his parents, Joan and Harvey, who instilled in him a strong sense of family, community, and faith that guided him throughout his adult life and career. Harvey progressively followed a call west starting with Milwaukee, Wisconsin where he completed his Bachelor's Degree in Engineering at Marquette University and built friendships that would prove to be lifelong. Upon graduation, he continued on his westward path, finally settling by the ocean he loved so deeply in the San Francisco Bay Area, which he called home for more than 35 years.

DEATH NOTICE

MCHUGH



BARBARA MCHUGH
We are saddened to announce the passing of Barbara Mchugh, who died peacefully in Alexandria, Virginia on December 19, 2024 at the age of 87.
She was born in Baltimore, MD on July 2, 1937. Barb grew up in a military family as the oldest of eight children, and thus was accustomed to a military lifestyle and the busy pace of growing up in a large family. She graduated from Towson Catholic High School. Barbara met her future husband of 68 years, Tom, at his senior Prom in 1953, and they were married in 1956.
As a military wife, she supported her husband in his chosen career while caring for the family, keeping them together during countless moves and deployments over the course of 34 years. She was an active volunteer and loved helping others, whether it was being part of the PTA, military spouse organizations, the Catholic Women of the Chapel, or just helping military families in their time of need. She loved annual family vacations and insisted on keeping the large group under one roof as often as possible. Barbara's passion was spending time in the kitchen; cooking, baking, canning vegetables from the garden, and entertaining always gave her great pleasure. Of her many talents, sewing, needlepoint, and knitting ranked high. She continued her mom's tradition of knitting Christmas stockings which continues today—all the way down to her great grandchildren.

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DEATH NOTICE

BEANE



MARK WENDELL BEANE
Mark Wendell Beane of Washington, DC, died on December 8, 2024, at age 61, after many years of debilitating illness. Following graduation from Howard University School of Engineering (1985) and University of California at Berkeley (1995), he held several electrical engineering positions in the DC area while avidly studying ancient African history and actively pursuing the uplift of his community. Mark is survived by his mother, DeAnna Banks Beane; sister, Songhay Beane; nephews, Shaka Barrett and Tarik Barrett; and cousin, Christopher Banks Carr. He predeceased his aunt, Sharon P. Banks, by 3 days. A memorial service for Mark and Sharon will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, January 4, with Family Hour at 10 a.m., at Asbury United Methodist Church, 926 11th St. NW, Washington, DC 20001.

DEATH NOTICE

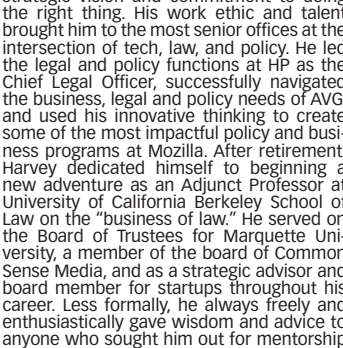
DIX



KEVIN WILLIAM DIX (Age 66)
Proud UVA alumnus Kevin William Dix passed away on December 16, 2024. He is survived by his wife, Marni Matyac; his mother, Margaret Dix; his sisters, Gillian Likins and Glenys Dix. He is predeceased by his father, Thomas Dix, and brother, T. Keith Dix. A memorial service will be held at 11 a.m. on Saturday, January 11, 2025, at Trinity Episcopal Church in Manassas, VA, with a reception to follow. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to Insight Memory Care Center at www.insightmcc.org. "I have worn the honors of Honor. I graduated from Virginia." -James Hay Jr.

DEATH NOTICE

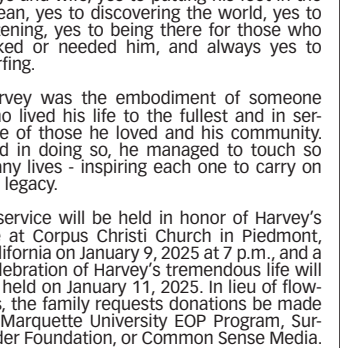
ANDERSON



HARVEY JAMES ANDERSON II
Harvey James Anderson II – proud father and husband, accomplished lawyer, dedicated sponsor and mentor, cherished friend, avid surfer – led his life with love and light and it is with profound sadness that we share his sudden passing on December 19, 2024, at the age of 61. He leaves behind his loving family, mother Joan Fowler Anderson, wife Denelle Dixon, and their sons Cole Anderson, Luke Anderson, Dylan Thayer, Trevor Thayer, and Jax Thayer. In death, he joins his father Harvey James Anderson I.
Born in Washington, DC, Harvey was raised by his parents, Joan and Harvey, who instilled in him a strong sense of family, community, and faith that guided him throughout his adult life and career. Harvey progressively followed a call west starting with Milwaukee, Wisconsin where he completed his Bachelor's Degree in Engineering at Marquette University and built friendships that would prove to be lifelong. Upon graduation, he continued on his westward path, finally settling by the ocean he loved so deeply in the San Francisco Bay Area, which he called home for more than 35 years.

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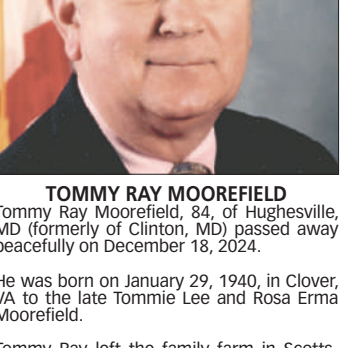
MCHUGH



BARBARA MCHUGH
We are saddened to announce the passing of Barbara Mchugh, who died peacefully in Alexandria, Virginia on December 19, 2024 at the age of 87.
She was born in Baltimore, MD on July 2, 1937. Barb grew up in a military family as the oldest of eight children, and thus was accustomed to a military lifestyle and the busy pace of growing up in a large family. She graduated from Towson Catholic High School. Barbara met her future husband of 68 years, Tom, at his senior Prom in 1953, and they were married in 1956.
As a military wife, she supported her husband in his chosen career while caring for the family, keeping them together during countless moves and deployments over the course of 34 years. She was an active volunteer and loved helping others, whether it was being part of the PTA, military spouse organizations, the Catholic Women of the Chapel, or just helping military families in their time of need. She loved annual family vacations and insisted on keeping the large group under one roof as often as possible. Barbara's passion was spending time in the kitchen; cooking, baking, canning vegetables from the garden, and entertaining always gave her great pleasure. Of her many talents, sewing, needlepoint, and knitting ranked high. She continued her mom's tradition of knitting Christmas stockings which continues today—all the way down to her great grandchildren.

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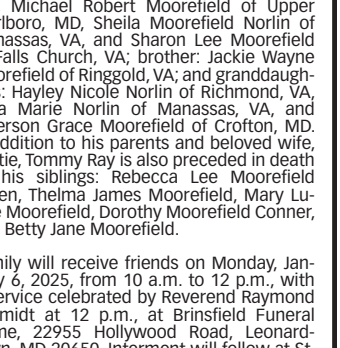
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DEATH NOTICE


BYARS



MATTHEW DAVID BYARS
With profound sadness, we announce the sudden passing of our beloved son, Matthew on November 21, 2024. Born in Brooklyn, NY, and raised in Bethesda, MD, Matthew graduated from Walter Johnson High School, where he shined in acting and singing. He continued his passion for performance at Frostburg State University, earning a degree in Theater. After college, Matthew pursued a career as a talent agent, driven by his love for the entertainment industry. His greatest joys included attending concerts and shows, exploring real estate, cherishing animals, performing karaoke, enjoying stand-up comedy, and spending time with friends. Matthew's kind and generous spirit touched everyone who knew him, and his loss will be deeply felt. A memorial service will be held on January 28 at 2 p.m. at North Chevy Chase Christian Church, 8814 Kensington Parkway, Chevy Chase, MD. In lieu of flowers, contributions to Walter Johnson High School's Theater Program are greatly appreciated. For more details and the full obituary, please visit www.purnphreyfuneralhome.com.

DEATH NOTICE


JACKSON



EUGENE DONNELL JACKSON "Gene" (Age 64)
Of Washington, DC transitioned on December 12, 2024, at 12 p.m. Beloved son of Lauraine Pringle Jackson and the late John Jackson; dear brother of Gregory Jackson (Kristina); special nephew of George, Johnnie "Eddie" (Lucille), Sharon, Yuletta and deceased aunts, Gertrude "Trudy" Pringle Peoples and Patricia Pringle Hawkins; dearest love of Delores Jackson; and a host of family members and friends. Viewing on Saturday, January 4, from 10 a.m. until service at 11 a.m., at Greater Morning Star Apostolic Ministries, 1700 Ritchie Marlboro Road, Largo, Maryland 20774. Service entrusted to Wiseman Funeral Home.

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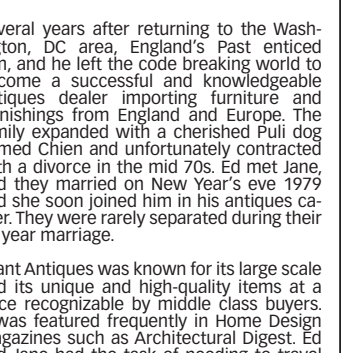
GRANT



EDWARD JOEL GRANT
Ed Grant, longtime owner of Grant Antiques
Edward Joel Grant died on December 14, 2023 in Philadelphia PA at 82. He leaves his wife Jane, his sons Michael (Penelope) and Gregory (Elisabetta); sister, Alice; ex-wife Jackie; granddaughter Antonia; nephew Ben and innumerable cousins and offspring, all of whom were attached to him, as he was to them. The family held a graveside memorial service and was then interred in King David Cemetery, Putnam Valley, NY.
Ed was born in the Bronx the son of Frances and William (Willy) Grant and lived first in Parkchester, one of the earliest planned communities; White Plains for high school, Lehigh at 16! and soon achieved a BA, BS, MS in electrical engineering, a wife, a few years later a second MS from George Washington University and in short order, two sons.
In the cold war late 60s, Ed and family lived in Northern England for a couple of years for his work for the NSA (the National Security Agency). England had a very lasting effect on his professional and personal life.

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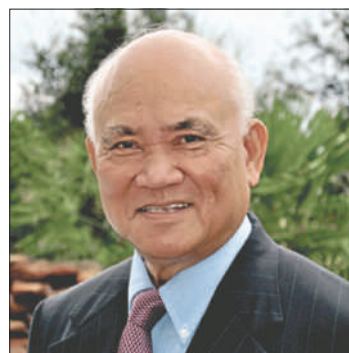
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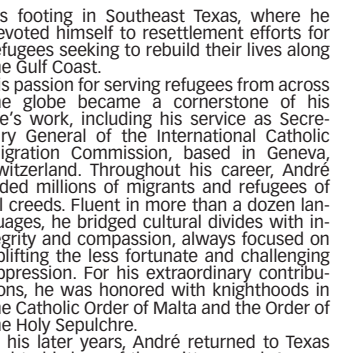
VAN CHAU



ANDRÉ NGUYEN VAN CHAU (Age 89)
André Nguyen Van Chau passed away peacefully at his home in Katy, Texas, on the early afternoon of Sunday, December 15, 2024, surrounded by his loving family. At 89, he left an indelible mark on the world, approaching each day with enlightened intellect, unwavering faith, tender compassion, and an infectious smile.
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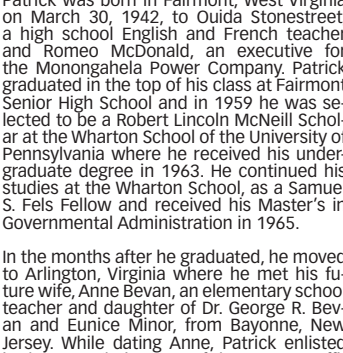
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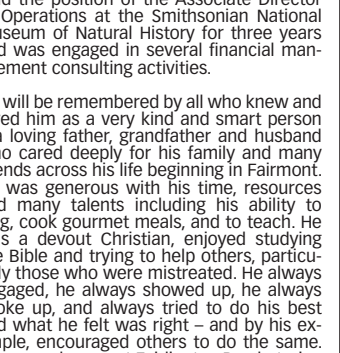
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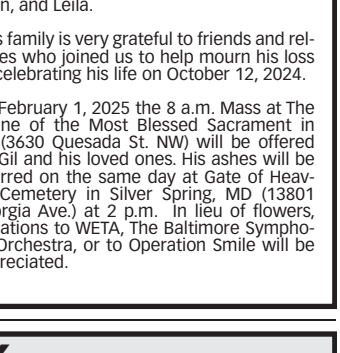
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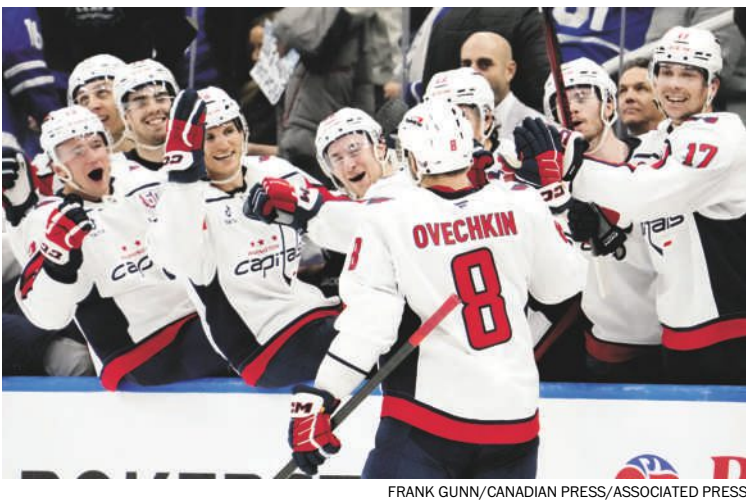
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Alex Ovechkin scored into an empty net with about three minutes left, leaving him just 26 goals shy of breaking the NHL record.

Ovechkin boosts offense in his return

CAPITALS 5,
MAPLE LEAFS 2

Scoring output is highest
in almost a month

BY BAILEY JOHNSON

TORONTO — In their last game before the NHL's holiday break, the Washington Capitals looked in need of a breather. On Saturday night at Scotiabank Arena,

following a four-day respite between games, the rejuvenated Capitals showed off the effects of that rest.

The Capitals scored five goals, their most since they notched six Nov. 30, as they beat the Toronto Maple Leafs, 5-2. Goaltender Logan Thompson made 35 saves on 37 shots for Washington, including a stunning denial with his glove in the first period. Matt Murray, making just his second start of the season, stopped 27 shots for Toronto.

It was a fairly quiet night for

Capitals captain Alex Ovechkin, who returned after he missed 16 games with a broken left fibula — until he hit the empty net with 3:23 remaining. He skated 14:58, put three shots on goal and dished out three hits. He is 26 goals from breaking Wayne Gretzky's NHL record of 894.

"In the game, it happens so quick, and you have to be ready for that," Ovechkin said. "Obviously, I try to feel how I feel with the puck, mentally, physically. As soon as the first shift ended, I was feeling like, 'Okay, now I

can play.'"

Trailing by two goals, Toronto pulled Murray for an extra attacker with more than four minutes left. With just over three minutes to go, Ovechkin chased down the puck and tucked it into the vacated net for his 16th goal of the season and the 869th of his career.

Coach Spencer Carbery said Saturday morning that he

SEE CAPITALS ON D8

Capitals at Red Wings
5 p.m., Monumental

For Quinn, winning is cool, calm, collective



Sally Jenkins

Every team claims to be a collective, but some are more cooperative than others, especially in the contract- and incentive-clause-driven NFL, as

Dan Quinn knows after 25 hard years in the league. The Washington Commanders are the actual deal, such an aggregate that their coach can't separate out the singular difference that has flipped them from 4-13 to 10-5. Quinn summed this up after struggling to put his finger on it, enthusiasm mangling syntax, but somehow resolving in a strange clarity.

"I would say the best part of our team right now is the team," he said.

Quinn is in the midst of a fascinating early-stage build, one that you sense contains some insights as useful to people in neckties and heels as to those who wear cleats. What encourages Quinn most about the Commanders on the verge of the playoffs is nothing he

SEE JENKINS ON D5

Falcons at Commanders

8:20 p.m., NBC

Inside: Jonathan Allen is activated from IR and is set to play tonight. D5

Brunson is too much as Wizards falter late

KNICKS 136,
WIZARDS 132 (OT)

Knicks star has 55 points, spoils Champagnie's night

BY VARUN SHANKAR

With their leading scorer out, the Washington Wizards needed to find new sources of offense Saturday night against the New York Knicks.

They found it in three players — two expected and one anything but. The first two, Bilal Coulibaly and Bub Carrington, are lottery picks and critical parts of the Wizards' rebuild. The third, Justin Champagnie, is on a two-way contract and entered the season outside the rotation.

The trio combined for 66 points, with Champagnie's career-high 31 leading the way. But that wasn't enough to overcome Jalen Brunson, who scored a season-high 55 and heard "MVP!" chants during the Knicks' 136-132 overtime victory at Capital One Arena. The teams will meet again Monday night.

"As a team, we fought and we

SEE WIZARDS ON D8

Knicks at Wizards

Monday, 7 p.m., Monumental



PHOTOS BY THE WASHINGTON POST, GETTY IMAGES AND ASSOCIATED PRESS

Clockwise from top left, Carlos Alcaraz, Shohei Ohtani, Imane Khelif, Caitlin Clark, Noah Lyles and Stephen Curry created some of the most indelible sports moments from the past year — which began with the Chiefs' Super Bowl dynasty being sealed with a kiss between Travis Kelce and Taylor Swift.

These 10 moments defined 2024

BY AVA WALLACE

This was a year of sports in transition. Many of the biggest stories of 2024 came from the Paris Olympics; those Games probably marked the ends of eras in women's gymnastics, men's basketball and men's tennis while ushering in a new king on the track. ¶ But it wasn't just the Olympics that demanded our attention. Women's sports thrived like never before, one team established unquestionable supremacy in the NFL, and megastars Caitlin Clark and Shohei Ohtani made long-awaited arrivals on their sports' grandest stages. Mostly, 2024 seemed to give us a hint of what's to come. ¶ When I reflect on this past sports year, grand images of athletic splendor from the Paris Olympics dominate (as do fond memories of my daily ham-and-cheese baguette). But not every achievement, scandal or passing of the torch happened on the banks of the Seine. It was a busy year. Here's a look at the 10 moments that defined 2024.

STORY, D3

BASEBALL

The Diamondbacks make a surprise splash by adding right-hander Corbin Burnes on a \$210 million deal. D2

PRO FOOTBALL

The Bengals keep their playoff hopes alive by beating the Broncos in OT; the Chargers secure their spot. D5

MEN'S COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Maryland and Georgetown struggle at points while returning from their Christmas break but still prevail. D6

THE DAY IN SPORTS

BASEBALL Hernández agrees to rejoin the Dodgers

Teoscar Hernández is headed back to the Los Angeles Dodgers. The free agent outfielder agreed with the reigning World Series champions on a three-year, \$66 million contract, a person familiar with the negotiations told the Associated Press late Friday night.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the deal was pending a successful physical.

After initially looking for a three-year contract that never materialized in free agency last offseason, Hernández and his representatives turned their focus to getting the best short-term deal from the best team interested. That led to a one-year, \$23.5 million deal with Los Angeles, where he joined a loaded lineup that included **Shohei Ohtani**, **Mookie Betts** and **Freddie Freeman**.

Hernández wanted to play deep into October, and he did, becoming a World Series champion during an all-star season. He also was the Home Run Derby champion and won his third career Silver Slugger, which earned him a \$1 million bonus. ...

The Boston Red Sox announced they signed right-hander **Walker Buehler**, a two-time all-star who was on the mound when the Dodgers clinched the World Series, to a one-year deal.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL UCLA beats Gonzaga at Clippers’ new arena

Eric Dailey Jr. had 18 points, making four three-pointers, and No. 22 UCLA edged No. 14 Gonzaga, 65-62, in the first men’s college basketball game played at Intuit Dome, the new home of the NBA’s Los Angeles Clippers.

Ryan Nembhard’s basket gave Gonzaga a 60-58 lead with 56 seconds left before the Bruins (11-2) scored five points in a row. **Sebastian Mack** converted a three-point play with 33 seconds remaining to put UCLA ahead, and **Skyy Clark** hit two free throws 20 seconds later.

Graham Ike led the Bulldogs (9-4) with 24 points and eight rebounds. Nembhard had 16 points and eight assists. ...

Colby Rogers scored 28 points and **Moussa Cisse** had 13 points, 11 rebounds and three blocks as host Memphis knocked off No. 16 Mississippi, 87-70.

PJ Haggerty added 17 points for the Tigers (10-3), who led by two at halftime but opened the second half on a 14-4 run to take control.

Sean Pedulla led the way with 13 points and four assists for the Rebels (11-2), whose five-game winning streak ended. ...

Tucker Anderson made a three-pointer from the right wing with 6.8 seconds left, and Utah State stunned No. 20 San Diego State, 67-66, on the road after rallying from an 18-point deficit.

The Aztecs’ **Wayne McKinney III** missed a three with two seconds left, and the Aggies (12-1, 2-0 Mountain West) rushed to the other end of the court to swarm Anderson.

Miles Byrd and **Nick Boyd** scored 14 apiece for San Diego State (8-3, 1-1), which went cold from the field in the second half and saw its four-game winning streak end. ...

In area men’s action, George Mason defeated Mount St. Mary’s, 64-56, at EagleBank Arena; Howard lost, 83-67, to Hampton; and Richmond fell, 75-57, to Florida Gulf Coast. ...

Fifth-year senior **Kelsey Ransom** scored a season-high 29 points and added seven assists and six rebounds to lead the Georgetown women past Maryland Eastern Shore, 78-68, at McDonough Arena.

PRO BASKETBALL Three players banned in Mavericks-Suns spat

The NBA suspended Dallas Mavericks forward **Naji Marshall** for four games and Phoenix Suns center **Jusuf Nurkic** for three for their roles in an on-court fight during Friday night’s game.

Dallas forward **P.J. Washington** was suspended for one game. All of the suspensions are without pay.

Nurkic was called for an offensive foul while being guarded by **Daniel Gafford** with 9:02 left in the third quarter before the altercation quickly escalated. Nurkic confronted Marshall before taking an openhanded swing at his head, and Marshall responded with a punch. Washington quickly

shoved Nurkic to the ground before the teams were separated.

The NBA said Marshall “attempted to further engage Nurkic in a hostile manner in the corridor outside the locker rooms.” ...

Dallas star **Luka Doncic** is the latest professional athlete whose home has been burglarized.

The star guard’s business manager told multiple media outlets there was a break-in at Doncic’s home. Jewelry valued at about \$30,000 was stolen, the Dallas Morning News reported, according to an internal police report it obtained. ...

Chicago Bulls guard **Ayo**

Dosunmu has a strained right calf and will be reevaluated in 10 days, the team said. ...

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander had 22 points and **Jalen Williams** added 20 as the Oklahoma City Thunder beat the host Charlotte Hornets, 106-94, for its 10th straight regular season win.

Aaron Wiggins chipped in 17 points and **Isaiah Hartenstein** had 12 points and 15 rebounds for Oklahoma City, which never trailed.

Both teams were down multiple starters — **LaMelo Ball** and **Brandon Miller** for the Hornets and **Luguentz Dort** and **Cason Wallace** for the Thunder.



MATTHIAS SCHRADER/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sky-high

Ryoyu Kobayashi soars through the air during training at the Four Hills ski jumping tournament in Oberstdorf, Germany.

SPOTLIGHT: BASEBALL

Diamondbacks reach a deal with ace Burnes

BY DAVID BRANDT

Right-hander Corbin Burnes and the Arizona Diamondbacks agreed on a six-year, \$210 million contract, a person familiar with the negotiations told the Associated Press late Friday night.

The person spoke on the condition of anonymity because the deal was pending a successful physical.

The 30-year-old Burnes was perhaps the top free agent pitcher on the market after going 15-9 with a 2.92 ERA for the Baltimore Orioles this past season, when he earned \$15.6 million. Baltimore acquired the right-hander in a February trade after he spent his first six major league seasons with the Milwaukee Brewers.

It’s no shock Burnes landed a big contract, but the destination is a surprise. Arizona’s payroll usually ranks in the middle of the pack in the majors, and this would be the largest contract in franchise history.

The \$35 million average salary would rank Burnes fifth among active pitchers with current contracts behind Zack

After strong season with O’s, the 30-year-old righty agrees to a six-year, \$210M contract

Wheeler, Jacob deGrom, Blake Snell and Gerrit Cole. Burnes’s agent, Scott Boras, has negotiated more than \$1.6 billion in contracts for his clients this offseason.

The Diamondbacks are spending in an effort to compete with the World Series champion Los Angeles Dodgers in the National League West. After reaching the World Series in 2023, Arizona did not make the postseason this year.

The team now has a potential starting rotation that includes Burnes, Zac Gallen, Merrill Kelly, Eduardo Rodriguez and Brandon Pfaadt, which on paper is among the best in baseball.

Burnes finished fifth in Cy Young Award voting in his first year in the American League. He won the award in the NL in 2021. He has made at

least 28 starts in each of the past four seasons.

Aside from a poor stretch in August, Burnes was excellent last season, giving the Orioles’ injury-riddled rotation an ace who could be counted on. Baltimore reached the postseason as a wild card and was swept by the Kansas City Royals, but that wasn’t Burnes’s fault. He started the series opener and allowed one run in eight innings of a 1-0 defeat.

The righty was also the starting pitcher for the AL in the All-Star Game in July.

Burnes set a career high in 2024 with 22 quality starts. His strikeout rate of 23.1 percent was his lowest since he became a starter, but his walk rate (6.1 percent) was his best since his Cy Young-winning campaign.

The agreement between Burnes and the Diamondbacks comes after left-hander Blake Snell went to the Dodgers on a five-year, \$182 million contract in November. Burnes is two years younger and has been more durable than Snell, who pitched 216⅓ fewer innings over the past four seasons.

— Associated Press

TELEVISION AND RADIO

NFL	
1 p.m.	Dallas at Philadelphia » WTTG (Ch. 5), WBFF (Ch. 45)
1 p.m.	New York Jets at Buffalo » WUSA (Ch. 9), WJZ (Ch. 13)
4:25 p.m.	Green Bay at Minnesota » WTTG (Ch. 5), WBFF (Ch. 45)
8:20 p.m.	Atlanta at Washington » WRC (Ch. 4), WBAL (Ch. 11), WBIG (100.3 FM)

NHL	
5 p.m.	Washington at Detroit » Monumental Sports Network, WJFK (106.7 FM)
8:30 p.m.	Dallas at Chicago » ESPN

MEN’S COLLEGE BASKETBALL	
Noon	Indiana State at Ohio State » Big Ten Network
1 p.m.	Navy at William & Mary » MASN
2 p.m.	Chicago State at Illinois » Big Ten Network
3 p.m.	Buffalo at Temple » ESPNU
4 p.m.	Winthrop at Indiana » Big Ten Network
6 p.m.	Toledo at Purdue » Big Ten Network
8 p.m.	Campbell at North Carolina » ACC Network
8 p.m.	Western Kentucky at Michigan » Big Ten Network

WOMEN’S COLLEGE BASKETBALL	
Noon	Virginia at Notre Dame » ACC Network
Noon	Alabama A&M at Vanderbilt » SEC Network
1 p.m.	Michigan State at Maryland » Big Ten Plus, WTEM (980 AM)
1 p.m.	South Florida at Rice » ESPN2
1 p.m.	Columbia at Towson » Monumental Sports Network
2 p.m.	Louisville at Boston College » ACC Network
2 p.m.	Wofford at South Carolina » SEC Network

4 p.m.	North Carolina at Miami » ACC Network
4 p.m.	Texas Rio Grande Valley at Texas » SEC Network
6 p.m.	Clemson at North Carolina State » ACC Network
10 p.m.	Michigan at Southern California » Big Ten Network

SOCCER	
10 a.m.	English Premier League: Nottingham Forest at Everton » USA Network
12:15 p.m.	English Premier League: Liverpool at West Ham » USA Network
12:45 p.m.	English League Championship: Leeds United at Derby County » CBS Sports Network

TENNIS	
5 a.m.	United Cup, group stage; ATP/ WTA: Brisbane International, early rounds » Tennis Channel
6:30 p.m.	United Cup, group stage; ATP/ WTA: Brisbane International, early rounds; ATP: Hong Kong Open, early rounds; WTA: Auckland Open, early rounds » Tennis Channel

PRO BASKETBALL — NBA G LEAGUE	
2 p.m.	Osceola at Raptors 905 » NBA TV

HOCKEY — IIHF WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIP, GROUP PLAY	
Noon	Sweden vs. Switzerland » NHL Network
2:30 p.m.	Finland vs. United States » NHL Network
5 p.m.	Slovakia vs. Czech Republic » NHL Network
7:30 p.m.	Germany at Canada » NHL Network

HOCKEY Dobes blanks champs in debut for Montreal

Jakub Dobes stopped 34 shots in his NHL debut, **Kirby Dach** had his first two-goal game in nearly two years and the Montreal Canadiens beat the host Florida Panthers, 4-0, in Sunrise. Dobes, a 23-year-old from the Czech Republic, went 9-3-1 with a 2.44 goals against average and a .910 save percentage in the minors this season, his second as a pro.

He became the first goaltender to record a shutout against the

defending Stanley Cup champion in his NHL debut since **Daren Puppa** did so for the Buffalo Sabres at the Edmonton Oilers on Nov. 1, 1985, according to Stats.

Cole Caufield and **Jake Evans** also scored for Montreal, and **Alex Newhook** had two assists.

Spencer Knight stopped 21 shots for Florida, which was shut out in back-to-back games for the second time this month. ...

Connor Hellebuyek made 33 saves and **Nikolaj Ehlers** had a goal and two assists as the NHL-leading Winnipeg Jets defeated the Ottawa Senators, 4-2, at home.

Gabriel Vilardi gave Winnipeg

a 3-2 lead on a power play midway through the third period, scoring off Ehlers’s one-touch pass.

Kyle Connor and **Mark Scheifele** each had a goal and an assist. The Jets have won three in a row and seven of eight to improve to 26-10-1. ...

Jackson Blake had a go-ahead power-play goal with 9:17 left and **Jack Roslovic** scored twice as the Carolina Hurricanes beat the New Jersey Devils, 5-2, in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Dmitry Orlov and **Sebastian Aho** also scored in Carolina’s four-goal third period. **Dustin Tokarski** had 21 saves to help the Hurricanes forge a split of the home-and-home on consecutive nights between the Eastern Conference contenders.

Carolina’s **Rod Brind’Amour** became the fastest coach to 300 wins in NHL history. It was the Hurricanes’ 488th game under Brind’Amour, who reached that mark in eight fewer games than **Bruce Boudreau**. ...

Notre Dame forward **Danny Nelson** scored twice, Western Michigan’s **Hampton Slukynsky** made 25 saves, and the defending champion United States beat Latvia, 5-1, in the world junior hockey championship in Ontario.

The United States improved to 2-0 in Group A play, while Latvia dropped to 1-1 a day after stunning Canada with a shootout victory.

In the only other game of the day, the Czech Republic defeated Kazakhstan, 14-2, to improve to 2-0 in Group B.

SOCCER Atalanta’s streak ends, but it stays atop Serie A

Atalanta’s winning streak ended at 11 matches after it drew at fourth-place Lazio, 1-1, in the Italian league.

Substitute **Marco Brescianini**’s late equalizer in Rome meant the Bergamo squad — which was down leading scorer

Mateo Retegui because of a leg injury — remained atop Serie A. Four minutes after he went on, Brescianini finished off a counterattack set up by **Nicolo Zaniolo** and **Ademola Lookman**.

Fisayo Dele-Bashiru scored midway through the first half for Lazio after receiving a ball over the top and blasting past onrushing goalkeeper **Marco Carnesecchi**.

Atalanta was left one point ahead of defending champion Inter Milan, which won at Cagliari, 3-0, earlier and also has a match in hand.

Alessandro Bastoni put Inter ahead with a looping header following a cross from **Nicolò Barella** after the break. **Lautaro Martinez** scored his first Serie A goal in nearly two months by volleying in another cross from Barella. Then **Hakan Calhanoglu** converted a penalty.

Atalanta will face Inter in its next match Thursday, in the semifinals of the Italian Super Cup in Saudi Arabia. ...

Four players from the River Plate women’s team who were arrested on allegations of racism during a match were released, São Paulo, Brazil, state’s prison administration secretariat said.

WINTER SPORTS Monney capitalizes on Odermatt’s mistake

Alexis Monney claimed his first World Cup victory in a downhill in Bormio, Italy, after a rare mistake from lauded Swiss teammate **Marco Odermatt**.

Odermatt was fifth, 0.80 back of Monney. He made an uncharacteristic error midcourse that sent his skis in opposite directions, but the three-time overall champion somehow managed to get back into position to finish and remain on top of the downhill and overall standings. ...

Federica Brignone held on to her opening-run lead at a women’s World Cup giant slalom in Semmering, Austria, becoming the first Italian winner of the event in 22 years.

Brignone could even afford a mistake near the end of her second run as she defeated Olympic GS champion **Sara Hector** by 0.57 seconds. **Alice Robinson** of New Zealand was nine-tenths of a second off the pace in third. ...

French skier **Cyprien Sarrazin** was awake and in stable condition a day after undergoing surgery for a head injury suffered in a crash during training for a World Cup downhill.

Sarrazin, who won the downhill on the Stelvio course last year, was one of two skiers airlifted to a hospital after crashing Friday on the slope set to be used for the Milan-Cortina Olympics in 14 months.

— Associated Press

10 memorable sports moments of 2024

The Super Bowl in Las Vegas, the Olympics in Paris and so much more. Here’s to a year of glitzy, golden memories.



EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES

Chiefs are officially a dynasty

The Kansas City Chiefs not only pulled off a 25-22 overtime win against the San Francisco 49ers to become the NFL’s first repeat champions since the New England Patriots in 2003 and 2004, they did so at the first Super Bowl in glitzy Las Vegas at the height of their popularity. (Thanks, Taylor Swift.) Patrick Mahomes cemented himself as the *crème de la crème* of quarterbacks, Andy Reid added to his illustrious coaching legacy, and Travis Kelce channeled Elvis at the after-parties. The win helped catapult the Chiefs from regular ol’ NFL elites into a true dynasty — with pop cultural crossover relevance, to boot.



LEE JIN-MAN/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Ohtani’s interpreter fired in gambling scandal

Sleepy 2024 for Shohei Ohtani, huh? It’s difficult to pick which moment in Ohtani’s spectacular year stands above the rest, but I won’t soon forget the shock of learning that his longtime interpreter and close friend, Ippei Mizuhara, had stolen millions from him to pay off gambling debts. The news broke on the eve of his debut season with the Los Angeles Dodgers, but somehow the betrayal didn’t slow baseball’s golden boy. That he moved on from that to become the first player to log 50 home runs and 50 stolen bases in a season before winning the World Series with Los Angeles and taking his rightful throne atop his sport is even more impressive in retrospect.



GREGORY SHAMUS/GETTY IMAGES

18.7 million watch NCAA women’s final

All that I said about it being hard to choose just one moment from Ohtani’s year? Ditto Caitlin Clark. Although her Iowa Hawkeyes lost the NCAA tournament title game to South Carolina, Clark can take solace knowing that 18.7 million people tuned in to make the championship clash the most-watched women’s basketball game ever (though knowing what we know about her competitiveness, she would rather take the win). For Clark, it was both a farewell to her historic college career and a tease of the stardom — and historic ratings — waiting for her in the WNBA. For women’s sports generally, the game was another important marker in a banner year for viewership and monetary investment.



JULIAN FINNEY/GETTY IMAGES

Alcaraz defeats Djokovic at Wimbledon (again)

Men’s tennis has been in transition since Roger Federer retired in 2022, but a new order finally fell into place when Carlos Alcaraz defeated Novak Djokovic for the second straight year to take the Wimbledon title. Alcaraz had already made history when he won the French Open weeks before to become the first man in tennis history to win a Grand Slam on all three court surfaces before turning 22, but his drubbing of Djokovic made it clear he has a business side to go with the wunderkind revelry that defines his tennis. Equally important? He found himself a worthy adversary in Australian Open and U.S. Open champion Jannik Sinner. A new rivalry was born just as two more defining members of men’s tennis’s golden era — Rafael Nadal and Andy Murray — retired from playing.



JAVIER SORIANO/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Spain stands tall

July 14 was a great day to be a Spaniard. Hours after Alcaraz won Wimbledon, the Spanish men’s national team became the first team to win four European Championships, adding this summer’s 2-1 victory in the final against England in Berlin to wins in 1964, 2008 and 2012. The flip side of the Spanish glory, of course, was England’s continued suffering — the Three Lions have not won a major men’s trophy since the 1966 World Cup.



PATRICK SEMANSKY/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The NBA and WNBA strike a \$76 billion deal

The NBA and WNBA announced new media rights deals in July totaling around \$76 billion over 11 years that are set to begin after the leagues finish their seasons in 2025. The NBA Finals will stay on ESPN and ABC, and new partners NBC and Amazon entered the picture, but one of the most notable takeaways had to do with the WNBA capitalizing on a watershed year. The league’s new media rights deal is valued at around \$200 million annually, up from the current \$60 million per year.



GABRIEL BOUYS/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Golden moment for Andrade, Biles and Chiles

One of the most indelible images from the Paris Games was that of silver medalist Simone Biles and bronze medalist Jordan Chiles gleefully bowing to gold medalist Rebeca Andrade of Brazil after the women’s gymnastics floor exercise. It was a fitting, and perhaps final, exit for Biles from the Olympic stage, not one that came with another gold medal around her neck but one that signified a passing of the baton, to mix my Olympic metaphors — Andrade had long idolized Biles before becoming the only legitimate competition she has ever faced on the apparatus. Chiles was later stripped of her medal, and her disputed third-place finish became one of the lasting controversies of the Games. But the moment remains: three Black women atop a historically White sport; three fierce competitors reveling in one another’s success.



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

Lyles runs 100 meters into forever

How was it that the fastest 10 seconds of the Paris Games were followed by what felt like the longest wait of the summer? Noah Lyles redeemed his third-place finish at the Tokyo Games by beating Jamaica’s Kishane Thompson by five-thousandths of a second in a photo finish, thus backing up his plentiful showboating and creating one of the lasting memories of the Olympics. His other memorable moment in Paris is when he collapsed on the track after running the 200 meters — and finishing third — with covid-19, and if there was one lesson from the Games, it was this: If Lyles is at the starting blocks, you had better be paying attention.



MOHD RASFAN/AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

Khelif takes victory lap in Paris

The only scandal that truly threatened to overtake the Paris Games concerned Imane Khelif, the Algerian boxer who faced claims that she had failed a “gender eligibility test” from the leader of the International Boxing Association, which does not run the Olympic boxing competition and never produced any test results showing Khelif possesses XY chromosomes. The International Olympic Committee stood by Khelif, who took a triumphant lap around the boxing ring at Roland Garros after winning the gold medal in the 66-kilogram (146 pound) weight class and then had this to say: “My message to the world, the whole world is: Hold on to Olympic values and [don’t] bully people.”



TONI L. SANDYS/THE WASHINGTON POST

U.S. men’s basketball team says goodnight

When Stephen Curry, Kevin Durant and LeBron James united to play their first — and probably last — Olympics together, few expected the tumultuous journey the team of NBA all-stars would travel to the gold medal game. But the trio of greats showed up in the final, fending off both a young French team led by phenom Victor Wembanyama and the notion that their global basketball reigns were coming to an end. No one made his case with more flair than Curry, who led the team with 36 points, including nine three-pointers, and left Paris with a memorable sign-off: “Night, night.”

NFL WEEK 17

SCHEDULE

Week 1 at Buccaneers 37, Commanders 20	Week 4 Commanders 42, at Cardinals 14	Week 7 at Commanders 40, Panthers 7	Week 10 Steelers 28, at Commanders 27	Week 13 at Commanders 42, Titans 19	Week 16 at Commanders 36, Eagles 33
Week 2 at Commanders 21, Giants 18	Week 5 at Commanders 34, Browns 13	Week 8 at Commanders 18, Bears 15	Week 11 at Eagles 26, Commanders 18	Week 14 Bye	Week 17 vs. Atlanta 8:20 p.m. (NBC)
Week 3 Commanders 38, at Bengals 33	Week 6 at Ravens 30, Commanders 23	Week 9 Commanders 27, at Giants 22	Week 12 Cowboys 34, at Commanders 26	Week 15 Commanders 20, at Saints 19	Week 18 at Dallas Jan. 4 or 5; date, time and TV TBA

On the air

Sunday's game airs on NBC with Mike Tirico, Cris Collinsworth and Melissa Stark on the call. Bram Weinstein, London Fletcher and Logan Paulsen will call the game on the Commanders Radio Network, including flagship station WBIG (100.3 FM).

Betting lines

Washington is favored by 4½ points. The over/under is 47½ points. Neil Greenberg's pick is Washington -4½.

Forecast

The National Weather Service calls for an 80 percent chance of rain with a low around 50 degrees.

Uniforms

The Commanders will wear burgundy jerseys. The Falcons will wear white jerseys and black pants.

Playoff picture

A win or a tie would clinch a postseason berth for Washington, as would a Carolina Panthers win or tie against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers earlier Sunday.

Key matchup

Washington's defensive front seven vs. Atlanta RB Bijan Robinson: Similar to New Orleans Saints star Alvin Kamara, Robinson is a dual-threat playmaker out of the backfield.

No longer held back by former Falcons coach Arthur Smith's play-calling and lack of touches during his rookie season, Robinson has avoided a sophomore slump. He has caught fire of late, rushing for 413 yards and four touchdowns in his past four games.

The second-year back out of Texas has topped last season's output in carries, rushing yards and touchdowns. He also has caught 56 of 62 passing targets compared with 58 of 86 in 2023. He has just one receiving touchdown this season compared with four in 2023 but is only 67 receiving yards behind his rookie total.

Washington's run defense had improved entering last Sunday's victory over the Philadelphia Eagles, allowing just 195 yards combined over its three previous games. But Saquon Barkley, a contender for MVP honors, showed there is still room for improvement when it comes to stopping the run. The Commanders conceded 211 rushing yards to the Eagles, including 150 by Barkley. However, Washington showed that when it commits to stopping the run, it can. The Commanders held Barkley to 41 rushing yards over the final three quarters. Jalen Hurts's early exit because of a concussion made stopping Barkley easier.

Stacking the box and forcing the quarterback — especially with Falcons rookie Michael Penix Jr. making just his second career start — to make plays could pave the way for another Washington triumph. The likelihood of rain could bode well for the Commanders against a team that plays its home games in a dome.

Injury report

For Washington, cornerback Marshon Lattimore (hamstring), wide receiver Dyami Brown (hamstring), offensive tackle

Andrew Wylie (groin), linebacker Jordan Magee (hamstring) and safety Tyler Owens (ankle) are out. For Atlanta, cornerbacks Kevin King (concussion) and Antonio Hamilton Sr. (quadriceps) are out.

About the Falcons

Atlanta sparked curiosity when it selected Penix, the Heisman Trophy runner-up, with

the eighth pick in the 2024 draft a month after it signed quarterback Kirk Cousins to a four-year, \$180 million deal.

The Falcons started the season 6-3 but experienced a four-game swoon before a lackluster 15-9 win at the Las Vegas Raiders in Week 15. As the season progressed, Cousins's declining play reached a tipping point, leading to a quarterback change. After the victory over the

Raiders, Coach Raheem Morris benched Cousins in favor of the first-round pick, who was named the starting quarterback for Atlanta's Week 16 matchup against the New York Giants. Penix was 18-for-27 passing for 202 yards with no touchdowns and an interception as Robinson (94 rushing yards, two touchdowns) and the Falcons' defense (two pick-sixes) did the heavy lifting in a 34-7 romp over

the tanking Giants. The Falcons received a boost last Sunday night when the Tampa Bay Buccaneers lost to the Dallas Cowboys to propel them from outside the playoff picture to the No. 4 seed as the new leaders of the NFC South.

Q&A

D. Orlando Ledbetter, a Falcons beat reporter for the

Atlanta Journal-Constitution, answered questions in advance of Sunday night's game.

Q: Dan Quinn coached the Falcons from 2015 to 2020. Four years after his dismissal, he landed in Washington. What's the perception of the job Quinn has done this season from Falcons fans and those who cover the team?

A: Quinn's tenure in Atlanta got off to a great start. He had a talented staff and a top-level quarterback and took the franchise to the Super Bowl in his second season. The Falcons had been to only one previous Super Bowl. However, after blowing a 28-3 lead [against the Patriots] after he failed to rein in offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan, things went downhill. His best coaching job may have been in 2017, when he got an emotionally scarred Falcons team back to the playoffs, where it came within a goal line stand of winning at Philadelphia in the divisional round. The Eagles would go on to win the Super Bowl.

Q: Sunday night will feature two of the top eight picks from the 2024 draft. In making his second career start, what will Michael Penix Jr. have to do to show he belongs in the upper echelon of quarterbacks from his draft class?

A: Penix will have to throw a few more accurate — and softer — passes. He had a few bounce off his receivers' hands and skipped a few throws into the turf. He also must finish drives in the red zone with touchdowns and short field goals.

Q: What's your bold prediction for Sunday's game?

A: Commanders 35, Falcons 21. Penix is not ready for a shootout with Jayden Daniels, and the Falcons have struggled against running quarterbacks. The Falcons should have benched Kirk Cousins sooner.

Trivia question

Including the playoffs, Washington is 18-10-1 all-time against Atlanta. The lone tie was a 20-20 draw Oct. 15, 1967, that moved Washington to 2-2-1 on the season. Legendary pass-catchers Charley Taylor, Bobby Mitchell and Jerry Smith caught touchdown passes for Washington that day. Who threw those passes?

Previous meeting

Oct. 15, 2023: Commanders 24, Falcons 16: Washington was outgained 402 yards to 193 at Mercedes-Benz Stadium but intercepted second-year quarterback Desmond Ridder three times to snap a three-game losing streak.

Game day grub

Each week, we will recommend recipes related to the Commanders' opponent. Get the recipes at [postsports.com](#).

Lemon-pepper chicken wings are legendary in Atlanta — just ask former NBA guard Lou Williams. This recipe, inspired by the wings found at the city's American Deli, features a wet version of the lemon-pepper sauce, which gets its flavor from fresh lemon zest and juice and freshly cracked pepper.

Trivia answer

Quarterback Sonny Jurgensen, who led the NFL in 1967 with 31 touchdown passes and 3,747 yards. It's the only season in Washington franchise history in which a quarterback passed for at least 30 touchdowns.

— *Jake Russell and Scott Allen*

OTHER GAMES

Cowboys at Eagles , 1 p.m. (Fox)	Raiders at Saints , 1 p.m.	Panthers at Buccaneers , 1 p.m.	Dolphins at Browns , 4:05 p.m.	Lions at 49ers , Monday, 8:15 p.m. (ABC, ESPN)
Jets at Bills , 1 p.m. (CBS)	Colts at Giants , 1 p.m.	Titans at Jaguars , 1 p.m.	Packers at Vikings , 4:25 p.m. (Fox)	

AFC

EAST	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA	SOUTH	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA	NORTH	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA	WEST	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA
Buffalo	12	3	0	.800	469	331	Houston	9	7	0	.563	349	358	Baltimore	11	5	0	.688	483	351	Kansas City	15	1	0	.938	385	288
Miami	7	8	0	.467	305	329	Indianapolis	7	8	0	.467	318	359	Pittsburgh	10	6	0	.625	363	328	L.A. Chargers	10	6	0	.625	368	281
N.Y. Jets	4	11	0	.267	292	344	Jacksonville	3	12	0	.200	277	396	Cincinnati	8	8	0	.500	453	417	Denver	9	7	0	.563	387	311
New England	3	13	0	.188	266	401	Tennessee	3	12	0	.200	284	417	Cleveland	3	12	0	.200	245	380	Las Vegas	3	12	0	.200	264	390

NFC

EAST	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA	SOUTH	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA	NORTH	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA	WEST	W	L	T	PCT.	PF	PA
Philadelphia	12	3	0	.800	402	283	Atlanta	8	7	0	.533	327	349	Detroit	13	2	0	.867	493	299	L.A. Rams	10	6	0	.625	342	356
Washington	10	5	0	.667	432	348	Tampa Bay	8	7	0	.533	427	352	Minnesota	13	2	0	.867	396	276	Seattle	9	7	0	.563	345	343
Dallas	7	8	0	.467	324	404	New Orleans	5	10	0	.333	309	346	Green Bay	11	4	0	.733	413	287	Arizona	7	9	0	.438	353	355
N.Y. Giants	2	13	0	.133	215	362	Carolina	4	11	0	.267	283	448	Chicago	4	12	0	.250	286	348	San Francisco	6	9	0	.400	331	349

NFL ROUNDUP

Cincinnati stays alive with a wild win

BENGALS 30, BRONCOS 24 (OT)

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Joe Burrow threw his third touchdown pass to Tee Higgins with 1:07 left in overtime, and the Cincinnati Bengals kept their slim playoff hopes alive with a wild 30-24 victory over the Denver Broncos on Saturday.

Following a Broncos punt, Burrow completed a 31-yard pass to Higgins to the Denver 3, then went back to the lanky wide receiver for the game-ending play. Higgins finished with 11 receptions for 131 yards.

Cade York had a chance to win it for the Bengals with about three minutes left in overtime, but his 33-yard field goal bounced off the left upright.

Denver then went three-and-out, including a Bo Nix incompletion on third down, handing the ball right back to Cincinnati (8-8).

•**CHARGERS 40, PATRIOTS 7:** Justin Herbert threw three touchdown passes as Los Angeles clinched its second playoff appearance in three seasons with a rout of New England in Foxborough, Massachusetts.

The win also secured the fourth postseason appearance in Jim Harbaugh's five seasons as an NFL coach, adding to the three he made during his stint with the San Francisco 49ers.

Herbert finished 26 of 38 for 281 yards to become the third player in NFL history with at least 3,000 passing yards and 20 touchdown passes in each of his first five seasons.

•**RAMS 13, CARDINALS 9:** Ahkello Witherspoon made a diving interception on a deflected pass in the end zone with 37 seconds to play, and Los Angeles barely maintained command of the NFC West race with a victory over Arizona in Inglewood, California.

Puka Nacua had 129 yards receiving and Kyren Williams scored the only touchdown for the Rams (10-6), who grinded through a difficult offensive night and survived a hair-raising fourth quarter for their fifth consecutive victory.



ANDY LYONS/GETTY IMAGES

The Bengals' Tee Higgins scores the game-winner in overtime, his third touchdown catch of the game.

Hall of Fame finalists named

Two-time Super Bowl MVP Eli Manning, former defensive players of the year Luke Kuechly and Terrell Suggs and prolific tight end Antonio Gates are among the finalists for the 2025 Pro Football Hall of Fame class.

The Hall announced the names of the 15 modern-era finalists who advanced from a group of 25 to the final stage of voting. The group includes five players in their first year of eligibility, nine who were finalists last year and wide receiver Steve Smith Sr., who made it this far for the first time in his fourth year of eligibility.

The selection committee will vote next month to pick the class of three to five modern-era players that will be announced the week of the Super Bowl.

Five others also are under consideration for enshrinement, with Maxie Baughan, Sterling Sharpe and Jim Tyrer finalists in the seniors category, Mike Holmgren in the coaches category and Ralph Hay as a contributor.

Between one and three of those nominees will also get inducted into the Hall.

Manning, Kuechly and Suggs are finalists in their first year of eligibility, along with postseason kicking star Adam Vinatieri and former Baltimore Ravens guard Marshal Yanda.

Gates was a first-time finalist for the 2024 class and is back at this stage along with defensive end Jared Allen; wide receivers Torry Holt and Reggie Wayne; offensive linemen Willie Anderson and Jahri Evans; defensive backs Darren Woodson, Eric Allen and Rodney Harrison; and running back Fred Taylor also advancing.

•**DOLPHINS:** Miami quarterback Tua Tagovailoa was downgraded to doubtful for Sunday's game against the Cleveland Browns because of a hip injury.

Tagovailoa was limited in practice this past week with the injury, which he suffered in a loss to the Houston Texans on Dec. 15.

•**PANTHERS:** Carolina placed its leading rusher, Chuba

Hubbard, on injured reserve with a strained calf.

Hubbard was limited in practice Friday with a knee injury and was listed as questionable to play Sunday against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. After practice, Hubbard complained of pain and had an MRI exam, which revealed a Grade 2 calf strain, according to the team.

•**BUCCANEERS:** Two-time Pro Bowl linebacker Shaquil Barrett is rejoining Tampa Bay.

The Buccaneers signed the two-time Super Bowl champion, also announcing safety Jordan Whitehead was activated from injured reserve ahead of Sunday's home game against the Panthers.

•**COLTS:** Indianapolis quarterback Anthony Richardson was ruled out for the Colts' big game at the New York Giants on Sunday. Richardson missed practice Thursday and Friday because of back and foot injuries.

Richardson's absence probably means Joe Flacco will start against the Giants.

Allen activated from IR after nine-game absence

Washington run defense should get major boost with return of star tackle

BY NICKI JHABVALA

The Washington Commanders activated defensive tackle Jonathan Allen from injured reserve Saturday, giving them a significant boost up front as they try to clinch a playoff spot Sunday night against the Atlanta Falcons.

Allen tore his pectoral muscle in the Commanders' loss to the Baltimore Ravens on Oct. 13 and was believed to be out for the season. But after he had surgery, the nature of the injury and his recovery made a return possible.

"He's built different, for sure," Coach Dan Quinn said this month. "But it was within the last month where this trajectory was taking place. And if he had hit all the markers, then we knew this would've been the window that the docs had advised to say, if he hits all the stuff to lead up into this, pressing and moving, that you'd have a shot to do that."

Allen's return should only help a defensive front that has im-



TERRANCE WILLIAMS/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Commanders defensive tackle Jonathan Allen is slated to return against the Falcons after suffering a torn pectoral muscle Oct. 13.

SALLY JENKINS

The Commanders operate as a complete collective

JENKINS FROM D1

identifies on a statistics sheet, Jayden Daniels's rookie of the year quality performance at quarterback notwithstanding. Rather, it's something Quinn hears, a sound that makes him pause and listen before he starts team meetings on a bleary-eyed weekday morning.

"I can hear it before I even come into the room," he observed. It's a noise of intermingled chatter, jaunty laughter and rank ambition — the sound of an "energy," as Quinn put it, that is rare in his experience and suggests the players like being in that room together, like being at work with their colleagues.

"There's not this, 'Oh, this part is really good,'" he remarked recently. "It's collectively their space together. There's not a numeric part to it. It's a good locker room. They really like their sideline. They are all in for

one another."

The Commanders had their Christmas party the other night, and what pleased Quinn most was not that Daniels cultivated goodwill by giving his offensive linemen electric scooters, although that was a typically sleek move by their effortlessly engaging quarterback. It was that a team member told Quinn, "It was less like an office party and more like just a party with your friends." Quinn has been after that feeling throughout his first season as coach, a connection "on a deeper level than just people that work together." In any business, the early-build mode, for all of its difficulties, is also an opportunity, your best chance to get the ethics and standards right. And the ethic Quinn wants, that any great team has, is one in which his people play as much out of a sense of responsibility to each other as for themselves.

"Which some people think you can't do in pro ball," Quinn said this past week. "And I would say, I'm showing and saying the other way, I think we can."

They started talking about the "collective" back in training camp. The word has rung throughout the season. Defensive coordinator Joe Whitt Jr. used it back in September, when the defense was a poor-looking work in progress. "I know everybody wants to get enamored and individual player stats and numbers and all that, but we rush as a collective," he said. "We play as a collective."

Quinn used it again just the other day, on the Monday morning after the Commanders upset the Philadelphia Eagles despite giving up five turnovers. In a crazy way, the lows of that game were as bonding as anything they've experienced, a stress test. "The truth is collective," Quinn told them after the win.

It's an easy word to use — not so easy to create. It started with a set of written standards that Quinn asked the players to draw up in the preseason. Instead of imposing it on them, like a lot of coaches would, he gave them a blank sheet and asked them to fill it in. Early on in his career,

Quinn would wonder, "How do I lead?" he said. "And now I recognize, like, how do I draw out the leaders in *other* people, the staff members, the players? It's like a coloring book. I draw the pictures, but they've got to color it in."

The self-written standards were important because "now they have a way to push one another" instead of being pushed and "to tell the truth to one another without it coming across like, 'I'm going to be an a--hole,'" Quinn says. But it's a delicate dance, the collective truth — it depends on being frank with good intentions and not tipping over into blame. If the Commanders go on to the playoffs, and if in the coming years they win big, the Eagles game will be the definitive turning point for the organization, and not just because it came against a playoff-quality team. It was the game where the collective could have torn apart.

The sense of mutual responsibility and code could have failed at a couple of junctures this season, especially during their three-game losing streak. But last week was the ultimate stress test, where people could easily have turned

on each other and started blaming.

Instead, when Brian Robinson Jr. fumbled twice or Saquon Barkley ripped off a 68-yard touchdown run, "There was a lot of trust that took place," Quinn said. When they trailed by seven at halftime, he knew that frustration and emotion would run high on the sideline, and he told his leaders to beware of becoming heated. "You're going to have to look into the face of temptation some," he said.

They resisted the temptation. Instead they somehow stayed in solution mode, and this is where Quinn's thoughts get really interesting, and he offers some observations useful for any of us going through a tough work experience together.

"How do you clear it?" he asked rhetorically. "Because you do have to acknowledge it. You're mad; you're pissed. It's not like you say, 'Don't worry about it.' That usually makes you more mad. 'Hey, don't worry about it.' Well, hey, it's a big deal, I *am* going to worry about it. And so how do you acknowledge it? You take it in. *Why* did it happen?"

This was where the self-written standards came in handy. They allowed for a dispassionate group analysis,

where a technique failed, where an elbow wasn't locked down or an angle wasn't right or a tackle wasn't square.

"So as long as you can come to where the mistake occurred, that makes it easier because then I know what the correction can be," Quinn said.

There are going to be mistakes and failures in any group endeavor, sometimes terrible ones, awful misjudgments, personal collapses. Much as Quinn hates the self-inflicted damage and tough spots his young team has put itself in, he loves the way it responds. Instead of worrying about the scoreboard, the players worry about being more responsible to each other on the next play. It's becoming a signature quality, and it's the source of their indefinable magic, with three fourth-quarter comebacks and game-winning drives this season.

When Quinn convened a meeting of team leaders recently to ask them what issues are most important to them, they said, "How do we protect this locker room?" They know it's a different one from others they have played in. Whatever happens to them next, "They're proud of what they created," Quinn said.

COLLEGE FOOTBALL ROUNDUP

Cyclones cap best season in school history with one more comeback victory

IOWA STATE 42, MIAMI 41

ASSOCIATED PRESS

It was a season of Iowa State comebacks. And fittingly, that's how it ended for the Cyclones.

Game MVP Rocco Becht scored from a yard out on fourth and goal with 56 seconds remaining and No. 18 Iowa State capped the best season in school history by rallying past No. 15 Miami, 42-41, in the Pop-Tarts Bowl on Saturday in Orlando.

Becht finished with 270 passing yards and three touchdowns for Iowa State (11-2), which entered this season — the 133rd year of Cyclones football — never having won more than nine games.

The victory marked the fourth time in 2024 that Iowa State got a winning score with less than two minutes remaining. For this one, the Cyclones rallied from a 10-point deficit in the second half — with Miami quarterback Cam Ward watching after a record-setting first half — to get win No. 11. Carson Hansen rushed for a pair of touchdowns for Iowa State.

And as the MVP, Becht got the honor of choosing which flavor Pop-Tart was to be sacrificed in a giant toaster.

"There's only one," Becht said. "Cinnamon roll."

Ward passed for three touchdowns in his final college game to break the Division I career record of 156 set by Houston's Case Keenum from 2007 to 2011. Ward finished with 158.

Damien Martinez rushed for a

career-high 179 yards for Miami (10-3).

Ward was 12 of 19 passing for 190 yards and three touchdowns in the first half before Emory Williams took over to start the second.

•**ALAMO BOWL:** L.J. Martin rushed for 88 yards and two touchdowns and Jake Retzlaff passed for 151 yards as No. 17 BYU topped No. 23 Colorado, 36-14, in San Antonio.

The Cougars (11-2) scored in every quarter in rolling to their second straight bowl victory.

Colorado (9-4) was held to 210 total yards with only two net yards rushing. The Buffaloes had 90 yards in the fourth quarter with the Cougars leading by 29 points.

Buffaloes quarterback Shedeur Sanders was sacked three times and threw two interceptions before a sellout crowd of 64,261.

Heisman Trophy winner Travis Hunter had four receptions for 106 yards, including a 43-yard touchdown from Sanders.

•**MILITARY BOWL:** Rahjai Harris broke free for an 86-yard touchdown run with 1:33 remaining, giving East Carolina a pulsating 26-21 victory over North Carolina State in a game that descended into a wild brawl in the final minute at Navy-Marine Corps Memorial Stadium.

Harris had 220 of ECU's 326 yards rushing, and his sensational sprint near the end of the game gave the Pirates (8-5) the lead back after they surrendered a 13-point advantage in the fourth. But after an interception by Dontavious Nash ended the Wolfpack's final drive, East Carolina's attempt to run out the clock was interrupted by a large-scale fight between the

in-state rivals — who play each other again to start next season.

•**ARIZONA BOWL:** Kevin Davis had a career-high 148 yards rushing and two touchdowns on nine carries and Jordan Brunson also ran for two scores to carry Miami (Ohio) to a 43-17 blowout of Colorado State (8-5) in Tucson.

The RedHawks (9-5) are 9-7 all-time in bowl games.

•**FENWAY BOWL:** Connecticut's victory in Boston showed North Carolina coach-in-waiting Bill Belichick how much work he has ahead of him.

Joe Fagnano threw for 151 yards and two touchdowns as the Huskies handled Belichick's new team in his old backyard, 27-14.

•**PINSTRIPE BOWL:** In New York, Dylan Raiola passed for 228 yards and a touchdown and Nebraska (7-6) built an 18-point

lead and held on to upend Boston College (7-6), 20-15, for its first bowl victory since 2015.

•**NEW MEXICO BOWL:** Josh Hoover passed for four touchdowns to help TCU (9-4) cruise to a 34-3 rout of Louisiana Lafayette (10-4) in Albuquerque.

Georgia's Beck to enter draft

Bulldogs quarterback Carson Beck announced his plans to enter the NFL draft, five days after having season-ending elbow surgery.

•**CONNECTICUT:** Huskies Coach Jim Mora agreed to a two-year contract extension through 2028, the school announced right before U-Conn. turned back North Carolina in the Fenway Bowl.

•**WASHINGTON STATE:** The Cougars hired South Dakota State's Jimmy Rogers as their new coach.

COLLEGE BASKETBALL

Larrañaga is latest coach to opt out of the new NCAA



John Feinstein

Carolina to reach the Sweet 16 of the NCAA men's basketball tournament.

Before that run, the Patriots had never won an NCAA tournament game. Neither had Larrañaga. What's more, their presence in the NCAA tournament had been questioned by many, including the CBS duo of Jim Nantz and Billy Packer during the selection show.

Larrañaga had suspended point guard Tony Skinn for one game after Skinn delivered a low blow to a Hofstra player late in the Patriots' CAA tournament semifinal loss.

Mason upset Michigan State without Skinn, then stunned North Carolina after trailing 16-2 in the first half.

Larrañaga called me that evening, shouting over the noise of blaring car horns: "We're getting a police escort back to campus," he said. "Can you believe that?"

A trip to the Sweet 16 rated a police escort. What next?

And so two days later, I sat in Larrañaga's house while he recalled the events of the previous weekend. He started to talk about his sons — both of whom played college basketball — and how he and Jon contacted Jay, who was playing in Italy, after the North Carolina win. As he talked about how proud he was of his boys, Larrañaga began to cry. His wife, Liz, walked into the room.

"Talking about the boys again?" she said, knowing what could bring her husband to tears.

He nodded and said (tearfully), "There's no crying in the Sweet 16, right?"

Five days later, there was plenty of crying after George Mason continued its run by upsetting top-seeded Connecticut, 86-84, in overtime to reach the Final Four. As Larrañaga sprinted past me to cut down the nets, he paused and said, "I can't wait to see Nantz and Packer in Indianapolis."

Larrañaga retired Thursday after winning 744 games and going to a second Final Four in 2023 while coaching at Miami. Like many important coaches, he was driven from the game by the new NCAA, which includes countless name, image and likeness deals and nonstop transfers.

During his news conference Thursday, Larrañaga recalled eight players coming to him after the Final Four run in 2023 and telling him they were entering the transfer portal.

"I said, 'Don't you like it?' 'No, I love it. I love Miami. It's great,'" Larrañaga said. "But the opportunity to make money someplace else created a situation that you have to begin to ask yourself as a coach, what is this all about? And the answer is it's become professional."

The Hurricanes had gone 29-8 on their way to the Final Four. One year later, they were 15-17. This season, they are 4-8 after a loss at home to Mount St. Mary's. Larrañaga decided enough was enough and announced his retirement Thursday. Clearly, he

didn't see his team improving on last season's 6-14 ACC record.

But his retirement goes well beyond wins and losses. He never envisioned a world in which he would be constantly negotiating with agents of potential transfers and high school seniors. He called me a couple of months ago to ask whether I thought there was anything to be done about the current situation.

"I'm not sure how much longer I can do this," he said. Then he told me a story about how he carefully put together an offer for a potential transfer, only to be told by the player's agent, "Coach, you're not even in the ballpark."

"I never thought my career would come down to dealing with agents," he said. "I'm almost 75. I'm worn out physically and emotionally."

The main reason Larrañaga and coaches such as Jay Wright, Roy Williams, Mike Brey and — most notably — Tony Bennett feel burned out by their jobs is NIL, which the Supreme Court unanimously ruled in favor of in the summer of 2021. But lost in the Supreme Court's decision was the 2018 Condoleezza Rice commission, which recommended that agents be allowed to negotiate on behalf of amateur athletes.

This was the fox being let into the henhouse. Now coaches such as Bennett and Larrañaga, who never had to think about negotiating with agents, found themselves constantly dealing with them. In fact, at his farewell news conference, Bennett thanked his staff for "protecting me from the agents."

"I meant it," Bennett said to me a couple of weeks ago. "I wouldn't have lasted as long as I did if not for my staff getting between me and the agents."

Larrañaga clearly felt the same way. He had great success at Miami, reaching the Sweet 16 four times (without a police escort), the Elite Eight twice and the Final Four once.

His departure from George Mason was a sad one. Three years earlier, he had turned down Providence, his alma mater, to stay at Mason. But he and Athletic Director Tom O'Connor had a falling-out after a 27-7 season, and Larrañaga left for Miami. It's fair to say that George Mason hasn't been the same since. The Patriots haven't made the NCAA tournament since Larrañaga's final season and have failed to finish in the top four of the Atlantic 10 since they joined the conference in 2013.

Larrañaga retires as the winningest coach in Miami history, just as he left as the winningest coach in George Mason history. He belongs in the Hall of Fame, not only for his wins but for his outgoing personality. He won a lot. He entertained even more.

He cried in the Sweet 16, and he cried some more after his team made the Final Four. He grew up in the Bronx and learned to Bronx whistle in high school so the entire arena could hear it. The New Yorker in him never went away. He loved to compete no matter where he was coaching.

On my all-time list of memorable moments is him shouting over the bedlam in what was then Verizon Center to say, "I can't wait to see Nantz and Packer in Indianapolis."

Boy, was that fun.



JOHN MCDONNELL FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Maryland forward Julian Reese finished with 23 points and 11 rebounds Saturday afternoon in the Terps' final nonconference matchup.

Sluggish Terps put the Hawks to rest

MARYLAND 81, UMES 66

Willard blames days off for their lackluster play

BY PATRICK STEVENS

Kevin Willard said he had never given a team four days off at Christmas before this season. The Maryland men's basketball team's lackluster showing Saturday afternoon against Maryland Eastern Shore suggests the Ter-rapins' coach is unlikely to do so again.

The Terps never trailed but sputtered in stretches of their 81-66 victory at Xfinity Center, an atypically erratic performance to close nonconference play for a team with a habit of clobbering opponents in College Park.

"You can't give college kids four days off," Willard said. "I'm an idiot."

Julian Reese had 23 points and 11 rebounds for his sixth double-double of the season and freshman Derik Queen collected 18 points and 14 rebounds for his fifth for the Terps (11-2), who resume Big Ten play with games Thursday (at Washington) and Jan. 5 (at Oregon). They will do so after yielding 36 points in the paint to the Hawks (4-12); only

Purdue has managed more against Maryland this season. Also, the Terps shot 5 for 18 on three-pointers; that tied the Nov. 4 opener against Manhattan for their fewest makes from the outside.

"We had five days off," junior guard Ja'Kobi Gillespie shrugged. "That's probably what really caused it."

KC Shaw had 20 points and nine rebounds for UMES, which has dropped all 19 of its meetings with Maryland but proved pesky after a 12-day layoff.

Maryland was a week removed from thrashing Syracuse, 87-60, at Barclays Center in New York. Willard didn't believe it would be a good idea to bring the team home just to practice the next day before giving the Terps Dec. 23, 24 and 25 off. So the team dispersed from the Gotham Classic and didn't resume practice until Thursday.

Still, there was virtually no mystery coming into Saturday. Toss aside its mid-November loss to Marquette, and Maryland had won its other eight home games by at least 24 points. As for the Hawks, they had swept their non-Division I competition and had chances to pick off D-I foes Penn, Old Dominion, Longwood and Wagner, losing those four games by a combined nine points.

Yet for as well as UMES has acquitted itself at times under

first-year coach Cleo Hill Jr. — who showed a penchant for rebuilding programs on the Division II level at Shaw and Winston-Salem State — it lost its four previous games against power conference foes (Vanderbilt, Illinois, Arkansas and Connecticut) by an average of 53.5 points.

Those struggles were understandable; Hill had to construct his entire roster after his June 1 hire. They weren't evident against the Terps, who bolted to an 11-2 lead only for UMES to rattle off eight consecutive points to avoid getting buried early. That set in motion a repeating sequence of Maryland uncorking a spurt, only for the Hawks to figure out how to hang around.

Reese was an exception to the lethargic effort, piling up 13 points and seven rebounds as the Terps stretched out a 40-24 halftime lead.

"When you take that many days off, you know the older guys can handle it," Willard said. "I think Ju came in ready, rested and just came out and played physical and aggressive."

When Jordan Geronimo — who started the second half over Queen because Willard didn't think the freshman played well early — dunked on the first possession after the break to extend Maryland's lead to 18, it seemed the Terps would be able

to enjoy a stress-free second half.

Instead, UMES closed within 54-48 with 10:08 remaining. The Terps needed little more than a minute to brush off the Hawks' surge — with Queen's dunk off an inbound pass, Reese's basket and Selton Miguel's transition layup — and eventually grew their lead to 23.

And with that, Maryland completed a 10-1 nonconference record that featured far more blow-outs than close calls.

"I feel like we played pretty good since the start," said Gillespie, who had nine points, nine assists and two turnovers in 35 minutes. "This is probably the worst game we've played."

Saturday didn't prove costly to a team with a reworked roster that spent the past two months illustrating it would not follow the path of its offense-challenged predecessor. Even on a sluggish day, Maryland earned its fifth wire-to-wire victory. And with a Tuesday flight preceding the program's first West Coast trip in conference play, the Terps are well positioned to push for an NCAA tournament berth and perhaps contend for the Big Ten title as the calendar flips to 2025.

"I feel like we created a good résumé for ourselves," Reese said. "We earned a lot of respect from the country, and that's what we planned to do. We're just looking to build on that."

Hoyas add another notch to growth chart with rout

GEORGETOWN 83, COPPIN STATE 53

Freshman Sorber leads way in blowout at home

BY NOAH FERGUSON

The Georgetown men's basketball team entered this season in search of clarity. Four of the Hoyas' top five scorers from last season's 9-23 squad are gone. All but two of their players this year are underclassmen. Only time on the court together would show how these young Hoyas would fare in Coach Ed Cooley's second year.

Two months in, the Hoyas have shown they are up to the task. To close the calendar year on a winning note Saturday afternoon, Georgetown beat Coppin State, 83-53, at Capital One Arena to improve to 11-2. With nonconference play complete, the Hoyas already have exceeded last season's win total.

"The fact that we eclipsed last year ... we should," Cooley said. "We're trying to earn the trust of people that, hey, we're trying to move our program forward knowing that we were up against a lot, so I'm proud of our group."

Center Thomas Sorber led the Hoyas in a physical matchup with the Eagles (1-13), finishing with 22 points and 12 rebounds. The freshman's four blocks tied his season high.

Malik Mack, who missed the Hoyas' previous two games with a lower-body injury, added



DANIEL KUCIN JR./IMAGN IMAGES

Freshman Thomas Sorber finished with 22 points, 12 rebounds and four blocks as Georgetown (11-2) poured it on at Capital One Arena.

15 points and 11 assists.

"I've been practicing a little bit throughout the week, so I still had my legs under me a little bit," he said. "It was just more so fun to be back out there with the guys and getting our chemistry back up since I missed the last couple of games."

Fellow sophomore Drew Fielder set career highs with 20 points and 13 rebounds. The Hoyas controlled the final 20 minutes to pull away.

"I thought the second half was the way we wanted to play — in transition, rebounding the ball, three double-doubles, which is really good," Cooley said. "We re-

ally challenged our guys defensively on the glass. I thought Fielder did a great job. Sorber did a great job. And Malik with 11 assists. ... If we can have that every night, I think it's going to give us a shot every night."

Last season, the Hoyas finished 2-18 in Big East regular season play. Georgetown matched that win total after just two conference games with last Sunday's 61-60 victory at Seton Hall. That followed a Dec. 18 blowout of visiting Creighton.

Saturday's game lacked the drama of the Seton Hall matchup as the Hoyas never trailed. Mack, a Harvard transfer and former

standout at St. John's College High, buried a corner three-point-er on the Hoyas' first possession. Sorber banked in a layup through contact moments later, and Cooley's team soon had an eight-point lead.

Still, the Hoyas led by just seven at halftime. Turnovers slowed the Hoyas' offense in the first 20 minutes as the Eagles stuck around.

"Coming out of the holiday, we were a little rusty in the first half. I thought we made a lot of mistakes," Cooley said. "We [now] have back-to-back games with [19] turnovers, so that's something we're going to have to identify as we get into Big East play."

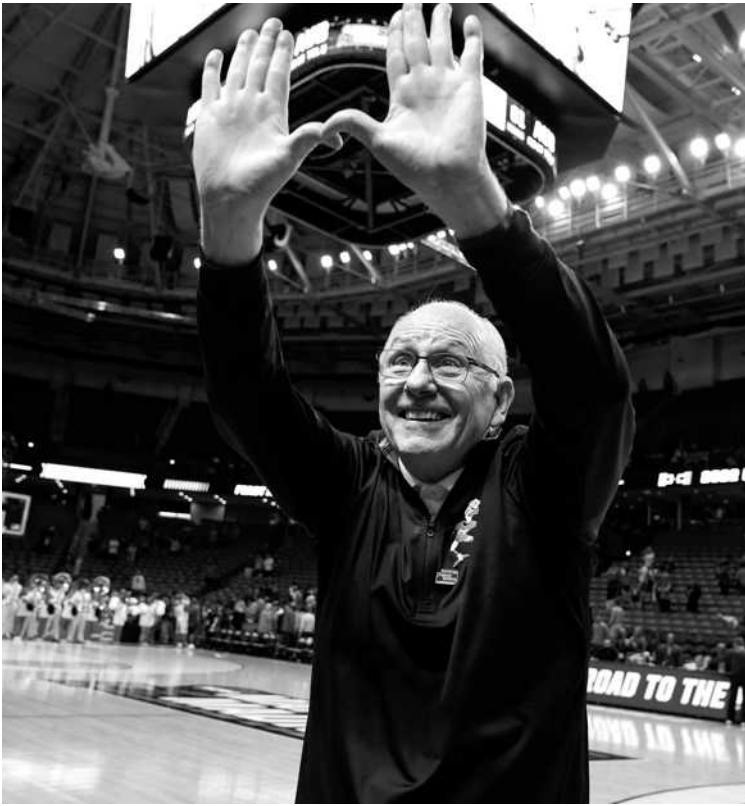
Georgetown doubled up Coppin State in the second half as the Hoyas' size overwhelmed the Eagles in the paint. Cooley tightened his rotation to give his starters a chance to find their groove, he said. The Hoyas got the ball to Sorber and Fielder early and often as they began to pull away.

Mack continued to flourish, too — his six second-half assists created opportunities for Sorber and Fielder down low. Midway through the half, a crafty layup by Mack delighted the crowd, forcing Coppin State to take a timeout with the Hoyas' win in hand.

The task gets tougher from here: Georgetown hosts Xavier on Friday before visiting Marquette on Jan. 7 and welcoming two-time defending champion Connecticut to Capital One Arena on Jan. 11.

"2024 is complete," Cooley said. "I've seen enormous growth with our group."

Xavier at Georgetown
Friday, 8 p.m., CBS Sports Network



BYRNN ANDERSON/ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jim Larrañaga, who retired as Miami's basketball coach Thursday, said dealing with agents wore on him "physically and emotionally."

SCOREBOARD

PRO FOOTBALL

Chargers 40, Patriots 7

L.A. CHARGERS	7	13	10	10	-40
NEW ENGLAND	0	7	0	0	-7

FIRST QUARTER

LA Chargers: Davis 23 pass from Herbert (Dicker kick), 3:28.

SECOND QUARTER

LA Chargers: FG Dicker 27, 10:15.
LA Chargers: McConkey 6 pass from Herbert (Dicker kick), 3:03.
New England: Douglas 36 pass from D.Maye (Slye kick), 1:24.
LA Chargers: FG Dicker 38, :02.

THIRD QUARTER

LA Chargers: McConkey 40 pass from Herbert (Dicker kick), 7:43.
LA Chargers: FG Dicker 41, 5:43.

FOURTH QUARTER

LA Chargers: Dobbins 2 run (Dicker kick), 12:03.
LA Chargers: FG Dicker 35, 3:47.

	LAC	NE
First Downs	29	11
Total Net Yards	428	181
Rushes-Yards	37-147	20-96
Passing	281	85
Punt Returns	2-18	1-15
Kickoff Returns	1-17	4-107
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	0-0
Comp-Att-Int	26-40-0	13-24-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	0-0	4-30
Punts	2-46.0	4-55.0
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	1-1
Penalties-Yards	6-54	7-9
Time Of Possession	40:26	18:34

PASSING

LA Chargers: Herbert 26-38-0-281, McConkey 0-2-0-0.
New England: Maye 12-22-0-117, Brissett 1-2-0-1 (minus 2).

RUSHING

LA Chargers: Dobbins 19-76, Haskins 8-30, Vidal 5-24, Herbert 3-12, Hightcock 1-8, Davis 1- (minus 3).
New England: Gibson 12-63, Maye 6-32, Stevenson 2-1.

RECEIVING

LA Chargers: McConkey 8-94, Johnston 5-48, Palmer 4-41, Davis 2-29, Smartt 2-23, Dissly 2-21, Haskins 1-10, Fisk 1-8, Dobbins 1-7.
New England: Douglas 4-46, Boutte 4-28, Hooper 3-19, Bourne 2-22.

Bengals 30, Broncos 24 (OT)

DENVER	3	0	7	14	0 - 24
CINCINNATI	0	7	3	14	6 - 30

FIRST QUARTER

Denver: FG Lutz 30, 9:45.

SECOND QUARTER

Cincinnati: Higgins 2 pass from Burrow (York kick), 1:49.

THIRD QUARTER

Cincinnati: FG York 22, 9:07.
Denver: Sutton 6 pass from Nix (Lutz kick), 3:10.

FOURTH QUARTER

Cincinnati: Higgins 12 pass from Burrow (York kick), 11:33.
Denver: M.Mims 51 pass from Nix (Lutz kick), 8:48.
Cincinnati: Burrow 1 run (York kick), 1:29.
Denver: M.Mims 25 pass from Nix (Lutz kick), :08.

FIRST OVERTIME

Cincinnati: Higgins 3 pass from Burrow, 1:07.

	DEN	CIN
First Downs	34	49
Total Net Yards	329	499
Rushes-Yards	27-123	28-115
Passing	206	384
Punt Returns	0-0	1-4
Kickoff Returns	1-27	3-98
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	1-2
Comp-Att-Int	24-31-1	39-49-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	2-13	7-28
Punts	4-41.5	1-47.0
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-1
Penalties-Yards	7-35	3-15
Time Of Possession	26:57	41:56

PASSING

Denver: Nix 24-31-1-219.
Cincinnati: Burrow 39-49-0-412.

RUSHING

Denver: McLaughlin 10-69, Nix 7-31, Estime 9-24, Mims 1- (minus 1).
Cincinnati: C.Brown 20-67, Burrow 4-25, Herbert 4-23.

RECEIVING

Denver: Mims 8-103, Sutton 5-55, Veale 2-27, McLaughlin 2-7, Williams 2-0, Estime 1-13, Adkins 1-7, Trautman 1-5, Krull 1-3, Franklin 1- (minus 1).
Cincinnati: Higgins 11-131, Gesicki 10-86, Chase 9-102, C.Brown 4-24, Iosivas 3-59, Grandy 1-7, D.Sample 1-3.

MISSSED FIELD GOALS

Cincinnati: York 33.

Rams 13, Cardinals 9

ARIZONA	0	0	6	3	-9
L.A. RAMS	0	10	0	3	-13

SECOND QUARTER

LA Rams: K.Williams 1 run (Karty kick), 3:23.
LA Rams: FG Karty 53, :27.

THIRD QUARTER

Arizona: McBride 1 pass from Murray (kick blocked), 8:31.

FOURTH QUARTER

Arizona: FG Ryland 28, 14:00.
LA Rams: FG Karty 53, 6:33.

	ARI	LAR
First Downs	24	12
Total Net Yards	396	257
Rushes-Yards	22-113	22-68
Passing	283	189
Punt Returns	2-15	1-6
Kickoff Returns	1-28	1-33
Interceptions Ret.	0-0	2-11
Comp-Att-Int	33-48-2	17-32-0
Sacked-Yards Lost	4-38	0
Punts	4-41.0	6-49.83
Fumbles-Lost	0-0	0-0
Penalties-Yards	9-62	7-46
Time Of Possession	36:55	23:05

PASSING

Arizona: Murray 33-48-2-321.
LA Rams: Stafford 17-32-0-189.

RUSHING

Arizona: Carter 13-70, Murray 4-32, Mi.Wilson 1-7, Conner 4-4.
LA Rams: K.Williams 13-56, Stafford 6-16, Corum 5- (minus 4).

RECEIVING

Arizona: McBride 12-123, Harrison 6-96, Mi.Wilson 6-22, Dorch 5-18, Higgins 2-23, Carter 2-11, Conner 2-4, Z.Jones 1-19, Dallas 1-5.
LA Rams: Nacua 10-129, K.Williams 3-16, Higbee 2-9, Kupp 1-29, Whittington 1-6.

TENNIS

ATP

Through Tuesday

SINGLES RANKINGS

- Jannik Sinner, Italy, 11830
- Alexander Zverev, Germany, 7915
- Carlos Alcaraz, Spain, 7010
- Taylor Fritz, USA, 5100
- Daniil Medvedev, Russia, 5030

DOUBLES RANKINGS

- Mate Pavic, Croatia, 7510
- Marcelo Arevalo-Gonzalez, El Salvador, 7510
- Jordan Thompson, Australia, 6655

WTA

Through Tuesday

SINGLES RANKINGS

- Aryna Sabalenka, Belarus, 9416
- Iga Swiatek, Poland, 8295
- Coco Gauff, USA, 6530
- Jasmine Paolini, Italy, 5344

DOUBLES RANKINGS

- Katerina Sinikova, Czechia, 9530
- Erin Routliffe, New Zealand, 8165
- Gabriela Dobrowski, Canada, 6805

PRO BASKETBALL

NBA

EASTERN CONFERENCE

ATLANTIC	W	L	Pct	GB
Boston	22	10	.688	1½
New York	22	10	.688	1½
x-Philadelphia	11	19	.393	10½
Brooklyn	12	19	.387	11
Toronto	7	24	.226	16

SOUTHEAST

Orlando	19	14	.576	
Atlanta	17	15	.531	1½
Miami	15	14	.517	2
Charlotte	7	24	.226	11
Washington	5	24	.172	12

CENTRAL

Cleveland	27	4	.871	—
Milwaukee	16	14	.533	10½
Indiana	15	17	.469	12½
x-Detroit	14	17	.452	13
Chicago	14	18	.438	13½

WESTERN CONFERENCE

SOUTHWEST	W	L	Pct	GB
Memphis	20	10	.688	—
Houston	21	10	.677	½
x-Dallas	20	11	.645	5½
San Antonio	16	15	.516	9½
New Orleans	5	27	.156	17

NORTHWEST

Oklahoma City	25	5	.833	—
x-Denver	16	13	.552	8½
Minnesota	14	14	.500	9
x-Portland	10	20	.333	15
x-Utah	7	22	.241	17½

PACIFIC

L.A. Clippers	18	13	.581	
x-L.A. Lakers	17	13	.567	½
Golden State	16	15	.516	2
Phoenix	15	16	.484	3
x-Sacramento	13	18	.419	5

x-Late game

FRIDAY'S RESULTS

New York 108, at Orlando 85
at Boston 142, Indiana 105
San Antonio 96, at Brooklyn 87
Minnesota 113, at Houston 124
Memphis 132, at New Orleans 124
Cleveland 149, at Denver 135
Dallas 98, at Phoenix 89
at L.A. Clippers 102, Golden State 92

SATURDAY'S RESULTS

New York 136 at Washington 132 (OT)
at Atlanta 120, Miami 110
Oklahoma City 106, at Charlotte 94
at Chicago 116, Milwaukee 111
at Golden State 109, Phoenix 105
Detroit at Denver, late
Philadelphia at Utah, late
Dallas at Portland, late
Sacramento at L.A. Lakers, late

SUNDAY'S GAMES

Brooklyn at Orlando, 3:30
Atlanta at Toronto, 6
Indiana at Boston, 6
Memphis at Oklahoma City, 7
Miami at Houston, 7
San Antonio at Minnesota, 8

MONDAY'S GAMES

New York at Washington, 7
Chicago at Charlotte, 7
L.A. Clippers at New Orleans, 8
Denver at Utah, 9
Cleveland at Golden State, 10
Dallas at Sacramento, 10
Philadelphia at Portland, 10

TUESDAY'S GAMES

Milwaukee at Indiana, 3
Toronto at Boston, 3
L.A. Clippers at San Antonio, 7
Minnesota at Oklahoma City, 8
Cleveland at L.A. Lakers, 9
Memphis at Phoenix, 9

WEDNESDAY'S GAMES

Chicago at Washington, 7
Orlando at Detroit, 7
New Orleans at Miami, 7
Utah at New York, 7:30
Brooklyn at Toronto, 7:30
Dallas at Houston, 8
Atlanta at Denver, 9
Philadelphia at Sacramento, 10

Knicks 136, Wizards 132 (OT)

New York	32	28	30	29	17	-136
Washington	33	27	38	21	13	-132

NEW YORK	MIN	FG	FT	O-T	A	P	PTS
Anunoby	42:05	4-12	0-0	1-4	0	1	9
Hart	38:36	5-10	3-3	3-11	7	1	13
Towns	43:37	13-19	2-3	3-14	3	3	30
Bridges	46:39	8-14	2-2	1-3	2	3	21
Brunson	44:00	18-31	16-17	0-3	9	1	55
McBride	19:06	1-0	0-0	1-1	2	3	2
Achiuwa	19:00	1-3	1-1	2-7	2	1	3
Shamet	6:21	0-1	0-0	0-1	0	1	0
Payne	5:36	1-2	0-0	0-1	0	2	2

TOTALS 265 51-97 24-26 10-43 26 14 36
Percentages: FG 52.6, FT 92.3 **3-Point Goals:** 14-40, 25.0 (Bridges 3-9, Brunson 3-11, Towns 2-5, McBride 1-4, Anunoby 1-5, Achiuwa 0-1, Payne 0-1, Shamet 0-1, Hart 0-3). **Team Rebounds:** 6. **Team Turnovers:** None. **Blocked Shots:** 3 (Towns 2, McBride). **Turnovers:** 15 (Bridges 3, Brunson 3, Towns 3, Achiuwa 2, Hart 2, Anunoby, Payne). **Steals:** 7 (Bridges 3, Anunoby, Hart, Payne, Shamet).
WASHINGTON **MIN** **FG** **FT** **O-T** **A** **P** **PTS**
Champagnie 44:41 13-15 0-0 4-10 1 4 31
Coulibaly 36:47 8-17 0-1 1-6 6 5 18
Sarr 31:48 3-10 4-4 2-6 5 4 12
Brogdon 30:10 6-15 7-8 1-3 7 2 22
Carrington 43:20 8-13 0-0 5-7 2 17
George 34:10 5-11 0-0 1-3 3 3 13
Kispert 22:50 4-9 2-2 1-3 2 0 11
Valanciunas 21:14 4-9 0-0 1-8 3 2 8
TOTALS 265 51-99 13-15 11-44 32 22 132
Percentages: FG 51.5, FT 86.7 **3-Point Goals:** 17-38, 44.7 (Champagnie 5-6, Brogdon 3-7, George 3-7, Coulibaly 2-4, Sarr 2-4, Carrington 1-4, Kispert 1-6). **Team Rebounds:** 5. **Team Turnovers:** 2. **Blocked Shots:** 4 (Coulibaly, George, Sarr, Valanciunas). **Turnovers:** 15 (Brogdon 5, Champagnie 3, Coulibaly 2, Sarr 2, Carrington, Kispert, Valanciunas). **Steals:** 7 (Champagnie 2, Coulibaly 2, Brogdon, Kispert, Valanciunas).
A: 20,385 (20,356). **T:** 2:28.

Hawks 120, Heat 110

MIAMI	28	30	26	26	-110
ATLANTA	35	26	32	27	-120

MIAMI: Highsmith 6-8 0-0 14, Jaquez Jr. 4-12 0-0 8, Adebayo 8-17 1-1 17, Herro 8-15 8-28, Robinson 6-14 0-0 16, Jovic 0-3 4-5 4, Ware 2-3 0-0 4, Burks 3-9 2-10, Larsson 0-10-0, Rozier 3-8-2-9. **Totals** 40-77-18 110.
ATLANTA: J.Johnson 13-20 0-1 28, Risacher 4-12 0-0 9, Capela 3-3 0-1 6, Krejci 2-6 2-2 7, Young 3-13 3-4 11, Nance Jr. 4-6 2-2 10, Hunter 8-16 4-7 26, Matthews 5-8 4-5 18, Wallace 2-4 0-0 5. **Totals** 44-86 17-22 120.
Three-point Goals: Miami 13-21 (Herro 4-7, Robinson 4-10, Highsmith 2-3, Burks 2-6, Rozier 1-5, Ware 0-1, Adebayo 0-2, Jovic 0-2, Jaquez Jr. 0-5), Atlanta 15-37 (Hunter 4-7, Mathews 4-7, J.Johnson 2-3, Young 2-9, Wallace 1-2, Krejci 1-4, Risacher 1-4, Nance Jr. 0-1). **Fouled Out:** None. **Rebounds:** Miami 42 (Adebayo 10), Atlanta 47 (J.Johnson 12). **Assists:** Miami 23 (Herro 10), Atlanta 34 (Young 15). **Total Fouls:** Miami 19, Atlanta 16. **A:** 17,856 (18,118).

Thunder 106, Hornets 94

OKLAHOMA CITY	28	33	29	16	-106
CHARLOTTE	22	24	28	20	-94

OKLAHOMA CITY: Jal.Williams 8-21 3-3 20, Wiggins 6-10 2-2 17, Hardenstein 6-7 0-0 12, Gilgeous-Alexander 8-15 5-6 22, Mitchell 4-8 1-1 10, Dieng 0-2 0-0 0, Jay.Williams 3-7 0-0 9, Jones 1-5 0-0 2, K.Williams 4-6 1-1 9, Joe 2-7 0-1 5. **Totals** 42-88 12-24 106.
CHARLOTTE: Bridges 5-16 8-8 19, Green 3-9 1-2 10, M.Williams 4-9 4-5 12, Curry 4-8 3-12, Micic 6-13 0-0 16, Diabate 0-1 0-0 0, Salaun 3-10 2-2 9, Jeffries 2-5 0-0 5, Richards 0-11-21, Wong 2-8-6-10. **Totals** 29-80 25-84.

Three-point Goals: Oklahoma City 10-38 (Jay.Williams 3-4, Wiggins 3-7, Mitchell 1-2, Gilgeous-Alexander 1-6, Joe 1-9, Jal.Williams 1-7, Dieng 0-1, Jones 0-3), Charlotte 11-34 (Micic 4-7, Green 3-6, Curry 1-2, Jeffries 1-4, Salaun 1-4, Bridges 1-8, Wong 0-3). **Fouled Out:** None. **Rebounds:** Oklahoma City 49 (Hardenstein 15), Charlotte 44 (Bridges 10). **Assists:** Oklahoma City 29 (Gilgeous-Alexander, Jal.Williams, Jay.Williams 6), Charlotte 17 (Bridges 6). **Total Fouls:** Oklahoma City 19, Charlotte 16. **A:** 19,325 (19,077).

Bulls 116, Bucks 111

MILWAUKEE	25	35	24	27	-111
CHICAGO	33	29	21	33	-116

MILWAUKEE: Middleton 8-15 1-1 21, Portis 5-17 2-2 14, Lopez 9-22 1-1 22, Jackson Jr. 0-3 0-0 0, Lillard 8-19 10-10 29, Prince 3-8 0-0 6, Green 2-4 0-0 5, Rollins 3-6 0-0 7, Trent Jr. 3-8 0-0 7. **Totals** 41-102 14-14 111.
CHICAGO: LaVine 5-12 4-6 15, Williams 4-8 0-0 9, Vucevic 10-24 0-0 23, Giddey 9-15 3-4 23, White 9-16 3-3 22, Buzelis 1-2 0-0 2, Craig 2-8 0-0 6, Phillips 0-1 0-0 0, Terry 1-2 0-2 2, Ball 3-5 0-0 9, Carter 1-2 2-2 5, Horton-Tucker 0-0 0-0 0. **Totals** 45-95 12-17 116.

Three-point Goals: Milwaukee 15-45 (Middleton 4-6, Lillard 3-9, Lopez 3-11, Portis 2-7, Rollins 1-1, Green 1-3, Trent Jr. 1-4, Jackson Jr. 0-1, Prince 0-3), Chicago 14-36 (Ball 3-4, Vucevic 3-7, Giddey 2-6, Craig 2-7, Williams 1-1, Carter 1-2, LaVine 1-4, White 1-5). **Fouled Out:** None. **Rebounds:** Milwaukee 43 (Portis 9), Chicago 5

At a Cameroon baseball academy, young athletes find Harmony — and passion

BY GLYNN A. HILL

Former American League MVP Mo Vaughn scoots forward in his chair, positioning himself so the laptop camera captures his face and the body of a student named Chase, who stands nearby clutching an aluminum bat at Vaughn's sports academy in Boca Raton, Florida.

Over the next 20 minutes, Vaughn cycles his attention from the camera to Chase, pointing to his feet, knees and the angle at which he swings his bat. "Most important when you're hitting, you need to have balance," Vaughn says. On the other end of the Zoom call, more than 6,000 miles away, around three dozen kids and teenagers gathered in a hotel conference room in Yaoundé, Cameroon, watch, absorbing the lesson and formulating follow-up questions.

Cameroon has produced stand-out athletes in the NBA, mixed martial arts, soccer and even the NFL. No one from the central African nation has ever played Major League Baseball.

The young participants gathered in Yaoundé that early December day are part of an effort to change that. They belong to Harmony Baseball Academy, which was founded in 2019 by Arsel Giowou.

Giowou was exposed to baseball through the country's National Institute of Youth and Sports when he was 8. He had never seen bats, gloves and baseballs before, and he wanted to learn more. Three years later, he was invited to Fukui, Japan, to participate in a camp organized by the World Children's Baseball Fair. The non-profit organization was established in 1992 by Japanese baseball legend Sadaharu Oh and Hall of Famer Hank Aaron with the aim of growing baseball around the world. The experience was transformative for Giowou, who hailed from a country lacking dedicated baseball fields.

"It was really an incredible and unforgettable experience because it was in Japan and it was my first time to have my own equipment, to see a professional baseball stadium, train on a baseball field, see professional players and coaches, be trained by professional coach-



Arsel Giowou founded Harmony Baseball Academy in Cameroon in 2019. His young players practice and compete on makeshift fields.

es and see kids like me from different parts of the world share the same passion for the game as me," Giowou said. "I would say that the true love for baseball was born when I was in Japan."

Giowou continued to practice when he returned, largely at the institute. But he returned to a country where baseball paled in comparison to more popular sports, partly evidenced by the lack of facilities and youth leagues. Baseball broadcasts and equipment are scarce, too.

At 17, Giowou decided to do something about it. He was still in high school when he started Harmony Baseball Academy, aiming to teach the sport to girls and boys in the Cameroonian capital.

The organization started with 10 participants and has grown to 50, with ages spanning 8 through

17. Few of them knew anything about baseball before joining, and the ones who did were exposed through American movies. Everyone else signed up out of curiosity, Giowou said.

The students train on Saturdays and Sundays. Giowou, whose staff consists of four coaches, split them into six teams that compete against one another for a championship. They practice behind the goals of a local soccer field, and when they play games, Giowou rents and retrofits an entire field.

Now 22, Giowou runs the program free of charge to make it accessible to all who want to learn baseball. It subsists on donations and fundraisers. When in need, he improvises. Lacking tees to practice hitting, Giowou made his own using an overturned bucket with a bottle filled with sand

on top.

Giowou in 2020 reached out to an American organization, Angels at Bat, which led to a large donation of bats, balls, helmets and uniforms this year. In 2022, Los Angeles Dodgers players visited Cameroon to give pointers to his young players. He also received a shout-out from the late Billy Bean, the former major league outfielder who later served as MLB's first diversity chief.

From day-to-day, Giowou wants to grow the sport and create opportunities. In the long term, he has loftier goals. He hopes to build a stadium in Yaoundé that includes a field with major league dimensions. It would serve as a place for Harmony to practice and play, and Giowou envisions it hosting international competitions. It also would

allow Cameroonians to watch live baseball.

"The very first baseball field in Cameroon," he said. "This stadium would mean a lot to the community because we will no longer rent a space to be able to play."

While the percentage of African American players in MLB has dwindled from 20 percent to less than 8 percent, hardly any have come from the African continent.

In geographic terms, Al Cabre-ra in 1913 became the first, though he was born in the Canary Islands, an archipelago off the coast of Northwest Africa controlled by Spain. More than a century later, South African infielder Gift Ngoepe became the first African-born player to reach the majors in 2017. A compatriot, Tayler Scott, pitches for the Houston Astros.

With Ovechkin scoring in return, Caps top Leafs

CAPITALS FROM D1

believed simply having Ovechkin in the lineup would boost the Capitals offensively, regardless of his individual production. That prediction quickly came true.

"I did [feel a lift], definitely, on the bench," Carbery said. "Now it settles in to you're just playing hockey. It was just an odd game. It was just really odd in a lot of the things we were doing without the puck. But I did notice — you can feel it on the bench, no question."

The Maple Leafs won Friday in Detroit in their first game back from the holiday break. In the opening minutes Saturday, it appeared Toronto had the upper hand after knocking off its rust a night earlier. Five of the first six shots on goal were by the Maple Leafs, and one of them — a

deflection off John Tavares at the front of the net — was the first goal, giving Toronto the lead 3:14 in.

But the Capitals responded with a goal from winger Andrew Mangiapane, a Toronto-area native, just 1:32 later. His wrist shot, set up by center Hendrix Lapierre, had just enough pace to leak through Murray and cross the goal line.

With its own rust shaken off, Washington found its game. Defenseman Jakob Chychrun scored his 10th goal — setting a franchise record as the quickest defenseman to score 10 goals with the team — at 8:54 after an extended offensive-zone shift by the fourth line stressed the Maple Leafs defensively. Chychrun blasted home a one-timer from the right circle off a feed from his defense partner, Trevor van

Chasing Gretzky

Capitals captain Alex Ovechkin is nearing Wayne Gretzky's NHL goals record of 894.

GOALS FROM BREAKING THE RECORD

26

Riemsdyk.

Late in the period, Thompson robbed William Nylander with his glove to keep Washington in front.

The robbery was so dramatic — he dived back across the crease to deny Nylander from hitting an empty net — that Maple Leafs fans celebrated and the "Hockey Night in Canada" broadcast on Sportsnet triggered its "Leafs goal" animation before everyone realized the puck was in Thompson's glove.

"He was all alone, and he made a first tip on the shot, then credit to him to pull it because I was down and out," Thompson said. "A lot of times, that puck

goes in. Today, it just hit me."

Thompson stopped Nylander on a breakaway a few minutes later, preserving the Capitals' 20-minute lead.

The Maple Leafs tied the score just over eight minutes into the second period when Bobby McMann tucked home his own rebound after a two-on-one with Max Domi. Defenseman Martin Fehervary was the lone defender back when the puck was turned over at Washington's blue line, and Ovechkin, late in his longest shift of the game, dived to try to interrupt the pass. It seemed to work when Thompson made the first save, but McMann was in the crease to jam in the rebound.

But the Capitals again had a quick response. Midway through the period, the fourth line turned in another extended shift in the offensive zone with relentless pressure and good stick work that kept Toronto from being able to clear the puck. After a quick regroup on an attempted clear, center Nic Dowd found space along the goal line off a

nice feed from defenseman Rasmus Sandin to fire home the go-ahead goal into a wide-open net.

"The difference in the game for me, how we're able to get two points of out it, is Nic Dowd's line and [Lapierre's] line," Carbery said. "... Those two lines were difference-makers for us."

The Capitals got their first power play with 8:43 remaining. When Ovechkin was sidelined, Washington put John Carlson and Chychrun on the top power play, a relative rarity in the NHL — most teams use four forwards and one defenseman. With Ovechkin back, the Capitals elected to keep Carlson and Chychrun together, and the decision paid immediate dividends. Winger Tom Wilson tipped in a point shot from Chychrun at 12:36 to extend Washington's lead.

"These games are always tough coming off the break, but I thought our battle was really good," Wilson said. "... That's been our foundation — just playing hard, playing together, giving

CAPITALS' NEXT THREE		
at Detroit Red Wings		
Sunday	5	Monumental
vs. Boston Bruins		
Tuesday	12:30	Monumental
vs. Minnesota Wild		
Thursday	7	Monumental
Radio: <i>WJFK</i> (106.7 FM), <i>WFED</i> (1500 AM)		

ourselves a chance to win."

In the final minutes, Ovechkin was banging on the boards after Murray was pulled, leaving Carbery little doubt about what his captain wanted — and what he was going to do once he stepped on the ice.

"Was he? I didn't notice," the coach quipped. "... Scoring on the empty net, a lot of coaches put their best offensive players in those situations because they can anticipate where the puck is going. That's a prime example right there."

Champagnie is a standout for the Wizards, but Brunson lifts the Knicks to OT win

WIZARDS FROM D1

pushed through," Champagnie said.

He added: "I've been waiting for an opportunity to show what I can do for a while. ... When I get on the floor, I just let it flow."

Even with Jordan Poole sidelined by a left hip contusion, the Wizards (5-24) trailed by three with 10.4 seconds left in overtime after a pair of Brunson free throws. They never got a chance to go for the tie — the Knicks (22-10) fouled Malcolm Brogdon. The former University of Virginia guard, another source of needed offense who finished with 22 points, made both shots.

Brunson negated that with his own perfect trip to the line, and New York fouled Brogdon again on the ensuing possession with just 2.8 seconds left. Brogdon made the first free throw and intentionally missed the second in hopes of a rebound, but the Knicks secured the loose ball and the win.

Brunson, who Knicks Coach Tom Thibodeau told reporters before the game was a game-time decision, scored 23 points across the fourth quarter and overtime. He shot 18 for 31 overall and decimated Washington despite



Justin Champagnie made 13 of 15 shots, including five three pointers, en route to a career-high 31 points Saturday. He added 10 rebounds.

making just 3 of 11 three-pointers.

"He made some tough shots. We probably had some bad execution on our coverages at times," Wizards Coach Brian Keefe said.

"He made us pay when we did." Keefe's squad had several chances to tie it late in overtime. The Wizards were down five with under a minute remaining when

Coulibaly raced downcourt and made a layup through a foul. He couldn't hit the free throw, but New York's Josh Hart stepped out of bounds. Brogdon had a chance to tie the score with a three on the ensuing possession but couldn't capitalize.

A steal and score by Brogdon brought the Wizards back within one, but the Knicks' fouling kept the home team at bay. The Wizards couldn't find consistent offense: They shot 4 for 10 in overtime.

Washington led by five with 67 seconds left in regulation after Carrington drilled a jumper. But a Brunson and-one got the visitors within two.

The Wizards had multiple chances on the next possession: Rookie center Alex Sarr grabbed a Carrington miss, and the ball found Coulibaly, who missed a decent look from three.

Brunson had no such issues, wriggling his way around Coulibaly's long arms to the hoop for a floater that rolled all around the rim before dropping in to tie the score at 119 with 11.8 seconds left. Coulibaly had a chance for the game-winner but couldn't generate a good shot. The Knicks got one last chance with 0.8 seconds left, but Karl-Anthony Towns

missed a tough layup.

"It's been a long time," Coulibaly said when asked about the last time a coach gave him the ball for a late, pivotal offensive possession. "... I'll make a better play next time."

Champagnie, who shot 13 for 15, added a career-high five three-pointers on just six attempts. Washington, which was coming off a rare win Thursday when it shot poorly from three, made 44.7 percent of its shots from long range. And the Wizards shot 56 percent from the field in the first quarter, when they led by as many as nine points.

Brunson erased that early cushion. He scored or assisted on 14 of New York's final 16 points in the quarter, a stretch that helped the visitors cut their deficit to one.

Towns gave the Knicks the lead with an offensive rebound and a layup to start the second quarter. That started a dominant stretch for the center, who scored 12 points and grabbed six rebounds in the period. Towns finished with 30 points and 14 rebounds.

Washington kept pace, however, and the teams entered half-time tied.

Brunson reestablished himself

WIZARDS' NEXT THREE		
vs. New York Knicks		
Monday	7	Monumental
vs. Chicago Bulls		
Wednesday	7	Monumental
at New Orleans Pelicans		
Friday	8	Monumental
Radio: <i>WTEM</i> (980 AM)		

with 19 points in the third quarter, but Washington's offense found collective efficiency. Four players scored at least six points for the Wizards, who shot 71.4 percent in the quarter, which they ended up by eight.

Sunk by Brunson, they wouldn't hold on. But the Wizards believe these experiences — slim margins, dwindling clocks and boisterous crowds — will help their young players. Washington's four most recent first-round draft picks played at least 32 minutes.

"We're just trying to get to the stuff that we work on late in the games. Don't try anything new — that's not the moment for that," Coulibaly said. "We're just trying to grow up as players."

Arts&Style

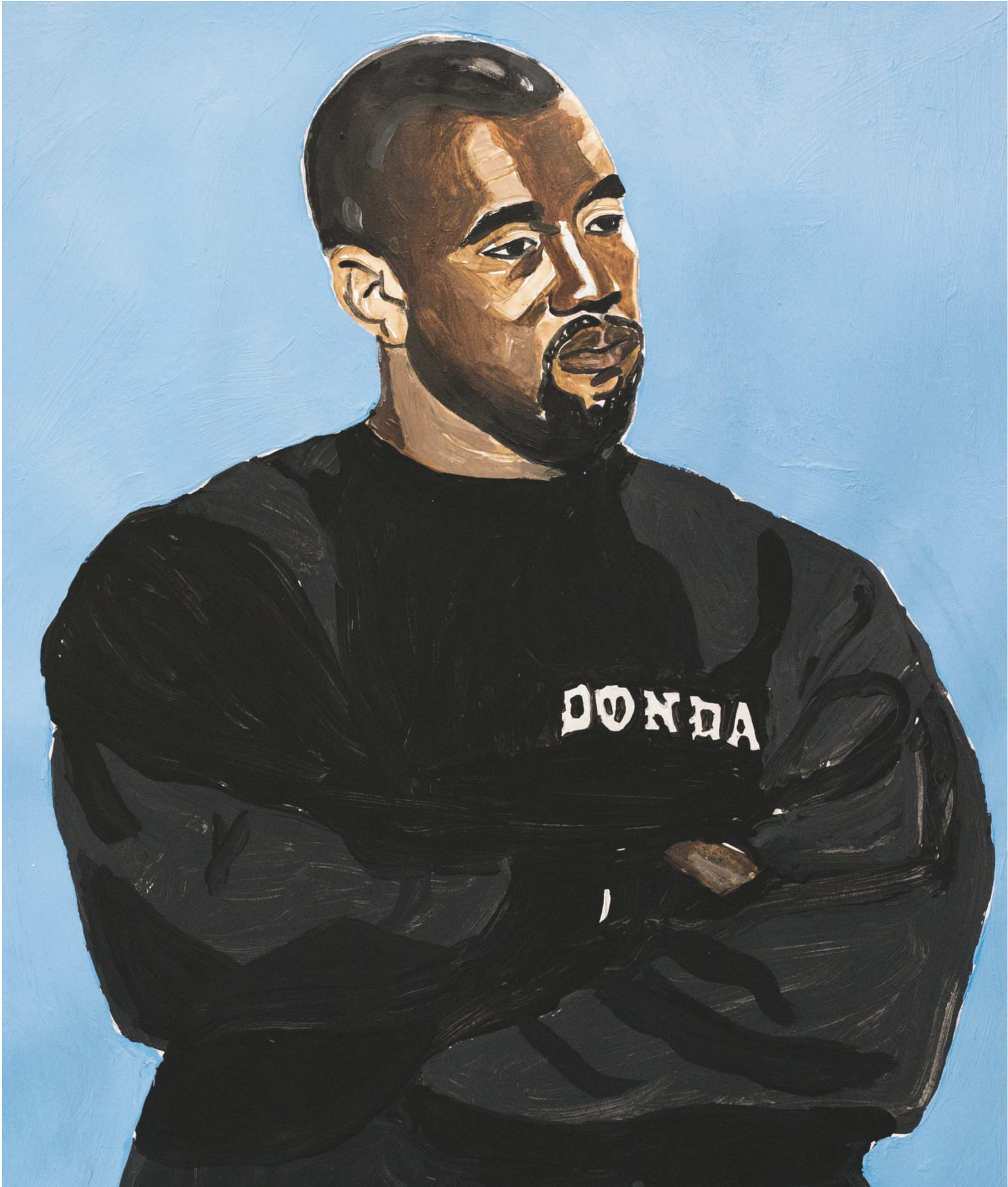


ILLUSTRATION BY DIDIER VIOUÉ FOR THE WASHINGTON POST; KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR ROC NATION

ART REVIEW

Amy Sherald masters color in her portraits

BY SEBASTIAN SMEE IN SAN FRANCISCO

Amy Sherald’s official portrait of former first lady Michelle Obama was revealed to the public in 2018, and as it toured the country over the next few years of the first Trump administration, the painting became a sort of traveling relic.

Sherald, 51, is now the subject of a superb traveling retrospective called “Amy Sherald: American Sublime,” which is now on display at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art before it visits New York and D.C. next year. It’s rare to see contemporary portraits that so confidently hold their own in a museum setting, quietly but irresistibly pushing their way into the audience’s space.

The show’s curator, Sarah Roberts, former head of painting and sculpture at SFMOMA, has hung most of the paintings at eye level — a little lower than usual — which helps create the sense that we’re meeting the subjects who stare out at us on shared ground, as equals.

Sherald has said she paints Black people not

SEE SHERALD ON E11

A year without Ye

Kanye West predicted pop’s future. Now it’s here, and he isn’t a part of it.

BY CHRIS RICHARDS

Pop music overfloweth in 2024. Kendrick Lamar and Drake had their tectonic spat. Beyoncé went country. Charli XCX got bratty. Chappell Roan and Sabrina Carpenter joined the party. Taylor Swift refused to go home. And amid this profusion of beef, twang, mischief, freshness, eras upon eras, it was easy to miss what should have been a glaring absence — a year of pop maximalism without its leading maximalist, the path breaker once known as Kanye West.

It was the first year in 20 when he didn’t seem to matter. Which wasn’t for lack of trying. Ye issued two new albums in 2024, both long-

form collaborations with the singer Ty Dolla \$ign, each of which felt dull, discursive, drained of vitality and imagination. “Vultures 1” dropped in February with a thud. In August, “Vultures 2” hardly made a sound at all. At least not in terms of the cultural conversation, that unmeasurable hum we still use to confer importance.

Over in the marketplace, though, these “Vultures” respectively debuted at No. 1 and No. 2 on the Billboard albums chart — a perverse triumph of too-big-to-failness, maybe. But aside from that, nobody really bothered to talk about these records, or think about them,

SEE YE ON E6

ART REVIEW

Through Ailey, exhibit tells the American story

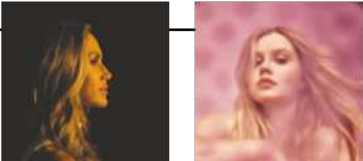
BY PHILIP KENNICOTT IN NEW YORK

The Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition “Edges of Ailey” is a sprawling, monumental and thrilling survey of the work and legacy of the great American choreographer Alvin Ailey, who died in 1989. It is also a canonization in at least two senses of the word.

It argues, convincingly, that Ailey is worthy of secular veneration in the firmament of American artistic genius. And while making that argument, it maps the wide horizons of the canon of art he created, fostered and inspired. The elevator pitch for this show, if one was necessary, must have been something like: He was everywhere, did everything, knew everyone, and encompassed the all and everything of America in the 20th century.

Exhibitions about choreography, and artists for whom choreography is essential to their work, are by no means a novelty. But if there are any lingering doubts about how a

SEE AILEY ON E2



A review of the best celebrity portraits to appear in the Style section in 2024 E7



ART



JASON LOWRIE/BFA.COM

‘Edges of Ailey’ centers on dance genius’s lasting impact

AILEY FROM E1

museum devoted to the visual arts can effectively display an art form that is essentially temporal, that unfolds in time and space and is dependent on the engagement of a living audience with living dancers, they are answered as soon as you step out of the elevators into the cavernous 18,000-square-foot fifth-floor galleries of the museum.

Above the display cases, temporary walls and freestanding works, a phalanx of 18 video screens plays a montage of Ailey’s work. When I arrived, a chorus was singing “I’ve Been ‘Buked and I’ve Been Scorned,” the spiritual that opens Ailey’s popular masterpiece “Revelations.” Greeting you at eye level are works by contemporary artists including Senga Nengudi and Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, the former a sculptor and choreographer who has fused the plastic and the performing arts, the latter a painter whose spontaneous portraits of imaginary people capture better than photographs the lingering ocular impression of bodies and minds in motion.

The curatorial style of the show’s organizer, Adrienne Edwards, is minimalist. There are long rows of cases full of archival material documenting Ailey’s triumphs onstage, his connections to other artists, his working methods, and his stew of doubts, desires and insatiable curiosity. There is sound filtering down from the video screens and accessed through listening stations scattered throughout the display. There are paintings, sculptures and installations that inspired him or were inspired by him. Taking in all of it, one thinks of Falstaff’s self-assessment, that he was a wit and a source of wit. In this case, Ailey was a visionary and a source of visions in others.

We learn the basic arc of Ailey’s life and career: Born in 1931, he grew up in rural Texas but left in 1942 to join his mother, who had moved to Los Angeles. He caught the arts bug early, discovered dance as an adolescent and danced with the company of Lester Horton — a seminal but tragic pioneer of modern dance in America — in the early 1950s. Horton died in 1953, and Ailey briefly took over leading the group before moving to New York, where his career spiraled rapidly upward as a dancer on Broadway.

In 1958, he founded his own company, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and the inclusion of that word — American — is key to understanding his ambitions. He made his own dances but also performed work by other choreographers, forging a company that was not just a crucible of his own creativity but a showcase and eventually a museum preserving a broader vision of American dance in the 20th century.

Unlike other contemporary choreogra-



MARCUS IEITH/COURTESY OF LYNETTE YIADOM-BOAKYE/CORVI-MORA AND JACK SHAINMAN GALLERY

TOP: “Edges of Ailey,” a sprawling exhibit on the work and legacy of choreographer Alvin Ailey, is on display at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York through Feb. 9. ABOVE: The show includes pieces by artists he inspired or was inspired by, including Lynette Yiadom-Boakye’s “A Knave Made Manifest.”

phers, including Horton, Martha Graham and Merce Cunningham, Ailey didn’t create his own, branded technique. Rather, he absorbed, borrowed and synthesized what he needed from others, including the dance vocabulary of various African diasporas in the Americas, jazz, Broadway styles and ballet. The last of these is often downplayed in discussion of Ailey, and popular memory tends to prioritize works like “Revelations” or the 1974 “Night Creature” (with its score by Duke Ellington) over equally powerful visions like “The Lark Ascending,” with its music borrowed from Ralph Vaughan Williams. But ballet is irrepressible in Ailey’s work, including a wonderful bit of rapid footwork that

erupts like a fit of giggles in “Revelations.” In a fascinating section that surveys the response of visual artists to African American musical styles and performers, a small sculpture by Betye Saar suggests the vexed and vulnerable status of African American dance in the 20th century. Saar builds her work, “I’ve Got Rhythm,” from a found object, a metronome, the mechanical timekeeping device with a swinging arm that used to be found on every piano in every parlor in America. But she has added a black minstrel-looking figure to the moving arm and affixed references to racial violence (“lynched after refusing to dance”).

SEE AILEY ON E3

AILEY FROM E2

The dances of Ailey and the work of other choreographers curated by his company put the Black body front and center, reveling in spirituality and sensuality, eroticism and humor, referencing Africa, Haiti, Brazil and other realms not circumscribed within the familiar bounds of the Anglo-Saxon cultural imperium. This was possible so long as dance was entertainment, so long as the dancers were understood (as suggested by Saar’s grim sculpture) to be dancing for the delectation of White audiences.

Ailey was doing much more than that, or perhaps he was only seeming to do that while in fact doing something very different. In one of the notebook pages on display, he writes underneath the title “How I work” the words: “Musical ideas/visual ideas/social ideas.” The last of these, the social ideas, are often smuggled in, and even to this day, it’s possible not to see them if you are intent on just being entertained.

Ailey’s queerness is one of those ideas, and it was something he wrestled with throughout his life. In a page torn from a notebook, he posits homosexuality as a form of narcissism, and on yet another the word “Sex” is underlined above two telephone numbers. When he died of complications related to AIDS, the cause wasn’t acknowledged, and at his funeral, the eulogies by Amiri Baraka, Maya Angelou and Toni Morrison made no mention of his sexuality.

And yet queerness is everywhere in his dance, and often functions like a message, ambiguous but full of grace, a quivering of hands, a fluttering of wings, passed between dancers with no reference to their gender or desires. In the discourse of race and sexuality, the former is the thing that can’t be hidden, while the latter engenders ideas of passing, masks and codes. In Ailey, despite his own reticence about sexuality, the two are inextricable.

The exhibition, which opened in September, includes a survey of works by canonical Black artists, including Jean-Michel Basquiat, Elizabeth Catlett, Thornton Dial, Aaron Douglas, William H. Johnson, Horace Pippin, Gordon Parks, Martin Puryear. Too many to be named. And by the end, you realize that by looking intently at what seems a focused subject, the life and legacy of Ailey, the show presents a more inclusive and satisfying historical account of African American art

SEE AILEY ON E4

A collection of Carl Van Vechten portraits of Alvin Ailey made in 1955, including this one, can be viewed in “Edges of Ailey.”



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GABRIELA ORTIZ: *Téneke* – *Invenções de Território*
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There are paintings, sculptures and installations that inspired him or were inspired by him. Taking in all of it, one thinks of Falstaff’s self-assessment, that he was a wit and a source of wit. In this case, Ailey was a visionary and a source of visions in others.



SAM GILLIAM/ARTISTS RIGHTS SOCIETY/COLLECTION OF BETH RUDIN DEWOODY

AILEY FROM E3

than many recent exhibitions that made that their explicit goal.

And so the only quibbles are about where the stress falls and what might be given more or less emphasis. Despite the title — “Edges of Ailey” — the focus is squarely on the centrality of Ailey to American cultural life. His sexuality definitely merited being one of the main chapters of the show, along with “Black Women,” “Black Spirituality,” “Black Music” and “Black Migration.” His choreography for the Metropolitan Opera’s premiere of Samuel Barber’s “Antony and Cleopatra” or his collaboration with Virgil Thomson on “Four Saints in Three Acts” are acknowledged, but definitely on the edges of “Edges of Ailey.” But these are small things, and with only 18,000 square feet of space, not everything can be included.

The exhibition also included a substantial amount of live performance earlier in its run, including appearances by the Ailey company and Ailey II, the early-career company under the larger Ailey umbrella. I missed this, alas, but the fact they happened points out something that may not be obvious to audiences who are primarily focused on the visual arts. It is all too rare that dance companies, theater troupes or musical ensembles built around a visionary, charismatic leader survive after he or she dies. Too often, the founder has no legacy plan, cultivates no successor, builds no endowment, and within a few years, the company is gone. Ailey died young, at the age of 58, but he had built a company that endures.

Looking at a magnificent collection of Carl Van Vechten portraits of Ailey made in 1955, you see a kid and a chameleon, in profile, in motion, costumed in different dress and holding different props. He smiles, he laughs, he smolders. But one of them shows him staring directly at the lens of the camera, and the intensity and purposefulness of his gaze is mesmerizing. Every biographer, and every curator who sets out to tell the story of a life, must wonder if their subject knew where it was all going, if greatness gathered by accident or was the plan from the start.

He knew.

Edges of Ailey Through Feb. 9 at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York.
www.whitney.org

Sam Gilliam’s “Swing 64,” an acrylic on canvas done in 1964, is on display in “Edges of Ailey,” which also has cases full of archival material documenting Alvin Ailey’s triumphs.

How to turn acquaintances into friends

Asking Eric
R. ERIC THOMAS

Dear Eric: My husband and I are in our 70s and retired to a new community. We are engaged in church ministries and social groups that meet for dinner periodically. I volunteer, and he is an avid golfer.

My problem is not being able to turn new relationships into meaningful friendships. I have met many wonderful people but have a problem getting close with anyone. Any suggestions?
— *Feeling Isolated*

Isolated: I know it doesn’t feel like it, but you’re not alone. Many adults struggle to make the deep connections they want, especially later in life or in new communities. I turned to my friend and friendship expert Anna Goldfarb, author of “Modern Friendship: How to Nurture Our Most Valued Connections.”

Here’s what she advises: “One of the best strategies for deepening a friendship is to provide what researchers call social identity support, which is seeing your friends for all the roles they play in their life: their race, class, gender, and religion. This could look like asking to try their favorite dishes they grew up eating, including them in your cultural traditions, and signaling that you’d like to be a part of theirs, too.

Another strategy is to recruit an accountability buddy. Identify a meaningful goal you both want to achieve — moving your body more, learning how to knit, watching every Matt Damon movie in chronological order — whatever floats your boat. Your friendship will deepen as you cheer on one another because you’re more invested in your successes.”

Goldfarb told me, and I agree, that you’re off to a great start. So, you should congratulate yourself on making the effort

and for continuing to try. It’s not always easy or as straightforward as we’d like, but you’re on the right path.

Dear Eric: I enjoy your column and would like to make a comment regarding the letter from “Game Off” regarding her frustrations with her 10-year-old grandnephew who plays video games while on family vacation. I agree family time is important, and, in her own home, she should negotiate something with her niece so she can spend time with her grandnephew during visits.

However, she’s completely out of touch regarding gaming. Many colleges now have competitive gaming teams supported by computing and graphic design faculty and they operate out of the athletics department just like other teams — it’s called “esports” and is becoming a big business. Her grandnephew may be headed to a successful career down the road through gaming.
— *Game Time*

Game Time: You’re right, it’s all about balance. The letter writer can and should communicate her needs and wants regarding family visits. But she should also remain open to parenting choices that may not be what she would do in a similar circumstance.

Additionally, while moderation is important when making decisions about gaming, you’re correct that it’s a growing and sometimes lucrative field of study and competition. The first esports college scholarship was given out in 2014, and there are currently more than 250 varsity-level esports programs across the United States and Canada, per the National Association of Collegiate Esports.

Dear Eric: I just love your column — read it every day. I don’t miss it because your

advice is straightforward, right on, sensible and kind. So, I saw myself in the letter from a friend of the woman who is so kind and so helpful to everyone, but rather controlling and beastly with her husband (“Bad Mouthing Do-Gooder”). Not as the friend, but as “the woman,” although, mercifully, not that far over the top.

However, I see where I can improve in my relationship with my husband, not that he is perfect, as he tends to be a bit self-centered but is a good guy with many excellent qualities.

After reading that column, I took a very deep breath, a big step back, decided to let go and then said to myself, “I can be a better person.” I made a promise to myself to do this, and this is my mantra: “Be a better person.” I am grateful for your column, and glad to be able to change when needed.
— *Living and Learning*

Living and Learning: This is a beautiful response to the sometimes-tricky problem of being a person. I commend you for being willing to be so open and vulnerable and to commit to change. I also want to encourage you not to be too hard on yourself. It’s great to identify places where you can grow, but it’s also okay to acknowledge places where you need other people to make changes, too. The key is to talk them through, with empathy and openness, so that no one feels attacked and everyone feels heard.

Thanks for your kind words about the column, as well. I am so glad it’s resonating with you.

Send questions to R. Eric Thomas at eric@askingeric.com or P.O. Box 22474, Philadelphia, PA 19110. Follow him on Instagram and sign up for his weekly newsletter at rerithomas.com.

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HOROSCOPE

BY GEORGIA NICOLS

Happy Birthday | Dec. 29: You’re charming and likable because you have excellent people skills. You’re also intelligent and perceptive. Your relationships matter. This has been a year of hard work for you; however, next year will bring exciting changes and increased freedom. Be ready to act fast when new opportunities arise.

Moon Alert: Avoid shopping and important decisions from 6-11:55 p.m. After that, the Moon moves from Sagittarius into Capricorn.

ARIES (March 21-April 19) Travel plans might be pie-in-the-sky today; nevertheless, relations with friends will be positive. Meanwhile, you might have less energy to deal with your kids or social situations. It’s like the wind has gone out of your sails.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20) Decisions about finances, especially if they include parents or authority figures, will likely favor you today. In turn, you might feel sorry for someone, which is why you have less energy to devote to home and family.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20) Be careful in agreeing to anything or volunteering for anything, because relations with authority figures are subject to confusion, even manipulation.

CANCER (June 21-July 22) Issues regarding religion or the law might be confusing today. You’re not sure who to believe. Fortunately, someone might give you money they owe you or do a favor for you. This is timely because your energy to work is low right now.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22) Don’t worry if you feel tired and not up to the task. You might need naps or opportunities to stop working because Mars is retrograde in your sign. It feels like something is dragging you down. Romance might be disappointing today.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) When dealing with partners and close friends today, if you feel disappointed, ask yourself if you expressed your expectations ahead of time. Unexpressed expectations generally lead to disappointment.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22) You might feel emotionally confused today. You might even have trouble distinguishing between reality and illusion! Make sure that others are reliable and that no one is trying to call a fast one on you. Say grounded; be cautious.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21) This is a poor day to make important financial decisions because someone might deceive you either intentionally or by accident. Fortunately, relations with family members are warm.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21) Today is ripe for emotional confusion, which will lead to misunderstandings or misconceptions. This can lead to mood swings. Fortunately, everyday conversations are charming, especially with siblings and relatives.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) Feelings of escapism might make you want to run away. Others might feel a heightened intuition and spiritual awareness in a vague, idealistic way. That’s because there’s an element of confusion present today. Sit tight.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18) Be extra clear to avoid misunderstandings when talking to friends and members of groups today. Even though you feel warm and connected to someone, ironically, communications could go south in a New York minute.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20) When dealing with bosses, parents and authority figures today, be extra clear in all your communications. Make sure you know what they expect from you. Make sure they understand you. Meanwhile, someone might help you.



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The Washington Post

After previous heartbreaks, spouse wonders what’s next after husband cheated



Carolyn Hax

Hi, Carolyn: I don’t consider myself lucky in love. I’m admittedly heavily affected by my parents’ decade-long, arduous divorce — which started my final year of high school. My father was an alcoholic, and his behavior and personality actually got worse after he stopped drinking; my mother is severely hearing-impaired, which resulted in, I think, issues with confidence, self-worth and connection, and she turned to me for the early parts of the dissolution process.

My first major relationship, my boyfriend relapsed with drugs and alcohol and failed out of a drug court program. I drew a final line when he was in prison. My next significant relationship was with a longtime good friend — who eventually came out as gay (which is totally fine).

My next major relationship was for six years. I was all in until he accused me of something terrible, and his only response to my explanation was that I gave him “a lot to think about.” I ended things when he was unable to comprehend how hurtful his accusation was.

I met somebody new, and things seemed like they just

might work out. It’s been six years, and we got married two years ago. Things have been bumpy; he has OCD and is really unpleasant while stressed out, dismissive, attention-hoarding, as I try to advocate for my needs being met.

Then he confesses he cheated on me. Massage places. Websites. Pornography. Sharing pics of himself. There’s more. Apparently, all bad “coping strategies” that predate our relationship but that crop up during times of stress or unhappiness.

Anyway — he’s asking me to hope for our future together. He says he loves me, wants a future with me ... all the things. I spent the past six months in a fog, and now I just feel empty. Should I stick around? Why?

— *Tired of Hoping*

Tired of Hoping: On the one hand, I get feeling unlucky when your romantic history starts with a prison breakup and leads to a cheating husband.

On the other hand, you’ve worked hard at being a better judge of character and taking care of yourself throughout.

On the third hand — anatomy is needlessly limiting — why are we talking as if your life or any life is a continuous, logical narrative?

Yes, your parents got you off to a dysfunctional start.



ILLUSTRATION BY NICK GALIFIANAKIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Disentangling a parent’s alcoholism from a child’s emotional patterns and expectations is its own area of expertise, and I could end my answer by urging this specialized counseling (see: bit.ly/49QU3hy), if you haven’t gone already.

But I’ll keep going in hopes of persuading you to release the whole idea of yourself as a doomed object of these larger forces of fate.

Most people carry some difficult legacy from their parents into their adult relationships. They vary in

number and intensity, sure, and you got some heavy ones. But parents are human, and life is life. No one starts out completely unburdened with nothing to learn, overcome or outgrow.

Then, most people — I would venture all — experience anywhere from a little to a lot of relationship trial and error on their way to a life partnership. That is assuming they find such a partnership at all, and it hangs on for life — the first try, or the second or third or whatever. Does this trial-and-error history of high hopes and breakups make everyone unlucky in love?

Or are they, and you, just ... having lives, with loves in them? Which means they are having times of elation and promise, *most* (all?) ending in disappointment and heartbreak, followed by learning, healing, trying again.

If the end always brings harm instead of disappointment, then of course that says to stop the cycle entirely and get some professional guidance. But otherwise, any of us can feel normal, great or terrible about this process based on how we frame it.

Again — the emotional imprint of your parents’ relationship may still be compromising your judgment in your own relationships. If so, then that’s important to address in earnest and soon. It also

wouldn’t be unique to you, though, in any way.

Nor would it consign you to the mercy of luck, hope, destiny or any kind of narrative. It would, instead, be a kind of health-care homework assignment. Your pattern is something to diagnose and treat, so you can understand, manage, anticipate, regulate it. Like anyone else does with their “stuff.”

Just as your husband urgently needs to do with his, yes? Any talk of whether you “stick around” and/or “why” is wildly premature if he hasn’t taken serious steps toward managing his own behavior health for his own reasons.

Letting him know that conveniently takes the marriage question off your agenda.

Clear it of everything, in fact, except your own sense of well-being. That’s your priority now — not “Do I stay married” but “Am I okay with myself, whatever happens?” Getting to “yes” means calm, not numbness, toward the chapter you turn to next.

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Ye’s music shaped the future, but he’s absent at present

YE FROM E1

or feel disappointed by them, or stick up for them, or even care about them. Remember when the arrival of a new Kanye West album qualified as a culture-shaking event? This year, Ye seemed to be standing at an impossible new frontier: at the top and irrelevant.

The air at that altitude is about as unknowable as it gets, and it blows in the opposite direction of all we know about this man. Ambiguity has always been an anti-Ye property. Until recently, his career supplied us a steady diet of shocks and jolts, denunciations and declarations. But instead of his career collapsing in a decisive fall from grace, Ye has slogged through a tortured, decade-long undoing.

We’ve slowly watched his mental health deteriorate, his family splinter, his politics grow hateful — all of which has felt frustrating, infuriating and profoundly sad. Somewhere between the heroic seething of his 2013 masterpiece album, “Yeezus,” and this current state of inertia, his righteous anger lost all its persuasive power. Something hot and radical deteriorated into something cold and aggrieved, and his music became thin and uninventive in the cooling, too.

Yet, as unfamiliar as this feels, Ye’s inconsequentiality in 2024 at least gave us the opportunity to recognize what we’re grieving. He’s still here. His story isn’t finished. But for now, we’ve lost Kanye West as a cardinal point in popular music. We’ve lost a sense of promise in pop, along with the feelings of momentum and futurity that go with it. And that has to be the weirdest thing about all of this. Kanye West wrote the future. Now we’re living in a future where he doesn’t seem to matter very much at all.

Instead of trying to locate the moment in his arc when everything went wrong, maybe we should try to identify the last time everything seemed to be going right — that is, roughly 11 years back, when he was still surfing the boiling hot tidal wave of “Yeezus.” Tender and vicious, it remains the keystone album that Ye has kept trying — and failing — to remake since. Did he know he was peaking in real time? On the “Yeezus” tour, he literally scaled a giant stage prop built to look like a mountain. Maybe he knew the only place to go next was down. On the serrated “Yeezus” standout “I Am a God,” one sneering line has since become the most significant lyric of his career: “Soon as they like you, make ‘em unlike you.”

In the heat of the moment, it felt romantic. The artist against the world. But during a nightly series of indignant, meandering, extemporaneous speeches on the “Yeezus” tour, it became less clear who or what Ye was raging against. “Ain’t never been a rapper to have problems with two presidents,” he fumed at one show before pivoting into how unfairly he had been treated by the power-people of the fashion world. Over time, a courageous disdain for authority figures revealed itself to be a cry for their approval, and after Ye posted up for a photo opp with then President-elect Donald Trump inside Manhattan’s Trump Tower in December 2016, there was no turning back.

In 2018, he changed his name to Ye, released two trifling albums, “Ye” and “Kids See Ghosts,” and lost even more of his fandom by visiting Trump in the Oval Office in October, auditioning for a starring role in the MAGA-verse by making misogynistic comments about Hillary



SCOTT DUDELSON/GETTY IMAGES



EVAN VUCCI/AP

FROM TOP: Ye performs in Inglewood, California, in March, celebrating the release of “Vultures 1.” The rapper alienated many fans when he visited President Donald Trump in the White House in 2018. Ye, then known as Kanye West, at Mercedes-Benz Stadium in Atlanta in 2021.

Clinton. In 2019, he attempted a spiritual cleanse by hosting a weekly musical gathering called Sunday Service that culminated in his pseudo-gospel album, “Jesus Is King.” Then came a desultory run for president in 2020, followed by his hapless 2021 album, “Donda.” In 2022, a backlog of antisemitic public remarks cost his clothing brand, Yeezy, a multi-million-dollar deal with Adidas. In June, Yeezy employees filed a lawsuit against Ye, citing a hostile workplace and unpaid wages. Was this making them unlike you?

The three-episode Netflix documentary series “Jeen-yuhs” from 2022 is as close as we’ve come to any kind of answer. The first two acts of the docuseries focus on the rise of Kanye West, the underdog wunderkind from Chicago who tries to conjure mainstream rap stardom from thin air and actually succeeds. With his loving mother cheering him on, he shows unflinching persistence and astonishing ingenuity, until he quite literally makes his dreams come true. He was easy to root for, and his victories felt bigger than him. So much so that listening to his career-launching hits more than two decades later — “Through the Wire,” “All Falls Down,” “Jesus Walks” — might make you feel like you’re reliving your own life’s accomplishments.

Then, the third act jumps ahead. Past the wounded melodicism of 2008’s “808s and Heartbreak,” past the pomp and prestige of 2010’s “My Beautiful Dark Twisted Fantasy,” past the stylized rage of “Yeezus” — three albums that changed the aesthetic contours of rap music. We’re in the presence of a very different superstar, too. He’s lost his mother. He’s losing his marriage. He’s changed his name. He had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2017, and while he doesn’t talk about it much on screen, we’re able to see it manifest, in private and in public. Launching his 2020 presidential bid at a rally in Charleston, South Carolina, West is shown on screen crying when discussing the issue of abortion, claiming that his parents considered aborting him. (“There would have been no Kanye West,” Ye said at the rally, “because my dad was too busy.”) Later, on screen, Ye is on the phone with his father, who epitomizes grace and patience, gently encouraging his son to write out his speech in advance next time. “Okay,” Ye says, unchastened, seemingly unaware of anyone else’s feelings.

As a whole, “Jeen-yuhs” illustrates how Ye’s sense of grievance got him to the top — and how it remains the only working strategy he’s ever known. Outrageously competitive from the start, he is a hungry mind with total self-belief

and zero impulse control. Once he became the defining artist of his time, he had to find new worlds to conquer, which meant new enemies to defeat, which meant new people to doubt him. So he abandons rapping about society’s inequities and injustices and fixates on feeling slighted by the powerful and hated on by the public. His victimhood fits right in with the paranoid selfishness of today’s most unfathomably wealthy and the triumph of the sore winner — the only thing that connects his art to the current American moment.

His ugliness has become artless. That’s the main thing to glean from all the music Ye dropped this year. Dim and unfeeling, these two “Vultures” albums are as zero-calorie as the back-to-back albums he released in 2018 — but they have more structure, musically and lyrically, which confirms volition and intent. If you ever loved Kanye West with all of your being, ever felt 20 feet tall while listening to him turn imagination into reality, this feels something like agony.

Is there any kind of theme hiding in this new music? Maybe it involves positing hedonism as heroism, with Ye delivering a sluice of brainiac vulgarities and nihilistic pillow talk over the sounds of Viking choruses, melodramatic bass explosions and reified “Yeezus” synths. But behind the cosmetic grandeur, the tracks feel unsure of their roots, so they make clumsy melodic references to classic songs by the Pharcyde, Juvenile and others. As for the lyrics, they feel truly lost. The title track of the first album opens with a promise — “Won’t tell no lies, won’t hold my tongue” — then eventually gets to its fundamental trolling: “How I’m antisemitic?” The rhyme’s unprintable rejoinder is beside the point. In 2024, Ye is a rapper who put hate into the world so he could rap about being condemned for it.

This can’t be the future he imagined for himself. Or maybe Ye’s future was nothing more than a radical present. His absence from the colorful, bountiful, maxed-out, anything-is-possible tomorrow that his music once promised us feels disorienting, though. Deeply sobering, too. It serves as our latest reminder that there is no future. It doesn’t yet exist. The future is something we all have to build toward. Music itself thrives inside that little idea. What are pop songs other than endless iterations of anticipation and resolution that help us better organize the then-now-next of our own disordered lives? Ye’s greatest music made the future feel sturdy and capacious, but it only ever existed in the now. Now that’s over. And the future is still coming.



KEVIN MAZUR/GETTY IMAGES FOR UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

PHOTOGRAPHY



THE BEST CELEBRITY
PORTRAITS FROM STYLE IN
2024

BY SHANE O'NEILL

Power shifted in 2024. ¶ At fashion houses, creative directors departed and arrived. Media executives bucked traditions while media workers went on strike or got laid off. Movies like “Wicked” and “Anora” pondered the ways femininity and agency intersect and butt heads. TikTok — maybe now in its final days in the United States — was a place to argue politics and lust over a fugitive. And for the first time since the 1890s, an incumbent president was replaced by a former president. ¶ Portraiture itself can be a power struggle. The subject asserts her identity, the photographer tries to tease out a moment of authenticity or visual surprise. Sometimes it’s a tango, sometimes it’s a tangle. Both are represented in this collection of 25 portraits. ¶ We asked photographers and journalists to share their recollections from some of the most captivating photos featured in the pages of The Washington Post Style section this year. Some of them are funny, some touching. All are powerful.

Sasha Velour
by Marvin Joseph

It was photo editor Lauren Bulbin’s idea to paint the set “the bluest blue” for “RuPaul’s Drag Race” Season 9 winner Sasha Velour. The multidimensional set became a playground for Velour and photographer Marvin Joseph to collaborate, capturing the drag artist’s verve and charisma. “She was exactly how you always hope a celebrity you adore will be,” Bulbin said of Velour.

Lily Gladstone
by Laura Hynd

“Killers of the Flower Moon” actress Lily Gladstone made a point to showcase Indigenous designers in the months leading up to the Oscars. For this portrait, she wore beaded earrings by jewelry designer Jennifer Younger.

Angourie Rice
by Sean Scheidt

Sean Scheidt took this dreamy portrait of Angourie Rice at the very end of a long weekend of press for “Mean Girls.” He knew she would be tired. “Probably exhausted,” he said. “I know I would be.” Still, when he asked if she wanted to experiment, she immediately agreed. Scheidt stretched the fabric of Rice’s dress over his lens, lending the shot its gauzy circle pattern. The airy movement of her hair is courtesy of a blow dryer held off camera by a stylist.

Brittany O’Grady
by Melissa Isabel Quiñones

Melissa Isabel Quiñones captured the fierce vulnerability of Brittany O’Grady just ahead of her first feature lead in the horror film “It’s What’s Inside.” “I have now fully accepted that my sensitivity, that what I physically and emotionally feel, is actually a superpower,” O’Grady told The Washington Post.

SEE PORTRAITS ON E8

PHOTO

PORTRAITS FROM E7



Lara Trump
by Taurat Hossain

Kara Voght and Maeve Reston profiled Lara Trump, the daughter-in-law to Donald Trump and former co-chair of the Republican National Committee. Voght thinks this portrait by Taurat Hossain captures Lara's aspirations and ambitions. "There's some real gravity there, right?" Voght said. "That's something I think Lara craves in her public persona, though I'm not sure that's always the impression she leaves."



Simone Rocha
by Tori Ferenc

"I've always been about harnessing the femininity," Simone Rocha said of her designs, which can be simultaneously flouncy and fierce, even sinister. Tori Ferenc's portrait of the designer captured this fusion of the sweet and the serious.



Charlie Wilson
by G L Askew II

When Charlie Wilson found out that the photographer G L Askew's mother was a fan, the front man for the Gap Band insisted that they give her a call. Askew said it "made her year."



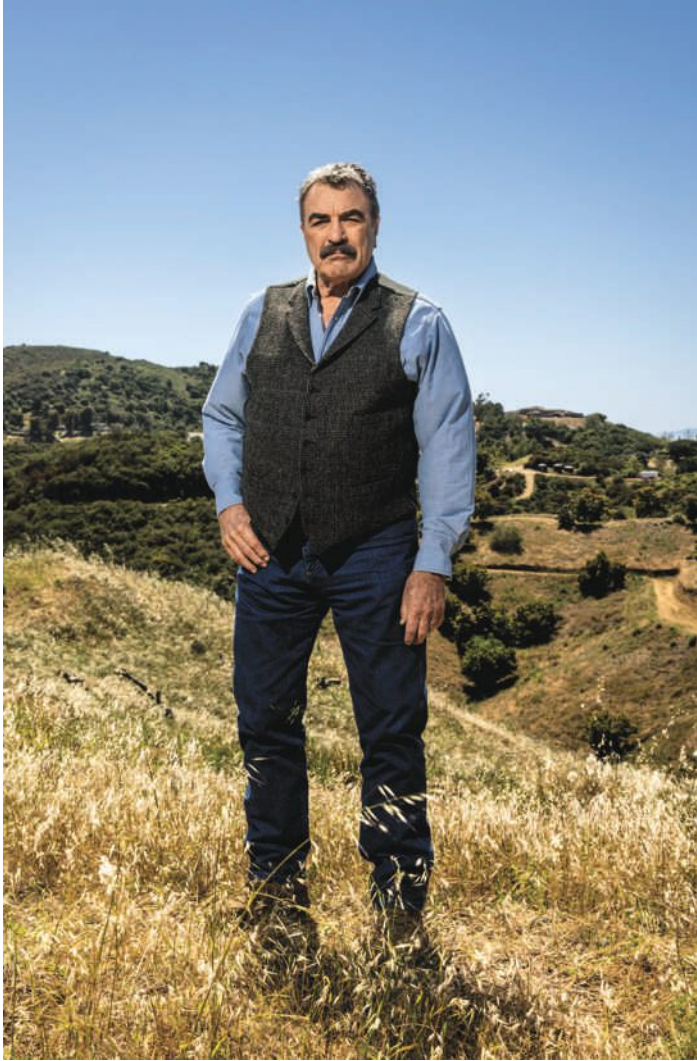
Law Roach
by Ramona

Since no one else would show up in, packed her truck, grabbing a real option I had." long fringes o



Valerie Bertinelli
by Maggie Shannon

After years of restricting calories and fretting over her diet, Valerie Bertinelli decided to stop worrying and start loving food. Her third cookbook was called "Indulge," and her portrait by Maggie Shannon captured her new-found freedom from food anxiety.



Tom Selleck
by Roger Kisby

Tom Selleck was photographed on his 63-acre ranch in Thousand Oaks, California. The ranch, previously owned by Dean Martin, is both a refuge from and testament to his decades-long career in Hollywood.



Joel Kim Booster
by Michelle Watt

Michelle Watt had all the ingredients in place for a dramatic portrait in Los Angeles with Joel Kim Booster. Correction: Almost all the ingredients. An assistant ducked out mid-shoot to grab the comedian an ice-cold Diet Coke.

Cristin Milioti
by Evelyn Freja

This quiet moment was captured after photographer Evelyn Freja asked Cristin Milioti if she had been surprised by the runaway success of "The Penguin" miniseries in which she co-starred. Milioti laughed to herself, then her eyes looked to the distance. "Almost like she was wondering how she got there," Freja said.

Jeremy O. Harris
by Kemka Ajoku

The playwright Jeremy O. Harris is known for keeping a packed social schedule. It's great for his reputation as a bon vivant, but not so great for finding time for a portrait. The morning after "Slave Play" opened, The Washington Post finally found a quiet moment to photograph the playwright, still in his pajamas, surrounded by flowers and reading newspaper reviews, some rosy, some thorned.

Maika Monroe
by Em Monforte

When photographer Em Monforte arrived to shoot "Longlegs" actress Maika Monroe, the house's owner was eating egg salad with her daughter, permeating the whole set with its aroma. Monroe was unfazed, delivering poses that leaned into the unsettling beauty that made her a horror star.



GRAPHY



Rosales

knew what looks stylist Law Roach would photographer Ramona Rosales said she luck with “every imaginable background She went with solid black but ended up d scrim from her truck to accentuate the f Roach’s leather coat.



John David Washington and Danielle Deadwyler
by Kendall Bessent

It turned out Denzel Washington wasn’t needed to shed light on the works of August Wilson for “The Piano Lesson,” starring his son John David Washington opposite Danielle Deadwyler, and directed by his other son, Malcolm. After two weeks of Denzel hanging around on set, he realized his sons were fine on their own. “I didn’t need to stay,” he said. “They were making a movie.” And, despite the stylists, assistants and publicists on set for The Post’s shoot, “John David and Danielle were all very chill,” said photo editor Annaliese Nurnberg, calling the vibe “energizing chaos.”



Chitose Abe
by Pooneh Ghana

A few months after this shoot, fashion writer Rachel Tashjian heard from Chitose Abe’s team. “Apparently, she was having a great time and decided to do her hair curly.” That is, the woman Tashjian called “the most powerful fashion designer you don’t know about” had *literally* let her hair down.



Cynthia Erivo
by Marvin Joseph

Cynthia Erivo’s relentless press cycle for “Wicked” left photographer Marvin Joseph with very little time to plan and shoot. Luckily, Erivo showed up gracious and ready to collaborate. Even luckier: She was photographed in a striking royal blue skirt, a departure from the on-brand green she had been wearing for most of the year.



Meagan Good
by Andre Wagner

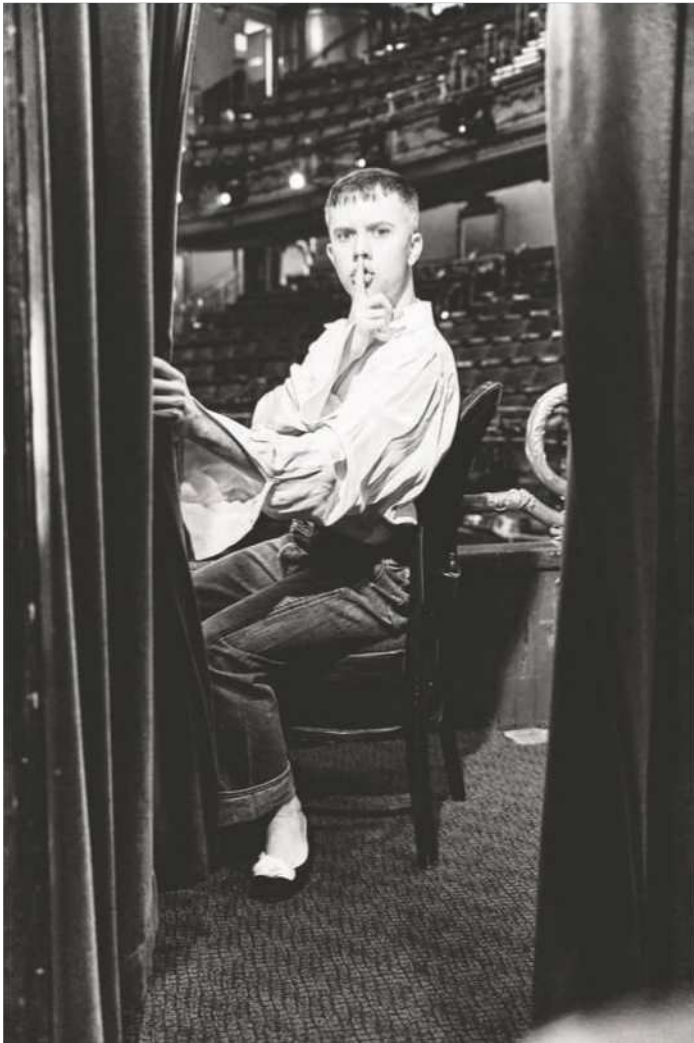
Meagan Good was not shy. Within five minutes of meeting writer Helena Andrews-Dyer, she was already talking fertility and perimenopause. Soon after, she was speaking frankly about her relationship with Jonathan Majors, a popular topic of speculation on gossip sites and brunch tables.



Sandeep Salter
by OK McCausland

“It was great working with someone who has a background in ballet,” OK McCausland said on photographing Sandeep Salter at her trendsetting Brooklyn store Salter House. The hardest part for the photographer was not pulling out her credit card during the shoot. “I may have gone back later,” McCausland said.

PHOTOGRAPHY



PORTRAITS FROM E8

Michael Douglas
by Raul Romo

The photographer Raul Romo was looking at the glassware in the hotel room when he noticed Michael Douglas looking at him in a mirror's reflection. It was Romo's hand mirror, which he always brings to shoots. "It helps bring the subject at ease, so they can see themselves and how the process is looking," he said.

Sam Zimmerman
by Drew Gurian

Photo editor Maya Valentine reached out to photographer Drew Gurian based on a series he did in which he shot dancers through frosted plexiglass. Gurian used a similar technique when shooting Sam Zimmerman, the curator for the horror streaming platform Shudder. "Not everybody is going to jump onboard for something that is dark and moody and weird," Gurian said. Luckily, Zimmerman was tuned into the vibe, requesting that black metal be blasted during the shoot. Gurian happily obliged.

Cole Escola
by Jesse Dittmar

The finger held to Cole Escola's lips was an appropriate gesture: This entire shoot was conducted without the actor saying a word. It was just days before their play "Oh, Mary!" would open on Broadway, and Escola was on strict vocal rest. Afterward, Escola emailed the photographer Jesse Dittmar apologizing for the silence. "I totally got it after I saw the show," Dittmar said. "It involved a lot of yelling."

Natasha Rothwell
by David Needleman

The plan was to shoot "How to Die Alone" actress Natasha Rothwell in a studio. But the summer light outside was calling photographer David Needleman. "We just had to!" he said. After several hours in the studio, he asked Rothwell if she would step outside. Within five minutes, they had their shot.

Isabella Rossellini
by Gioncarlo Valentine

Photo editor Moira Haney had been on sets with dozens of luminaries but found herself unusually starstruck by Isabella Rossellini, photographed by Gioncarlo Valentine in Middleburg, Virginia, where her film "Conclave" was playing at a film festival. "The hardest part was not blurting out how much I adored Ms. Rossellini's 2007 guest appearances on '30 Rock,'" Haney said. "But I like to be professional on set, and that seems like a ridiculous thing to say to the star of 'Blue Velvet.'"

Glen Powell
by Jane Greer

Glen Powell was photographed in Austin, where he shot his very first movie gig as "Long-fingered Boy" in "Spy Kids 3-D: Game Over."

ART



JOSEPH HYDE/PHILLIPS



JOSEPH HYDE/ROBERT F. SMITH/HAUSER & WIRTH

The Michelle Obama portrait catapulted Amy Sherald. It’s far from the artist’s best.

SHERALD FROM E1



MATTHEW MILLMAN PHOTOGRAPHY

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Sherald mixes her own colors and expertly pairs bold patterns with hard-to-describe hues, such as in “Mama Has Made the Bread (How Things Are Measured).” Sherald is a master of color — take in how the dress pops against the background of “Untitled (Opal).” Visitors at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art look at her portrait of Michelle Obama.

so much as a historical corrective (African Americans are hugely underrepresented in U.S. art museums) but with an impulse simply to celebrate them. Race is there in her work, in other words, but it’s not at the forefront. (“Maybe we don’t have to start there,” as she said to Jeffrey Brown on PBS’s “NewsHour.” “Let’s start with my humanity first.”)

Because most people continue to associate the Jersey City-based painter with the former first lady, the first thing to say is that Sherald is much, much better than the Obama portrait might lead you to believe. For all its popularity, it’s fair to say that something about that portrait — which is included in this show — fails to achieve liftoff.

Perhaps the pose — chin on hand, elbow on forearm — feels too contrived. Perhaps it’s that there’s nothing in the paint’s facture — no wristy brushwork, no dramatic chiaroscuro — to humanize the overall stiffness. Or perhaps it’s that the colors fail to transcend the portrait’s rote formality.

In any case, its relative weakness is a reminder that what makes Sherald so good has little to do with the criteria we apply to most portraiture. Her works don’t have much in the way of deep psychology. Her use of paint gives you no sense of intensified physicality. Nor does she seem especially interested in the drama of light as it plays across human heads.

Instead, her smoothly painted sitters meet our gaze calmly and levelly. There’s nothing histrionic or expressionistic at play. These paintings are cool, reticent, uncannily still. They leave an immaculate impression, as if her subjects were insulated from the pressures and tumult of life and from any whiff of mortality.

Why, then, are the best of them so convincing — not just as serviceable likenesses but as full-blown works of art? I think the answer is straightforward. It’s color.

Color is Sherald’s originality, her bent, her gift. There are other components to her achievement: her devotion to presenting Black sitters as archetypes of everyday hu-

manity, her thoughtful engagement with iconic photographs and with the tradition of American portraiture, and so on. But ultimately, Sherald’s brilliance comes down to the subtlety and splendor with which she choreographs the push and pull of color relations.

Take the 2018 portrait titled “Mama Has Made the Bread (How Things Are Measured).” A woman wearing chunky earrings stands with her right hand on her hip. She wears a black fur draped over her shoulders and a printed dress. Pleats below the hip give a jaggy scintillation to its pattern of white circles on a black background.

Her pose — hand on hip, head slightly tilted — is straight out of a fashion magazine. As such, it could be banal. But the pale yellow earrings are set off by the rich black fur (black, you suddenly remember, is absolutely a color!) and the whole ensemble of sharp tonal contrasts is set off by an even, otherworldly backdrop of chalky strawberry pink. The effect is all at once. It’s *a priori*. It happens, in other words — and *then* you think about it.

Because Sherald wants to achieve maximum color intensity, she’s not interested in using modulated light and shade to create an impression that this woman occupies an actual space. Modulation would only weaken the impact of the color. So she keeps the pink background flat, even and drenching.

The fur’s texture is suggested by tiny brushstrokes that soften the silhouette against the pink background. Its blackness is a shade deeper than the gently warmed gray of the woman’s hands. Her left hand dangles beside the pleats of her dress, its placement making her arm seem improbably long — Sherald’s sly shout-out, perhaps, to Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres, the French neoclassicist who took wild liberties with his subjects’ anatomies as he tried to maximize svelteness, elegance and immediacy.

Sherald’s work is full of such subtle touches. But her portraits are made inimitable by her electrifying color harmonies.

SEE SHERALD ON E12

Sherald’s works leave an immaculate impression, as if her subjects were insulated from the pressures and tumult of life. Why, then, are the best of them so convincing — not just as serviceable likenesses but as full-blown works of art? I think the answer is straightforward. It’s color.



JOSEPH HYDE/AMY SHERALD/HAUSER AND WIRTH



JOSEPH HYDE/WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART/AMY SHERALD/HAUSER AND WIRTH



JOSEPH HYDE/THE SPEED ART MUSEUM/SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE/AMY SHERALD/HAUSER AND WIRTH



JOSEPH HYDE/HAUSER AND WIRTH

SHERALD FROM E11

As a colorist, she follows no formula, has no signature palette. She mixes and names her own colors. She is brilliant at placing rich, saturated colors and bold patterns against indeterminate, hard-to-describe hues. The woman’s dress in “Untitled (Opal),” 2019, for instance, is clearly yellow — but what word would you use to describe the background? I think it’s a sort of warmed-up teal, but I’m not confident. All I know is that the painting is a knockout.

Sometimes, rather than playing up contrasts, Sherald toys with colors that are neighbors on the color wheel. For instance, in a 2020 portrait she made of the late Breonna Taylor (it appeared on the cover of *Vanity Fair*), Taylor’s turquoise dress is set against a slightly warmer teal ground, to electrifying effect.

In some galleries, Roberts has placed several singular portraits all in a row, so the colors interact not only within each portrait but across pictures. The blue, mauve and red backgrounds of three neighboring paintings all chime, as do the more localized relations within each picture, giving the ensemble an almost musical richness.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Works by Amy Sherald include “A Golden Afternoon” (2016); “If You Surrendered to the Air, You Could Ride It” (2019); “There Is No Charm Equal to Tenderness of Heart” (2019); and “Breonna Taylor” (2020).

Sherald’s bigger paintings are hit and miss. Too often, the scale feels bombastic, the effect arch and airless. But they can also be funny, and that’s something to like.



The show’s final gallery, featuring recent work, shows her in total control of her craft. It presents beautiful people whose beauty is made permanent and inviolate by Sherald’s surpassingly gorgeous colors.

The combination of a yellow-and-white striped dress and gray skin set against a light but rich blue in “There Is No Charm Equal to Tenderness of Heart” is so straightforwardly lovely I wanted to weep as I stood in front of it.

If Sherald’s stated desire to turn individuals into archetypes who stand for something more than themselves is propagandistic, it strikes me as benignly so. What’s neither benign nor propagandistic — rather, it’s pure aesthetic electricity — is the aloof and brilliant power of her colors.

Amy Sherald: American Sublime Through March 9 at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. sfmoma.org. It will travel to the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York from April 9 to Aug. 3, 2025, and the Smithsonian’s National Portrait Gallery in D.C. from Sept. 19 to Feb. 22, 2026.

the **GUIDE** to the Lively Arts

SHOW NAME	DATES & TIMES	DESCRIPTION	DETAILS	PRICE	ADDITIONAL
THEATRE					
 What the Constitution Means to Me By Heidi Schreck Directed by Morgan Gould	Jan 15 - Feb 16, 2025	Heidi Schreck examines our nation's most debated document and its effects on four generations of women in her family. One of the most beloved plays in America, the Pulitzer Prize finalist—featuring brand new material for 2025—has never been more relevant, urgent, or needed.	Round House Theatre 4545 East-West Highway, Bethesda, MD (240) 644-1100 RoundHouseTheatre.org	From \$43 (free for students age 13 - college)	“Electrifyingly topical and eye-opening” - The New York Times
MUSIC - CONCERTS					
 Mezzo-soprano, Samantha Hankey & pianist, Myra Huang in recital with Vocal Arts DC	Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at 7:30 pm	Highlighted by The New York Times as “a major artist of her generation,” world-renowned mezzo-soprano Samantha Hankey makes Vocal Arts DC debut performing Schumann’s Dichterliebe with two-time GRAMMY nominated pianist Myra Huang.	Kennedy Center Terrace Theater 1-800-444-1324 www.kennedy-center.org www.vocalartsdc.org	\$50	VADC: Presenting the beauty of song

The Guide to the Lively Arts appears: • Sunday in Arts & Style. deadline: Tues., 12 noon

• Monday in Style. deadline: Friday, 12 noon • Tuesday in Style. deadline: Mon., 12 noon • Wednesday in Style. deadline: Tues., 12 noon

• Thursday in Style. deadline: Wed., 12 noon • Friday in Weekend. deadline: Tues., 12 noon • Saturday in Style. deadline: Friday, 12 noon

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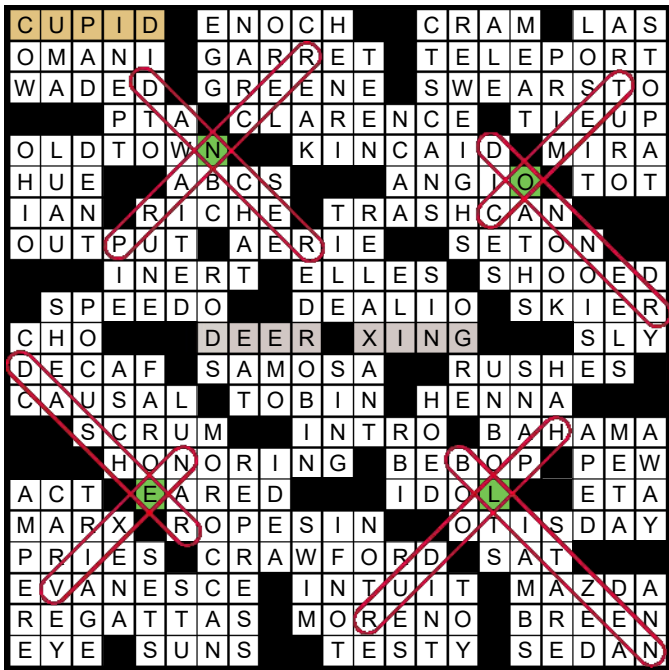
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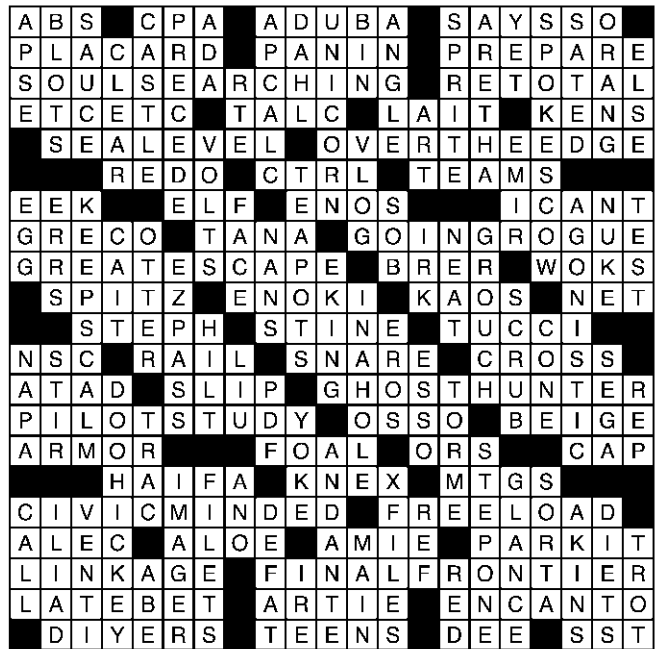
Answers to last week's puzzle.

SIGN OF THE TIMES (DEC. 22)



Eight of Santa's reindeer cross each other in X shapes (CUPID, the only reindeer that isn't crossing another, can be found at 1 Across). The four letters in the reindeer crossings spell **NOEL**.

Answers to last week's L.A. Times Sunday puzzle.



12/22/24

CROSSWORD

"CLOSING PERFORMANCE: A MARCHING BANDS METAPUZZLE" BY EVAN BIRNHOLZ

Marching Bands is a variety crossword where answers are entered in Rows and Bands. Each Row contains two answers side by side; their clues are given in order, but you must determine the dividing points between them. The Band answers start in a lettered square (A-E) and wind around clockwise, ending in the space below that square.

The final meta answer to these variety puzzles is a well-known song. (Acknowledgments to Mike Shenk.)

- ROWS**

 - Revolutionary Guevara
 - Opening
 - Person behind the wheel
 - Orchestra's reference
 - Kingdom
 - Shade acquired at the beach
 - Gets married in secret
 - Works very hard
 - Bit of stationery often used in studying for a test (2 wds.)
 - Make a miscue
 - Sneakers and high heels, e.g.
 - Mysterious and unsettling
 - She has to play
 - Emerald City visitor
 - Maker of foam darts
 - Improvement in international relations
- BANDS**

A

 - Less expensive
 - Deep bowls for serving soup
 - "The Voice of Space" painter Magritte
 - Whacked sharply, as flies
 - Campbell who played Julia Salinger on "Party of Five"
 - Beachside shelters
 - "Hypnotize U" band
- B**

 - Waterways with mouths
 - Atoll composition
 - Laugh ____ (hilarious thing)
 - Dweebish person
 - Tree trunk tossed in the Highland Games
 - Obi-Wan portrayer Guinness
 - "Celebrity Skin" band
 - ____ for the poor (charitable gifts)
 - Let loose
 - Peeled-off layer
 - "We're number ____!"
 - Zig or zag
 - "I'll Supply the Love" band

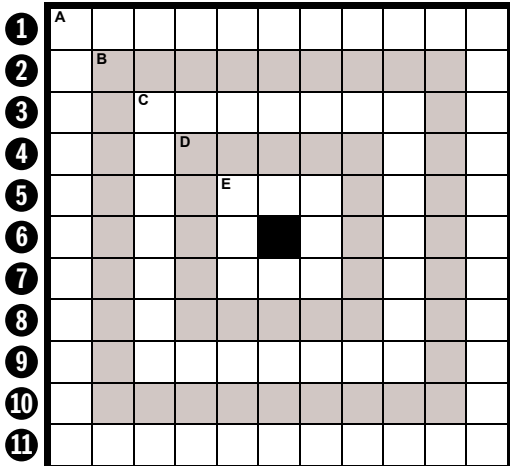
D

 - Green pasta topping
 - Removed, as spam
 - "All Right Now" band

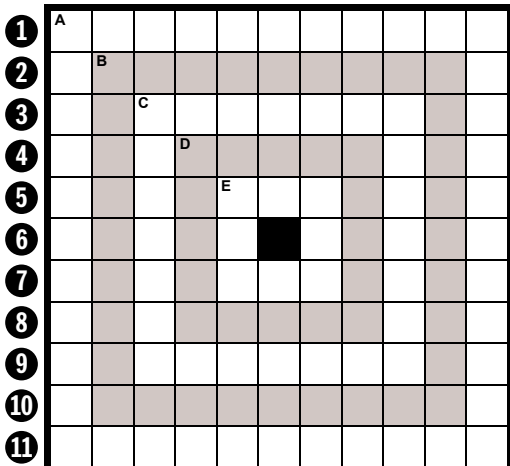
E

 - Touches gently

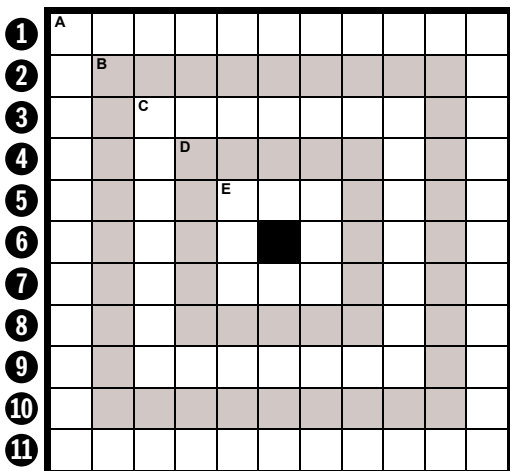
PUZZLE 1



PUZZLE 2



PUZZLE 3



HOROSCOPE

This week, Horoscopes can be found on **Page E4**.

L.A. TIMES SUNDAY PUZZLE

EDITED BY PATTI VAROL AND JOYCE NICHOLS LEWIS

"RUNWAY SHOW"
BY ADRIANNE BAIK

ACROSS

- Farm stores
- Shell competitor
- Secures
- Big serving
- Cover, in a way
- Press
- backspace
- Welsh accent
- feature
- Company
- picture
- Eldest von
- Trapp sister
- Ride ____ : roll backward while facing forward on a skateboard
- Greek venues
- Taj Mahal site
- "Dish service
- "Animated film with the tagline "Honey just got funny"
- Kerfuffles
- "Wonder Woman"
- antagonist
- Sounds of hesitation
- KPMG
- employee
- Company VIP
- Turns loose (on)
- Focal point in a cathedral
- Sign on a staff
- British "sir"
- "Rumpelstiltskin" or "Cinderella"
- "Many a sunset image
- Reasons some check Zillow, for short
- "... as all ____-out"
- Do not disturb
- Truckloads
- Chevy
- Japanese noodle
- Inner circle
- members
- Honey holders
- 105-Across
- producers
- Deng: pygmy hippo of internet fame
- Finish with a lower score
- High quality
- Asian language
- Long-haul travel perk, and a description of the answers to the starred clues
- Expressive rock genre
- Handled talent show intros, e.g.
- Spiny succulent

DOWN

- Part of a taco assembly kit
- Epic set in the 10th year of the Trojan War
- Dupe

4 Extreme preoccupation

5 Window feature

6 Impatient kid's cry

7 Give a TED Talk, e.g.

8 Efforts to get dough from cookies?

9 Doubter's query

10 "Frasier" actress Jane

11 Ambiguous shapes

12 Teacher's helper

13 Groups that create harmony?

14 Spooked wildebeest movement

15 Bulgarian or Bosnian

16 Digital circuit building block

17 Come to the same conclusion concerning

18 Feathery wrap

28 Like some veils

30 Clumsy hulks

34 Got comfortable in a La-Z-Boy

37 Hot spots in the kitchen

39 Org. that takes many forms

41 Veterinary patient

42 Dove shelter

44 Consumed

45 Icy

46 Shoelace tip

48 Digger controller

49 Billiards bounce

50 Persian poet

55 ____ stick

56 Fire sign?

57 Guest spot?

58 Dwindle in size

60 Capital near the Andes

61 Old relation

62 MGM mascot

64 Tennis star Ivan

65 Fire sign?

66 Wordless

67 French cookbook term

68 Big time?

69 Greet silently

70 Donald Glover's "Community" filler

75 "Here we go again"

76 Learn of

77 Looking sunny

78 Small glazed treat

79 Deep purple fruit

80 Travel baggage

81 Tackled together in tandem

83 Con

84 Go on a run?

85 Disney's Cruella de

87 Was short

89 Gamer's field

90 Twain hero

94 Hundred-to-one shot

98 "Good grief!"

100 Real estate expert

102 Camera view

103 Pathogen fighter

104 Vibe

106 Hopful

107 College World Series org.

109 Critic's kudos

110 Spreadsheet filler

111 ____ shed

12/29/24

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Engagements | Weddings Anniversaries

To place an announcement:
email: weddings@washpost.com
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Weddings

Tip #2:

Getting married away from home? Travel two days or more before the ceremony to be sure you're there in time.

Declare Your Love!

Announce your Engagement, Wedding or Anniversary in The Washington Post's Sunday Arts & Style Section. (Birthdays, Graduations & other Special Events have moved to Thursdays.) You may provide text and photos. **Color is available.** Many packages include keepsake plaques of your announcement.

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Contact The Weddings DropBox at: weddings@washpost.com
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All materials must be received by Monday at 1 p.m.

Retropolis

The past, rediscovered

wpost.com/retropolis

50364 1x6.5

sweater or tank top?

Stay one step ahead of the weather with the

Capital Weather Gang

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50141 3x4.75

MOVIE DIRECTORY

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DINING



PHOTOS BY DEB LINDSEY FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Restaurateur Stephen Starr and chef Nancy Silverton preview lunch options. Starr says all he knew about Silverton before asking her to collaborate was that her focaccia “blew me away.”

Osteria Mozza is a joy from the start in Georgetown

Stephen Starr and Nancy Silverton bring a Midas touch to Italian dining room

BY TOM SIETSEMA

Philadelphia restaurateur Stephen Starr and California chef Nancy Silverton weren't well-acquainted when Starr approached her about opening a place together in Washington three years ago. All Starr says he knew was that Silverton's focaccia "blew me away" and would probably make a splash at his chosen location, the barn-size space previously filled by Dean & DeLuca in Georgetown. Starr, whose contributions in the District include the popular Le Diplomate and St. Anselm, guessed right. No sooner did Osteria Mozza open in November than lines formed for Silverton's focaccia di Recco — and, really, for just about every aspect of a genius

collaboration that ranks up there with Taylor and Travis. Hyperbole? Read on. You may wonder how a handful of ingredients, baked in a deck oven, can create such a following. (Seven hundred people are on the wait list for dinner on any given night.) You wonder only until the marvel arrives on a pizza stand, two yeastless, strudel-thin rounds of golden crust encasing a thin layer of delicately tangy stracchino cheese. Named for the part of Italy where it originated — the city of Recco sits on the Ligurian Coast — this is a focaccia unlike any other in the city. You can gild the lily with toppings of aged Parmigiano Reggiano, Alba truffles, or

kerchiefs of prosciutto, which gives you the world's best, open-faced ham and cheese sandwich, but the \$26 focaccia di Recco is sublime sans decoration. I never visit Osteria Mozza, a spin-off of Silverton's same-named restaurant in Los Angeles, without launching a meal with this affordable luxury. You'll be encouraged to try something from the marble-paved mozzarella bar, "the heart and soul of the restaurant," says a docent, er, server. The kitchen imports its cheese from prime sources. I've yet to try a combination I wouldn't return to, but I'd return fastest for a ball of burrata on a raft of soft leeks sharpened with a mustard vinaigrette and crisped with toasted breadcrumbs, also punched up with mustard. A quick glance at the menu, which also borrows ideas from Silverton's Chi Spacca and Pizzeria Mozza in Los Angeles, reveals a lot of dishes you think you know. The snacks include arancini, the pastas embrace orecchiette with fennel sausage, and the secondi courses find cured, confit duck. Most are elevated versions of what you may have encountered elsewhere, at least locally. The extraordinary richness of the audibly crisp duck has a fine foil in pear mostarda. The most novel pasta is meatless: slippery coins of corzetti stampati, a fresh pasta from Liguria, paired with slices of seared eggplant, olives and a rich tomato sauce. Garlic and chile flakes — zing! — are added before the plate leaves the kitchen. If a dish has anchovies or bread in it, order away. Say yes, then, to spaghetti alla Calabrese, with Cantabrian anchovies marinated in bright lemon and parsley. Silverton jokingly calls a popular entrée "chicken bread" because the support beneath the roasted chicken — house-baked sourdough bread — absorbs some of the stock used to baste the chicken and becomes diners' real object of fascination. The chef says she's not coming in with recipes handed down by an Italian grandmother, but rather, food that "keeps people at the table" and an experience as much as anything else. (Who knew that the most intoxicating tuna salad around is lush fish inside a sweet and silky pepper?) "Italians love to be together," says Silverton, the author of 11 cookbooks and nine restaurants around the world. Tender lamb neck in a moat of polenta tastes Old World; I love the hits of orange, rose-

mary and, yes, anchovy in the braised meat. Her California roots show in her focus on seasonality and vegetables in particular. Consider the brussels sprouts. Instead of serving them whole or halved and fried or grilled, she offers them as a fluffy chiffonade tossed with almonds, pecorino and mint, an enlightened salad that prompted a typically articulate colleague to drop the f-bomb out of sheer joy and then re-create it at home during the holidays. Look up from this delicious cooking and take in the scene, lit to flatter the crowd. New York-based Roman and Williams filled 20,000 feet of space with terrazzo floors, green- and caramel-colored seating, arched windows and a small market, part of the lease agreement, whose shelves are stocked with Silverton-selected pastas, olive oils, condiments and more from producers or importers the chef actually knows. I've always arrived to a packed house. Michelle Obama has twice eaten in the handsome private dining room overlooking the show on the ground floor, while Mitt Romney had a retirement party in the solarium. Pizza was introduced at lunch and brunch after my last visit. Wisely, Silverton whipped up a different recipe for Washington, which lacks the wood-burning oven of her establishments out West. The local pies are said to be Roman in style, lighter and airier. Silverton is one of the country's best sweets makers and has a James Beard award to prove it. She was honored as Best Pastry Chef in 1990 (also Outstanding Chef in 2014). I know of no one who makes a finer butterscotch budino, its deep flavor created by burning the caramel and its richness offset with delicate rosemary cookies, reflecting Silverton's affinity for pairing sweet and savory in her desserts. The perfectionist says she gets bored by most tiramisus by the third bite, so she created a dessert that sits tall on its plate and combines the moistness of tres leches with the delicacy of sponge cake. Her tiramisu combines ground coffee and ground nuts in the cake and places the traditional mascarpone atop the construction. Trust me, no one is bored eating this reinvention — just wistful, when the last spoonful disappears. While I'm reluctant to stir you from this dream, duty requires me to share a few disappointments. Hundreds of revelers make for a loud eve-

ning, and the wine list seems priced for moguls. A few dishes — bronzed arancini, octopus with celery — are merely very good, which helps in winnowing the choices here. This is a small thing, but for such a detail-conscious establishment, why the regular ice instead of an artisanal block in the (otherwise good) Negronis? From Day 1, Osteria Mozza felt like a well-oiled machine. At the door, diners encounter a fleet of smiles to steer reservation holders to the center of the room, home to the host lectern, or identify the available bar stools or tables close to the market. In preparation for launch, a clutch of Starr's team went to work in Silverton's restaurants and the chef brought a bunch of her people to Washington. (Executive chef Jeremy Barragan has worked for his boss in California and abroad since 2010 and watches over a staff of 70 in the copper-fronted kitchen.) Rehearsals for the fresh face lasted a month. Not every new restaurant gets that benefit, but practice helps when you're feeding up to 500 people a weeknight, more on weekends. The TSA could learn from the restaurant's gracious performance. Christmas came early with the arrival of Osteria Mozza. And Christmas is expected to come again in February, when Starr introduces a retro supper club in the former Occidental space downtown. For the moment, he and Silverton are serving a generous helping of soul-satisfying food, hospitality and ambiance — the whole package — that's not just keeping people at the table, but polishing the city's reputation as one of the country's best places to eat.



Among Osteria Mozza's dishes is a Caesar salad with egg, leek and anchovy crostini.

Real estate battle over secretive off-market listings heats up

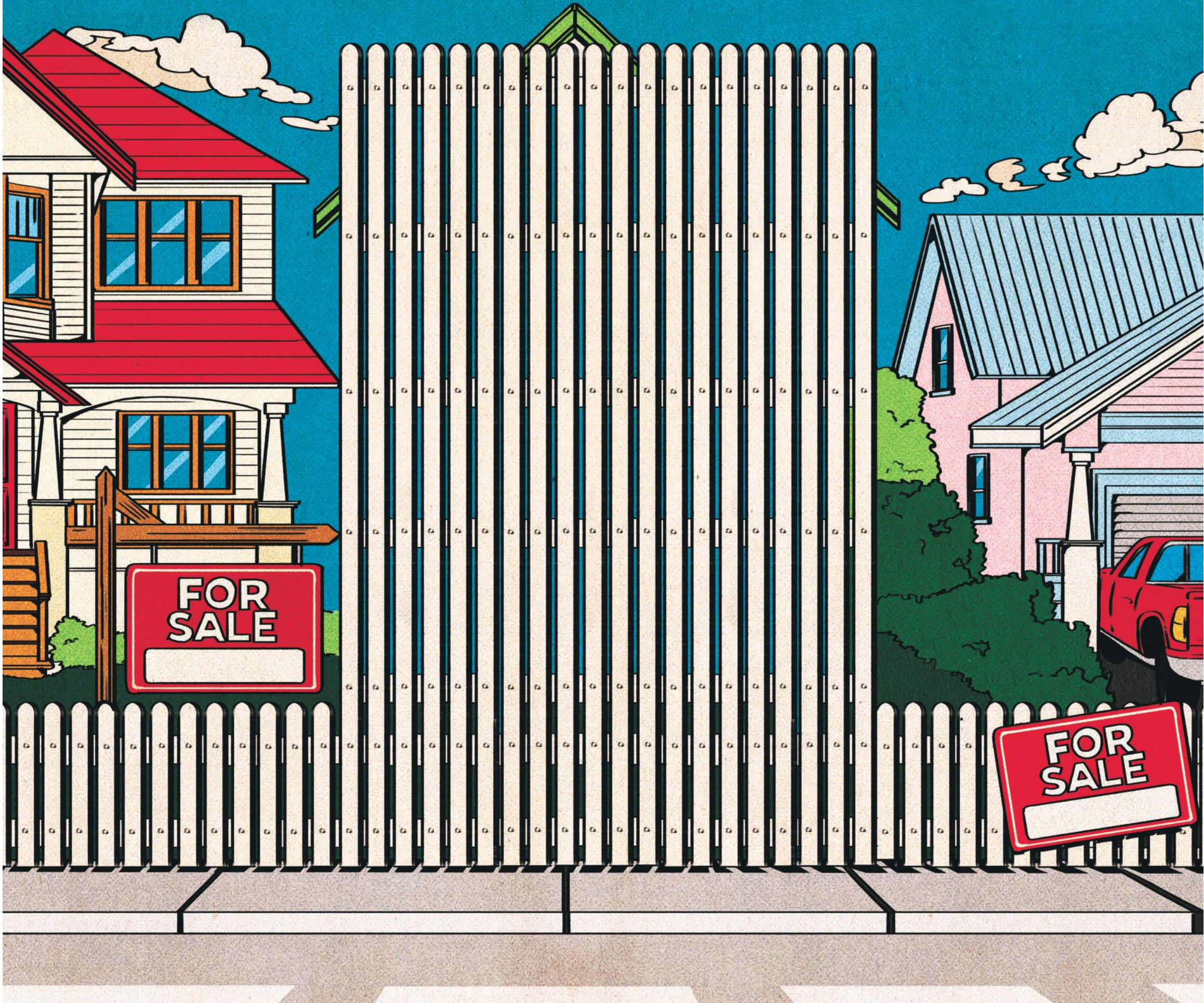


ILLUSTRATION BY MARIA JESUS CONTRERAS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

AI data center firms bet on moonshot energy technologies

BY EVAN HALPER

Technology companies racing for advantage in artificial intelligence are struggling to find enough electricity to supply data centers — those massive, windowless buildings that contain thousands of computers running at once. A single facility often requires an entire city's worth of energy. Data centers are projected to consume as much as 17 percent of all U.S. electricity by 2030.

With energy shortages threatening AI progress, tech leaders are investing in moonshot projects that aim to deliver huge amounts of power in just a few years. In many cases, these planned new energy sources would not even patch into existing power grids. Instead, they would feed directly into the data centers (and, in some cases, other nearby industrial plants) under exclusive agreements.

The Washington Post published articles this year on the rapid growth of data centers and the effects they are having on communities, energy supplies and the climate.

For six projects that provide a glimpse of how the AI energy future might look, turn to G4

Brokerage giant Compass wants to expand non-public listings but is facing pushback from within the industry

BY MICHELE LERNER

When prospective home buyers come up empty-handed, seeing a “sold” sign on an ideal home that never showed up during their search rubs salt into the wound.

What's frustrating to so many is these non-public sales, often known as off-market listings, shortcut the transparency that's meant to inform the buying and selling process: Every home that's listed by a real estate agent and marketed to the public is supposed to be visible through one of the hundreds of databases known as Multiple Listing Services (MLS).

Now, an internal battle is heating up between real estate brokerages over off-market listings — just as the dust is starting to settle on commission rule changes triggered by lawsuits against brokerages and the National Association of Realtors (NAR).

Unlike the commission overhaul, which pitted home sellers against real estate giants, this fight resembles a clash of titans more than a rematch of Harry Potter vs. Lord Voldemort. And the eventual outcome could result in more off-market sales at a time when buyers are already slammed by housing scarcity and high prices.

At stake is an NAR rule enacted in 2019, known as the Clear Cooperation Policy (CCP), that requires agents to list a property on their MLS within one business day after marketing it to the public.

Under an off-market listing (also known more pejoratively as a pocket listing), an agent markets the property before putting it on the MLS — using back channels to expedite the deal between private parties. This tactic is

SEE REAL ESTATE ON G5

In wake of office mandates, these places remodeled working remotely

BY DANIELLE ABRIL

Rising social media start-up Bluesky reached more than 25 million users in recent months, at one point adding a million users a day. Behind the scenes is a small team of 20 people — who all work remotely.

Bluesky, which evolved from a Twitter research project to an independent entity in 2022, chose remote work because it needed specialized engineers from North America and abroad, its executives say. Employees write proposals that the team debates, looking for holes in ideas. They gather in person one week a quarter and in smaller groups throughout the year to foster collaboration.

“When somebody tosses out an idea, I say, ‘Write a proposal!’” said Paul Frazee, Bluesky's chief technology officer, who said the company's way of working makes him confident in remote work indefinitely. “In some ways, this was the only way we could do this,” added Rose Wang, Bluesky's chief operations officer.

Almost five years after the pandemic forced many to work remotely or hybrid, companies across the country are wrestling

SEE OFFICE ON G5

TECHNOLOGY

Some Waymo riders recount feeling like sitting ducks when strangers interfere with their self-driving robot chauffeur. **G2**

SOCIAL MEDIA

Elon Musk's messages on X blast to an audience far bigger than Donald Trump reaches on the platform, data analysis by The Post shows. **G3**

Conservative activists ask major corporations to consider investing in bitcoin

BY JULIAN MARK

Conservative activists are turning to a new tool to fulfill their anti-“woke,” free-enterprise mission: pushing Fortune 100 companies to convert some of their assets to bitcoin.

Since October, the National Center for Public Policy Research, a right-wing think tank, has filed shareholder proposals asking Microsoft and Amazon to consider investing in bitcoin, arguing that would insulate the companies and their investors from inflation. More bitcoin proposals are on the way, the group says, while also arguing that advancing the adoption of bitcoin fits into their “pro-freedom” agenda because cryptocurrency largely operates outside of the control of governments.

“There are concerns about the abuse of the financial markets to oppress citizens — and particularly that this can cut in an anti-conservative way,” said Stefan Padfield, director of the center’s Free Enterprise Project.

The new strategy comes amid a broad embrace of crypto by conservatives, including President-elect Donald Trump, who told advocates in July that he intends to make the United States the “crypto capital of the planet,” with promises to take a much lighter

regulatory approach to the volatile market than the Biden administration has.

Crypto investors have spent hundreds of millions of dollars to influence lawmakers in Washington and elect pro-crypto candidates this past election cycle. Trump and some of his Cabinet picks have financial interests in the industry, while the president-elect has expressed interest in creating a national stockpile of bitcoin.

Rumble, a video platform popular with conservative influencers, announced in November that it would diversify its cash reserves with \$20 million in bitcoin, about 15 percent of its cash assets. In the announcement, Chris Pavlovski, Rumble’s chairman and CEO, cited “the election of a crypto-friendly U.S. presidential administration and increased institutional adoption.”

And long before the recent surge in bitcoin’s price, electric car marker Tesla invested \$1.5 billion in bitcoin, calling the purchase a measure to diversify its holdings and maximize its returns on cash. Tesla CEO Elon Musk, who is expected to wield significant influence in the second Trump administration, has been an advocate for the crypto market.

Now activists who have railed

against what they view as “woke” politics in corporate America are also pushing bitcoin.

In recent years, the National Center for Public Policy Research has filed numerous shareholder proposals and lawsuits meant to pressure companies into dropping their DEI (diversity, equity and inclusion) and ESG (environmental, social and governance) efforts, which the group considers to be part of the “the woke takeover of American corporate life.”

Bitcoin is a “nonpolitical” alternative to those efforts that will better serve investors, said Ethan Peck, deputy director at the Free Enterprise Project.

Corporations have been too “content” to hold cash that could be undermined by inflation, he added. “So I thought that the best answer to that is bitcoin.”

Bitcoin, the first crypto currency, was rolled out in 2009 and used by early adopters as an alternative to government-issued money. Its value has swelled over the past two decades, thanks to increasing investor interest and mainstream recognition, such as the Securities and Exchange Commission’s approval this year for bitcoin-based exchanged-traded funds. Bitcoin’s price topped \$100,000 per coin following the election victory of Trump,

although it has recently fallen below that benchmark.

That growth, however, has also come with punishing downcycles, most recently during a large-scale crypto crash in 2022: Bitcoin’s price plunged 66 percent from over \$47,000 to around \$16,000 amid the collapse of multiple crypto firms, such as the exchange FTX. The asset’s volatility has earned it a reputation for being highly risky and speculative, with its value supported mainly by the belief that it will continue appreciate in price.

Microsoft shareholders this month overwhelmingly voted down the National Center’s proposal that the tech giant explore whether to invest 1 percent of assets into bitcoin. The vote came after the proposal was presented by Michael Saylor, co-founder and executive chairman of MicroStrategy, a business software company whose stock has gained more than 2,000 percent over the past five years largely because its massive and ongoing cryptocurrency investments — the company in a recent filing said it has about 439,000 bitcoins — have made it a proxy for confidence in the crypto market.

“Microsoft can’t afford to miss the next technology wave — and bitcoin is that wave,” Saylor said in the roughly three-minute pre-

sentation to Microsoft shareholders, adding that popular and political support is building for the cryptocurrency.

MicroStrategy did not respond to a request for comment from The Washington Post.

He quoted Trump telling crypto enthusiasts at July event to “never sell your bitcoin.”

The Amazon proposal, submitted in December, asks the company to explore whether to put some of its total assets — “even just 5%” — into bitcoin. As with the Microsoft proposal, it says that the company’s cash and bond reserves are being “debased” by inflation. Amazon reported about \$585 billion in cash and similar assets at the end of the third quarter; 5 percent would come out to about \$29.25 billion.

Peck said the National Center is negotiating a bitcoin proposal with another major company, which he declined to name, and has plans to soon file others. He also said that, to his knowledge, the National Center has not received donations from any pro-crypto groups, although he said his group might welcome new fundraising opportunities prompted by the recent bitcoin proposals and their publicity.

“We definitely had some talks internally [that] this might open up an avenue of other kinds of

fundraisers,” Peck said. “But I’m not aware of anyone that has given money yet.”

Jason Helfstein, head of internet research at research firm Openheimer & Co., said that companies holding bitcoin instead of cash could result in losses — and might be unnecessary since inflation has cooled and as interest rates remain relatively high.

“We’re not going through an inflationary period right now in America,” Helfstein said. “Has Microsoft’s or Amazon’s or Meta’s or Alphabet’s cash become meaningfully devalued in the past year? Relative to how much you could lose if bitcoin corrected? You have to look at both sides of this.”

But Dan Romanoff, a Morningstar analyst, said bitcoin might be a useful hedge against inflation, even though gold is generally considered to be best asset for the job.

The price appreciation for both bitcoin and gold have outpaced inflation over the past five years, though bitcoin’s gains have been far greater. Although there is not a lot of historical data on cryptocurrency’s behavior through different economic cycles, a case can be made for a minor investment in bitcoin, Romanoff said.

“If [Amazon] wants to be able to keep a small portion of its cash in bitcoin, that doesn’t seem unreasonable,” he said.

New form of harassment targets Waymo robotaxi riders in San Francisco

BY LISA BONOS

SAN FRANCISCO — Stephanie, a tech worker in San Francisco, was drawn to the robot taxis that Alphabet’s Waymo operates in the city because she felt more secure without a human driver. The vehicles provide hundreds of thousands of driverless rides each month, city data shows.

“It’s so much safer, especially for a woman,” she said in a phone interview this month. “You’re not getting in the car with some strange man.”

But when a self-driving ride turned scary last month, she found herself wishing there had been a stranger behind the wheel after all.

Stephanie recalled riding home with her sister in one of Waymo’s driverless Jaguar SUVs around 10:30 p.m. on a Saturday when a car holding several young men began following them. They drove close to the robotaxi honking and yelling, “Hey, ladies — you guys are hot.”

If she or another human had been driving, it would have been easy to reroute the car to avoid leading the pursuers to her home. But she was scared and didn’t know how to change the robot’s path. She called 911, but a dispatcher said they couldn’t send a police car to a moving vehicle, Stephanie recalled.

“All the safety things then become unsafe if someone is following you,” she said of the incident, which Waymo confirmed and has not been previously reported.

As Waymo expands its service in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix and Austin, some passengers like Stephanie have found that traveling by robotaxi can make riders into sitting ducks for a new form of public harassment.

The Washington Post spoke with four Waymo passengers, three of them women, who said they experienced harassment or what felt like threats to their safety from people who followed, obstructed or attempted to enter a driverless vehicle they were riding in.

Some had reported the incidents to the police or 911 and all spoke on the condition that their last names not be used out of concern for their personal safety.

All the riders said their experiences with Waymo had generally been positive but that the company should improve on how it responds to threats to riders’ personal safety.

“We take these events very seriously and understand how upsetting they can be,” Waymo spokesman Ethan Teicher said in an email. He said incidents of harassment or attempts to enter one of the company’s vehicles during a ride are “extremely rare.”

Support agents stay on the line with riders who call in such incidents and work with law enforcement as appropriate, Teicher said. Passengers can tell a vehicle to pull over or change its next stop or destination using the Waymo app, or ask a support agent to make similar changes. But support staff cannot redirect a vehicle’s specific route, he said.

Elliot, a tech worker in San Francisco, recalled in a phone interview a “scary” situation during a Waymo ride late one night in October. A pedestrian tried to enter the driverless vehicle as it waited at a red light.

“Go away,” Elliot yelled at the



MONICA RODMAN/THE WASHINGTON POST

A self-driving Waymo in San Francisco sits at a red light, a situation in which some riders have found themselves to be sitting ducks for harassers outside the vehicle.

man as he knocked on the window before briefly flashing what looked like a knife, video of the incident viewed by The Post showed. “What are you doing?” Elliot asked, before the man walked away.

Elliot said the encounter unfolded so quickly that he didn’t have time to call Waymo support or the police as it happened, but he recorded video of the interaction and filed a police report a few days later.

In the moment, Elliot said, he wished someone could have “slammed on the gas and gotten away from this guy,” adding that Waymo should change how its vehicles respond in such situations. The San Francisco Police Department confirmed the incident in an email and said it is investigating.

Waymo’s sensor-studded vehicles have become a constant presence on San Francisco streets. Tourists gawk at them and transit riders are confronted by bus shelter ads from the company proclaiming, “Welcome to the future.”

But while Alphabet’s fleet has become the first large-scale deployment of commercial driverless service, San Francisco’s journey as a robotaxi test bed has at times been bumpy. Autonomous vehicles have obstructed other traffic, including fire fighters at emergency scenes. A grisly collision with a pedestrian initially struck by a human-driven vehicle forced General Motors’s Cruise to end its commercial service in the city in 2023.

The harassment incidents are the latest example of how it has proven easier to program robotaxis to observe road signs and speed limits than to handle the nuanced human aspects of driving on public roads.

Michael Brooks, executive director of Center for Auto Safety, a

nonprofit consumer advocacy group, said in an email that the vehicles “are way behind when it comes to interpreting human behavior and responding appropriately.”

San Francisco residents have also learned that self-driving vehicles can be manipulated. During a recent test ride through Golden Gate Park in San Francisco, a handful of laughing cyclists held up a Waymo vehicle carrying a Washington Post reporter by weaving in and out of the lane in front of it.

“We see a lot of prank-type behavior,” Brooks said, but some incidents have been more violent. Waymo vehicles have been defaced with graffiti and in February, one was set alight on a crowded street in Chinatown.

Missy Cummings, an engineering professor at George Mason University who directs the university’s Autonomy and Robotics Center, said it’s to be expected that

some people will take advantage of situations where no driver is present.

She also theorizes that self-driving cars can trigger Americans’ anxiety about being replaced by technology. “People are just tired of and fearful of tech that seems to be coming at them from all sides in a negative way,” Cummings said.

Whatever the causes, those who have experienced harassment or other incidents during a robotaxi ride say operators like Waymo need to provide better support for passengers during and after such moments.

Madelline, a 25-year-old restaurant server in San Francisco, said that during a recent Waymo ride around 2 a.m., the driverless vehicle had to stop after two drivers ahead began yelling at each other and throwing things out of their cars in what appeared to be a road rage dispute.

The two cars blocked an inter-



MIKE KAI CHEN FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Some harassers take advantage of Waymo cars’ external sensors to force the vehicle to stop, frustrating — or scaring — its riders.

section and one person got out of one of the vehicles.

“I was definitely panicking a little bit,” Madelline said, as her car waited for the road to clear instead of turning off as a human driver might do. In her distress she called her sister for support, and didn’t consider Waymo’s support line.

She would like to have more control over a robotaxi’s route but still prefers Waymo rides to using Uber or Lyft, whose drivers sometimes make her uncomfortable. “Being able to be alone in a car feels a lot safer,” Madelline said.

The night that Stephanie was followed and catcalled during a driverless ride, she said the other car gave up the chase when the Waymo was a minute from her house. She and her sister arrived home safely, though terrified.

Stephanie didn’t catch the car’s license plate number, which the 911 dispatcher requested after her ride concluded. Waymo vehicles, like other driverless cars in development, use multiple cameras to help make sense of the world around them. But when she later asked the company for the car’s video footage, hoping it had captured the license plate, Waymo declined to provide it, she said.

She would like closer coordination between Waymo and first responders and said she is now unsure about self-driving rides after dark. “I would feel safe taking it during the day,” Stephanie said. But “at night, maybe I’m safer having someone else in the car just in case something happens.”

Waymo’s spokesman Teicher said the company has a close relationship with emergency responders. “We also respond to lawful investigative requests for information, and we will pursue legal action when appropriate,” he said.

Distressed riders might be helped sooner if robotaxis could respond to incidents without their passenger having to call customer support.

But passengers don’t have the option to “command the vehicle to do something that’s against the road rules,” such as drive at or even into a human in self-defense, said Phil Koopman, an electrical and computer engineering professor at Carnegie Mellon University who has been studying self-driving cars for nearly 30 years.

Cummings, of George Mason University, said solving such personal safety issues is going to take a combination of planning and sensing by vehicles themselves and coordination with remote operations teams.

In September, Amina V. was on her way to a hair appointment when a man stepped in front of her robotaxi and the car stalled in the middle of the street. She already had been recording herself in the Waymo, so she turned the camera to capture the man hitting on her while her car stood frozen in San Francisco’s SoMa neighborhood.

She later posted the video on Instagram and X, where Waymo acknowledged the incident.

Amina said in an interview this month that she felt “annoyed” and “powerless” because the car wouldn’t move while pedestrians — first one, then two — were blocking the robotaxi’s path. She called Waymo’s support line, and the operator said they had seen the situation through their cameras.

“They were pretty helpful,” Amina recalled, noting that Waymo asked if she needed police, which she declined because by then the men had left. Waymo offered Amina her next ride free; she took her mom who was visiting from Michigan.



WASHINGTON POST ILLUSTRATION; TOM BRENNER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST; ISTOCK

At 10:39 a.m. on the day Donald Trump declared victory for a second term, Elon Musk wrote six words on X. The post instantly caught fire. After an hour and a half it had been seen more than 10 million times — and was still reaching 120,000 new viewers every minute. With over 200 million followers Musk has the biggest account on X and increasingly uses it to wield political power.

In 26 days around the election, Musk fired off 3,870 posts that received more than 33 billion views.

Musk’s reach transcends Trump’s, with each of his X posts typically seen by twice as many users as a post from the president-elect.

As Musk prepares for a central role in the U.S. government, the billionaire has a political megaphone unmatched in modern society.

From the moment Musk first endorsed Trump in a post on X in July, the tech mogul’s account has been one of his most powerful tools of support for Trump.

The service formerly known as Twitter that he acquired for \$44 billion in 2022, and renamed to X, shed users after Musk cut its payroll and loosened content rules. It is much smaller than rivals such as Facebook and TikTok. But X retained its position as a central place for political news and discussion during the 2024 campaign.

Trump’s win and close alliance with Musk has given it new significance.

As Musk became one of Trump’s closest advisers and funneled at least \$277 million into the 2024 campaign cycle, the tech entrepreneur posted less about his companies and more about politics.

He blasted out his approval for Trump’s stances on immigration and the economy, posted AI-generated images and video attacking Vice President Kamala Harris, and spread conspiracy theories about voter fraud.

Almost 40 percent of Musk’s posts in October and November were about electoral politics, a sharp increase even from this summer. He can insert his views into the feeds of millions of people with a flick of his thumbs.

The billionaire, who is the world’s richest person according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index, has the most followed account on X and an audience that eclipses other top political accounts, including those of President Joe Biden, Harris and Trump himself, according to an analysis by The Washington Post.

Musk’s posts have received a total of 133 billion views since July, data analysis by The Post shows. That’s 15 times Trump’s audience in the same period and more than 16 times the combined reach of all accounts belonging to members of the incoming Congress.

Trump pioneered the use of Twitter as a political cudgel during his first presidency and had about 88 million followers before he was banned in 2021. He used tweets to fire White House staff,

threaten world leaders and move financial markets.

As Trump returns to the White House, Musk now has the loudest voice online — and a much larger audience than the president-elect.

Since Election Day, Musk has — in posts that reached millions of users — pressured the incoming administration on Cabinet picks, promoted the nongovernmental “efficiency” commission he will co-chair for Trump and polled users on whom Senate Republicans should choose as majority leader.

“For Trump’s first term, he dominated Twitter in terms of the conversation and engagement,” said Tyler Brown, former director of digital strategy for the Republican National Committee. “Now, there is a similar phenomenon going on with Musk.”

To measure Musk’s online might, The Post has been tracking the view count on every one of his X posts approximately every hour from Oct. 25. The dataset, obtained in collaboration with the National Conference on Citizenship, a nonprofit focused on civic engagement, provides an unprecedented look at how posts on the site spread.

Even before Musk restricted Twitter’s API, which researchers used to access data from the site, it wasn’t possible to see how quickly tweets gained an audience. The Post’s data reveal how rapidly Musk’s posts rocket across X.

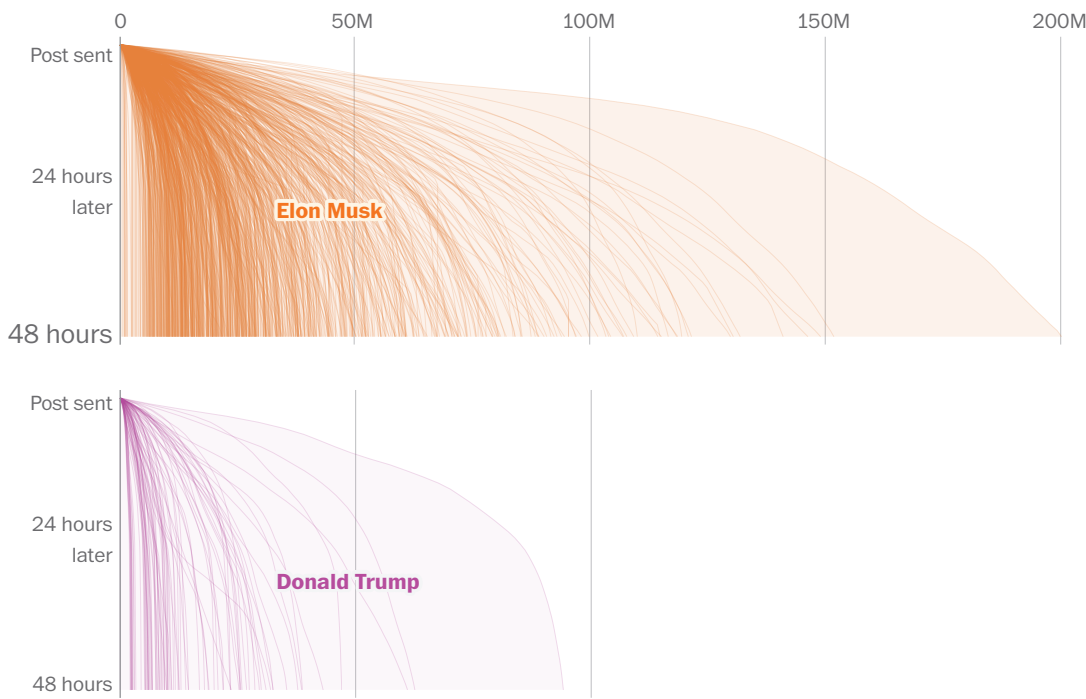
After just one hour, Musk’s typical post in the week around the election racked up more than 2.4 million views, according to The Post’s analysis, more than the total views received by a typical tweet from Harris.

Trump’s typical post gets 2 million views in the first hour, slightly less than Musk’s. But posts from X’s owner spread faster and wider as more hours pass. Musk is also much more active, and typically posted more than 130 times daily in the 26 days around the election.

The president-elect posts on his own social platform, Truth Social, far more frequently than he does on X. But Trump’s site, which he launched after he was suspended from Twitter after the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol, has struggled to win a significant userbase. The president-elect has only 8.4 million followers there compared with his 96 million on X, where his account was reinstated by Musk.

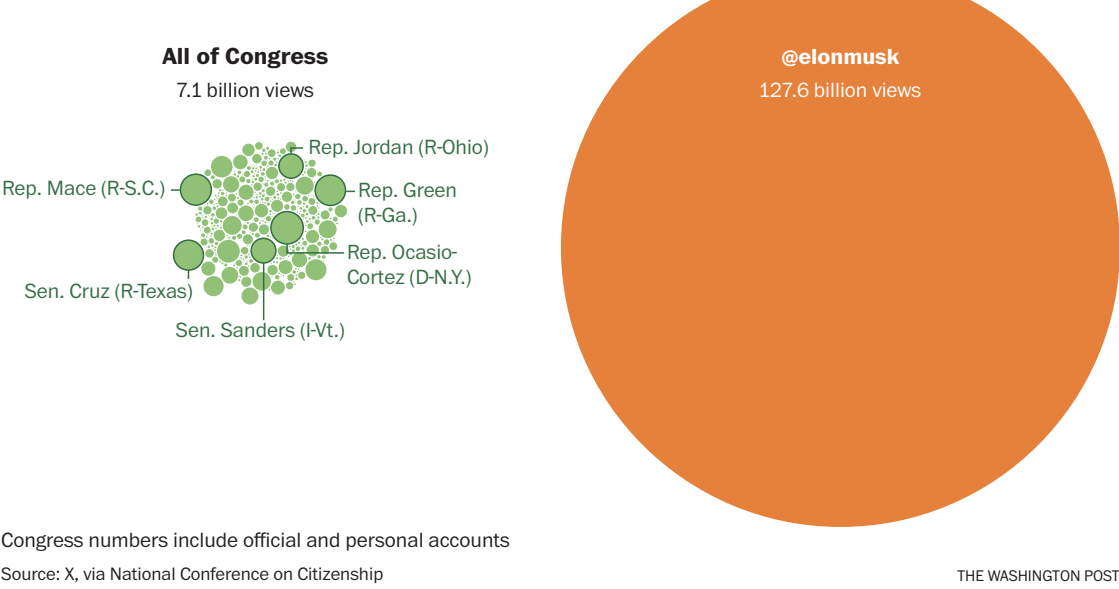
Musk’s huge following and high volume of posts — potentially boosted by intentional moves by the platform to increase its owners visibility — has helped the billionaire become seemingly

Views of each X post in 26 days around the election



Musk’s influence online eclipses all of Congress

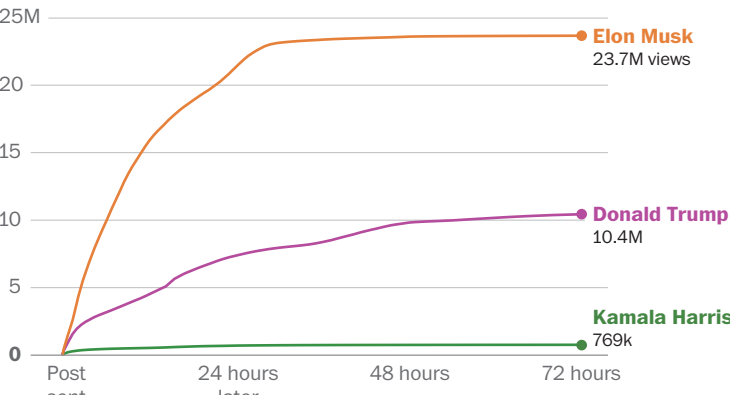
Views of all posts on X from July through November 2024



Congress numbers include official and personal accounts
Source: X, via National Conference on Citizenship

Musk’s typical post gets far more views than Trump’s and Harris’s

Number of views over time for the median post, by final view count, of each X user from Oct. 31 through Nov. 5



Source: X, via National Conference on Citizenship

THE WASHINGTON POST

ubiquitous on X even for users who don’t follow him.

While disclosures from some X investors suggest it has lost much of its value under Musk, his embrace of Trump has transformed the purchase into perhaps his

most influential bet.

“Having someone like Elon Musk who is from a sphere outside of politics and the news media talking about Trump, his policies, and criticisms of the Democrats is really helpful for

cutting through and getting attention,” said Eric Wilson, Republican digital strategist and executive director of the Center for Campaign Innovation. “And it clearly made an impact.”

Musk and a spokesperson for X did not respond to a request for comment. In a statement, Brian Hughes, a spokesperson for the Trump-Vance transition team, said that Musk’s “ideas and efficiency” would benefit the federal government.

“Elon Musk and President Trump are great friends and brilliant leaders working together to Make America Great Again,” Hughes said. One Saturday after the election, Musk opined to his followers about two rumored candidates for treasury secretary — hedge fund manager Scott Bessent and Howard Lutnick, CEO of financial service firm Cantor Fitzgerald and Trump’s co-transition chair — saying he viewed Lutnick as more of a change agent.

Trump ultimately picked Bessent. And Musk’s post — which garnered more than 3 million views in two hours and twenty

minutes — irritated some in the president-elect’s circle, who saw it as an attempt to sway Trump’s decision-making, The Post reported.

Musk has also used X as a public control room for the nongovernmental “DOGE” commission he will co-chair, endorsing suggestions from X users such as reforming Pentagon spending or cutting foreign aid.

Political figures from both sides of the aisle now turn to Musk’s X account as a way to shape the policy of the incoming administration. He has exchanged posts on the platform with prominent venture capitalists and lawmakers, including Sen. Joni Ernst (R-Iowa) and Rep. Ro Khanna (D-California), who expressed support — or suggested targets — for Musk’s plans to cut government spending.

Earlier this month, New York City Council member Vickie Paladino appealed to Musk on X after he responded “wow that’s terrible” to a post in which she criticized Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg over a local manslaughter case.

“Elon, you have no idea. We need a lot of help here,” Paladino said. “Please keep us in mind, the GOP has significant opportunity to make gains in the next couple of cycles but we need resources and personnel desperately to capitalize on the momentum that’s been building.”

Musk did not reply but had told advisers before the election that he wanted his super PAC, America PAC, to target progressive district attorneys, such as Bragg, linked to billionaire and prolific liberal donor George Soros.

The same day Paladino appealed to him for help, Musk shared another X user’s screenshot of a Post article reporting that D.C. lobbyists were scrambling to find ways to reach Trump’s self-declared “first buddy.”

Making threats or offering him money would “obviously be silly and ineffective” for anyone seeking his attention, Musk said in his post, which suggested a better way to reach him on political matters.

“I will do my best,” he wrote, “to respond to well-reasoned arguments here on X for serving the best interests of the American people.”

Total view counts on posts were measured at more than 48 hours after the post was published, by which time few tweets are still circulating. According to The Post’s analysis of posts, most tweets had received more than 99 percent of their eventual total views after 48 hours, and fewer than 1 percent had less than 85 percent of their eventual total views. Analysis excludes retweets (which don’t have an independent view count) and replies. Totals through Dec. 12, 2024. In graphics of view counts over time, counts at time stamps between observations are interpolated linearly. The proportion of Musk’s tweets that related to politics was measured with a keyword-based classification methodology previously used in this analysis from August.

Green hydrogen towering in the wilderness

Project Nujio'qonik, Newfoundland



CHRIS CROCKWELL/WORLD ENERGY

World Energy plans to develop wind farms to power its hydrogen project in Newfoundland.

In theory, green hydrogen could solve a lot of the AI industry’s energy challenges. The idea is to transform large amounts of wind or solar power into hydrogen fuel, which acts like a battery, storing the energy to be burned and turned into electricity after the wind dies down or the sun has set. The result: 24/7 power just as reliable as a nuclear or gas plant. The advantage for the climate: When you burn hydrogen, the main by-product is clean water. Subsidies in the United States and Canada aim to bring down the cost of this exceedingly expensive technology. Several tech companies are looking at remote locations for hydrogen projects as they mull moving data center operations off the power grid, away from populations centers and into places where there is abundant renewable energy and room to build. A prime example, World Energy’s Project Nujio’qonik in Newfoundland, would harness the steady shoreline winds to generate electricity equivalent to the amount used by a few millions of homes. A large-scale data center would be on-site, potentially along with another energy-hungry industrial facility, such as an iron ore processing plant.

Reviving a notorious nuclear plant

Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania



WESLEY LAPOINTE FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Cooling towers at Three Mile Island are being rehabilitated near Middletown, Pennsylvania.

Tech companies are eager to revive the nuclear industry. It has the potential to provide large amounts of zero-emissions power, around the clock. Just how serious they are became clear when Microsoft struck a deal to help bring the Three Mile Island nuclear plant out of retirement. The plant is a symbol of the industry’s misfortune: The 1979 partial meltdown of one of its units was the worst nuclear accident on U.S. soil. The premature closure, in 2019, of its other unit was precipitated by difficulty competing with cheaper natural gas energy. Now, Microsoft and Three Mile Island owner Constellation Energy hope to turn the plant into a symbol of nuclear’s rebirth. Under the deal the two companies worked out, Microsoft would purchase all of the energy the plant generates for as long as 20 years. The firms would not disclose the price Microsoft is paying, but analysts say the energy will be considerably more expensive than other available power. It will all be fed into the regional power grid. Amazon is exploring a similar deal with another nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania. Hurdles remain, along with unresolved questions about where to store high-level radioactive waste.

A battalion of batteries

Edwards & Sanborn Solar Project, Mojave Desert, California



TERRA-GEN LLC/MORTENSON

Edwards & Sanborn Solar and Energy Storage in California.

Another way to turn solar power into an always-on energy source is by pairing it with giant batteries. They store excess electricity and allow it to be used after sundown or on cloudy days. Battery-makers are racing to bring their costs down, in an effort to make these kinds of systems more affordable and efficient. The Edwards & Sanborn installation in the Mojave Desert offers a look at the direction many tech companies are heading, as well as the immense amount of resources and land it can take to power a large-scale data center this way. The project includes 1.9 million solar panels sprawled across a barren landscape with abundant sunshine. They sit alongside 120,000 batteries housed in metal structures resembling shipping containers. Edwards & Sanborn generates about the amount of electricity required to operate one of Meta or Google’s larger data centers.

Chasing the holy grail

Helion Fusion, Washington state



CHONA KASINGER FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

Cables on Trenta, a fusion device prototype by start-up Helion.

Harnessing atomic fusion, the same power generated by the collision of atoms that powers the sun, is the holy grail of clean energy. Scientists have been trying to do this since the Eisenhower administration in the 1950s, seeing promise for abundant, cheap, zero-emission energy. But engineering challenges are immense and have defied solutions. It requires sustaining the reaction of atoms as they are fused in a magnetic chamber, capturing the energy from the collisions and then channeling that energy into a usable form. And to make it commercially viable, more energy must be produced than is put in. Fusion start-up Helion, backed by OpenAI CEO Sam Altman, claims it will be generating usable electricity from fusion by 2028. Scholars in the field are deeply skeptical, saying fusion start-ups have fallen short on such promises for years. Nonetheless, Microsoft has bet big on Helion with a deal to purchase fusion energy for a data center in Washington state. Several other fusion companies are hoping for breakthroughs. Virginia is betting a firm called Commonwealth Fusion Systems will be able to generate enough electricity at a planned plant near Richmond to power 150,000 homes by the early 2030s.

Nuclear, downsized

TerraPower, Wyoming



TERRAPOWER

A rendering of a future TerraPower project on a former coal plant property in Wyoming.

Tech companies also are attempting to reinvent nuclear power. Their goal is to produce smaller, nimbler fission reactors that can be efficiently installed alongside data centers. The reactors are cooled with sodium instead of water. The most prominent of these projects was launched by a company led by Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates, TerraPower. It claims its advanced reactors, which would hold energy in a molten salt storage system, will be exponentially safer than legacy models and create less waste. Nonproliferation experts are skeptical of the claims. There are questions about whether these kinds of reactors can be manufactured and deployed quickly. TerraPower has already broken ground at its planned power plant on the property of a shuttered Wyoming coal plant. It does not, though, have a license for its reactor, and regulatory reviews may take years.

Digging deep into the Earth’s crust

Fervo Enhanced Geothermal, Utah and Nevada



ELLEN SCHMIDT/AP

A drill rig at a Fervo Energy geothermal site near Milford, Utah, in November 2023.

Fracking is typically associated with extracting fossil fuels, which contribute to global warming, from the earth. But fracking technology has unleashed a flurry of excitement around next-generation geothermal energy, which harnesses heat from deep in the Earth’s crust to generate power. Backed by Google and the U.S. government, Fervo Energy is using fracking tools in a bid to generate large volumes of energy. A pilot project in the Nevada desert confirmed the zero-emissions technology is viable. Now, Fervo is drilling in the Utah high desert with the aim of generating the amount of power that would rival a pair of nuclear plants. The Biden White House sees potential for dozens of such projects, and the enthusiasm is unlikely to wane when Donald Trump takes office. Trump’s pick to lead the Department of Energy, Chris Wright, is a financial backer of Fervo through the company he founded, Liberty Energy.

Companies focus on collaboration without issuing return-to-office mandates

OFFICE FROM G1

with what works for their cultures, workforces and future. Some are enforcing five-day of-office mandates, arguing that innovation, collaboration and productivity are best accomplished in person. But others are reinventing how work gets done after doubling down on remote and hybrid models.

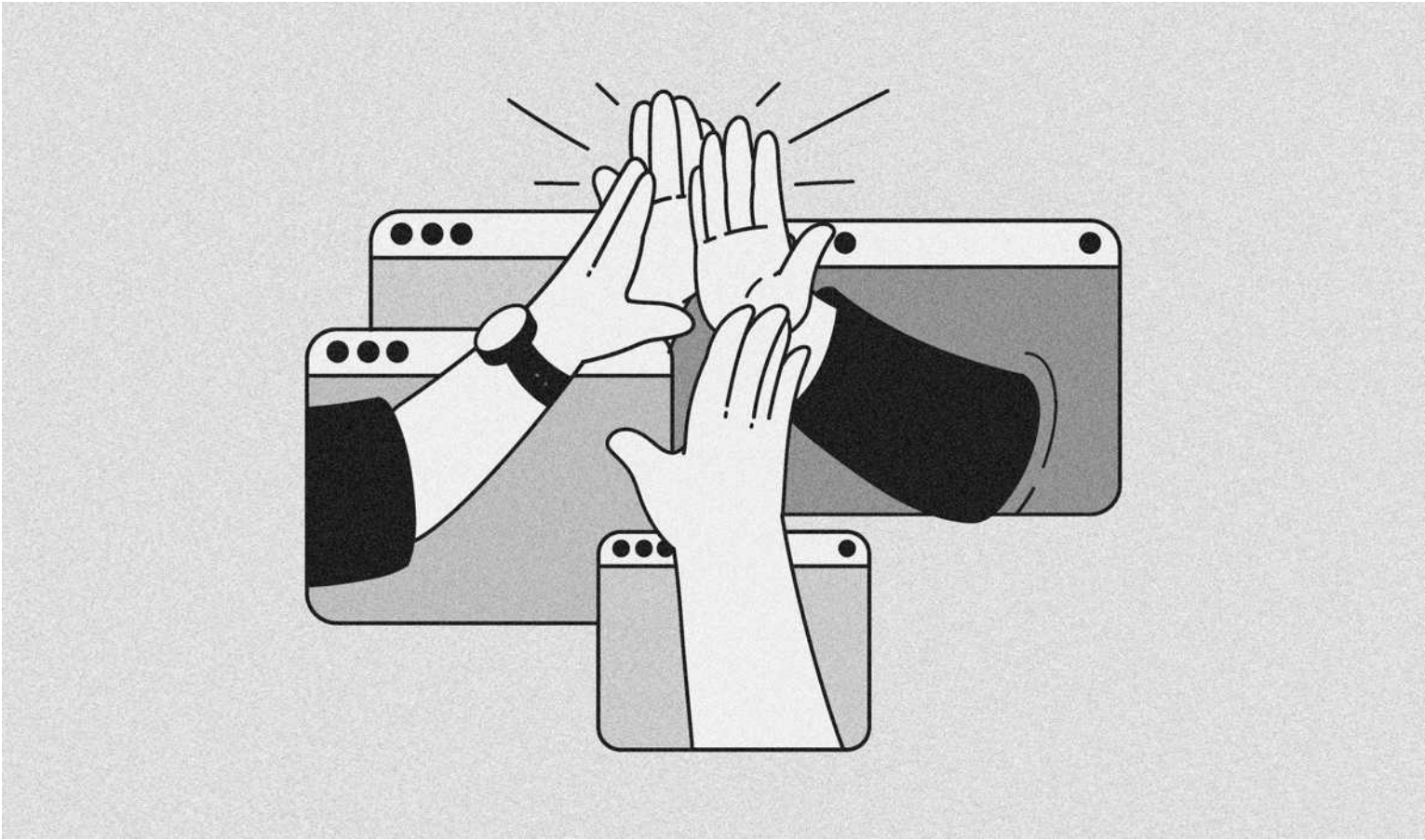
In November, the share of people working fully on-site had decreased 2.8 percentage points from 79.5 percent during the same time last year, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Those who worked remotely, at least part time, also jumped 2.8 percentage points from 20.5 percent.

The debate over work flexibility continues to ignite controversy, spurring employee protests, legal filings and even resignations. While companies implementing office mandates say they improve performance, a recent Gallup poll found that a majority of workers prefer hybrid work, saying it reduces burnout, improves productivity and encourages work-life balance.

Companies that recently required workers to return to the office five days a week have garnered attention, including Amazon, whose founder Jeff Bezos owns The Washington Post. The Post is also asking workers to return to the office five days a week. Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon, one of the first to call workers back full time in 2021, also cited innovation and collaboration as reasons for the mandate. President-elect Donald Trump has also said he'll call federal workers back to the office five days a week.

"We've observed that it's easier for our teammates to learn, model, practice, and strengthen our culture; collaborating, brainstorming, and inventing are simpler and more effective; teaching and learning from one another are more seamless; and, teams tend to be better connected to one another," Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said when announcing the policy in September.

Asked to provide a comment for this story, Amazon pointed to



WASHINGTON POST ILLUSTRATION; ISTOCK

Jassy's announcement. Goldman Sachs reiterated its previous statement saying showing up and being present with employees and clients has "bigger impact."

Companies that embrace hybrid and remote work options tend to be highly online and have workers whose jobs don't necessarily depend on location like those in blue-collar and health-care positions do. They acknowledge that it takes effort to rethink structure, communication, physical space, and access to documents and colleagues. Some downsized their office footprint and invested the savings in helping teams gather when it makes the most sense. They also say it can be a challenge to maintain momentum, align goals, foster communication, promote mentoring and support people's sense of belonging.

For Pinterest, the focus on changing how managers supervise and support became critical,

said Sara Phillips-Broadhurst, the company's senior director of people strategy and innovation. So offering managers new training has been key. Atlassian, a collaboration software company, determined it needed a way for everyone to better align on goals. So every Friday, teams create a tweet-length update on every goal and project for leaders and other teams to review the following Monday.

"It gives the whole company the chance to understand what's happening at any given time," said Annie Dean, vice president of Atlassian's Team Anywhere, the organization charged with overseeing distributed work. "So many problems companies have are because of silos."

Despite initial challenges, Kai Swavely, senior director of people technology at Pinterest, said the company's policy called PinFlex, which allows workers to choose where they work if their jobs can be done anywhere, has helped

expand its ability to innovate. After making its annual hackathon virtual in 2023, that year's winning idea came from a Pinterest employee outside the United States and brought together departments to develop an internally "beloved" tool that helps workers find information.

"Before the pandemic, you had to be in San Francisco to participate," she said.

The key to doing the best work in distributed environments is guidance and experimentation, Phillips-Broadhurst said. That includes tasking leaders with being intentional about asking employees to meet in person. It also means using a mix of traditional internal information hubs, messaging apps and emerging tech such as artificial intelligence for support.

Atlassian reduced its office footprint and reinvested the savings in bringing employees together. It has a culture of documentation, using shared docu-

ments, messaging systems and video to help employees capture meetings and comments and collaborate even though they may work at different times.

"It doesn't make sense to me, in the age of AI, our focus is being spent on where people sit," Dean said.

Earlier this year, Atlassian released Rovo, its first AI product built and shipped within six months, marking the fastest product development at the company to date. Atlassian was able to move about 200 employees to the project and hire 200 more within that time frame. Most meetings were recorded and documented, and the shared goals and progress tracking made it possible to move faster, said Jamil Valliani, Atlassian vice president and head of AI products.

Allowing employees to work remotely also has helped Yelp become more efficient, said Craig Saldanha, chief product officer.

About 87 percent of workers said they were more productive, he said. With the new model, Yelp brings new features to market 60 percent faster, Saldanha said. A lot of the efficiency, he said, came from formalizing processes already happening on an ad hoc basis. In distributed environments, being clear about goals and expectations affects the efficiency of the team.

The ability for people to collaborate across teams and geographies has allowed people to innovate in ways that didn't happen before, Saldanha said.

Airbnb is also experiencing a jump in productivity, which Iain Roberts, head of people and culture, credits in part to the company's flexible work policy. Airbnb has released 535 updates in the past three years, and the scale of each launch has increased every year, he said.

For H&R Block, which changed its initial office plan to allow people to work remotely part time, company data showed collaboration, employee engagement and productivity had not declined in remote work, said Tiffany Monroe, H&R Block's chief people and culture officer.

Nicholas Bloom, a Stanford University economics professor who studies remote work, said flexible work can allow companies to get better talent by investing in people rather than spaces. It also gives workers more time for deep thinking that can lead to better results, though he suggests companies should also ensure workers spend some time together in person.

Deborah Lovich, future of work fellow at Boston Consulting Group's Henderson Institute think tank, said many companies prefer the office-based model of working because it's familiar, even though the pandemic showed that remote or hybrid models can be successful. In her view, those companies are becoming less employee-centric, to their detriment.

"It completely demoralizes your talent," she said. "There's nothing that says 'I don't trust you' like an RTO mandate — other than an RTO mandate tracking badge swipes."

After commission overhaul, real estate industry clashes over off-market listings

REAL ESTATE FROM G1

allowed under the CCP as long as the homes are marketed privately among agents within a brokerage or individually to specific potential buyers.

Now, a brokerage giant, Compass, wants to repeal this rule altogether — in effect, opening a bigger window for off-market listings — because it allegedly forces the release of too much information that hurts sellers.

"Using MLS data ... real estate websites have built their business models at the expense of homeowners by showing negative insights on their listings, such as days on market, price drops and home value estimates," said Robert Reffkin, CEO of Compass. "The CCP removes a seller's right to choose how to market their home to meet their individual needs."

But other brokerages are fighting to keep the rule, at least in modified form, arguing that it enhances transparency and choice. Some also claim it's effectively a power grab by Compass.

The repeal argument "is just one company's cynical effort to achieve profitability by convincing American homeowners to do something that's demonstrably against their interest," said Leo Pareja, Miami-based CEO of eXp Realty, a brokerage operating in 24 countries.

Anywhere Real Estate Inc. — the parent company of Coldwell Banker Realty, Century 21, Sotheby's International Realty, Corcoran and more — also favors keeping the rule but would be open to having it overhauled.

The debate has become heated enough that the NAR took up the issue in an advisory committee, which in turn passed the question on to the association's leadership. While the rule remains in effect, the NAR told The Washington Post that it's "continuing to evaluate the policy — a final decision has not yet been made." Still, many agents and brokerages continue to market their access to off-market listings as part of their value proposition.

The fight is expected to further escalate, because the changes in commission rules will probably cut into agent and broker earnings. To offset that drop, larger brokerages have an interest in keeping their listings in-house and minimizing agent competition, which effectively keeps commission rates higher, said Glenn Kelman, Seattle-based CEO of Redfin.



DAVID PAUL MORRIS/BLOOMBERG NEWS/GETTY IMAGES

A Compass sign outside a home for sale in Sacramento. Compass wants to repeal the Clear Cooperation Policy, opening a bigger window for off-market listings, because it allegedly forces the release of too much information that hurts sellers.

"I have a hard time with brokers getting on their high horse about how this is [about] freedom and the American flag and apple pie," Kelman said. "It's the oldest game in business, which is trying to play a game of monopoly."

The price of exclusivity

Agents don't have to join an MLS, but most do because it lets them share data across all companies. And for an MLS to function, agents must share all their listings, not just some, notes Victor Lund, managing partner with WAV Group, a real estate consulting firm based in Laguna Beach, California.

"Anyone who holds back a listing hurts buyers," Lund said. "All listings should be on the MLS because partial participation dulls the sharp accuracy of data about available inventory and recent comparable sales that have a bearing on the market."

The genesis of the CCP goes back to the 2010s, when top agents — particularly in the luxury market — created their own networks to share exclusive listings. These properties could be marketed to

agents within a brokerage and privately to individual potential buyers, but not on public websites.

"A lot [of these agents] work for the same brokerage, so there's a financial incentive if the buyer's agent and the listing agent work for the same company since they can double-end the commission," said James Dwiggins, San Francisco-based CEO of NextHome.

As many as 10 or 15 percent of homes were sold off-market before the CCP rule was crafted as a response, Lund estimates. But once in effect, its broader intent seems to have worked. While off-market listings are hard to track, Bright MLS estimates that less than 5 percent of listings in its service area throughout the Mid-Atlantic region now are private.

For most sellers, the rule's enhanced transparency helps. They want to sell their home for the highest price as fast as possible and with the least amount of friction, which means being visible to the largest number of buyers, Kelman said. And most research shows that homes listed on the MLS sell for more than off-market listings. For example, one study

from Bright MLS showed that MLS-listed homes sold for an average of 17.5 percent more than off-MLS sales between 2019 and the first quarter of 2023.

But a more exclusive niche of sellers — like celebrities and the ultra-wealthy, or public figures seeking a low profile — see benefits to privacy. These are the ones who are most likely to take advantage of the off-market loophole in the rule to skirt around public marketing. In addition, some MLS systems give sellers the option to list without photos, or information on the price or open houses, Kelman said.

Potential losers

Along with the benefits of market competition, backers of the rule point to fair-housing principles.

"The whole point of creating an open marketplace is so that anyone, regardless of gender, race, age or any other protected class, can see everything that is for sale," Dwiggins said. But under off-market listings, "agents try to sell them inside their office."

"So if a buyer isn't working with

an agent in that office, they won't even know the property was for sale," he added. "That's exclusionary by definition."

The essence of the CCP rule and fair-housing laws is to make sure that everyone can see all homes for sale, agreed Kelman.

"Selling a house is not the same as another commodity like a candy bar or a couch," Kelman said. "Housing shapes generational wealth and educational opportunities. You need a free and open market for housing because the stakes are so high."

More broadly, many real estate professionals worry that repealing the rule will make it harder for sellers and agents to collect key market data.

A repeal is "a disadvantage for both sellers and buyers," said Ryan Schneider, the Madison, New Jersey-based CEO of Anywhere, in a third-quarter earnings call in early November. "Buyers get the lack of transparency of their current listing inventory, and over the long run, sellers will have less info of what's happening in their market."

Another risk to sellers, in Dwig-

gins's view, is that they might get spun by their brokerage: An agent may encourage an off-market listing by telling their client the commission will be reduced if the same brokerage represents both sides, and that the home will be sold quickly and with less foot traffic because the agent already knows of an interested buyer or two. What that agent may not make clear to sellers is that they might net less money on the sale if they're not fully exposed to the open market, Dwiggins said.

Potential winners

To Compass's Reffkin, by contrast, scrapping the rule will help sellers by letting them market their home as home builders and real estate developers do. For example, they could use "premarketing and multi-phased marketing that protects their listings from the potential risks of MLS exposure that include accumulation of days on market and public price history," he said.

"By forcing home sellers into a system of negative insights like days on the market and price history, the CCP creates a 'risk to list' that discourages home sellers from publicly listing their homes," he argued. Lift the rule, and sellers will have more ways to market their homes and increase inventory, he added.

Pareja of eXp doesn't buy that argument — and believes a repeal would diminish the transparency of the U.S. market, which compares favorably to other countries.

"Our overseas agents complain that they need to go to 10 websites to get an idea of what's for sale," Pareja said. "When I helped my parents sell a home in Belize, it took about five years because of the difficulty getting it in front of buyers."

Still, Compass's push to scrap the rule may be joined by other major real estate players over time if more of them see an upside in keeping listings in-house, Lund said. That would also diminish the role of online companies such as Redfin, Zillow and Realtor.com, which could lose business if they no longer have access to most listings.

"Repealing the CCP is going to advantage the large brokers, including some who are [now] advocating for repeal," said Schneider of Anywhere. "We have more listings than anybody does, so if this thing gets repealed, we could be the biggest beneficiary — even if we don't think that's the right answer."

The Washington Post

Jobs

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Associations-The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association was founded in 1925. It is a not-for-profit scientific and professional association for speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and speech and hearing scientists. ASHA is committed to the consumers of our services, the more than 42 million Americans with communication disorders. ASHA's mission is to ensure that all people with speech-language, and hearing disorders receive quality services from well-educated professionals. The American Speech-Language-Hearing...

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Westat is seeking to hire Experienced Field Medical Records Abstractors to work on-site at their assigned location for a data collection effort to abstract specific data items from hospital data. The primary role is to review medical records in a...

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Westat has immediate openings for part-time (20-30 hours) to full-time (40 hours) travel survey data processors to support our current state and national household travel surveys. Responsibilities will include: Reviewing Logic Checks: Review...




Fairfax Water

Science-Fairfax County Water Authority (Fairfax Water) is Virginia's largest water utility, serving one out of every five Virginians who obtain their water from public utilities. Nearly 1.5 million people in the Northern Virginia communities of Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William and Alexandria depend on Fairfax Water for superior drinking water. That's 1.5 million friends, neighbors and family members. We don't need any other reason to demand the highest in water quality standards! Chartered in 1957 by the Virginia State Corporation Commission as a...

Accounts Payable Specialist I/II – Fairfax
Under general supervision of the General Accounting Supervisor, performs the day to day processing of accounts payable transactions for Fairfax Water. Examples of Duties: Reviews all invoices for appropriate documentation and distributes them as necessary for authorization...

Junior Operator/Plant Operator
Making regular and continuous tours of the treatment plant facilities and monitoring the performance of operating equipment and the effectiveness of the treatment process. Reporting any unusual conditions to Lead Operator.



Alexandria City Public Schools


Education-Alexandria City Public Schools is one of the most diverse school systems in the country and we celebrate that diversity. Our students come from more than 80 different countries, speak more than 60 languages, and represent a rainbow of ethnic and cultural groups. They are economically diverse, but all are rich in that the residents of Alexandria are dedicated to ensuring that each and every one of them achieves success. The children of Alexandria have benefited significantly from the strong support of City Council and the Alexandria...

Elementary Teacher 4-5th Grade – General Pool (2024-25 SY) – Alexandria
The Elementary Teacher facilitates student success in academic and interpersonal skills by implementing district approved curriculum; documenting teaching and student progress/activities/outcomes; addressing specific educational needs of...

Bus Driver – General Pool (2024-25 SY) – Alexandria
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Tech Jobs

Computer/IT: Senior Software Engineer – Association of American Medical Colleges – Washington, DC – Designs codes, tests, debugs, and documents new software systems, existing software systems, and application programs. Regs: Bach or frgn equiv in Computer Science, Information Technology, or a closely related field +5yrs of prgr resp exp in a software eng or Master's degree or frgn equiv in Computer Science, Information Technology, or a closely related field +5yrs of prgr resp exp in a software eng conc. Position eligible for full-time telecommuting from within the 48 contiguous states. Send CV to recruitment@aamc.org. Pls ref code: 19-1141

Data Analyst, Analyze and interpret complex data sets related to clients' business metrics to drive decision-making and foster company growth. May need to travel to other locations as required. Master's in Data Science, or any related, Mail resume to HR, Sapphire Software Solutions, Inc., 20130 Lakeview Center Plaza, Suite 400, Ashburn, VA 20147

Tech Jobs

Navy Federal Credit Union has F/T permanent openings for ETS Engineer II pos. to formulate strategies & dvlp API based buss. sol'ns. Regs: Bach/equiv in CS/Info sys/Engg (any)+ 5 yrs prgr exp in Business Analysis OR in lieu Master's/equiv + 1 yr exp. Job Loc'n: Vienna, VA. Part time telecommuting permitted. Mail Cvr Ltr & CV: Venkatesh Kawthale, 820 Follin Lane SE, Vienna, VA 22180 or email openpositions@navyfederal.org. Must use Ref# "ETS Engineer II Ref#240044"

IT Network Business Systems Analyst
Analyze, design IT infrastructure solutions. Plan, execute system upgrades, deployments, and migrations. Implement IT architectures. Configure Firewall, VPN and Intrusion Prevention. Project Management and data analysis. Night shift: 11:00 pm-7:00 am, Mon-Fri, occasional weekends and holidays. Bachelors' degree in Business and Data Analysis or Information Systems, two years experience in building business IT solutions. Knowledge of Network architecture and security standards, Cloud services. Apply by mail, Notionspace LLC, 629 K Street NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006 or email careers@notionspace.com.

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Tech Jobs

IT PROFESSIONALS
Ace Integrator Inc has multiple openings in Chantilly, VA. **Business Systems Analyst:** Work, Review, Perform, Assist, Provide, Prep & Document requirements for enhancements for specific app. **Computer Programmer:** Write, Collab, Implement, Correct, Create, Debug, Updt & expand existing apps. **Software Developer:** Analyze, Review, Plan, Prep, Dsgn, Assist, Work & Track all coding changes using help desk & version control software. **Software Engineer:** Respon, Involve, Work, Perform, Prep, Dvlp & maintain web services scripts. **Sr. Business Systems Analyst:** Analyze, Improve, Work, Create, Use & Oversee implementation proj from beginning to completion. **Sr. Software Developer:** Dvlp, Identify, Automate, Perform, Collab, Document, Ensure, Review & debug code. All positions req trvl/reloc to various unanticipated client locs throughout the U.S. w/expenses paid by employer. Standard Co. Brnts offered. Mail res & position to HR Mgr, Ace Integrator, Inc., 4455 Brookfield Corporate Dr, Ste#102B, Chantilly, VA, 20151 or email hr@aceintegrator.com. EOE.

Project Leads
Infocepts, LLC seeks Project Leads: Req. Bach or equiv. in IT, Comp. Sci, Eng (any), or related + 4 yrs relevant indus. exp. performing design, dev, programming or analysis in (BI) env. or Data/Warehouse. In lieu of degree, will accept 9 yrs' exp. in above stated occup. Position is based out of our VA, HQ & subj. to relocation. Qualified applicants submit resume to globalmobility@infocepts.com or Infocepts, LLC, 1750 Tysons Blvd, Ste 1508, McLean, VA 22102 Attn: HR Mng'r.

Senior Data Engineer
The U.S. Pharmacopeial Convention has multiple openings for Senior Data Engineer in Rockville, Maryland. Job duties include: Design, build, and execute efficient and scalable data pipelines to support the Data Strategy & Analytics team. Responsible for designing, developing, and maintaining the DevOps capabilities for the data strategy teams. Base Salary Range: USD \$127,546 - \$144,000 annually. Target Annual Bonus: % Varies based on level of role. Individual compensation packages are based on various factors unique to each candidate's skill set, experience, qualifications, equity, and other job-related reasons. Telecommuting benefits available. Please apply online at <https://usph.jobs/> Refer to Job code #SDE/20421.44.5.

Senior Engineer, Software Development
Verato, Inc. seeks Senior Engineer, Software Development (multiple openings) in McLean, VA to design and develop SaaS offerings and participate in all phases of the software development lifecycle. Requires a Bachelor's degree in Information Technology, Computer Engineering, or related & 3 years' experience working with OOD/OOP, design patterns, performance & scalability, and multi-tiered distributed systems from web layer to data layer, Linux, and Git; and coding in Java/Spring. Telecommuting permitted 4 days per week, must be in office 1 day per week. To apply mail resume to Alison Webber, Verato, Inc., ATTN: SED, 1751 Pinnacle Drive, Ste. 1700, McLean, VA 22102

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Senior Software Engineer II (SSE2)
Aprian Corporation, McLean, VA, seeks SSE2 with exceptional communication skills and deep knowledge of Android development and pipelines to develop, test, React-Native, Kotlin, and C++ to leverage knowledge of data structures, algorithms, and design patterns to write software in a full-stack web and mobile environment. Leverage relevant software development experience – sharing advanced/expert knowledge as key resources - to radiate best practices and faster development. Manage availability, latency, scalability and efficiency of product by engineering reliability into software and systems. Identify opportunities for code refactoring and performance optimizations on a regular basis and champion these efforts within the team. Serve as experienced mentor to junior software engineers by sharing best-practices and providing guidance on proficiency. Contribute to Aprian's long-term documentation through publishing relevant, high-quality content to Engineering's technical documentation site. Req: Master of Computer Science or related + min. 2 years of exp. in job offered or as Software Engineer in Android environment or in lieu of the employer will accept Bachelor of Computer Science or related + min. 5 years of exp. in job offered or as a Software Engineer in Android environment. Reply to Box Number M1000000784, The Washington Post, Washington DC 20071.

Software Technical Expert: Amdocs, Inc. Herndon VA: Support software production tickets & IT integration w/ multiparty software platforms. Design, model, modify, and debug software code according to functional & tech design specs supporting the telecommunications industry. Resp. for identifying, troubleshooting, & analyzing software performance issues & software solution integration across other hardware. Also responsible for serving as an expert on specific tech delivery solutions during the software development life cycle. Skills Req: Must have knowl of software & operating tools (i.e., Java, Jira, Unix, Linux, Oracle, version control system); data management & deployment software (i.e., Kubernetes, Couchbase, Elasticsearch, kafka); & knowl of cloud services (i.e., AWS, Gsaafan). Education req: Bachelor's degree (or foreign equivalent) in Computer Science, Software Engineering, Communication Engineering, or closely related software or engineering degree + 60 months exp as an Info Tech professional. Apply <https://usph.jobs/amdocs.com/careers/job/563430999591592> , ATTN: Req ID -193434

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Tech Jobs

Software Developer
LynxTech Group LLC has openings for the position Software Developer with Master's degree in Computer Science, Eng (any), Technology, Mgmt, Info. Sys or related to design, develop, implement, maintain and test business functions and web applications using a variety of languages, tools, methodologies and technical skills. Develop, create and modify general computer applications software or specialized utility programs. Analyze user needs and develop software solutions. Design software or customize software for client use with the aim of optimizing operational efficiency. Work location is Herndon, VA with required to travel and work from various unanticipated client workstations throughout the USA. Please mail resumes to 209 Elden St, Suite 306, Herndon, VA-20170 (OR) e-mail: accounts@lynxtechgroup.com

CCS Intervention Operations, LLC seeks Senior Software Data Engineers for Multiple Openings in Bowie, MD (& other US locations), to generate business logic, custom queries & reports from SW apps using T-SQL per defined tech specs. MS in CS, Info Tech Mgmt, Bus. Analytics, or rtdt field, plus 3 yrs of exp. in job off. or an Analyst, Eng., or rtdt role. Telecomm. Avail. Comp: \$148,221-\$158,221/Yr. For complete requirements, submit resume to: <https://job-boards.greenhouse.io/ccscareers/jobs/6281384003>

CCS Intervention Operations, LLC seeks a Software Data Engineer in Bowie, MD (& other US locations), to generate business logic, custom queries & reports from SW apps using T-SQL per defined tech specs. MS in CS, Info Tech Mgmt, Electronics & Comm Eng., or rtdt field, plus 1 yrs of exp. in job off. or an Analyst, Eng., or rtdt role. Telecomm. Avail. Comp: \$122,699 – \$132,699/Yr. For complete requirements, submit resume to: <https://job-boards.greenhouse.io/ccscareers/jobs/6281384003>

Technical Consultant
Multiple openings available for following position in Reston, VA & unanticipated client locations throughout the US:
Technical Consultant – 1920 Association Dr., Suite 501, Reston, VA – 20191. Dsgn, dvlp & maintain new apps, & develop IT Support services using Angular, React, Node.js; Writing Unit tests for Java Apps & Jest for UI apps. Employer will accept any amount of exp. w/ req'd skills. Supervises 7. For detailed job req'mts & to apply, visit <http://careers.walmart.com>, & apply to the following job ID # R-2053301, EOE, AAE.

Technical Consultant
Affiniti, inc. has the following openings in Washington D.C.: **Senior Data Engineer:** Impl. ETL proced. & strndrds for exist. new dplymnts. Salary: \$105,206 - \$125,206. (V101) **Expert Software Engineer – System Integration and Design:** Des. & exctc end-to-end telephony integrations of Affiniti's prod. suite w/in client envrnmnts. Telecommuting permitted. Salary: \$122,699 - \$142,699. (A100) **Staff Research Scientist:** Advise & mgmt a team of research scientists & data scientists. Salary: \$175,000 - \$195,000. (Z099) To apply: Please send resumes to Affiniti, Inc., 1701 Pennsylvania Ave NW, Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20006; recruitment@affiniti.com

UX/UI Developer
Design visual & user-friendly interfaces for the CDORS System & HBCU site using Figma & Adobe Illustrator, ensuring a seamless user experience; Conduct in-depth problem analysis through usability testing & user interaction to collect insights & feedback to enhance system functionality & user experience; Optimize user support & issue analysis by leveraging tools such as Redmine and Microsoft Power BI; Utilize Windows PowerShell scripts for automating fulfillment processes & leverage Microsoft Access for database mgmt. & order information analysis, ensuring accurate & efficient data retrieval.

Req.: Bachelor's degree in Design related with computer graphics & digital interface coursework. Job in Rockville, MD. Snd Resume to DSFederal, Inc., 6100 Executive Blvd, Ste 550, Rockville, MD 20852.

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EZ

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2024

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Labrador Retriever Puppies AKC, black, vet checked, UTD deworming, 1st shots. \$900. Call 540-239-0775

610 Dogs for Sale

puppies!

Mini goldendoodles Healthy, social, vet checked, health guarantee, UTB on shots/worming. Raised in home. In business for over 25 years. \$1950, for more info call or text, (640)241-4279

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Tibetan Mastiff Deposits are being accepted for companion and/or show Tibetan Mastiff puppies available for sale to approved homes. Black and tan and gold sables. Please read and research this noble breed. You may text 540-233-3570

Miniature Schnauzers We have 2 female S&P AKC puppies. Tails & dewclaws removed, worming and shots. Immediately available whelped 10/26/24. \$1500 each. Call 410-571-1140 for additional details.

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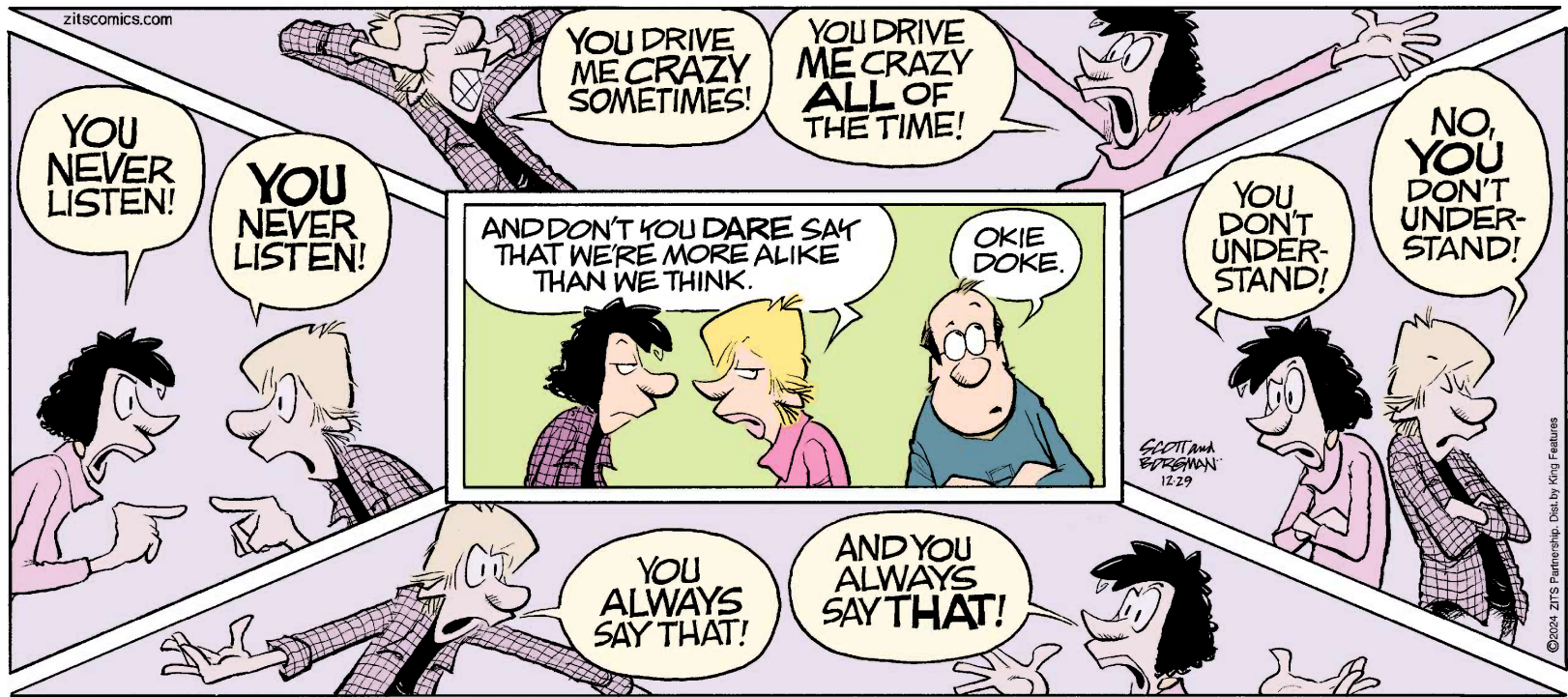
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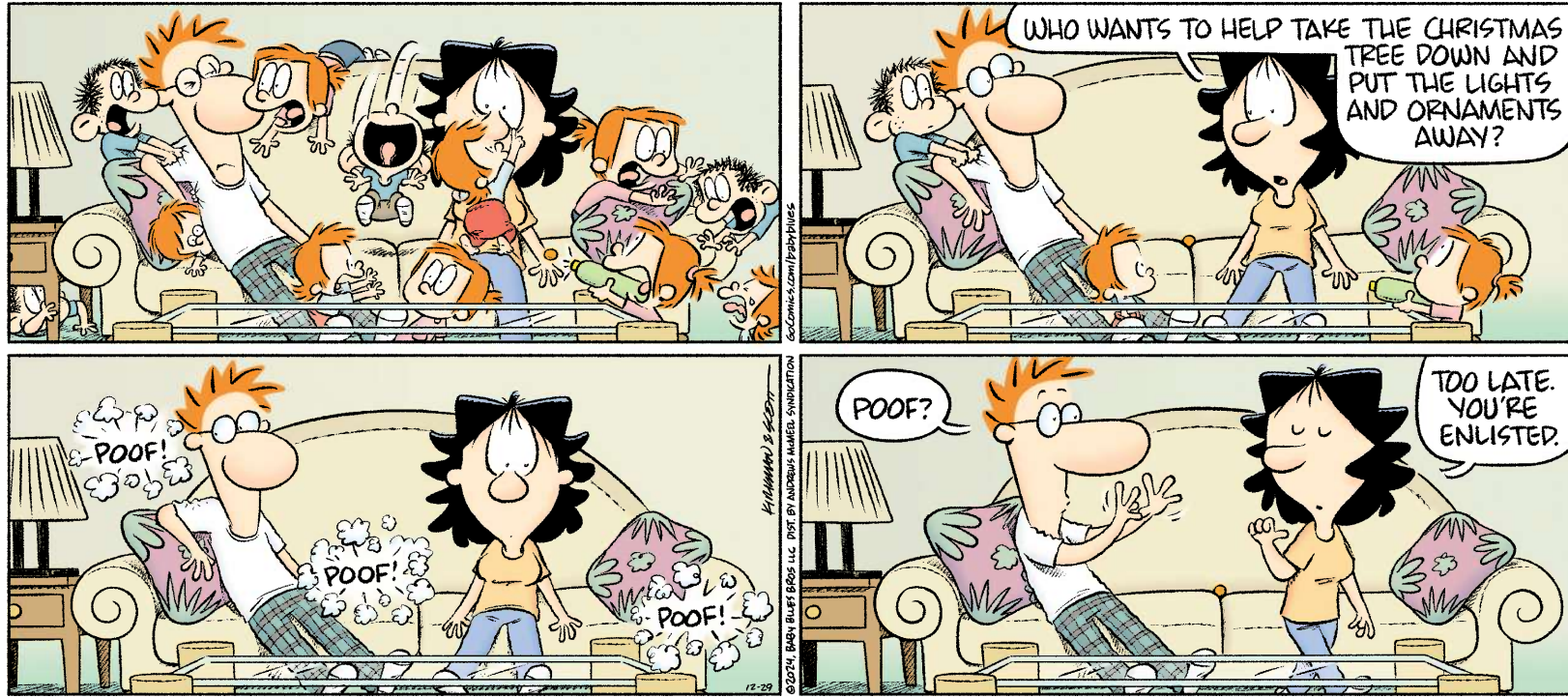
ZITS

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



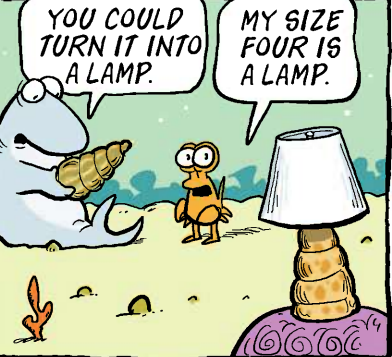
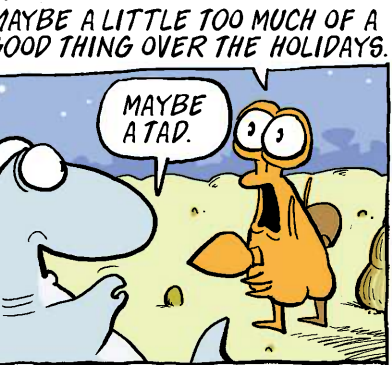
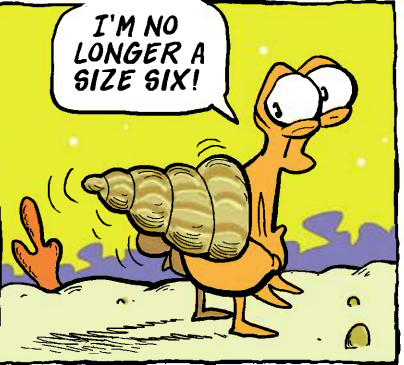
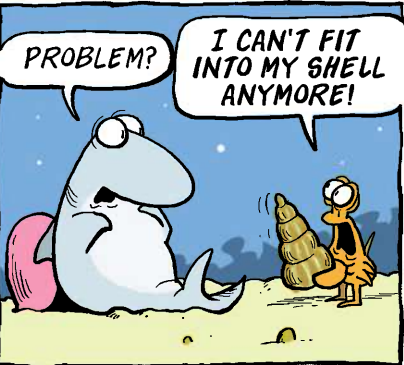
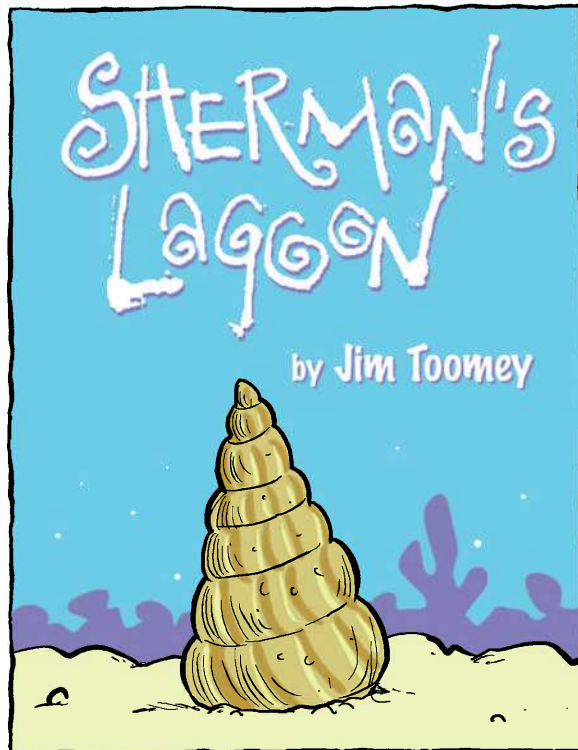
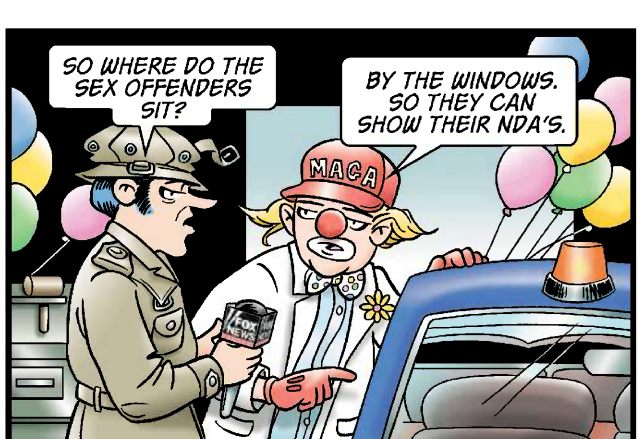
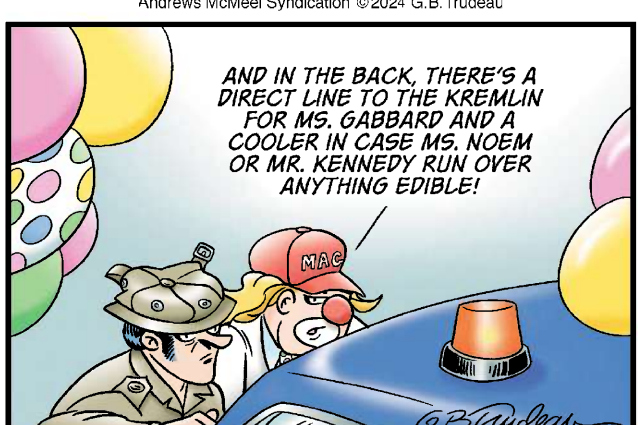
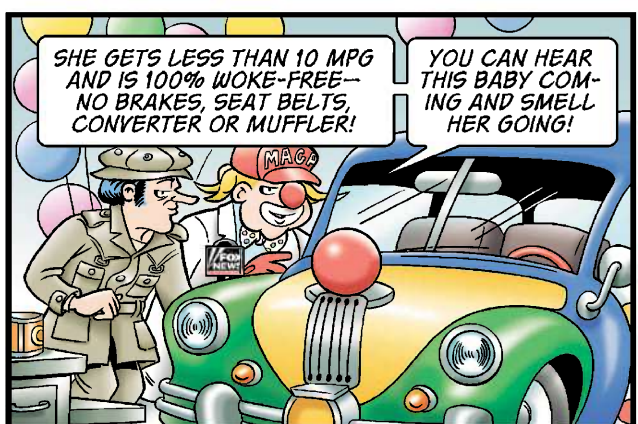
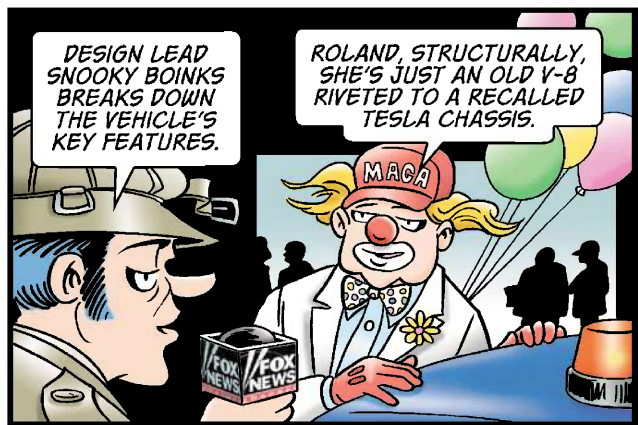
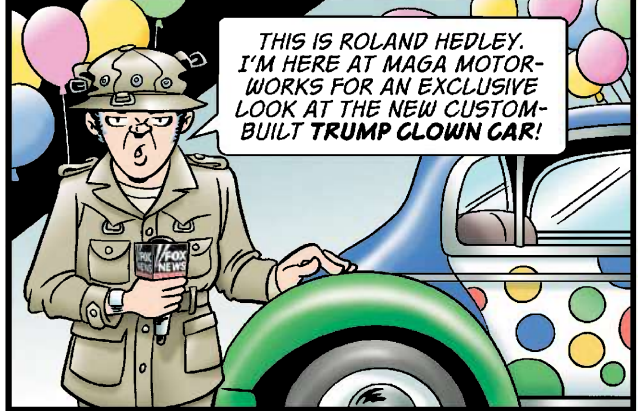
BABY BLUES

By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



DOONESBURY

By Garry Trudeau



CANDORVILLE

by DARRIN SELL

SO, WHAT BRINGS YOU TO THERAPY?

12-29

LET'S TRY ANOTHER APPROACH, MISTER NEWYEAR.

WHAT'S THE FIRST WORD THAT OCCURS TO YOU?

BONK! BONK! BONK! BONK!

THUMP THUMP THUMP THUMP

WWW.CANDORVILLE.COM

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THE ARGYLE SWEATER

By Scott Hilburn

JUS SO YOU KNOW, DIS IS DA BOSS'S FAVORITE SPORT-SYNCHRONIZED SWIMMING WIT DA FISHES.

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FRAZZ

By Jef Mallett

HOW IT WORKS IS, YOU WRITE YOUR TASKS AND GOALS ON STICKY NOTES.

AND POST THEM ALL UP ON THE WALL,

RESERVING THE KEY NOTE FOR THE END OF THE YEAR.

THEN...

I'D QUESTION YOUR SYSTEM IF I DIDN'T WANT SO BADLY TO ADOPT IT.

THE MULTICOLORED STICKY NOTES MAKE IT THAT MUCH BETTER.

Borrow Frazz's leaf blower

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GARFIELD

By Jim Davis

IT'S TIME TO TAKE THE TREE DOWN

JIM DAVIS 12-29

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YUP. HOLIDAY'S OVER

YUP

LET'S CIRCLE BACK IN JULY

SOUNDS LIKE A PLAN

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Liō

Dear Santa, Thank you for the new Jet Pack.

It's really cool and fits me good.

I guess I should have warned you about the plutonium fuel rods.

Hope they let you out of jail soon!

Your friends, Liō

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BARNEY

CLYDE

by Weingartens & Clark

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Ya got that right, kid.

'nough said.

NANCY

By Olivia Jaimes

I DIDN'T GET ENOUGH COMPLIMENTS FOR MY DECORATIONS THIS YEAR. YOU SHOULD COMPLEMENT ME MORE

FINE

OOH. AHH.

HANG ON

OKAY, SAY THAT AGAIN

OOH. AHH.

HAGAR THE HORRIBLE

By Dik Browne

12-29

THE KING WILL NEGOTIATE!

GET KOYER THE LAWYER! HE'S OUR BEST NEGOTIATOR!

HE'S AWAY ON VACATION!

THEN WE'RE SUNK! WE NEED A MIRACLE!

WOULD YOU SETTLE FOR MAGIC?!

MERLIN THE MAGICIAN HAS AGREED TO HELP!

FANTASTIC!

TURN LUCKY EDDIE INTO SOMEONE WITH UNYIELDING STUBBORNNESS AND THE ABILITY TO OUTWIT AND WIN ANY DISPUTE WITHOUT EXCEPTION!

I ALMOST FEEL SORRY FOR THE KING!

POOF

FoxTrot

by Bill Amend

I THINK MY NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION WILL BE TO CUT WAY BACK ON MY SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE.

I LOOKED AT MY STATS, AND I'M SPENDING A CRAZY AMOUNT OF TIME ON IT.

THOSE ARE HOURS THAT COULD BE SPENT TAKING WALKS... GARDENING... WRITING A NOVEL...

INSTEAD, I'M LETTING ALGORITHMS MESS WITH MY DAILY MENTAL HEALTH, ALL SO BILLIONAIRES CAN SELL ADS AND GET RICHER.

YUP. I THINK THAT'S GONNA BE MY RESOLUTION.

WHERE ARE YOU GOING?

TO GET MY PHONE SO I CAN POST IT ON FACE-BOOK.

NON SEQUITUR

By Wiley

HI, DANAE...TO WHAT DO I OWE THIS PLEASURE?

OH...I'VE GOT SOME QUESTIONS, LARS...

OK...

IS IT TRUE YOU GUYS WILL COME OUT PUBLICLY SOON?

UM... WHY DO YOU ASK?

WELL...TRENDING THEORIES SAY THE WORLDWIDE TURN TO AUTHORITARIAN RULE AND THE RECENT INCREASE OF CONFIRMED U.A.P. REPORTS ISN'T MERE COINCIDENCE, THAT YOU GUYS ORCHESTRATED MASS STUPIDITY TO MAKE TURNING PEOPLE INTO MIND-LESS, OBEDIENT SLAVES EASIER

NOTHING'S SO LOUD AS A QUESTION ANSWERED WITH SILENCE, LARS

AND YOU DIDN'T NOT HEAR IT FROM ME...OK?

PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

By Stephan Pastis

LEARNING AFTER AGE 30

by Rat

PERSON READS.

PERSON LEARNS NEW FACT.

The top federal tax bracket is currently 37%. In 1955, it was 91%.

PERSON MAKES A POINT OF MEMORIZING NEW FACT.

HIGHEST TAX BRACKET WAS 91%... HIGHEST TAX BRACKET WAS 91%...

NEW FACT ENTERS BRAIN.

BRAIN REALIZES IT'S TOO FULL TO FIT ANY NEW FACTS.

BRAIN KICKS OUT AN ESSENTIAL ONE.

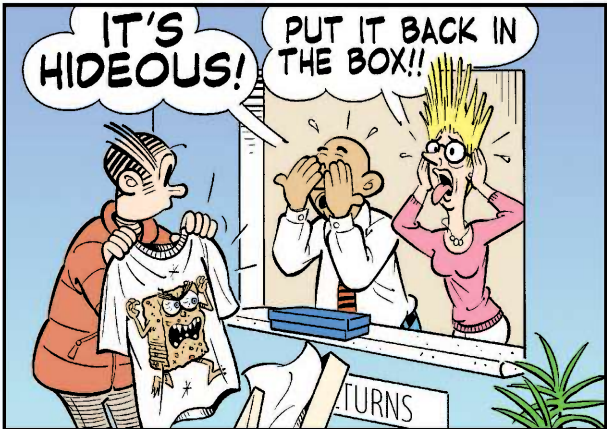
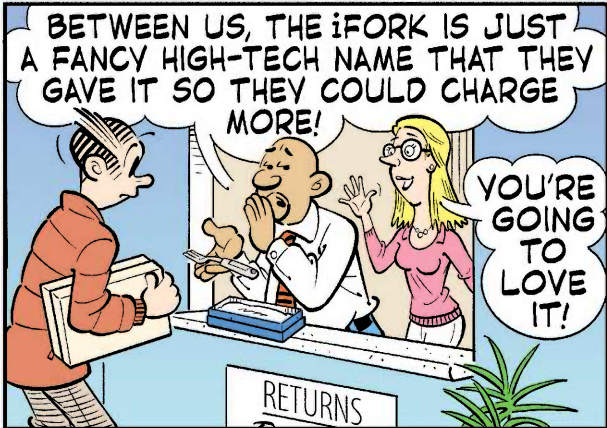
PTOOIE!

WHERE I PUT THE CAR KEYS.

HEY, HAVE YOU SEEN

BEHIND YOUR COFFEE MUG.

BLONDIE By Dean Young & John Marshall



WUMO



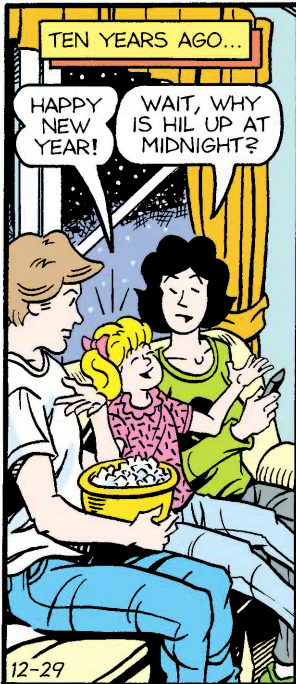
DUSTIN

By Steve Kelley & Jeff Parker



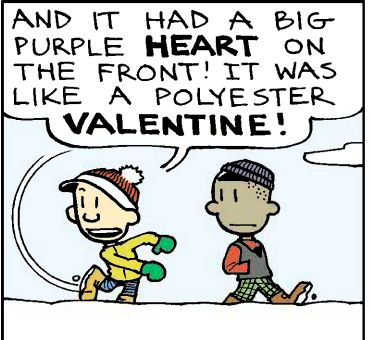
SALLY FORTH

By Francesco Marciuliano & Jim Keefe



BIG NATE

By Lincoln Peirce

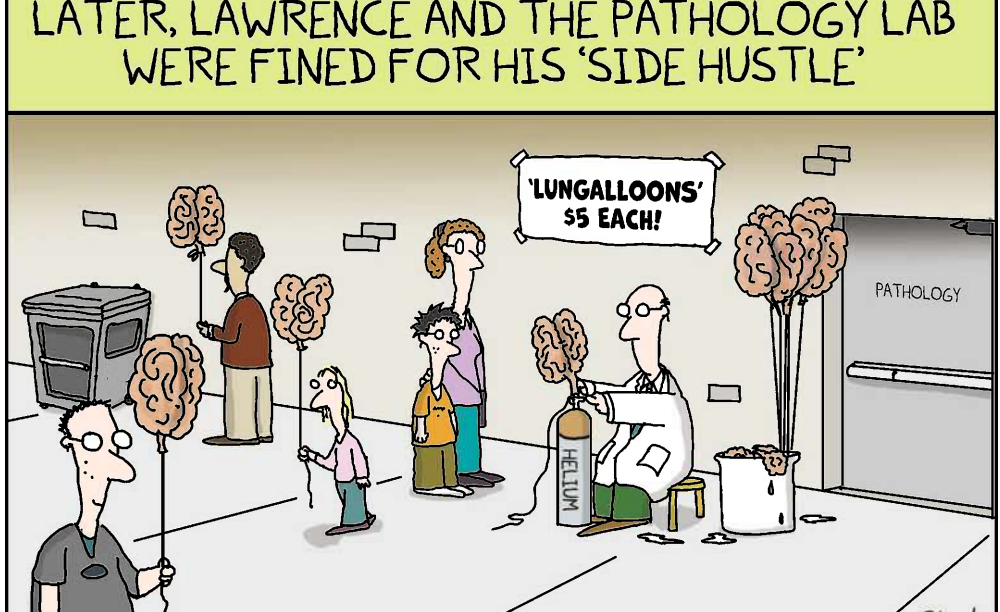


REPLY ALL LITE

By Donna A. Lewis

LOOSE PARTS

By Dave Blazek



JUMBLE KIDS

FOR KIDS

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME!®

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

The letters of these crazy words are all mixed up. To play the game, put them back into the right order so that they make real words you can find in your dictionary. Write the letters of each real word under each crazy word, but only one letter to a square.

RCY

CSIK

TADE

RYAP

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app - Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

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Now you're ready to solve today's Jumble For Kids. Study the picture for a hint. Play around with the letters in the circles. You'll find you can put them in order so that they make your funny answer.

Print answer here: " - "

ANSWER (HOLD UP TO MIRROR)

word word word word word

word word word word word

Agnes

by TONY COCHRAN

WOULD YOU LIKE TO OWN THE LATEST TOY SENSATION? IT'S A PUPDOLL: THE HEAD OF A DOLL ON THE BODY OF A PUPPY.

EW.

THE CUTE, FAMILIAR HUMAN FACE KEEPS YOU FROM SCREAMING WHEN YOU WAKE UP AT NIGHT AND THINK WILD ANIMALS ARE IN YOUR BED.

AND A FURRY PUPPY IS MORE SNUGGLY THAN COLD PLASTIC! GENIUS!

PLUS, THE TAIL MAKES IT EASIER TO HANG UP WHEN YOU HAVE TO HOSE OFF VOMIT OR OTHER BODILY FLUIDS.

YOU SHOULD WORK THAT RIGHT INTO THE ADS!

by HILARY B. PRICE

They have no gelly feelings about it either.

THE OIL MIGHT HAVE MIRACULOUSLY LASTED EIGHT NIGHTS, BUT THE CHOCOLATE SURE WON'T.

The FAMILY CIRCUS

By Bill Kean

YEAR-END "REMEMBERIES"

I LIKED THE OLYMPICS BETTER. THEY DIDN'T HAVE SO MANY SPEECHES.

GRANDMA SAYS THE FUTURE ISN'T WHAT IT USED TO BE.

IF YOU CAN'T GET ALONG WITH YOUR BROTHER AND SISTER, HOW DO YOU EXPECT TO GET ALONG WITH THE WORLD?

I'M HAVIN' A CATCH WITH GOD. I THROW THE BALL UP, AND HE THROWS IT BACK.

by DAVE COVERLY

GREAT-NOW I FEEL STUCK AND INSIGNIFICANT.

mutts

COMIC ART BY Patrick McDonnell

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS Hmm...

HA! HA! THAT'S GOOD!

OOH-THAT'S EVEN BETTER!

DEFINITELY DO-ABLE.

YESH! YESH! YESH!

WHERE DO I SHTOP!?!?

HERE, EARL, I'VE MADE SOME NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS FOR YOU!

FOR ME!?! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO MAKE NEW YEARS RESOLUTIONS FOR YOURSELF!

WHAT FUN IS THAT!?!?

FLASH GORDON

By Dan Schkade

A FEW HOURS AGO, I WAS LISTENING TO DALE'S SOFT VOICE BEAMED RIGHT INTO MY BRAIN.

SHE'D FOUND A LOOPHOLE IN TOA'S LAW.

JUGRID COULD FORCE KALA INTO A REMATCH-- BUT NAME A CHAMPION TO FIGHT IN HIS PLACE.

THUN WANTED TO AVENGE HIS DAD HIMSELF, BUT DOVA CONVINCED HIM IT HAD TO BE ME.

JUGRID CALLED KALA OUT. KALA SAID YES, BECAUSE HE HAD TO...

...BUT ONLY ON HIS TERMS: UNDERWATER, WITH NO ARMOR AND NO WEAPONS.

THOSE WERE THE RULES, ANYWAY.

BUT KALA HAD A STONESTEEL ROD IN HIS WRIST STRAP.

DAN SCHKADE 12-29-24

AND I DIDN'T SEE IT UNTIL HE'D CRACKED MY HELMET WITH IT.

NOW I'M SECONDS FROM BREATHING WATER...

...WHILE KALA'S GOT MY BAD SHOULDER IN AN ARM BAR...

NEXT: BLOOD IN THE WATER

JUDGE PARKER

By Francesco Marciuliano & Mike Manley

SO YOU'RE NOT GONNA TELL ME ANYTHING ABOUT WHAT'S GOING ON WITH YOU AND YOUR EX HANK?

FINE---

MARCIULIANO + MANLEY 12/29

I GOT IN TOUCH WITH HIM BACK IN L.A. WE'VE HUNG OUT A FEW TIMES. IMMEDIATELY HIT IT OFF AS IF WE NEVER BROKE UP...


BUT WE'RE TAKING IT SLOW. NO RUSHING THINGS. JUST SEEING HOW IT GOES.

HE'S SEEING SOMEONE ELSE, ISN'T HE?

THEY BROKE UP! THEY'RE BREAKING UP! I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THE TIMELINE, BUT THERE'S DEFINITELY AN ENDPOINT!

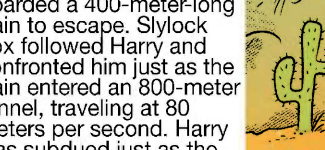


Slylock Fox

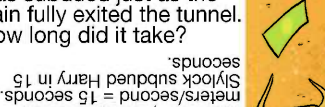


Harry Ape robbed the Forestville Bank and boarded a 400-meter-long train to escape. Slylock Fox followed Harry and confronted him just as the train entered an 800-meter tunnel, traveling at 80 meters per second. Harry was subdued just as the train fully exited the tunnel. How long did it take?

seconds.
meters/second = 15 seconds.
Slylock subdued Harry in 15
taken is: 1,200 meters ÷ 80
80 meters per second, the time
travel meters. At
800 meters long, so it must
meters long, and the tunnel is 400
Solution -- The train is 400




HOW TO DRAW a young cowboy



12-29

YOUR DRAWING

Today's terrific artist is Lillianna, age 12



Submit your drawing to www.slylockfox.com

The first pizzeria with tables and chairs opened in Naples, Italy, in ...

a) 1692
b) 1758
c) 1830

Answer -- (a) Antica Pizzeria Port'Alba opened in 1758. It is still in operation today.

Hank Ketchum's **Dennis the Menace**
LISTLESS

I PROB'LY SHOULD TRY AN' KEEP MY ROOM CLEANER AN' LISTEN BETTER.

MARGARET?

I GUESS IT'S HARD TO COME UP WITH RESOLUTIONS WHEN YOU'RE ALREADY PERFECT.

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RED AND ROVER

By Brian Basset

ROVER, JUST OVER THAT RIDGE IS THE NEW YEAR.

WHAT'LL WE FIND WHEN WE GET THERE?

I HAVE NO IDEA.

IT COULD BE GOOD. IT COULD BE BAD. IT COULD BE SOMETHING IN BETWEEN.

AN EXAMPLE, PLEASE.

MUSH!

MUSH!

MUSH!

WELL... IT'D BE LIKE THERE'S ONLY HALF OF A HALF OF A MILKY BONE WAITING FOR YOU.

12/29

© 2024 BRIAN BASSET

BREWSTER ROCKIT

Space Guy!

Tim Rickard

2024 WILL BE OVER SOON. GOOD RIDDANCE.

AND WHAT A CENTURY! THE WORLD SEEMS TO BE COMING APART.

AND TIME IS PASSING SO FAST! LIKE IT'S SPEEDING UP!

ANOTHER YEAR GONE BY. JUST THINK, IT'LL BE 2025! WE'RE NEARLY A **QUARTER-WAY** THROUGH THIS CENTURY!

OBSERVER-ONE, ARE YOU FAST-FORWARDING?

I WANT TO SEE HOW THIS ENDS.

12/29 brewrockit@yahoo.com

Mort Walker's

beetle bailey

HMM... HERE COMES SARGE...

HALT! WHO GOES THERE ?!

YOU KNOW PERFECTLY WELL WHO I AM!

NAME AND PASSWORD?

ORVILLE SNORKEL, SWAMPY321

TAP TAP TAP

CHECK YOUR PHONE

FOR WHAT?!

I JUST SENT YOU A VERIFICATION CODE

I'LL VERIFY YOU!

12/29

GREG + MORT WALKER

POPEYE

By Randy Milholland

A NEW YEAR CAN MEAN A NEW YOU! COME ON IN!

WELCOME, YOUNG MAN! CAN I HELP YOU?

I HOPE SO.

THE TRUTH IS, I HAVEN'T LIKED MYSELF FOR A LONG TIME.

I NEED A SERIOUS CHANGE THIS NEXT YEAR.

FEAR NOT, GOOD SIR. I, O.G. WOTASNOZZLE, AM HERE TO HELP!

I GUARANTEE YOU A NEW LIFE AS A NEW, BETTER YOU.

I JUST HAVE ONE QUESTION.

DO YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW YOUR BRAIN'S DIMENSIONS?

12-29

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Samurai Sudoku

The Samurai puzzle consists of five overlapping 9x9 grids sharing common rows and columns.

Grid 1 (Top Left):

			1	2	9			
4			5		8			7
		2		4		6		
	2	6				4	3	
9								2
	8	4				9	7	
		3		7				
1			8		2			
			4	1	3			

Grid 2 (Top Right):

			2	3	1			
8			6		9			1
		1		5		3		
	3	4				9	1	
2								6
	9	8				2	7	
				2		1		
9		7						8
	8	1	4					

Grid 3 (Bottom Left):

			2	3	9			
3			4		8			
		6		7				
	5	3				2	7	
6								1
	9	7				8	5	
		8		2		7		
7			9		3			5
			8	5	7			

Grid 4 (Bottom Center):

			7	3				
	6							
		4	5					

Grid 5 (Bottom Right):

			6	2	1			
			3		8			9
				7		3		
			4	6			9	7
2								4
	1	9				2	8	
		5		8		7		
4			9		7			1
			1	3	5			

How to Play

The rules of Samurai Sudoku are the same as in the popular Sudoku puzzles that appear in the daily comics section.

As with standard Sudoku, the Samurai version requires no math, just logic, reasoning ... and an iron will. The goal is to fill in each column, row and 3X3 box with the digits 1 through 9 without repeating any. The twist in Samurai Sudoku is that the digits that appear in the overlapping boxes must work for both puzzles.

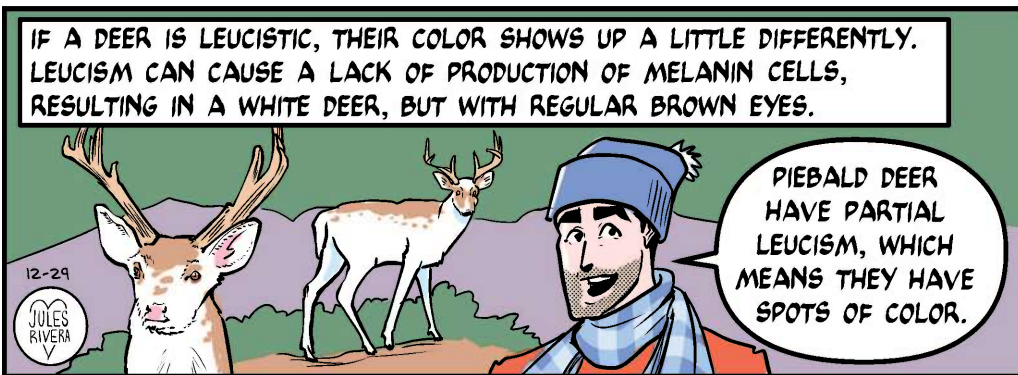
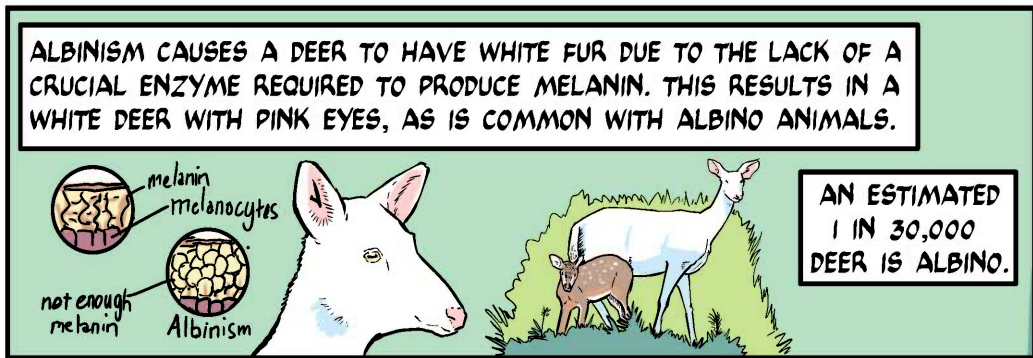
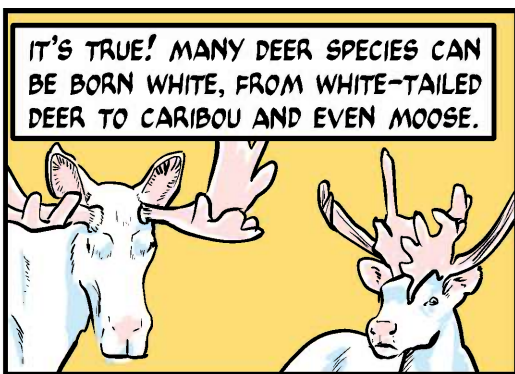
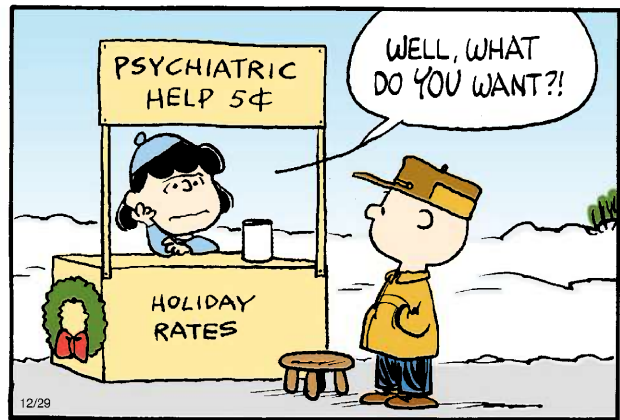
A piece of advice to get you started: Don't focus completely on one grid at a time. Keep the whole puzzle in mind as you go, because filling in a number in one grid could give you clues to another. What's important to understand is this: Each Samurai puzzle is ONE puzzle, not five separate Sudoku puzzles that just overlap each other. Occasionally people claim that, for example, the "bottom right" 9X9 puzzle had more than one solution. Well, yes it may, but the entire puzzle can be solved in only one way. Never resort to guessing! For more tips, go to <http://www.djape.net/sudoku/wp/?p=144>.

Last Sunday's Solution

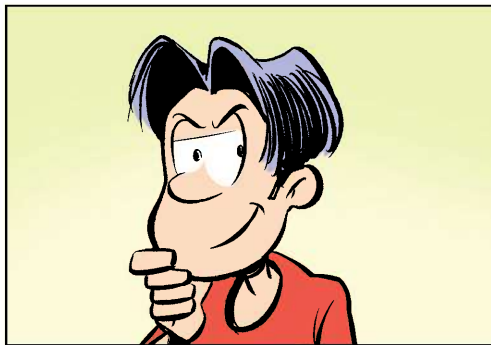
5	3	4	7	8	9	6	2	1
6	8	9	2	5	1	4	7	3
1	2	7	3	4	6	8	9	5
7	9	2	5	6	8	1	3	4
4	6	8	9	1	3	2	5	7
3	1	5	4	2	7	9	6	8
9	4	6	8	7	5	3	1	2
8	7	3	1	9	2	5	4	6
2	5	1	6	3	4	7	8	9

5	7	2	4	6	3	1	8	9
6	1	3	7	8	9	2	4	5
8	9	4	2	5	1	3	6	7
1	3	5	6	9	4	7	2	8

By Charles Schulz



By Cantú & Castellanos



By Scott Stantis

