



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

MARY AND JIM RICKERT, who own the Prather Ranch, say an obvious solution is to allow cattle ranchers to shoot problem wolves.

Ranchers confront an old nemesis

SISKIYOU COUNTY, Calif. — In far Northern California, beneath a towering mountain ridge still covered in April snow, one of the state's last cowboys stood in the tall green grass of a pasture he tends, describing what he sees as the one blight on this otherwise perfect landscape: wolves.

"I hate 'em," said Joel Torres, 25, his easy smile fading as he explained what the apex predators do to the cattle in his care at Prather Ranch, an organic farm in Siskiyou County dedicated to raising beef in a natural, stress-free environment. "They've just been tearing into our baby calves, mostly our yearlings."

Unlike predators that go for the throat and kill

Despite efforts to push wolves toward deer and elk in California, the protected predators find cattle easier prey

By Jack Dolan

prey relatively quickly, wolves often attack from behind and rip victims apart while they're trying to flee. Once they bring a cow to the ground, the pack will "kind of pick around a little bit, eat the good stuff" — particularly the rectum and udders — "and then just leave them and go on to the next one," Torres said.

That's how he has found dozens of mortally injured young cows, trembling and in shock, after wolf attacks. "It's crazy, the endurance of these animals. They'll just take it," Torres said.

There's no saving them. Their intestines often spill out through their hindquarters, and Torres shoots the cows to put them out of their misery.

[See Wolves, A6]

Pardoned rioters see political prospects

Some are embraced as heroes and candidates for office after being convicted in Jan. 6 storming of Capitol.

By Ali Swenson

JACKSON, Mich. — Ryan Kelley thought he had a good shot at becoming Michigan's governor in 2022.

That is, until he was charged with and eventually convicted of misdemeanors related to his role in the Jan. 6 riot and insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. His campaign sputtered and he finished fourth out of five candidates in the Republican primary.

Three years later, Kelley says, people ask him all the time to run for governor again. In today's America, where President Trump returned to the White House and within hours pardoned some 1,500 Jan. 6 convicts, Kelley's two-month prison sentence for his actions that winter day in 2021 isn't the obstacle to public life it might once have been.

It may even be a ticket to political prominence.

Far from being sidelined, those who rioted, assaulted police officers or broke into congressional offices during the deadly attack — while trying to overturn Trump's loss in the 2020 presidential election — are now being

[See Rioters, A9]

Fire victims allege insurer collusion

Suits say firms pushed homeowners to a state plan that charged more, covered less.

By Karla Marie Sanford

A group of property owners affected by the January wildfires is suing major California insurance carriers, including the state's largest,

State Farm, accusing them of violating California's antitrust and unfair competition laws.

The lawsuits follow others regarding insurers' handling of the aftermath of the Eaton and Palisades fires, including against Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara and the California FAIR Plan (specifically about smoke damage), the state's beleaguered insurance plan of last resort.

The group complaint and

demand for jury trial filed Saturday in Los Angeles County Superior Court allege that in a "nefarious conspiracy," major insurers conspired to "eliminate competition between them," thereby "intentionally and systematically" forcing homeowners to accept the California FAIR Plan.

On the same day, lawyers filed a separate class-action lawsuit alleging the same thing.

"Insurance is a product

that homeowners hope never to need, but rely on for peace of mind in normal times and for critical help rebuilding after a catastrophe," Michael J. Bidart of Shernoff Bidart Echeverria, one of the law firms representing the plaintiffs, said in a statement. "The complaints allege that, by colluding to push plaintiffs and so many like them to the FAIR Plan, the defendants have reaped the benefits of high

[See Insurers, A8]

Trade war's unexpected export: Humor

What do penguins, the Chinese government and remote islands have in common? Tariff jokes.

By Hailey Branson-Potts



DMITRI LOVETSKY Associated Press

WOODEN dolls for sale in St. Petersburg, Russia, depict world leaders Xi, left, Trump and Putin.

One meme shows a red MAGA hat on a store shelf bearing a "Made in China" tag. The \$50 price is crossed out, replaced by a tariff-inflated cost of \$77.

Another cartoon — labeled "The Art of the Deal," after Trump's 1987 book — shows a pair of gambler's hands. One with the word "tariffs" on its suit sleeve draws from a deck of cards bearing percentages. The Embassy's caption: "But... the cards are made in #China. #Tariffwar."

In Canada, the premier of Manitoba, Wab Kinew, signed a decree in an oversized folder and held it up with his signature, à la Trump. "This order," he said, "it's a wonderful order. It's a beautiful order. This order is pulling American booze off the liquor mart shelves."

And on Norfolk Island — a remote rock in the Pacific Ocean with about 2,000 residents and essentially no ex-

[See Humor, A7]

Bass weighs layoffs, other cost cuts

Mayor's budget, to be released on Monday, may include shedding more than 1,500 jobs amid fiscal shortfall.

By David Zahniser and Julia Wick

For Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass, the list of problems keeps piling up.

She began the year facing a barrage of criticism over the city's handling of the Palisades fire — her initial absence, her removal of an outspoken fire chief, the unpredictable doings of her recovery czar.

But even without that devastating emergency, there are other signs that the city has entered a precarious period.

Construction of new homes has steadily slowed, even as housing costs climb. Film and television productions have been fleeing the city, wounding an entertainment industry already in crisis. President Trump's trade war and immigration crackdown threaten two other pillars of the economy: international trade and tourism.

On Monday, Bass will offer her assessment of the city's overall health during her yearly State of the City address. That same day, she will release her budget for 2025-26, laying out her plan for addressing yet another huge problem: the city's financial crisis.

Faced with a nearly \$1-billion shortfall, Bass has been weighing whether to lay off more than 1,500 city workers — or almost 5% of the workforce — while also eliminating some vacant positions. Those behind-the-scenes deliberations have left many at City Hall anxious about the potential impact on street repairs, street lighting, animal shelters and public safety programs.

City Councilmember Ysabel Jurado, who took office in December representing part of the Eastside, said she has been taken aback by the magnitude of the challenges.

"I knew our city services were broken. I knew we were

[See Budget, A8]

Sharp dissent on Supreme Court

Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. castigates majority in a ruling on Venezuelan deportations. **NATION, A4**

Hollywood faces tariff trouble

Global strife and a wobbly economy will hurt an already struggling entertainment industry. **BUSINESS, A12**

Mayor wants homeless 'purge'

The comments by Lancaster leader Rex Parris stir furor, with some foes seeking his recall. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Weather
Mostly sunny.
L.A. Basin: 72/54. **B5**

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PERSPECTIVES

Lessons from Yosemite a decade after Rim blaze

The park's recovery can teach us what to expect in the wake of Eaton, Palisades fires.

BY CORINNE PURTILL

This month my family drove north from Los Angeles on State Route 99 toward Yosemite, exactly 157 years and five days after a 29-year-old John Muir set out on foot for the same destination from San Francisco.

There have, admittedly, been some changes in what is now Yosemite National Park since the Scottish-born naturalist began his hike equipped with little more than a pocket map and the confident assurance, he later wrote, "that Yosemite Valley lay to the east and that I should surely find it."

Muir encountered a valley floor uncluttered by paved roads, or cars, or clusters of tourists gaping at the rock climbers dangling from El Capitan's sheer face. But on the timescale of the geologic and glacial processes that shaped Yosemite, our visits occurred hardly a breath apart. Muir's description of the marvel he encountered could have easily been written last week.

"The Valley, comprehensively seen, looks like an immense hall or temple lighted from above," Muir wrote of his first impressions. "But no temple made with hands can compare with Yosemite. Every rock in its walls seems to glow with life ... while the snow and waterfalls, the winds and avalanches and clouds shine and sing and wreath the about them."

Yosemite's timeless granite cathedrals and snow-melt-swollen waterfalls are awe-inspiring. Yet as we drove each day from



DON BARTLETT Los Angeles Times

A FIREFIGHTER surveys the ruins of the Berkeley Tuolumne Camp near Groveland, Calif., in 2013. Its cabins and large dining hall that once served 4,000 people annually were almost destroyed by the Rim fire.

our rented cabin in the nearby Stanislaus National Forest to the park's western entrances, a very different sight rendered us speechless: acres upon acres of scorched landscape and charred, dead trees, the remains of once-lush forests devastated in the 2013 Rim fire.

The forests of the High Sierra have evolved to coexist with fire. Blazes sparked by lightning or intentionally lighted as part of Indigenous land-management practices have been part of the ecosystem for millennia, clearing away invasive species and excess vegetation and en-

couraging new growth. Some native trees are "serotinous," which means they rely on wildfire heat to trigger the dispersal of new seeds from their cones.

But the kind of massive, high-intensity, out-of-control wildfires sparked by a changing climate are something else entirely.

Ignited by a hunter's illegal campfire on Aug. 17, 2013, the Rim fire consumed more than 257,000 acres (400 square miles) overall, including some 77,000 in the bounds of Yosemite.

One-third of that acreage burned hot enough to destroy 75% to 100% of the

standing trees, leaving essentially nothing of the original forest alive to regenerate, said John Buckley, a former hotshot firefighter for the U.S. Forest Service who is executive director of the Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center, a nonprofit that works on wildlife, water and ecology in the northern Yosemite region.

Although controlled burns and wildfire management efforts carried out in previous years helped keep the Rim fire's spread in check to some degree, the intensity still led to massive tree mortality in some areas, creating conditions ripe for

the next megafire.

"Those are the places that really haunt us today," said Scott Stephens, a UC Berkeley professor of fire science and forest policy.

More than a decade later, there are still up to 300 snags — dead standing trees — per acre in some of Yosemite's most intensely affected areas, Stephens said. That translates to about 150 tons per acre of dead biomass in addition to any new growth that have sprung up, all of it a spark away from the next conflagration. "So," he said, "the next fire in that system will be an intense one."

There will undoubtedly

be a next one. At the time it occurred, the Rim fire was the third-biggest in California's recorded history. Some 12 fiery years later, it doesn't even crack the top 10.

A national park is a miracle of time, a place to marvel that our puny run as a species managed to intersect with the eons-long processes that shaped these breathtaking landscapes.

Right now, they are also places that lay bare how rapidly human-caused climate change can transform these ecosystems in ways that render them inaccessible for the duration of our lifetimes.

I last visited Yosemite as a child with my parents, but my children did not see the same park I did, and they never will. The Rim fire made sure of that. Within the blip of a single generation, swaths of millennia-old forest were transformed into charred landscape that physically cannot return to their former state within the course of my lifetime, or that of my children.

With careful stewardship, replanting and responsible fire management, it would be possible to nurture a young forest that "would be probably pretty darn beautiful" within the course of a few generations, Stephens said. But that takes investment and personnel, things that are highly imperiled in the National Park Service under the current Trump administration. Representatives of the park contacted for this story declined to comment.

"If we did that work in there proactively, when the next Rim fire comes, I think easily 50% of the [tallest] trees would survive. It'd be a victory," Stephens said. "But in the current condition, it's just as vulnerable as what we saw the Rim fire burn into."

Ivy League campuses among those hit by funding cuts

BY MAKIYA SEMINERA

Harvard University is the latest in a growing list of higher education institutions that had its federal funding targeted by the government in order to comply with the Trump administration's political agenda.

The series of threats — and subsequent pauses in funding — to some of the top U.S. universities have become an unprecedented tool for the administration to exert influence on college campuses. Six of the seven universities affected are Ivy League schools.

President Trump vowed to pursue these federal cuts on the campaign trail last year, saying he would focus on schools that push "critical race theory, transgender insanity, and other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content." Public school systems are targets for cuts too.

Here's a look at which universities have been pressured by the administration's funding cuts so far.

Harvard University

The administration recently announced its anti-semitism task force would conduct a "comprehensive review" of the Massachusetts university. The government was set to review nearly \$9 billion of federal grants and contracts.

Harvard is among universities across the country where pro-Palestinian protests erupted on campus last year amid the war in Gaza. Republican officials have since heavily scrutinized those universities, and several Ivy League presidents testified before Congress to discuss anti-semitism allegations.

The administration issued its list of demands to Harvard in a letter on April 3. The demands included a ban on masks, limitations on campus protests and a review of academic departments' biases.

About a week later, those demands were expanded to include leadership reforms, admission policy changes and stopping the university's recognition of certain student organizations.

Then, on April 14, Harvard President Alan Gerber refused to comply, saying



CHARLES KRUPA Associated Press

HARVARD is one of seven universities — six of which are in the Ivy League — targeted by the Trump administration. The White House froze more than \$2.2 billion in grants to Harvard and \$60 million in contracts.

in a letter that the university "will not surrender its independence or relinquish its constitutional rights."

Hours later, the administration announced it froze more than \$2.2 billion in grants to the university and \$60 million in contracts.

Cornell University

The White House announced recently that it froze more than \$1 billion of Cornell's federal funding. The administration said the freeze came as it investigated alleged civil rights violations at the university.

The New York university was among a group of more than 60 universities that received a letter from the Education Department on March 10 urging them to take steps to protect Jewish students or else face "potential enforcement actions."

The Defense Department issued more than 75 stop-work orders for research, Cornell said in a statement, but noted that the federal government hadn't confirmed whether the total funding freeze totaled \$1 billion.

Northwestern University

Like Cornell, Northwestern also saw a halt in some of its federal funding last week. The amount was about \$790 million, according to the Trump administration.

The Illinois university did not receive an official message from the White House on the freeze despite its cooperation with civil rights investigations, according to Northwestern officials at the time.

University spokesperson Jon Yates said Northwestern's scientific research was "at jeopardy" because of the freeze — a widespread issue for universities facing research cuts from the National Institutes of Health.

Brown University

The Trump administration was expected to pause federal grants and contracts at Brown University because of the Rhode Island school's response to accusations of antisemitism on campus, according to a White House official on April 3.

The total was expected to be about \$510 million in funding, according to the official.

Princeton University

Dozens of research grants were suspended at Princeton University without a clear rationale, according to an April 1 campus message from university President Christopher Eisgruber. The grants came from federal agencies such as the Department of Energy, NASA and the Defense Department.

Before the funding pause, Eisgruber had expressed his opposition to Trump's threatened cuts at Columbia University in an essay in the Atlantic magazine. He called the administration's move a "radical threat to scholarly excellence and to America's leadership in research."

University of Pennsylvania

Unlike the other targeted universities, the University of Pennsylvania saw funding cuts because of a transgender athlete who competed in Penn's swimming program, according to the Trump administration.

After a Feb. 5 executive order barring transgender athletes from participating in women's and girls' sports,

the Education Department launched an investigation a day later into athletics programs at Penn and San Jose State University. The Penn investigation centered on Lia Thomas, who is the first openly transgender athlete to win an NCAA Division I title and graduated from the university in 2022.

Over a month later, the White House announced the suspension of about \$175 million in federal funding from the Defense Department and the Department of Health and Human Services. The administration said the halt in funding on March 19 came after a separate discretionary federal money review.

The university said at the time that it wasn't directly notified of the action.

Columbia University

Columbia University was the first major institution that had its funding singled out by the Trump administration.

At first, federal agencies declared they were considering stop-work orders for about \$51 million in contracts with Columbia on March 3. Trump had also

said on social media that schools that allow "illegal protests" would see funding cuts.

Last year, Columbia student protesters started a wave of campus demonstrations against Israel's military campaign in Gaza. The protests led to tense face-offs with police at the New York City university and the arrests of more than 100 demonstrators.

University leadership faced scathing condemnations from Republicans on the protests' proliferation, leading then-President Minouche Shafik to step down. Columbia also began investigating pro-Palestinian student activists, such as Mahmoud Khalil, who was later arrested and is under the threat of deportation.

On March 7, the Trump administration canceled about \$400 million of Columbia's federal funding. Columbia took some action afterward, such as expelling and suspending some student protesters who occupied a campus building during demonstrations.

But two weeks after what Education Secretary Linda McMahon called a "productive meeting" with interim university President Katrina Armstrong, the university announced March 21 that it had agreed to make even more sweeping policy changes that the White House had demanded.

The changes included placing the Middle East studies department under supervision, hiring new safety personnel who can make arrests, prohibiting protests in academic buildings, updating student discipline policies and banning masks "for the purposes of concealing one's identity." The university also agreed to appoint a senior provost tasked with reviewing several international studies departments' leadership and curriculum.

Armstrong resigned the following week.

Some faculty members immediately decried the decision. Groups such as the American Assn. of University Professors and the American Federation of Teachers also filed a lawsuit March 25 against the Trump administration for the funding cuts.

Seminera writes for the Associated Press.

THE WORLD

Israel faults military in killings of Gaza medics

Deputy commander is fired after inquiry into March 23 attack finds ‘professional failures.’

By MELANIE LIDMAN

JERUSALEM — Israel said Sunday that an investigation into the killings of 15 Palestinian medics last month in Gaza by Israeli forces found a chain of “professional failures,” and a deputy commander has been fired.

The shootings outraged many in the international community, with some calling the killings a war crime. Medical workers have special protection under international humanitarian law. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies called it the deadliest attack on its personnel in eight years.

Israel at first claimed that the medics’ vehicles did not have emergency signals on when troops opened fire, but it later backtracked. Cellphone video recovered from one of the slain medics contradicted Israel’s initial account.

According to the investigation, the deputy commander, operating under “poor night visibility,” believed his troops were under threat when the ambulances sped toward their position and medics rushed out to check the victims. The military said the flashing lights were less visible when viewed with night-vision drones and goggles.

The ambulances immediately came under a barrage of gunfire, which went on for more than five minutes with brief pauses. Minutes later, soldiers opened fire at a United Nations vehicle that stopped at the scene.



ABDEL KAREEM HANA Associated Press

PEOPLE gather in Deir al Balah, Gaza, last month to mourn the eight Red Crescent workers who were among 15 medics slain in an Israeli attack on ambulances.

Mass grave burial

Eight Red Crescent personnel, six Civil Defense workers and a United Nations staffer were killed in the shooting before dawn on March 23 by Israeli troops conducting operations in Tel al-Sultan, a district of the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Troops bulldozed over the bodies and crushed the vehicles, burying them in a mass grave. U.N. and rescue workers were unable to reach the site until a week later.

The Israeli military said that soldiers buried the bodies to prevent them from being mangled by stray dogs and coyotes until they could be collected, and that the ambulances were moved to allow the route to be used for civilian evacuations later that day.

The inquiry found that the decision to crush the ambulances was wrong but said there was no attempt to conceal the shootings.

Maj. Gen. Yoav Har-Even, who oversees the military’s investigations, said the military notified international organizations later that day and helped rescue workers find the bodies.

The head of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society has said the men were “targeted at close range.” Night-vision drone video provided by the military shows soldiers were 65 to 100 feet away from the ambulances.

The deputy commander was the first to open fire, leading the other soldiers to start shooting, Har-Even said. The investigation found that the medics were killed because of an “operational misunderstanding” by Israeli forces, and that shooting at the U.N. vehicle was a breach of orders.

The findings asserted that six of those killed were Hamas militants — it did not give their names — and said three other paramedics were originally misidentified as Hamas fighters. The Civil

Defense is part of the Hamas-run government in the Gaza Strip.

No paramedic was armed and no weapons were found in any vehicle, Har-Even said.

One survivor was detained for investigation and remains in custody for further questioning. According to the military, soldiers who questioned the survivor thought he identified himself as a Hamas member, which was later refuted.

Inaccurate account

Har-Even said the deputy commander was fired for giving a report that was not “completely accurate” to investigators about the later incident in which troops fired on a U.N. vehicle. One person was killed.

The statement on the findings concluded by saying that Israel’s military “regrets the harm caused to uninvolved civilians.”

“Without accountability, we risk continuing to watch

atrocities unfolding, and the norms designed to protect us all, eroding,” Jonathan Whittall, interim head in Gaza of the U.N. humanitarian office OCHA, said in a statement responding to the findings. “Too many civilians, including aid workers, have been killed in Gaza. Their stories have not all made the headlines.”

There was no immediate public reaction to the findings from the Red Crescent or Civil Defense.

The findings have been turned over to the Military Advocate General, which can decide whether to file charges. It is meant to be an independent body, with oversight by Israel’s attorney general and Supreme Court.

There are no outside investigations of the killings underway.

Israeli strikes have killed more than 150 emergency responders from the Red Crescent and Civil Defense, most of them while on duty, as well as over 1,000 health workers during the war, according to the U.N. The Israeli military rarely investigates such incidents.

Israel has accused Hamas of moving and hiding its fighters inside ambulances and emergency vehicles, as well as in hospitals and other civilian infrastructure, arguing that justifies strikes on them. Palestinian medical personnel largely deny the accusations.

Military inquiry

Palestinians and international human rights groups have repeatedly accused Israel’s military of failing to properly investigate or whitewashing misconduct by its troops.

Har-Even said the Israeli military is investigating 421 incidents in Gaza during the war, with 51 concluded and sent to the Military Advo-

cate General.

There was no immediate information on the number of investigations involving potential wrongful deaths or how many times the advocate general has pursued criminal charges.

The International Criminal Court, established by the global community as a court of last resort, has accused Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant of war crimes. Israel, which is not a member of the court, has long asserted that its legal system is capable of investigating the army, and Netanyahu has accused the ICC of antisemitism.

The war in Gaza began when Hamas-led militants attacked southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and abducting about 250. Most of the hostages have been released in ceasefire agreements or other deals. Hamas currently holds 59 hostages, 24 of them believed to be alive.

Israel’s offensive has since killed more 51,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, according to Gaza’s Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants in its tally.

The war has destroyed vast parts of Gaza and most of its food production capabilities. Around 90% of the population is displaced, with hundreds of thousands of people living in tent camps and bombed-out buildings.

Frustration has been growing on both sides, with rare public protests against Hamas in Gaza and continued weekly rallies in Israel pressing the government to reach a deal to bring all hostages home.

Lidman writes for the Associated Press.



EVGENIY MALOLETKA Associated Press

PRIEST Serhii Zezul blesses Easter baskets in front of a church on Sunday in Lukashivka, Ukraine.

Zelensky says Russia creating ‘impression of a ceasefire’ in war

By VOLODYMYR YURCHUK AND ELISE MORTON

KYIV, Ukraine — Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky accused Russia on Sunday of creating a false appearance of honoring an Easter ceasefire, saying Moscow continued to launch attacks after Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a unilateral temporary truce.

“As of Easter morning, we can say that the Russian army is trying to create a general impression of a ceasefire, but in some places, it does not abandon individual attempts to advance and inflict losses on Ukraine,” Zelensky said in a post on X.

Despite Putin’s declaration of an Easter ceasefire, Zelensky said Sunday morning that Ukrainian forces had recorded 59 instances of Russian shelling and five assaults by units along the front line, as well as dozens of drone strikes.

In later updates, Zelensky said that despite Ukraine declaring a symmetrical approach to Russian actions, “the trend of increasing the use of heavy weaponry by Russian forces continues.” He said, however, that it was “a good thing, at least, that there were no air raid sirens.”

He noted that some Ukrainian troops were killed in a Russian “ambush” on Sunday in the Donetsk region and said the Russian soldiers responsible would be “eliminated.”

Russia’s Defense Ministry accused Ukrainian forces of overnight attacks in the Donetsk region despite the ceasefire. It said Ukraine

had sent 48 drones into Russian territory. According to the ministry, there were “dead and wounded among the civilian population,” without giving details. It claimed Russian troops had strictly observed the truce.

Russia-installed officials in the partially occupied Ukrainian region of Kherson said Ukrainian forces had launched attacks there.

Zelensky said that Russia must fully adhere to the ceasefire conditions and reiterated Ukraine’s offer to extend the truce for 30 days, starting midnight Sunday. Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha said Moscow had not responded to Kyiv.

“In practice, either Putin does not have full control over his army, or the situation proves that in Russia, they have no intention of making a genuine move toward ending the war, and are only interested in favorable PR coverage,” Zelensky wrote.

Hours after announcing the ceasefire, Putin attended an Easter service late Saturday at Moscow’s Cathedral of Christ the Savior led by Patriarch Kirill, head of the Russian Orthodox Church and a stalwart supporter of Putin and the war in Ukraine.

According to the Kremlin, the ceasefire, which it said began at 6 p.m. Moscow time Saturday, was to continue until midnight following Easter Sunday.

Putin offered no details on how the ceasefire would be monitored or whether it would cover airstrikes or ongoing ground battles.

Yurchuk and Morton write for the Associated Press.

Francis goes on popemobile romp, meets briefly with Vance on Easter

By NICOLE WINFIELD AND SILVIA STELLACCI

VATICAN CITY — Pope Francis emerged from his convalescence on Easter Sunday to bless thousands of people in St. Peter’s Square and treat them to a surprise popemobile romp through the piazza, drawing wild cheers and applause as he continues his recovery from a near-fatal bout of double pneumonia.

“Viva il papa!” — long live the pope — and “Bravo!” the crowd shouted as Francis looped through the square in his open-topped popemobile and then up and down the main avenue leading to it. He stopped occasionally to bless babies brought up to him, a scene that was common in the past but unthinkable just a few weeks ago as the 88-year-old pope fought for his life.

“Brothers and sisters, Happy Easter!” Francis said, his voice sounding stronger than it has since he was released from the hospital March 23 after a five-week stay.

Francis didn’t celebrate the Easter Mass in the piazza, delegating it to Cardinal Angelo Comastri, the retired archpriest of St. Peter’s Basilica. But after the Mass ended, Francis appeared on the loggia balcony over the basilica entrance for more than 20 minutes and imparted the apostolic blessing in Latin.

The crowd of people below, estimated by the Vatican to be more than 35,000, erupted in cheers as a military band kicked off rounds of the Holy See anthem.

In all, Francis was outside on a sunny spring day for around 50 minutes, with the temperature 70 degrees in a piazza awash in daffodils, tulips and other flowers donated by the Netherlands for Easter.

“It is excellent, a miracle,” said Margarita Torres Hernandez, a pilgrim from Mexico who was in the square. “Now that he has come out, for me it’s a miracle, it’s something very big, very beautiful.”

Greeting Vance

On his way to the basilica, Francis met briefly in his ho-



GREGORIO BORGIA Associated Press

POPE FRANCIS emerges from recovery to tour St. Peter’s Square after bestowing the Urbi et Orbi blessing at the end of Easter Mass at the Vatican on Sunday.

tel with Vice President JD Vance, who was spending Easter in Rome with his family. The Vatican said the encounter lasted a few minutes and was designed to allow for an exchange of Easter greetings.

The meeting comes after Vance and the pope got into a long-distance tangle over the Trump administration’s migrant deportation plans.

Francis offered the Catholic vice president three big chocolate Easter eggs for Vance’s three young children, who did not attend, as well as a Vatican tie and rosaries.

“I know you have not been feeling great, but it’s good to see you in better health,” Vance told the pope. “Thank you for seeing me.”

Vance’s office said the vice president “expressed his gratitude to Pope Francis for inviting him to meet on Easter Sunday and for the hospitality the Vatican has extended to his family.”

“I pray for you every day,” Vance said as he bid Francis farewell. “God bless you.”

Vance, who converted to Catholicism in 2019, and the pope have clashed over migration and the Trump administration’s moves to deport migrants en masse. Francis has made caring for migrants a hallmark of his papacy.

Days before he was hospitalized in February, Francis denounced the deportation plans, warning that

they would deprive migrants of their inherent dignity. In a letter to U.S. bishops, Francis also appeared to respond to Vance directly for having claimed that Catholic doctrine justified such policies.

Vance has acknowledged Francis’ criticism but has said he will continue to defend his views.

Recuperation

Francis has appeared in public only a few times since returning to the Vatican after a 38-day hospital stay. He skipped the solemn services of Good Friday and Holy Saturday leading up to Easter, but he had been expected to make an appearance Sunday.

Doctors have prescribed two months of convalescence and respiratory therapy to improve his lung function after he came down with a life-threatening case of double pneumonia. He still seems to require great effort to project his voice, and his breathing remains labored. But his voice sounded stronger than it has to date in the few words he uttered from the loggia.

“It was a very touching moment for us” to see the pope, said Marcin Popowsky, a pilgrim from Poland. “And we are very happy that we can see a pope in good shape.”

A day of joy

Easter is the most joyful moment on the Christian

liturgical calendar, when the faithful celebrate the resurrection of Christ after his crucifixion. This year, Easter is being celebrated on the same day by Catholics and Orthodox Christians, and has been marked by Russia’s announced temporary Easter truce in its war in Ukraine.

Easter at the Vatican traditionally involves a Mass and the pope’s Urbi et Orbi blessing — Latin for “to the city and the world,” a papal speech delivered from the loggia that is usually a roundup of global hotspots and human suffering.

In the speech, read by Archbishop Diego Ravelli, master of liturgical ceremonies, Francis appealed for peace in Gaza and Ukraine, as well as Congo and Myanmar and in other areas of war and other tragedy. And he made a special appeal for migrants and those affected by violence.

“How much contempt is stirred up at times toward the vulnerable, the marginalized, and migrants!” the message said. “On this day, I would like all of us to hope anew and to revive our trust in others, including those who are different than ourselves, or who come from distant lands, bringing unfamiliar customs, ways of life and ideas! For all of us are children of God!”

Winfield and Stellacci write for the Associated Press.

THE NATION



RICHARD R. BARRON Associated Press

BROKEN sheds, lumber and walls lie strewn on the ground behind a Quality Inn on Sunday in Ada, Okla.

Flooding kills two as storm batters Oklahoma, Texas

By HANNAH FINGERHUT

MOORE, Okla. — A slow-moving storm system brought heavy rain, large hail and tornadoes to parts of Texas and Oklahoma and left two people dead as severe weather warnings Sunday continued to threaten parts of the south-central and Midwest U.S.

On Easter Sunday, communities in Texas and Oklahoma were beginning to assess the damage wreaked by tornadoes. There were 17 reported events Saturday, according to Bob Oravec, lead forecaster with the National Weather Service's weather prediction center. Five were confirmed in south-central Oklahoma, including one that inflicted at least EF1 damage on a small town that was still recovering from a March tornado.

The storm also brought heavy rain to a broad swath from north-central Texas to east-central Oklahoma, which saw 2 to 4 inches accumulate Saturday into Sunday. Police in Moore, Okla., about 10 miles south of Oklahoma City, received dozens of reports of "high-water incidents" over the weekend, including two cars stranded in floodwaters Saturday evening. One car was swept away under a bridge, and police said they were able to rescue some people, but a woman and 12-year-old boy were found dead.

"This was a historical

weather event that impacted roads and resulted in dozens of high-water incidents across the city," the Police Department in Moore, a town of about 63,000 people, said in a statement Sunday.

Oravec said the system lingered over Texas and Oklahoma on Saturday, leaving the area stuck under an active thunderstorm pattern that produced flash flooding and tornadoes.

Bill Macon, Marshall County emergency management director, said his agency's early assessments show a tornado "skipped and jumped around" over a path of six to seven miles in the rural area that left at least 20 homes damaged, some destroyed.

Macon said people were mostly home when the late-night tornado came through, downing huge trees, dozens of electric poles and power lines, but there had not been reports of injuries or fatalities. "We take those things pretty serious down here in Oklahoma," he said of the weather service warnings.

One Oklahoma town that was still rebuilding from an early March tornado was hit again late Saturday. The north side of Ada, home to about 16,000 people, sustained damage that the National Weather Service said was at least an EF1 tornado.

Fingerhut writes for the Associated Press.

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court acted "literally in the middle of the night" and without sufficient explanation in blocking the Trump administration from deporting any Venezuelans held in northern Texas under an 18th-century wartime law, Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. wrote in a sharp dissent that castigated the seven-member majority.

Joined by fellow conservative Justice Clarence Thomas, Alito said there was "dubious factual support" for granting the request in an emergency appeal from the American Civil Liberties Union. The group contended that immigration authorities appeared to be moving to restart such removals under the Alien Enemies Act of 1798.

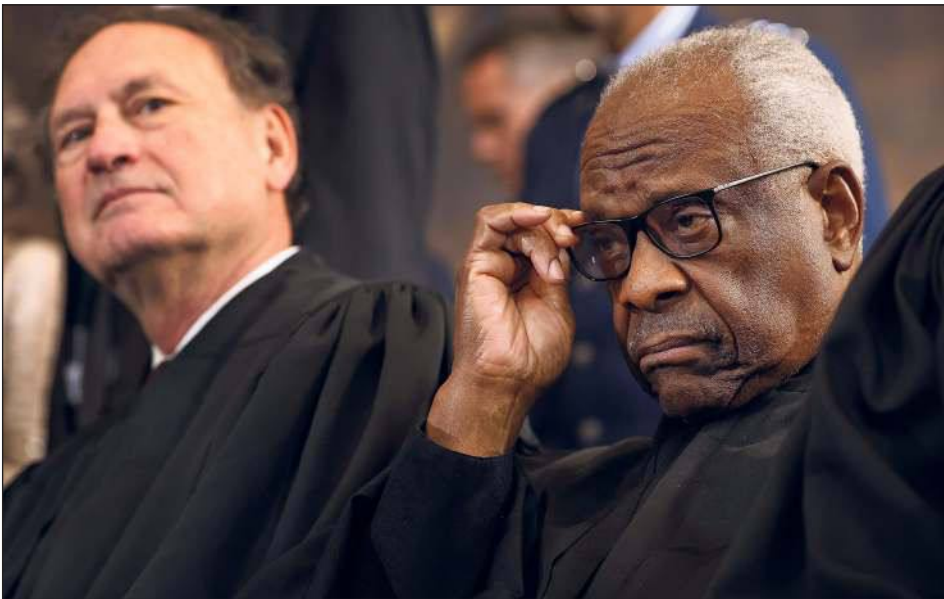
The majority did not provide a detailed explanation in the order early Saturday, as is typical, but the court previously said deportations could proceed only after those about to be removed had a chance to argue their case in court and were given "a reasonable time" to contest their pending removals.

"Both the Executive and the Judiciary have an obligation to follow the law," Alito said in the dissent released hours after the court's intervention against the Trump administration.

The justices' brief order directed the administration not to remove Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet Detention Center in Anson, Texas, "until further order of this court."

Alito said that "unprecedented" relief was "hastily and prematurely granted."

He wrote that it was not clear whether the Supreme Court had jurisdiction at this stage of the case, saying that not all legal avenues had played out in lower courts and the justices did not have the chance to hear



CHIP SOMODEVILLA Associated Press

JUSTICE Samuel A. Alito Jr., left, with Justice Clarence Thomas, who joined his dissent that said "unprecedented" relief was "hastily and prematurely granted."

the government's side.

"The only papers before this Court were those submitted by the applicants. The Court had not ordered, or received a response by the Government regarding either the applicants' factual allegations or any of the legal issues presented by the application. And the Court did not have the benefit of a Government response filed in any of the lower courts either," Alito wrote.

Alito said the legal filings, "while alleging that the applicants were in imminent danger of removal, provided little concrete support for that allegation." He noted that while the court did not hear directly from the government regarding any planned deportations under the Alien Enemies Act in this case, a government lawyer in a different matter had told a U.S. district court in a hearing Friday evening that no such deportations were then planned to occur either Friday or Saturday.

"In sum, literally in the middle of the night, the Court issued unprecedented and legally questionable relief without giving the lower courts a chance to

rule, without hearing from the opposing party, within eight hours of receiving the application, with dubious factual support for its order, and without providing any explanation for its order," Alito wrote. "I refused to join the Court's order because we had no good reason to think that, under the circumstances, issuing an order at midnight was necessary or appropriate. Both the Executive and the Judiciary have an obligation to follow the law."

The administration has filed paperwork urging the high court to reconsider its hold.

On Friday, two federal judges refused to step in as lawyers for the men targeted for removal launched a desperate legal campaign to prevent their deportation. Early Saturday, the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals also refused to issue an order protecting the detainees from being deported.

The ACLU had already sued to block deportations of two Venezuelans held in the Bluebonnet facility and sought an order barring removals of any immigrants in the region under the Alien

Enemies Act.

In the emergency filing early Friday, the ACLU warned that immigration authorities were accusing other Venezuelan men held there of being members of the Tren de Aragua gang, which would make them subject to President Trump's use of the law. Trump says the "invasion" of gang members constitutes a war on the U.S., and therefore the wartime law is applicable.

It has been invoked only three previous times in U.S. history, most recently during World War II to hold Japanese American civilians in incarceration camps. The administration contends that the law gives them the power to swiftly remove immigrants they identified as members of the gang, regardless of their immigration status.

Following the unanimous Supreme Court order on April 9, federal judges in Colorado, New York and southern Texas promptly issued orders barring removal of detainees under the law until the administration provides a process for them to make claims in court.

Federal cuts shake Kansas City workers

By RYAN J. FOLEY

KANSAS CITY, Mo. — In her 28 years working for the federal government, Shea Giagnorio provided day care for the children of U.S. soldiers, training for employees and oversight for safety net programs.

Public service took her from Germany to Alaska to Kansas City, Mo., where she moved last year for a long-sought promotion.

But when she reported to a downtown federal building for work one day last month, her access card did not work. After a co-worker let her into the building, she checked her email: Her entire office had been let go in the latest mass firing ordered by the Trump administration.

The 46-year-old single mom has canceled her apartment lease and may have to pull her daughter out of college. She wonders what will happen to the at-risk populations her team helped serve at the Administration for Children and Families, part of the Department of Health and Human Services.

"Not only me, but all these people's lives are turned upside down," Giagnorio said.

The impact of the cuts by the Trump administration, led by billionaire advisor Elon Musk's team, which he calls the Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE, can be found everywhere in the Kansas City metropolitan area, which has long been a major hub for federal agencies about 1,000 miles away from Washington. Money once promised to the region for public health, environmental, diversity, food aid and an array of other programs has been axed, and thousands of local jobs are in jeopardy.

With nearly 30,000 workers, the federal government is the largest employer in the region. One longtime Kansas City economic researcher said he believes the region could lose 6,000 good-paying federal jobs, which would wipe out thousands of



CHARLIE RIEDEL Associated Press

SHEA GIAGNORIO, left, speaks with a recruiter at a job fair after being laid off from her federal position.

others in service industries.

An Internal Revenue Service worker said thousands of her co-workers fear they will lose their jobs, even as they put in overtime processing tax refunds in a building so crowded that they struggle to find desks. Under pressure, hundreds more agreed last week to retire early or take a buyout.

"It's a kick in the stomach to people that are doing everything they can to meet what's required of them," said Shannon Ellis, a longtime IRS customer service representative and president of the union representing local workers.

By Thursday, at least 238 Kansas City workers had taken the buyout offers and were expected to leave the agency in coming weeks. Ellis noted many of those workers had been told they were essential and required to work overtime during tax season, some seven days a week.

A U.S. Department of Agriculture grant revocation disrupted a historically Black neighborhood's plan to expand its program growing fresh produce in a "food desert." A nearby pantry reduced its monthly grocery allotment for those in need after federal cuts left food banks short on stock.

Urban farmer Rosie Warren grew 2,500 pounds of fruits and vegetables last year in community gardens to help feed the Ivanhoe neighborhood, where many

Black families were concentrated under housing segregation policies of much of the 20th century.

Warren harvested greens, potatoes and watermelons as part of an effort to address food insecurity and health concerns in a neighborhood challenged by blight, crime and poverty. She was thrilled last fall when the USDA awarded the neighborhood council a three-year, \$130,000 grant to expand the gardens and farmers market serving the area.

In February, the council received a notice terminating the grant. The USDA had determined the award "no longer effectuates agency priorities regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion programs and activities."

"What do you do if you don't support providing access to food to people who don't have it? Wouldn't this make your job easier?" she said. "I think it's absurd. It doesn't make any sense."

The withdrawal of federal funding for new lab equipment and vaccines means the city may be less prepared for the next pandemic.

The Kansas City Health Department's laboratory is badly in need of an upgrade, with equipment dating to when the building opened in the 1990s.

One basement space is water-damaged and rarely used. Another has equipment so inadequate that the

city has to ship samples to a state lab 150 miles away, causing inefficiencies, agonizing waits for results and delayed response times.

But the funding for lab upgrades was abruptly eliminated last month as part of the Trump administration's \$11.4-billion cancellation of federal grants to states for public health.

A Health and Human Services spokesperson said the agency's downsizing, including cutting jobs and consolidating divisions, would save money and make the organization more efficient. As for the \$11.4 billion in grant funding cuts, the spokesperson said, "HHS will no longer waste billions of taxpayer dollars responding to a nonexistent pandemic that Americans moved on from years ago."

The IRS has offered a similar rationale for its downsizing, saying it is making process improvements that will ultimately serve the public more efficiently.

Musk said last year that President Trump's budget cuts would cause a "temporary hardship" that would soon put the economy on stronger footing.

One local economic researcher said it remained unclear just how deep that hardship will be in Kansas City, including whether it will just slow growth or cause population losses.

"It's a big burden that's being placed on a narrow group of people," said Frank Lenk, director of the Office of Economic Development at the Mid-America Regional Council, a nonprofit of city and county governments in the Kansas City region. "It will definitely take some of the steam out of the local economy."

Trump has credited Musk's team with helping end "the flagrant waste of taxpayer dollars," which he says will save billions to help improve the nation's finances.

Foley writes for the Associated Press. AP writer Heather Hollingsworth contributed to this report.

FOR THE RECORD

Unincorporated status: An article in the A section on April 20 about whether lack of cityhood hurt Altadena during the Eaton fire said the Topanga Coalition for Emergency Preparedness was formed after the 2018 Woolsey fire. The coalition formed after the 1993 Old Topanga fire.

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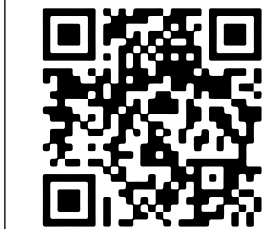
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In N.Y., toll on drivers remains in effect

Governor defies federal decision to end fee to enter Manhattan by Easter.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — New York's \$9 congestion toll on most drivers entering the busiest part of Manhattan remained in effect Sunday, despite an Easter deadline from the Trump administration to halt the first-in-the-nation fee.

Gov. Kathy Hochul's office and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, the state agency overseeing the tolls, confirmed Sunday that its system of traffic cameras continues to collect the fee assessed on most cars entering the borough below Central Park.

"The cameras are staying on," Avi Small, Hochul's spokesperson, said in an email.

President Trump's Transportation secretary, Sean Duffy, rescinded federal approval for the program in February, calling it "a slap in the face to working-class Americans and small-business owners," and initially gave New York until March 21 to comply.

The MTA challenged Duffy's decision in federal court, and he pushed the deadline back a month, to April 20. The Transportation Department insisted that it would not back off the deadline even as the court case plays out, saying it would "not hesitate to use every tool at our disposal" if the state failed to stop the toll.

"In case there were any doubts, MTA, State and City reaffirmed in a court filing that congestion pricing is here to stay and that the arguments Secretary Duffy made trying to stop it have zero merit," John J. McCarthy, the MTA's chief of policy and external relations, said Sunday.

Spokespeople for the Department of Transportation didn't immediately respond to messages seeking comment Sunday.

The fee began Jan. 5 and is meant to not just reduce traffic jams but also raise billions of dollars in revenue for New York's subways, commuter trains and public buses.

Trump, whose namesake Trump Tower and other properties are within the congestion zone, had vowed to kill the plan as soon as he took office.

The transit authority, meanwhile, has continued to tout the benefits of the tolling program, saying fewer vehicles are coming into the heart of Manhattan.

Around 560,000 vehicles per day entered the congestion zone in March, a 13% drop from the roughly 640,000 that the MTA projects would have driven through the area without the tolling scheme, according to data the agency released this month.

The agency has previously said it's on track to meet the \$500 million in revenue initially projected this year from congestion pricing.

The toll varies depending on type of vehicle and time of day and comes on top of tolls drivers pay to cross bridges and tunnels into Manhattan.

Other big cities around the world, including London and Stockholm, have similar congestion pricing schemes.

On Thursday, a Manhattan federal judge dismissed a series of lawsuits brought by the local trucking industry and other local groups challenging the toll.



SETH WENIG Associated Press
SIGNS advise drivers of a toll near the exit of the Lincoln Tunnel.



Photographs by MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

MEMBERS of the "Whaleback" wolf pack travel to the left (north) or right (south) of Goosenest Mountain as they hunt for their food.

Wolves a menace to cattle herds

[Wolves, from A1]

He'd like to shoot the wolves, too, at least a few, to teach the pack that there are "consequences to coming around here and tearing into our cattle." But the predators remain on the state's endangered species list, and aggressive measures to control their behavior are strictly forbidden.

Instead, all Torres can do is grit his teeth and deal with the grisly aftermath.

Torres and many other ranchers in California live where two very lofty and environmentally satisfying ideas collide: all natural, free-range ranching and the government-assisted return of a predator our ancestors hunted to near extinction.

No matter how hard officials try to direct the wolves toward their natural prey, mostly deer and elk, they seem to find the bigger, slower, domesticated cows wandering through well-kept, wide-open fields a lot more appealing.

Things have gotten so bad so quickly — wolves have been back in California for only a bit more than a decade — that officials in Modoc and Sierra counties have declared emergencies. Leaders in Siskiyou and Lassen counties are calling on the state to do something about the devastating economic toll the wolves are taking on ranchers.

And while wolf attacks on people are almost unheard of, many in those counties are worried about potential risks to children and pets as the wild predators wander ever closer to houses and show signs of becoming accustomed to humans.

In response, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife has approved what it calls increased "hazing," which includes firing guns toward the sky, driving trucks and ATVs toward wolves to shoo them away and harassing them with noise from drones — but nothing that might injure the wolves.

Ranchers are skeptical. Other hazing methods approved by the department in recent years, such as electric fences with red flags attached that flutter in the wind, have done little to keep the wolves from their herds.

"The wolves just jump over those fences," Torres said. "They do no good."

Mary Rickert, who owns the Prather Ranch with her husband, Jim, said the obvious solution is to let ranchers shoot problem wolves. "We'd just pick off a few of the bad actors, so the others would go, whoa, and back off," she said.

A century ago, wolves in the United States were almost wiped out by ranchers who regarded them as lethal enemies. The last wolf legally shot in California was in 1924, and by 1930 they were gone from almost the entire country, except for a small pack in northern Minnesota.

But in 1973, then-President Nixon signed the Endangered Species Act, and his administration added wolves to the list the following year. In the decades that followed, wolves began a slow recovery, mostly in the northern U.S.



JOEL TORRES, a herdsman at Prather Ranch in Macdoel, Calif., has had to collect carcasses of cows killed by wolves and euthanize the ones severely injured.

Then, in 2011, a wolf from Oregon known as OR7 — monitored by government biologists via an electronic collar — crossed the border into California and became the first known wild wolf to inhabit the state in almost 90 years. Like other notable transplants to the Golden State, he found pop culture stardom, becoming the heroic subject of a children's book and a 2014 documentary.

Environmental advocates and cheerleaders for biodiversity were overjoyed that the wolves — who in their best moments look a lot like big, cuddly dogs — were making such an astonishing comeback. The hope was that they'd mostly eat other wild animals.

But ask any rancher living in wolf country, and they'll tell you that's not what happened — and recent science backs them up.

In 2022-23, researchers from UC Davis analyzed more than 100 wolf scat samples collected in northeast California from the so-called Lassen pack. They found that 72% of the samples contained cattle DNA, and every wolf had at least one sample that contained cow, said Kenneth Tate, one of the researchers.

What's more, there were 13 wolves in the pack, nearly twice as many as state wildlife officials believed at the time.

"These packs are not in the wilderness. They're not up on Mt. Shasta or Lassen peak," Tate said. "They're establishing themselves down in the valleys, where the summer cattle graze."

And they are thriving. In just 14 years since OR7 crossed the border, seven separate packs have established themselves in the state. They're mostly in the north, but one pack has been confirmed in the southern Sierra Nevada, 200 miles from Los Angeles.

None of those packs has done as much damage to livestock as the "Whaleback" pack (named after a nearby mountain) that stalks the Prather Ranch in the remote Butte Valley.

That's because Prather's

lush pastures back up against a secluded mountain ridge running from nearby Mt. Shasta north to the Oregon border. That land belongs to the U.S. Forest Service, and it's covered in mature pine trees that provide nearly perfect cover.

From the top of the ridge, where the wolves are believed to make their den, there's a commanding view of Prather Ranch to the east and of another ranch, Table Rock, to the west. At any given moment in summer, when thousands of free-ranging cattle are scattered across those pastures, the wolves can gaze down from their protected perch and take their pick.

"It's like they're deciding between McDonald's and Burger King," said Patrick Griffin, the "wolf liaison" for Siskiyou County, whose job is to try to mitigate conflict between the predators and ranchers.

There's a "good-sized" elk herd ranging just north of the ranches, Griffin said, and he keeps hoping that the department's nonlethal hazing tactics will persuade the wolves to turn their attention to their natural prey. But he doesn't think the odds are very good.

"An elk is a lot more intimidating than a cow," Griffin said. "Which would you pick?"

The bigger problem, Griffin said, is that the Whaleback pack is teaching its young to hunt cows. And when they head off to claim their own territory and start their own packs, they'll take those lessons with them.

While other states, including Idaho, Montana and Wyoming, have allowed wolf hunts to resume, California still forbids ranchers from taking aggressive measures to stop the predators.

In addition to the nonlethal hazing, the department encourages ranchers to hire "range riders," essentially cowboys, to sleep in the pastures with the cows. But that costs money, and the state doesn't help with the added expense, Griffin said.

And even when people are present to harass the wolves, these ranches are so

large that it's impossible for them to be everywhere at once. One night, a "government guy" rode around Prather Ranch in his pickup with a spotlight, and the wolves still "tore into two cows that I had to put down," Torres said.

Each cow the wolves kill represents thousands of dollars in lost revenue, so in 2021 the state set up a pilot program with \$3 million to reimburse ranchers.

When they found a dead or dying cow with telltale signs of wolf "depredation," ranchers could alert the state and a representative would come out to investigate. If the investigator concluded wolves were to blame, the rancher would get a check, about \$5,000 on average.

But that money ran out in a hurry, state records show, with the majority of it, 67%, going to ranchers whose wolves were killed by the Whaleback pack.

And while the fund covered confirmed wolf kills, it did not compensate for all of the animals — especially newborn calves that are easier to carry — that simply disappeared into the forest.

Griffin, who investigates suspected wolf kills in the region for the Department of Fish and Wildlife, acknowledged that the 80 or so kills attributed to the Whaleback pack is an undercount. He cited studies from other states that estimate only about 1 in 8 wolf kills are ever confirmed.

"I know we don't find most of them," Griffin said.

And there's no money to compensate for the damage that the mere presence of wolves does to cow herds. The cows lose a lot of weight from stress and from trying to stay away from the wolves. Tate, the UC Davis researcher, said GPS data from trackers attached to cows show some of them being chased around the pastures all night long.

"Cows don't usually run 10 miles over four hours in the middle of the night," Tate said. "That's just not what they do."

But wolves are persistence hunters. Weighing

about 100 pounds each, they might struggle to take down a yearling cow that's pushing 1,000 pounds. So they spook the cow and get it running, following behind at a comfortable trot until the cow is exhausted. Then they attack.

"It's fun for [the wolves]; it's like an adrenaline rush," said Torres. "You can tell it really excites them."

But it's a nightmare for the herd, and not just the cows that get singled out. Researchers have found elevated levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, in herds exposed to wolves. Not only do the cows lose weight, but they abort pregnancies at increased rates, researchers found.

"Cattle actually react to wolves very differently, and in a much more extremeway, than they react to other predators," Rickert said.

"We have bears around the ranch, and they'll go and swim in the water troughs, and the cattle will just watch," she said with a laugh. And the occasional mountain lion will stop by, maybe kill a calf, and then move on.

But the wolves set up shop and torment the cattle.

The UC Davis researchers estimated that, over the course of one summer, each wolf in their study cost ranchers between \$70,000 and \$163,000.

All of which has left Griffin, the Siskiyou County wolf liaison, with deeply mixed feelings about the return of the predators.

"There are a lot of people in California who love wolves," he said, "but not very many of them live close to wolves."

Griffin said he enjoys tracking the predators, climbing ridges to see how they use the landscape to their advantage, setting up cameras in the mountains to catch breathtaking images of them playing with their young or howling in the snow on a moonlit night.

But on a recent afternoon, walking through a pasture in the shadow of Mt. Shasta with puffy white clouds drifting across a cobalt blue sky, Griffin recalled one of his worst days on the job.

He'd seen buzzards on the hillside just ahead, where the terrain turns steeply upward and the forest begins. When he arrived to see what the birds were eating, he found a dead cow, its rectum and udders torn away — classic wolf kill.

Mixed with all the blood, he noticed a substantial amount of mucus. His heart sank as he followed the trail of bodily fluids about 60 yards downhill to the half-eaten remains of a newborn calf.

He figured the wolves had waited until the cow was in labor, straining so hard with the contractions that she couldn't run, at least not very far.

"Wolves are beautiful animals, they're just beautiful," Griffin said, gazing up at the ridge where the predators parade in front of his cameras, sometimes with fresh kill in their mouths. "But what they do? That isn't so beautiful."

Dark humor takes edge off tariff tensions

[**Humor**, from A1] ports to the U.S. — a children's book author memed a baffled-looking tropical wrasse fish. The caption: "When you find out Norfolk Island exports are getting hit with a 29% tariff ... guess that's one way to leave a fish floundering."

There are many ways world leaders, businesses and consumers are grappling with the growing threat of a global trade war, but perhaps the easiest — and, for some, the most therapeutic — is to rely on dark humor.

Joking about Trump's frenetic rollout of tariffs has become a common response to the altogether serious issue of an economic fight started by the president that has upended markets, led to boycotts of American-made goods and travel to the U.S., and sparked fears of a recession.

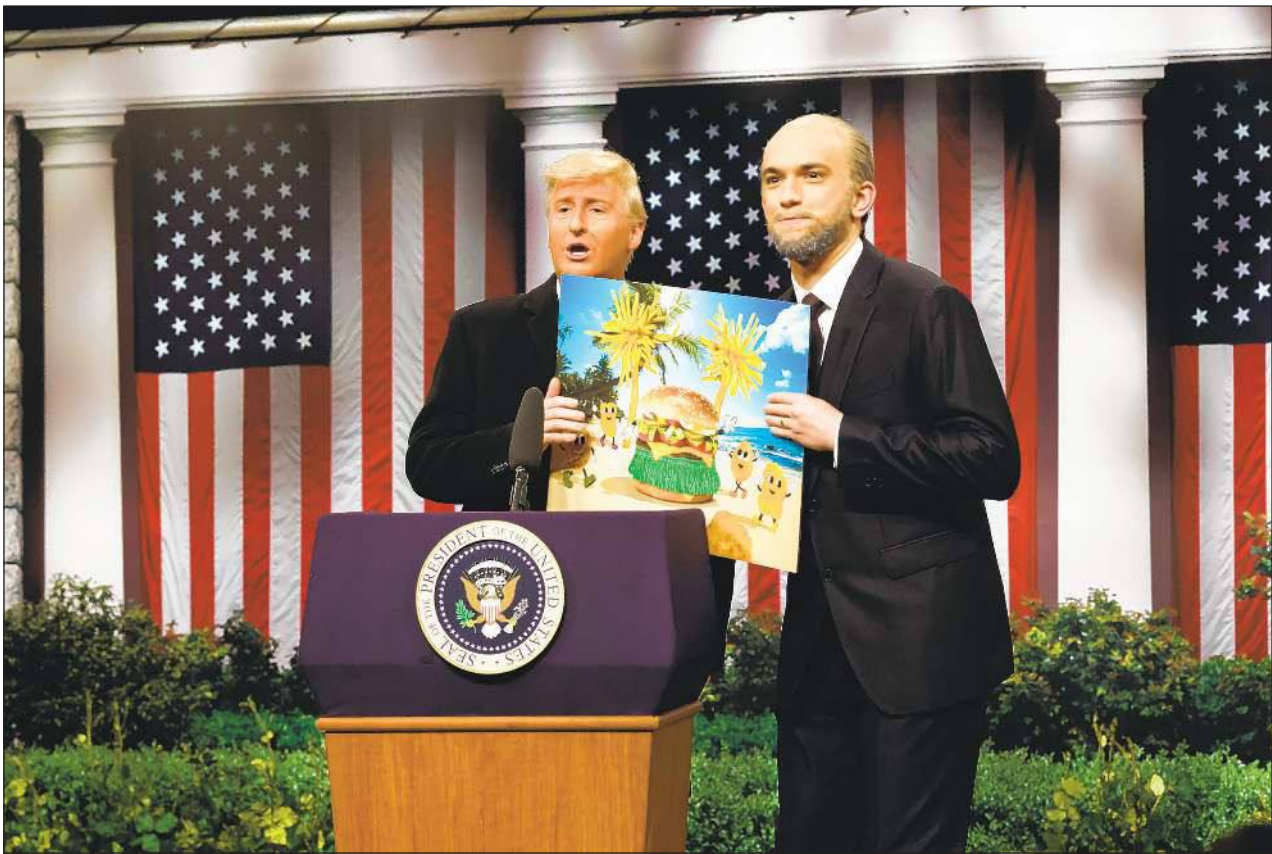
Some of the humor has a barbed, geopolitical aim in a war for the world's hearts and minds — see the Chinese government's fusillade of memes — but political scientists say that, for many people, humor is a natural response to stressful times.

Patrick Giamario, a professor at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and author of the book "Laughter as Politics: Critical Theory in an Age of Hilarity," said humor is an important part of the modern political process — and, for many, an attempt to make sense of events that feel overwhelming.

"The fact that we're laughing so much now is a sort of sign of how broken things are," Giamario said. "We laugh when things stop making sense."

In addition to global angst, the levies have spawned: references to Trump as a "domestic tariff-ist." Videos generated by artificial intelligence that show obese Americans toiling in garment factories. And lots of memes about over-taxed penguins angry about Trump's tariffs, which targeted a few barren, uninhabited subantarctic islands.

"Poor old penguins, I don't know what they did to Trump," Australian trade minister Don Farrell quipped to the Australian Broadcasting Corp. "But, look, I think it's an indication ... that this was a rushed



WILL HEATH NBC via Getty Images

JAMES AUSTIN JOHNSON, left, portrays President Trump and Andrew Dismukes is Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick in a recent "Saturday Night Live" skit satirizing the political tensions related to global trade.

process."

Trump's tariffs have kept much of the world's collective heads on a swivel. When he announced them, he said they would bring "jobs and factories ... roaring back into our country" — despite skepticism from economists across the political spectrum.

On April 2 — which Trump dubbed "Liberation Day" — he announced a baseline tariff of 10% on imported goods from all foreign countries. He also announced higher rates, which he called "reciprocal tariffs," for countries he said were unfairly taxing American goods. Financial markets plunged.

A week later, Trump changed course, saying he would pause the so-called reciprocal tariffs for 90 days while leaving the universal 10% tariff in place. He wrote on his Truth Social account: "BE COOL! Everything is going to work out well." Markets surged.

Meanwhile, Trump escalated his standoff with China, hiking levies on Chinese imports — except, he later said, on electronics such as smartphones and laptops — to 145%.

Beijing retaliated by rais-

ing its levies on U.S. goods to 125%. The trade war was joined by a meme war.

Many of the Chinese memes portray American workers as unprepared for the kinds of jobs that bring products to their homes at cheaper prices.

During a press briefing last week, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt was asked about Chinese officials sharing AI-generated videos depicting Trump, Vice President JD Vance and billionaire Elon Musk working in factories.

"I have seen the videos," Leavitt said. "I'm not sure who made the videos or if we can verify the authenticity. But whoever made it clearly does not see the potential of the American worker, the American workforce."

Screenshots of Leavitt herself being trolled by a Chinese diplomat who accused her of wearing a Chinese-made dress in the White House briefing room also have gone viral.

"Accusing China is business. Buying China is life," Zhang Zhisheng, China's consul general in Denpasar, Indonesia, posted on X. "The beautiful lace on the dress was recognized by an employee of a Chinese com-

pany as its product."

Ramesh Srinivasan, founder of the University of California Digital Cultures Lab, said it is clearly strategic for the typically staid Chinese government to turn to memes and internet jokes to communicate its stance on the trade war, which is that it "is ridiculous and unnecessary."

"They're presenting it in a much more innocuous and funny way, and that's very, very intelligent," Srinivasan said. "It's a sign of the times."

Trump and his acolytes, of course, are veterans of the meme wars (his son and advisor, Donald Trump Jr., lists "Meme Wars General" in his Instagram bio). The president's meme-filled X, née Twitter, account helped launch his political career, as did his crude-but-catchy nicknames for his opponents: Crooked Hillary Clinton, Sleepy Joe Biden and Little Marco [now Secretary of State] Rubio, among others.

Srinivasan said Trump, the former reality television star, has long been skilled at using dark humor to his advantage, especially online, where he is "this kind of hybrid troll-meme person."

On the internet, the tariff

jokes keep coming.

One widely-shared POV — internet lingo for "point of view" — video on TikTok shows a grumpy toddler striding officiously through an empty office. The caption: "POV: Me on my way to HR yet again for nicknaming my co-worker 'Tariff' for costing the company more than they're worth."

On YouTube, Penguins International, an apolitical conservation nonprofit dedicated to studying and protecting penguins, couldn't resist getting in on the fun.

After Heard Island and the McDonald Islands — Australian territories where lots of penguins and no humans live — were listed on Trump's tariffs list, Penguins International announced an online Protest March of the Penguins.

"Waddle we want? No tariffs!" read one digital protest sign.

"Beaks up!" read another.

On Wednesday, the Colorado-based organization posted a YouTube video of the birds' annual migratory trek across the ice to their breeding grounds. As they squawked and brayed, a narrator said: "This year, they

march in protest. They are peaceful. They are flightless. But they are certainly not voiceless."

"We wanted to take an unusual current event and make light of it and stir up some support for some penguins that are endangered and threatened to go extinct," David Schutt, executive director of Penguins International, said in an interview. Before the tariff announcement, he added, "most people didn't know about the islands that these penguins are on."

During an Easter-themed "Saturday Night Live" skit this month, Trump, played by James Austin Johnson, said: "Many people are even calling me the messiah, because of the mess I, uh, made out of the economy — all because of my beautiful tariffs. So beautiful. They were working so well that I had to stop them."

On her "Good for You" podcast on April 13, comedian Whitney Cummings joked about Trump's stated motive of using tariffs to bring manufacturing jobs back to the U.S., where workers — especially young ones who prefer remote work — don't want them.

"I have nieces who are Gen Z," Cummings said. "They're not going to work in a factory. They won't even work at the Cheesecake Factory because that would mean they would have a boss."

American manufacturing largely moved overseas, she continued, because "no one in America believes they should be working for some corporation who treats workers badly. *They* want to be the head of the corporation who treats workers badly."

Two nights later, Cummings did a stand-up set at the Hollywood Improv, performing on a stage that has hosted comedy legends such as Robin Williams, Chris Rock and Eddie Murphy.

Cummings made some mildly political jokes — including one about growing more conservative after having a child and trading in her electric car for a gas model because gas stations are the only places where it's socially acceptable to leave a small child alone in a vehicle.

But during her short set, she stayed away from tariffs — which are, perhaps, funnier on the internet.

As dementia rates rise, experts say hospitals aren't ready

BY DEVNA BOSE AND BENJAMIN THORP

AURORA, Ill. — At her mother's home in Illinois, Tracy Balhan flips through photos of her dad, Bill Speer. In one, he's smiling in front of a bucket of sweating beers and wearing a blue T-shirt that reads, "Pops. The man. The myth. The legend."

Balhan's father died last year after struggling with dementia. During one episode late in his life, he became so agitated that he tried to exit a moving car. Balhan recalls her dad — larger than life, steady and loving — yelling at the top of his lungs.

His geriatric psychiatrist recommended she take him to the emergency room at Endeavor Health's Edward Hospital in the Chicago suburb of Naperville because of its connection to an inpatient behavioral care unit. She hoped it would help get him a quick referral.

But Speer spent 12 hours in the emergency room — at one point restrained by staff — waiting for a psych evaluation. Balhan didn't know it then, but her dad's experience at the hospital is so common it has a name: ER boarding.

One in 6 visits to the emergency department in 2022 that resulted in hospital admission had a wait of four or more hours, according to an Associated Press and Side Effects Public Media data analysis. Fifty percent of the patients who were boarded for any length of time were 65 and older, the analysis showed.

Some people who aren't in the middle of a life-threatening emergency might even wait weeks, healthcare experts said.

ER boarding is a symptom of a crisis in the U.S. healthcare system, including shrinking points of entry for patients seeking care outside of ERs and hospitals



BENJAMIN THORP WFYI Public Media

WIFE Boni Speer, left, of Aurora, Ill., and daughter Tracy Balhan hold a photo of Bill Speer, who suffered an excruciatingly long wait in the emergency room.

prioritizing beds for procedures for which insurance companies typically pay more.

Experts also warn the boarding issue will worsen as the number of Americans 65 and older with dementia grows. Hospital bed capacity in the U.S. may not keep up. Between 2003 and 2023, the number of staffed hospital beds was static, even as emergency department visits shot up 30% to 40%.

'People need to be enraged'

For older people with dementia, boarding can be especially dangerous, Chicago-based geriatric psychiatrist Dr. Shafi Siddiqi said. One research letter published in June 2024 in the Journal of the American Medical Assn. looked at more than 200,000 patients and found long ER stays could be linked to a higher risk of dementia patients developing delirium — a tem-

porary state of mental confusion and sometimes hallucinations.

"People need to be enraged about [boarding]," said Dr. Vicki Norton, president-elect of the American Academy of Emergency Medicine.

National emergency physician groups have lobbied to keep boarding under control. While they've made some progress, nothing substantial has changed, despite concerns that it leads to worse patient outcomes. Dr. Alison Haddock, president of the American College of Emergency Physicians, said that's because boarding is a failing of the entire healthcare system that manifests in the ER, so solving it demands a systemic approach.

Federal and state policy decisions made nearly 40 years ago limited the number of hospital beds, said Arjun Venkatesh, who studies emergency medicine at Yale. People are living longer, he

said, resulting in more complicated illnesses.

In 2003, there were 965,000 staffed hospital beds compared with 913,000 in 2023, according to the American Hospital Assn. And another JAMA research letter published in February shows there are 16% fewer staffed beds in the U.S. since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The ones available may be prioritized for "scheduled care" patients who need non-urgent procedures, such as cancer care or orthopedic surgeries. Insurance companies pay hospitals more for those surgeries, Haddock said, so hospitals aren't likely to move patients into those beds — even as emergency rooms fill up.

Where can people go?

Though long stays in the emergency department are common, there isn't good data that track the ex-

trêmes, emergency medicine experts said.

The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services recently ended a requirement that hospitals track the "median" wait times in their emergency departments. An advisory group that develops quality measures for CMS recommended that the agency try to more accurately capture long emergency department stays. That measure has recently been submitted to CMS, which can choose to adopt it.

Patients' families worry that long emergency room stays may make things worse, forcing some to turn to limited alternatives for support and care.

Nancy Fregeau lives in Kankakee, Ill., with her husband, Michael Reeman, who has dementia.

Last year, she said he visited the Riverside Medical Center emergency department several times, often staying more than four hours and in one case more than 10, before finally getting access to a behavioral care bed. Riverside declined to comment on Reeman's case.

During long waits, Fregeau doesn't know what reassurance she can offer her husband.

"It's hard enough for anyone to be in the ER, but I cannot imagine someone with dementia being in there," she said. "He just kept saying, 'When am I going? What's happening?'"

Since November, Reeman has been going to the MCA Senior Adult Day Center in Kankakee. Fregeau said he treats the center like it's his job, offering to vacuum and clean, but comes home happier after having time around other people and away from the house.

In Illinois, there are fewer adult day centers than there are counties, and other resources for people with dementia are shrinking too. A report from the American

Health Care Assn. and the National Center for Assisted Living found that 1,000 nursing homes in the U.S. closed between 2015 and 2022. At least 15 behavioral health centers, which specialize in treating mental health issues, closed in 2023.

With fewer places for patients to go after being discharged, hospital beds are being used for longer periods, exacerbating the problem. It's more difficult to get a specialty hospital bed, especially when dementia causes aggression.

That was the case for Balhan's father, who became agitated during his ER stay. Hospital staff told Balhan the behavioral care unit wasn't taking dementia patients, so Speer was stuck in the ER for 24 hours until they found a separate behavioral health facility that would take him.

Though the hospital wouldn't comment on Speer's situation, Endeavor Health spokesperson Spencer Walrath said its behavioral care unit typically admits geriatric psychiatry patients, including those with dementia, but it depends on bed availability and a patient's specific needs.

Balhan thinks that the U.S. healthcare system failed to treat her dad as a human being.

"It didn't feel to me like he was being treated with any dignity as a person," she said. "If anything could change, that would be the change that I would want to see."

Bose writes for the Associated Press and Thorp for Side Effects Public Media. AP data journalist Kasturi Pananjady contributed to this report. This story is a collaboration between Side Effects Public Media, a health reporting collaboration of NPR member stations across the Midwest, and the AP.

L.A.’s budget woes could mean deep cuts

[**Budget**, from A1] not having the healthiest budgeting. But I didn't expect to have to consider thousands of possible layoffs," she said.

Bass, for her part, is seeking to project optimism. In interviews with The Times, she highlighted last year's reduction in street homelessness, a recent double-digit drop in homicides and shootings, and a fire recovery that she said is moving more quickly than after other massive wildfires.

"The city has challenges, no question. The city is not in decline. The city, in fact, is going to prepare to welcome the world in a little over a year," Bass said, referring to the 2026 World Cup.

Bass said she is still hoping to avoid employee layoffs, in part by securing financial relief from Gov. Gavin Newsom and the state Legislature.

The mayor and several council members went to Sacramento last month to highlight the city's dire financial condition. The mayor also spoke with Newsom by phone on Thursday about the crisis — and the city's need for aid.

"I didn't hear from him that there is no hope. I hung up with hope," she said.

While Bass publicly touts the idea of state financial relief, her labor negotiators are working behind the scenes to persuade the city's employee unions to make financial concessions, such as postponing pay raises scheduled for the upcoming fiscal year. Those increases, backed by Bass over the last two years, are expected to add about \$250 million to next year's budget, which takes effect July 1.

So far, the talks have not yielded results.

Last month, the board of the Los Angeles Police Protective League, which represents nearly 8,800 officers, took a stand against postponing the raises.

"You deserve every bit of compensation you receive," the union's board of directors said in a message to members, "and the city must look to other areas to tighten its belt."

Service Employees International Union Local 721, which represents more than 10,000 civilian city workers, had a similarly combative message.

"We're not going to allow the out-of-touch bureaucrats ... to balance the budget on the backs of city workers," said David Green, president of SEIU Local 721.

The prospect of deep cuts to city services could further complicate Bass' bid for reelection. Although she does not yet have any well-funded challengers, she remains a frequent target of criticism from real estate developer Rick Caruso, who ran against her unsuccessfully in 2022.

Caruso, who has not divulged whether he will run a second time, recently posted a video on social media high-



LOS ANGELES Mayor Karen Bass, center, mingles at an event marking 100 days since the Palisades fire at Clover Park in Santa Monica on Saturday. Bass has said she will not cut the Fire Department's budget.



BUDGET problems have left many at City Hall anxious about the potential impact on street repairs, street lighting, animal shelters and public safety programs.

lighting the results of a new poll from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, which found that L.A. County residents were deeply frustrated with the region's high cost of living.

That quality-of-life survey, which included residents outside L.A. who cannot participate in its city elections, showed that 49% of respondents had unfavorable views of Bass, up considerably from the prior year.

Mindy Romero, a political sociologist who runs USC's Center for Inclusive Democracy, said the Palisades fire and the events that followed eroded some of the goodwill the mayor en-

joyed during her first two years in office. Monday's speech, she said, could allow Bass to reset the narrative.

"The State of the City, the State of the State, the State of the Union — all those types of reports out to the public are always about informing the public, but they're also about setting a tone," Romero said.

Darry Sragow, a Democratic Party strategist, said the dissatisfaction felt by L.A. voters goes beyond wildfire recovery.

The discontent stems not just from big issues, such as the loss of entertainment industry jobs, but also day-to-day matters such as broken sidewalks, pockmarked

streets and lengthy 911 wait times.

"There's a sense that things are not under control," he said.

Sragow contends that the city's financial problems are largely self-inflicted. And he voiced strong doubts about a windfall arriving from Sacramento.

"I don't know that there would be a lot of sympathy for plowing a huge amount of state money into rescuing L.A.," he said.

In the run-up to her State of the City speech, Bass has begun dropping hints about her upcoming budget. Appearing in Pacific Palisades last week to mark the 100th day since the outbreak of the

fire, she said she will not cut the Fire Department budget.

Nor does she plan to make any cuts to Inside Safe, her signature initiative for fighting homelessness, she told The Times. "We still have to solve the city's problems," she said.

Some City Council members have begun expressing concern about the cost of Inside Safe, which relies heavily on leases with hotels and motels to temporarily house people moving off the streets. By early March, Inside Safe had moved more than 4,000 homeless people indoors, according to a public dashboard. Of that total, about 1,350 eventually returned to the streets, while another 70 died.

Bass, as part of her effort to reduce homelessness, has cut red tape for certain types of affordable housing projects. But housing construction has still been on a downward trajectory.

Last year, the city's Department of Building and Safety issued construction permits for 8,706 homes, a 43% drop compared to 2022, the year Bass took office, according to a report from the research firm Hilgard Analytics.

Mott Smith, who chairs the Council of Infill Builders, an advocacy group focused on development issues, said the city has failed to make meaningful progress in approving policies that will make it easier to build homes. As a result, he said, major investors and lenders are fleeing the L.A. market.

"Even the most die-hard boosters are questioning whether it makes sense to do business here," said Smith, who served on a city working group focused on streamlin-

ing the permitting process.

Smith said the slowdown in housing development is depriving the city of property tax growth, which in turn reduces its ability to deliver services.

Advocates for the entertainment industry have argued a similar case, saying the loss of local film and television shoots is having a ripple effect on the economy — and weakening the city's tax base.

With fewer local productions, L.A.'s entertainment workers are spending less at supermarkets, restaurants, dry cleaners and other businesses, said Monica Levinson, a member of Producers United, which met last week with the mayor's team to seek additional support for the industry.

"People are not putting money into the economy," Levinson said.

Last month, City Administrative Officer Matt Szabo informed the City Council that tax revenues were expected to come in \$315 million below previous projections, due to a slowdown in local economic activity.

Bass said she will continue to push for expanded tax credits for the entertainment industry, while also searching for ways to cut filming costs locally. On housing, she said she wants a faster permitting system but also believes the problem is caused in large part by market forces, such as higher interest rates.

Meanwhile, the city is confronting yet another financial issue: the growing cost of payouts stemming from police misconduct, broken sidewalks and other types of lawsuits against the city. The city will need to devote an additional \$100 million to legal payouts — both settlements and jury awards — in the coming budget year, Szabo recently told the council.

Bass portrayed the downturn in economic activity and the soaring cost of legal payouts as the biggest drivers of the city's budget woes. She expressed zero regret about her decision to boost the wages of police officers and other city employees, saying the move was needed to prevent workers from leaving.

Former City Councilmember Bernard C. Parks, who ran the council's budget committee for eight years, attributed much of the city's financial woes to the high cost of its public employee salary agreements.

Parks, a former LAPD chief who served on the council from 2003 to 2015, said he adopted a strategy for spending taxpayer funds early in his political career: "Never put anything in the budget that can't be sustained."

Now, Parks said, every layoff approved by the city will mean a reduction in some type of city service.

Times staff writer Noah Goldberg contributed to this report.

Insurer collusion is alleged in suits by property owners

[**Insurers**, from A1] premiums while depriving homeowners of coverage that they were ready, willing, and able to purchase to ensure that they could recover after a disaster like January's wildfires."

Representatives of the major insurance companies meet regularly to "discuss issues that we would consider to be market issues," including the administration of the FAIR Plan, said Jamie Court, president and chair of the board of Consumer Watchdog, a Santa Monica-based progressive nonprofit. "This was clearly a concerted attempt by the entire industry to push people in high-risk areas to lower benefit policies, and at the same time keep collecting higher premiums from everyone else."

The FAIR Plan was established in the wake of the 1965 Watts riots after fleeing insurers highlighted the need for a new type of carrier. The goal was to provide an insurance option for California homeowners living in places that open-market carriers refused to cover — including in communities vulnerable to wildfire.

The FAIR Plan has its own reserves but is backstopped by California's licensed property insurers, which are required to pay claims when the plan runs through its funds. The plan has proved pivotal because of increasingly disastrous fires in the state, including after the 2018 Camp fire that destroyed the town of Paradise and cost insurers \$12.5 billion.

However, with many insurers canceling coverage for homeowners in fire-risk zones, the FAIR Plan has become overwhelmed. The number of FAIR Plan policyholders has skyrocketed from about 200,000 residential policyholders in 2020 to nearly 560,000 as of March 2025.

The plan has estimated that it will lose some \$4 billion on claims related to the January fires in the L.A. area, draining its reserves and reinsurance.

charges to premiums paid by their policyholders to re-cover 50% of that.

Those increases in premiums apply to homeowners throughout California — not just fire-prone areas. That said, Lara must consider those surcharges separately.

Opponents of the policy call it an industry "bailout" that burdens consumers.

"Homeowners across the state should not be on the hook for the L.A. fires because insurance companies abandoned those neighborhoods and dumped homeowners on the FAIR Plan," Carmen Balber, executive director of Consumer Watchdog, told The Times in January.

The new suits allege that the state's top insurers — those required by law to back the FAIR Plan — colluded to cancel plans, leaving homeowners underinsured under that plan, which has higher premiums than most plans on the commercial market, yet is capped at the lower coverage limit of \$3 million. The plaintiffs are seeking three times the damages each has sustained.



THE JANUARY fire took a heavy toll on Pacific Palisades, including on Drummond Street, above, near Sunset Boulevard, which is seen on Thursday.

"This is exactly the type of action that needs to happen for us to break up what is clearly cartel-like behavior," Court said.

Representatives from State Farm and Allstate did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Hilary McLean, a spokesperson for the FAIR Plan, told The Times that "while the California FAIR Plan is not named in these lawsuits, the FAIR Plan does not comment on active litigation."

Gabriel Sanchez, repre-

senting Lara's office, said in an email: "The Department of Insurance is not involved in this matter as a party and cannot comment on the lawsuit. Our focus is, and always will be, protecting California consumers."

This month, State Farm proposed a 17% emergency rate hike — down from an initial 22% request to state officials in February — that it said is necessary to "help stabilize State Farm General's financial position" and prevent the carrier from

having to "further constrain" its ability to provide home insurance in California.

Meanwhile, many who lost their homes in the L.A.-area fires are calling for a formal government investigation of major insurance providers, alleging that delays and denials have kept them in dire financial straits and housing limbo.

Times staff writer Laurence Darmiento contributed to this report.

From convicts to honored GOP speakers

[Rioters, from A1] spotlighted as honored guest speakers at Republican events around the country. They are getting a platform to tell their version of events and being hailed as heroes and martyrs. Some are considering running for office, recognizing that, at least among a certain segment of the pro-Trump base, they may be criminals but they are hailed as patriots.

Kelley, a 43-year-old commercial real estate developer, is among those fielding new opportunities in the political arena.

At a recent county Republican committee event in Jackson, Mich., Kelley was met with hugs and handshakes. Dozens of attendees hollered and clapped when he introduced himself as “your favorite J6-er.” They gasped and shook their heads as Kelley recalled how his young son thought he was dead while he was in federal prison. They urged him to run for governor again in 2026. It is something he said he is debating.

After Kelley finished speaking, attendees said they were touched by his story.

“I’ve done much worse and did no jail time,” said 58-year-old Todd Gillman, a woodworker and Republican chairman for the local congressional district. “Thank God people like Ryan Kelley are not intimidated by the lawfare that was used against them.”

Showcasing rioters

It makes sense that Republicans are seizing the chance to showcase Jan. 6 rioters, said Matt Dallek, a historian at George Washington University who studies the conservative movement.

Trump, a convicted felon, has characterized those rioters as “political prisoners” and “warriors” for defending him and his false claims that the 2020 election he lost to Democrat Joe Biden was stolen. There is no credible evidence that the election was tainted or that Trump was the winner — facts backed up by federal and state election officials and

Trump’s attorney general. Trump’s allegations of fraud were also roundly rejected by courts, including by judges appointed by him during his first term.

“Those who are pardoned can testify, like no one else can, to the horrific power of the federal government to destroy their lives,” Dallek said. “It’s a potent rallying cry, and also probably a potent fundraising tool.”

There also is a danger to elevating them, he acknowledged. Many of those later pardoned by the Republican president assaulted police officers and otherwise used violence to stop the peaceful transfer of power, and juries determined their actions to be criminal — felonies, in many cases.

“It is, I think, a mainstreaming, a growing acceptance on the right of political violence, as long as it’s done in the service of Trump and his ongoing election lie,” Dallek said.

Kelley, who did not commit violence or enter the Capitol, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor trespassing charge. He said he saw some things at the Capitol — people breaking windows, for example — that he did not like. But he also rejected an audience member’s use of the term “insurrection.”

“It was a protest that turned into a little bit of a scuffle later in the day for a couple of minutes, right?” he told the nodding crowd in Jackson, a midsize city west of Detroit that residents say hosted the first official meeting of the Republican Party in 1854.

Extensive video and testimony involving the events inside the Capitol on Jan. 6 show more than a scuffle. A mob of Trump supporters — some armed with poles, bats and bear spray — overwhelmed law enforcement officers, shattered windows and sent lawmakers and aides running into hiding. Some were threatening to hang Vice President Mike Pence and hunt down Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other lawmakers.

About 140 police officers were injured, with some dragged into the crowd and beaten or attacked with



PAUL SANCYA Associated Press

AT A RECENT GOP event in Jackson, Mich., Ryan Kelley introduced himself as “your favorite J6-er.”

‘It is ... a growing acceptance on the right of political violence, as long as it’s done in the service of Trump and his ongoing election lie.’

— **MATT DALLEK**, historian, on Jan. 6 rioters being asked to speak at GOP events

makeshift weapons. Five officers died, as did four of the rioters.

Kelley said the reason he pleaded guilty was to avoid more serious charges. That differed from his tone at his sentencing hearing in 2023, when he told the judge that his actions outside the Capitol, from crossing the police line to riling up other rioters and ripping a tarp, were wrong. The judge told Kelley: “I think you misused the platform that you had as a candidate for elected office to minimize and, frankly, to lie about what happened.”

As he gazed out at an American flag banner while addressing the crowd in Jackson, Kelley said he “was a political prisoner for standing up for what I believe was right.”

That resonated with attendee Marilyn Acton, a

68-year-old mental health counselor. She hopes pardoned Jan. 6 rioters such as Kelley become more involved in Republican politics.

“I would like them to totally get involved, because I think people need to know the truth,” she said.

Speaking events

By the Associated Press’ count, at least two dozen local Republican groups nationwide in recent months have invited Jan. 6 rioters to speak at regular meetings or special fundraisers, some with titles such as “Insurrection Hoax” and “Patriots Vindicated.”

They include people who trespassed at the Capitol but also rioters who were criminally convicted and pardoned for more serious crimes such as carrying a firearm on Capitol grounds or violently attacking law enforcement.

The Western Wake Republican Club in North Carolina in March featured remarks from James Grant, a pardoned rioter who was among the first to assault police officers and breach a security perimeter during the attack on the Capitol.

Grant, who later climbed into the Capitol through a broken window and entered a senator’s office, used the stage to reiterate his claim that the 2020 election was stolen as well as another falsehood — that the actions on the front line of the riots

were led by “undercovers and federal agents.” In a video recording of the event, he also decried the conditions in prison and said the experience was traumatic for him.

A Republican women’s club in Lawrence County, Tenn., this month hosted an event for Ronald Colton McAbee, who was convicted of felonies for his violent acts on Jan. 6.

He was employed as a sheriff’s deputy in Tennessee when he went to the Capitol, dragging an officer away from a police line and punching another officer who tried to stop him.

McAbee told the crowd that the jury that convicted him of five felonies was biased and said he had been trying to help the officer in the melee. He encouraged those listening to get involved in politics and said he had considered running for office.

“It has been a thought, and we’ll see what happens,” he said in a video recording of the event.

Some of the local GOP groups welcoming Jan. 6 rioters have faced resistance from their communities, prompting them to relocate or cancel scheduled events.

In California, the Assn. of Monterey Bay Conservatives’ event featuring six pardoned rioters faced so much public outrage that three potential venues canceled, according to TV station KSBW. When the event was ultimately held at a fourth venue, in Salinas, protesters demonstrated outside.

The Monterey Peace and Justice Center, a local nonprofit that condemned the event, said in an emailed statement that “rebranding these rioters as heroes is a dangerous distortion of history.”

Event organizer Karen Weissman told the AP in an email that her group believed that it was “important for our community to hear their stories and hear a different perspective.”

David Becker, a former Justice Department lawyer and co-author of “The Big Truth,” a book about Trump’s 2020 election falsehoods, said he is troubled by

anyone who would reward or celebrate what happened on Jan. 6.

“We have to agree as a constitutional republic, as a democracy, that elections and the rule of law have meaning,” he said. “And if we lose that meaning, if we attack our own institutions, we are going down a path where something even worse could happen in the future.”

Political ambitions

Some pardoned rioters are taking things a step beyond speaking at political events and setting their sights on local, state or even federal office.

Jake Lang, who was convicted of assaulting an officer, civil disorder and other crimes before he was pardoned by Trump, recently announced he is running for Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s former U.S. Senate seat in Florida.

Enrique Tarrio, the former Proud Boys leader who was sentenced to 22 years in prison after being convicted of seditious conspiracy and other crimes before his full pardon, said in an interview with Newsmax that he will take a “serious look at running for office” in 2026 or 2028 and believes his “future is in politics.”

In Texas, pardoned rioter Ryan Nichols announced a run for Congress but withdrew days later.

Kelley, who is considering the pleas that he make another run for Michigan governor next year, said he is not sure he can commit his young family to the grind of the campaign. He said he wants Michigan to win, whether or not he is the one in office.

Still, he recognizes that Trump’s pardons have opened a window of opportunity that may not last forever.

“Now is kind of the time that I could catapult with that, right?” he said in an interview. “We get a lot of hate, but I’m also going to get a lot of support.”

Swenson writes for the Associated Press. AP writer Christina A. Cassidy in Atlanta contributed to this report.

250 years later, a divided nation faces new challenges

Americans mark the Battles of Lexington and Concord with reenactments, pride and protests.

BY HILLEL ITALIE AND MICHAEL CASEY

LEXINGTON, Mass. — Thousands of people came to this Massachusetts town over the weekend to witness a reenactment of how the American Revolution began 250 years ago, with the blast of gunshot and a trail of colonial spin.

Starting with Saturday’s anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, the country is looking back to its war of independence and asking where its legacy stands today. Just after dawn Saturday on the Lexington Battle Green, militiamen, muskets in hand, took on a much larger army of British regulars. The battle ended with eight Americans dead and 10 wounded — the dead scattered on the grounds as the British marched off.

The regulars would head to Concord, but not before a horseman, Dr. Samuel Prescott, rode toward the North Bridge, warning communities along the way that the British were coming. A lone horseman reenacted that ride Saturday, followed by a parade through town and a ceremony at the bridge.

The day offered an opportunity to reflect on this seminal moment in history but also consider what this fight means now.

“It’s truly momentous,” said Richard Howell, who portrayed Lexington Minuteman Samuel Tidd in the battle.

“This is one of the most sacred pieces of ground in the country, if not the world, because of what it represents,” he said. “To represent what went on that day, how a small town of Lexington was a vortex of so much. ... Lexington was the first



SOPHIE PARK Getty Images

PEOPLE gather with flags and signs in hand Saturday for a parade in Lexington, Mass., marking the 250th anniversary of the Battles of Lexington and Concord.

town that was able to anywhere muster men and were the first to face the onslaught of the British.”

Among those watching the Lexington reenactment was Brandon Mace, a lieutenant colonel with the Army Reserve who said his fifth great-grandfather Moses Stone was part of the Lexington militia.

He said watching the reenactment was “a little emotional.”

“He made the choice just like I made and my brother made, and my son is in the Army as well,” Mace said. “We weren’t drafted. We weren’t forced to do this. He did not know we would be celebrating him today. He did not know that he was participating in the birth of the nation. He just knew his friends and family were in danger.”

The semicentennial comes as President Trump, the scholarly community and others mark a national divide over whether to have a yearlong party leading up to July 4, 2026, as Trump has called for, or to balance any celebrations with questions about women, the en-

slaved and Indigenous people and what their stories reveal.

The history of Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts is half-known, the myth deeply rooted.

What happened at Lexington?

Reenactors may with confidence tell us that hundreds of British troops marched from Boston in the early morning of April 19, 1775, and gathered about 14 miles northwest of Lexington’s town green.

Firsthand witnesses remembered that some British officers yelled, “Throw down your arms, ye villains, ye rebels!” and that amid the chaos a shot was heard, followed by “scattered fire” from the British. The battle turned so fierce that the area reeked of burning powder. By day’s end, the fighting had continued around seven miles west to Concord and some 250 British and 95 Colonists were killed or wounded.

But no one has learned who fired first, or why. And

the Revolution was initially less a revolution than a demand for better terms.

Woody Holton, a professor of early American history at the University of South Carolina, says most scholars agree the rebels of April 1775 weren’t looking to leave the empire but to repair their relationship with King George III and go back to the days preceding the Stamp Act, the Tea Act and other disputes of the previous decade.

“The Colonists only wanted to turn back the clock to 1763,” he said.

Stacy Schiff, a Pulitzer Prize-winning historian whose books include biographies of Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Adams, said Lexington and Concord “galvanized opinion precisely as the Massachusetts men hoped it would, though still it would be a long road to a vote for independence, which Adams felt should have been declared on 20 April 1775.”

But at the time, Schiff added, “it did not seem possible that a mother country and her colony had actually come to blows.”

A story of surprise and improvisation

The rebels had already believed their cause greater than a disagreement between subjects and rulers. Well before the turning points of 1776, before the Declaration of Independence or Thomas Paine’s exhortation that “we have it in our power to begin the world over again,” they cast themselves in a drama for the ages.

The so-called Suffolk Resolves of 1774, drafted by civic leaders of Suffolk County, Mass., prayed for a life “unfettered by power, unclogged with shackles,” a fight that would determine the “fate of this new world, and of unborn millions.”

The Revolution was an ongoing story of surprise and improvisation. Military historian Rick Atkinson, whose “The Fate of the Day” is the second of a planned trilogy on the war, called Lexington and Concord “a clear win for the home team,” if only because the British hadn’t expected such impassioned resistance from the Colonists’ militia.

The British, ever underestimating those whom King George regarded as a “deluded and unhappy multitude,” would be knocked back again when the rebels promptly framed and transmitted a narrative blaming the royal forces.

“Once shots were fired in Lexington, Samuel Adams and Joseph Warren did all in their power to collect statements from witnesses and to circulate them quickly; it was essential that the Colonies, and the world, understand who had fired first,” Schiff said. “Adams was convinced that the Lexington skirmish would be ‘famed in the history of this country.’ He knocked himself out to make clear who the aggressors had been.”

A country still in progress

Neither side imagined a war lasting eight years, or had confidence in what kind

of country would be born out of it. The Founders united in their quest for self-government but differed on how to actually govern, and whether self-government could even last.

Americans have never stopped debating the balance of powers, the rules of enfranchisement or how widely to apply the declaration that “all men are created equal.”

That debate was very much on display Saturday — though mostly on the fringes and with anti-Trump protesters far outnumbered by flag-waving tourists, local residents and history buffs. Many protesters carried signs inspired by the American Revolution including “Resist Like It’s 1775,” and one brought a puppet of an orange-faced Trump.

“It’s a very appropriate place and date to make it clear that as Americans we want to take a stand against what we think is an encroaching autocracy,” Glenn Stark, a retired physics professor who was holding a “No Kings” sign and watching the ceremony at the North Bridge. “I feel strongly that it’s time to stand here and make it clear that we aren’t going to sit back and let this happen to our country.”

Democratic Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey, who spoke at the North Bridge ceremony, also used the event to remind the cheering crowd that many of the ideals fought for during the Revolution are once again at risk.

“We live in a moment when our freedoms are once again under attack, including from the highest office in the land,” she said.

“We see things that would be familiar to our Revolutionary predecessors — the silencing of critics, the disappearing people from our streets, demands for unquestioned fealty,” she said. “Due process is a foundational right. If it can be discarded for one, it can be lost for all.”

Italie and Casey write for the Associated Press.

ADVERTISING SUPPLEMENT

EMIL DAVTYAN AND BRIAN HEGARTY SHARE INSIGHTS ON EMPLOYEE BENEFITS & EFFECTIVE HR PRACTICES

This **‘Conversation with the Experts’** section is produced by the LA Times Studios team in conjunction with D.Law, Inc. and Marsh McLennan Agency.



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Businesses have been navigating through a continuously altering and evolving employee benefits landscape. Return-to-work mandates, new technological advancements and workforce shortages in many industries have led to a new set of expectations, protocols and best practices when it comes to businesses determining the right benefits packages for their employees. What should C-suiters and HR professionals be focusing

on in terms of new standards?

To answer that and other questions while taking a closer look at the latest developing trends in the business of employee benefits and HR best practices, we have turned to two of the region’s leading authorities, Emil Davtyan of D.Law, Inc. and Brian Hegarty of Marsh McLennan Agency, who graciously weighed in for a discussion and shared insights.

**Q:ARE THERE ANY NEW
LEGISLATIVE, COMPLIANCE
OR REGULATORY ISSUES/
TRENDS THAT HR
PROFESSIONALS SHOULD
BE AWARE OF IN 2025?**

A: DAVTYAN

In 2025, several new laws are creating fresh compliance challenges for HR teams. Updates to California’s pay transparency rules now require real-time salary range postings in job advertisements and

regulatory trends that could impact their organizations. Firstly, the Affordable Care Act (ACA) marketplace continues to evolve, with potential changes in enrollment periods and subsidy structures that may affect employee health benefits. Additionally, the Inflation Reduction Act is poised to significantly influence Medicare drug prices, which could have downstream effects on employer-sponsored health plans and overall healthcare costs. The national landscape for paid family leave is also shifting, with various states implementing or expanding their programs, necessitating that HR teams stay informed to ensure compliance and support for their employees. Lastly, the focus on long-term disability and mental health parity is gaining momentum, prompting HR professionals to reassess their policies to ensure they align with new standards aimed at providing equitable support for mental health conditions. Staying abreast of these issues will be crucial for HR professionals to navigate the complexities of compliance and to foster a supportive workplace environment.

**Q:HOW SHOULD
EMPLOYERS NAVIGATE
CALIFORNIA’S STRICT
MEAL AND REST BREAK
REQUIREMENTS IN 2025?**

A: DAVTYAN

California’s meal and rest break laws remain among the strictest in the country, and non-compliance continues to drive costly litigation. In 2025, employers should focus on consistent enforcement and robust documentation. This includes clearly communicating break policies to employees, scheduling shifts to accommodate timely breaks and ensuring that breaks are duty-free and uninterrupted. Employers should also implement systems to track when breaks are taken and flag any missed or late breaks, issuing premium pay as required. Training supervisors and HR teams to proactively enforce these policies is essential. A strong compliance infrastructure not only protects workers but also helps employers avoid significant penalties.

**Q:WHAT EMERGING
EMPLOYEE BENEFITS
DO YOU SEE GAINING
TRACTION IN
2025, AND WHY?**

A: HEGARTY

In 2025, several emerging employee benefits are expected to gain traction, reflecting the evolving needs of the workforce as highlighted in Marsh McLennan Agency’s 2025 employee benefits trends report. One significant area is support for caregivers, with organizations increasingly offering remote work benefits, flexible scheduling and enhanced family leave, childcare and fertility benefits to accommodate employees balancing work and caregiving responsibilities. Additionally, student loan repayment programs and learning opportunities are becoming more prevalent, as employers recognize the importance of investing in their employees’ education and financial well-being. There is a growing emphasis on mental well-being, with benefits that prioritize holistic health, such as Health Savings Accounts

AI is increasingly transforming benefits administration and employee engagement, positioning human resources as one of the departments most affected by this technological expansion.”

– BRIAN HEGARTY

internal listings, placing new demands on compensation systems. Expanded workplace surveillance disclosure rules are also in effect, requiring employers to inform employees of monitoring practices and obtain consent in certain scenarios. Federally, new EEOC guidance on AI in hiring emphasizes bias audits and transparency, catching some employers off guard who haven’t yet reviewed their algorithmic tools. Proactive policy updates and internal training are critical to staying ahead of these evolving requirements.

A: HEGARTY

In 2025, HR professionals should be vigilant about several emerging legislative and

California’s meal and rest break laws remain among the strictest in the country, and non-compliance continues to drive costly litigation. In 2025, employers should focus on consistent enforcement and robust documentation.”

– EMIL DAVTYAN

(HSAs) and Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAs), alongside flexible and remote work options and financial planning resources. These trends reflect a broader

commitment to fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace that addresses the diverse needs of employees in today's dynamic environment.

Q:WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON MISTAKES HR TEAMS MAKE IN CONDUCTING HARASSMENT INVESTIGATIONS?

A: DAVTYAN

A few common missteps can undermine the integrity of harassment investigations. One is failing to act promptly when a complaint is raised – delays can compromise evidence and erode trust. Another mistake is bias,

Employers must carefully consider the long-term consequences of reducing benefits, as this can lead to increased employee dissatisfaction and higher turnover rates, ultimately jeopardizing their ability to attract and retain top talent.”

– BRIAN HEGARTY

whether real or perceived, especially if the investigator has a close relationship with the involved parties. Incomplete documentation and inadequate communication throughout the process also pose risks. HR should avoid making premature conclusions and instead ensure the investigation is thorough, impartial and well-documented. Providing clear updates to all parties and taking appropriate corrective action when warranted are essential best practices that protect both employees and the organization.

Q:HOW ARE COMPANIES BALANCING COST-EFFECTIVENESS WITH PROVIDING COMPETITIVE BENEFITS PACKAGES?

A: HEGARTY

Companies are looking to innovative strategies to balance cost-effectiveness with the need to provide competitive benefits packages. While employers cannot control the rising costs of healthcare, they can optimize their spending strategies to mitigate ballooning prices. According to a 2024 McKinsey roundtable, high-performance networks (HPNs) have emerged as one of the most promising tools, potentially cutting costs by up to 15% and helping employers manage their healthcare expenditures more effectively. Additionally, self-insurance, traditionally favored by large organizations, is gaining traction among small and medium-sized businesses. When managed with a dynamic, data-driven strategy, it can yield long-term savings. Another effective approach is reference-based pricing, which establishes fixed maximum prices for medical services based on Medicare rates, allowing employers to avoid surprise costs and potentially save 20% to 30% annually on healthcare expenses (according to a 2022 BenefitsPRO study). These strategies can be further enhanced by utilizing data analytics and reporting tools to create more accurate forecasts of future healthcare spending. Marsh McLennan Agency's Planning & Analytics for Total Health (PATH) transforms your data into prescriptive strategies so you can offer competitive, cost-effective benefits while empowering healthier employees. Overall, employers must carefully consider the long-term consequences of reducing benefits, as this can lead to increased employee dissatisfaction and higher turnover rates,

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ultimately jeopardizing their ability to attract and retain top talent.

Q:WHAT BEST PRACTICES HELP ENSURE PREGNANCY-RELATED ACCOMMODATIONS ARE LAW-COMPLIANT AND EMPLOYEE-SUPPORTIVE?

A: DAVTYAN

To comply with California's pregnancy accommodation laws, employers should engage in a timely, good-faith interactive process as soon as an employee makes a request. This includes evaluating the employee's needs, considering physician recommendations and offering reasonable accommodations, such as modified duties, schedule adjustments or temporary leave. It's also important to educate managers about their responsibilities to avoid discriminatory remarks or actions, even unintentionally. Creating a supportive culture around pregnancy and parenthood helps ensure compliance and boosts employee morale. Documenting each step of the process protects both the employee's rights and the employer's legal interests.

Q:HOW IS AI BEING USED TO IMPROVE BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT?

A: HEGARTY

AI is increasingly transforming benefits administration and employee engagement, positioning human resources as one of the departments most affected by this technological expansion. The majority of HR leaders believe that AI will “radically change how work gets done,” (as quoted in ServiceNow's 2024 Employee Experience trends report) with clear use cases emerging across various HR functions, including hiring, learning and development, performance management, and benefits administration. In the recruitment process, AI solutions enhance efficiency and have been shown to improve the diversity of new hires, with nearly one in three HR professionals noting this positive impact according to SHRM's 2024 Talent Trends report. AI can also personalize learning and development materials to align with individual employee learning styles, significantly enhancing the employee experience while reducing associated costs. Organizations are leveraging AI to identify skill gaps, analyze performance metrics, and provide managers with actionable feedback, while also granting employees access to their performance data to track their progress. As HR departments prepare for the future, many are actively upskilling or reskilling employees to adapt to AI initiatives, recognizing the need for a more technology-minded approach to business decisions and organizational growth. While AI is expected to reduce workloads in the long run, the current talent and skills crunch may strain HR resources, making the integration of AI both a challenge and an opportunity for enhancing employee engagement and benefits administration.

Q:WHAT'S THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF BEREAVEMENT LEAVE RIGHTS IN CALIFORNIA?

A: DAVTYAN

California now mandates bereavement leave for eligible employees at companies with five or more workers. The law provides up to five days of unpaid leave upon the death of a qualifying family member. While the leave is unpaid, employees may use other available paid time off, such as vacation or sick leave. Employers must allow the leave to be taken within three months of the death and may request documentation, such as a death certificate or obituary. To remain compliant, employers should update their handbooks and ensure supervisors are aware of these requirements, balancing legal obligations with empathy during sensitive times.

Q:WHAT PROTOCOLS DO YOU RECOMMEND TO HELP COMPANIES COMMUNICATE BETTER WITH THEIR WORKFORCE?

A: HEGARTY

To enhance communication within the workplace, companies should adopt a comprehensive communication strategy that considers the diverse preferences and needs of their workforce. Employers who take the time to analyze their employee base and tailor strategies accordingly – whether through voluntary benefits that appeal to specific age groups, personalized communication methods or flexible work arrangements – position themselves as organizations that truly value their people. This approach not only addresses generational differences but also fosters a culture of inclusion where every employee feels supported. Utilizing technology to share benefits communications is essential in this context, as it allows for real-time updates and easy access to information. Companies can implement user-friendly platforms that centralize benefits information, making it accessible to all employees regardless of their preferred communication style. Additionally, incorporating interactive elements, such as webinars, video tutorials and FAQs, can

To comply with California's pregnancy accommodation laws, employers should engage in a timely, good-faith interactive process as soon as an employee makes a request ... creating a supportive culture around pregnancy and parenthood helps ensure compliance and boosts employee morale.”

– EMIL DAVTYAN

further engage employees and ensure that they fully understand their benefits. By fostering an inclusive communication environment that leverages technology and tailors strategies to meet the needs of a diverse workforce, organizations can improve employee engagement, satisfaction and overall workplace harmony.

Q:HOW SHOULD HR DOCUMENT TERMINATIONS TO PREVENT WRONGFUL TERMINATION CLAIMS?

A: DAVTYAN

Thorough documentation is the cornerstone of a defensible termination. HR should maintain clear records showing the employee's performance issues, disciplinary actions taken, and communications about expectations and improvement opportunities. When terminating for cause, employers should document the specific policy violations and provide the employee with a written explanation. Conducting an exit interview and having a witness present during the termination meeting can further protect the employer. Importantly, all documentation should be factual, objective and free from emotional language. Well-maintained records demonstrate fairness and transparency – key elements in defending against wrongful termination claims.

BUSINESS

Hollywood was already in a tough spot. President Trump's tariffs, the resulting stock market volatility and a possibly looming recession won't make life any easier for the entertainment industry.

In the days after Trump's so-called Liberation Day speech, the markets have given investors whiplash, with each new update sending stocks gyrating for another unpredictable cycle.

The administration's subsequent backtracking hasn't quelled the turmoil. Trump has put a 90-day pause on the latest levies, but the 10% across-the-board tariffs remain in place and with import taxes now at 145% for Chinese goods. But Trump says smartphones, computers and other electronics are excluded from the tariffs on China.

Confused? You're not alone, and as the cliché goes, markets hate uncertainty.

Stocks are generally down, including those of the major media and entertainment firms, which are all vulnerable to a potential economic downturn, even if they aren't all as exposed to trade disputes on their own. Concerns about pocketbook issues could make people think twice about taking vacations and going out. They might even encourage people to further cull their streaming services.

Walt Disney Co. shares are down 14% from a month ago. Warner Bros. Discovery, which is loaded up with debt and thus sensitive to shakiness in the capital markets, is off by 24%. Comcast, Paramount, Lionsgate and AMC Networks have all fallen.

Though Hollywood isn't as dependent on global trade as, say, the microchip industry, there are several ways the current situation could play out.

Advertising spending tends to pull back in a wobbly economy, and this is all happening just weeks before the networks' and streaming services put on their big upfront presentations to ad buyers. So the timing is not great, and streaming services are increasingly reliant on cheaper ad-based tiers for revenue and subscriber growth.

Theme parks could come under increased pressure. Park attendance, including at Disneyland and Walt Dis-



Los Angeles Times photo illustration; Getty Images

THE WIDE SHOT

How trade war could hurt Hollywood

Tariffs may not hit entertainment companies as hard, but economic malaise and global tensions could do much damage. And don't forget the China problem.

By Ryan Faughnder

ney World, is typically a good barometer for consumers' confidence in the economy, which already appears to be falling. Meanwhile, Comcast is preparing to open its long-awaited Epic Universe theme park in Orlando, Fla., in a big bet on its own intellectual property at a time when consumers are feeling pessimistic about the economy.

Although Disney executives have expressed optimism about summer booking for the parks this year, the trade war and the administration's generally nationalistic worldview has increased anti-U.S. sentiment abroad. That is already putting a damper on America's tourism industry, according to a report from Bernstein analyst Laurent

Yoon and as my colleagues Suhauna Hussain and Andrea Chang reported.

For California's already struggling film and TV production landscape, the tariffs will result in cost increases, for example, by raising the price of Canadian lumber used to build sets.

And don't forget the possible loss of the Chinese box office, which has already become a problem for Hollywood and may soon get worse. The China Film Administration said on April 10 that it would cut back on the number of U.S. films allowed into the world's second-largest film market.

China used to be a gold mine for U.S. studios, which could count on certain blockbuster films making huge amounts of money

from the nation's booming middle class. But that changed in recent years as China's own film industry became increasingly adept at creating films with impressive production values and often patriotic themes.

The Chinese government, of course, put its thumb on the scale in favor of homegrown productions.

Hollywood's box office from China last year was down at least 75% from its 2017 peak, according to TD Cowen analyst Doug Creutz. Hollywood now accounts for a small percentage of overall annual ticket sales in China.

Even so, it would be a mistake to downplay the issue. With the costs of U.S. movies increasing, every lit-

tle bit of lost revenue matters. Effects-driven spectacles such as "Jurassic World Rebirth" and "Avatar: Fire and Ash" can still do big business in the Middle Kingdom if they're allowed in. What would the "Fast & Furious" series be without Chinese audiences?

Don't forget Hollywood already lost Russia as a film market after Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine. One fewer major territory these days can make the difference between breaking even and not, according to film industry insiders.

Most high-level dealmaking is also probably on hold for now. With Trump, everything is a negotiating tactic, and policies announced one day might be completely different the next. In that

murky kind of environment, it will be difficult for executives to make long-term multibillion-dollar commitments.

That, for the time being, is the big-picture issue.

Whether you think Trump is recklessly dismantling an eight-decade global trade system for wrong-headed ideological reasons, or you believe he's causing short-term pain to rewrite the economic order in America's favor, few would deny these moves are destabilizing.

This article is taken from the April 15 edition of the Wide Shot, a weekly newsletter about the business of entertainment. Sign up at latimes.com/newsletters.

Why Trump's attacks on the Fed chair worry economists

By CHRISTOPHER RUGABER

WASHINGTON — President Trump has stepped up his attacks on Federal Reserve Chair Jerome H. Powell at the same time that the Supreme Court is considering a case that could make it easier for the president to fire him.

The developments are occurring against a backdrop of wider turmoil in the economy and financial markets, brought on by Trump's sweeping taxes on imports. Most economists worry that an assault on the Fed's longstanding independence from politics would further disrupt markets and add to the uncertainty enveloping the economy.

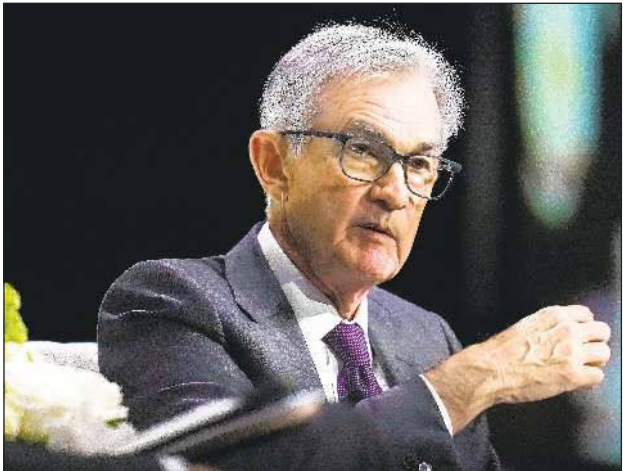
In comments at the White House on Thursday, Trump suggested he has the power to remove Powell and criticized him for not aggressively cutting interest rates.

"If I want him out, he'll be out of there real fast, believe me," Trump said. "I'm not happy with him."

All the scrutiny threatens the Fed's venerated independence, which has long been supported by most economists and Wall Street investors. Here are some questions and answers about the Fed.

Why does the Fed's independence matter?

The Fed wields extensive power over the U.S. economy. By cutting the short-term interest rate it controls — which it typically does when the economy falters — the Fed can make borrowing cheaper and encourage more spending, accelerating



ERIN HOOLEY Associated Press

THERE is disagreement among experts over whether the president can remove Jerome Powell as Fed chair.

growth and hiring. When it raises the rate — which it does to cool the economy and combat inflation — it can weaken the economy and cause job losses.

Economists have long preferred independent central banks because they can more easily take unpopular steps to fight inflation, such as raise interest rates, which makes borrowing to buy a home, car or appliance more expensive.

The importance of an independent Fed was cemented for most economists after the extended inflation spike of the 1970s and early 1980s. Former Fed Chair Arthur Burns has been widely blamed for allowing the painful inflation of that era to accelerate by succumbing to pressure from President Nixon to keep rates low heading into the 1972 election. Nixon feared higher rates would cost him the election, which he won in a landslide.

Paul Volcker was eventu-

ally appointed chair of the Fed in 1979 by President Carter, and he pushed the Fed's short-term rate to the stunningly high level of nearly 20%. (It is currently 4.3%). The eye-popping rates triggered a sharp recession, pushed unemployment to nearly 11% and spurred widespread protests.

Yet Volcker didn't flinch. By the mid-1980s, inflation had fallen back into the low single digits. Volcker's willingness to inflict pain on the economy to throttle inflation is seen by most economists as a key example of the value of an independent Fed.

What do Wall Street investors think?

An effort to fire Powell would almost certainly cause stock prices to fall and bond yields to soar, pushing up interest rates on government debt and raising borrowing costs for mortgages, auto loans and credit card debt.

Most investors prefer an independent Fed, partly because it typically manages inflation better without being influenced by politics but also because its decisions are more predictable. Fed officials often publicly discuss how they would alter interest rate policies if economic conditions changed.

If the Fed was more swayed by politics, it would be harder for financial markets to anticipate — or understand — its decisions.

So does that mean the Fed is completely unaccountable?

Well, no. Fed chairs are appointed by the president to serve four-year terms and have to be confirmed by the Senate. The president also appoints the six other members of the Fed's governing board, who can serve staggered terms of up to 14 years, though most governors leave before the end of their terms.

Those appointments can allow a president over time to significantly alter the Fed's policies. Former President Biden appointed five of the current seven members: Powell, Lisa Cook, Philip Jefferson, Adriana Kugler and Michael Barr. As a result, Trump will have fewer opportunities to make appointments. He will be able to replace Kugler, who filled an unexpired term ending Jan. 31.

Congress, meanwhile, can set the Fed's goals through legislation. In 1977, for example, Congress gave the Fed a "dual mandate" to keep prices stable and seek maximum employment. The Fed defines stable prices as inflation at 2%.

The 1977 law also requires the Fed chair to testify before the House and Senate twice every year about the economy and interest rate policy.

But can the president fire Powell?

Powell says the law establishing the Fed does not allow a president to fire a chair except for cause. There is some complication in that Powell was separately appointed as a member of the Fed's board of governors, and then elevated to the position of chair — by Trump, in 2017.

Most legal scholars agree that Trump can't fire Powell from the Fed's board of governors, but there is less agreement over whether a president can remove him as chair. In January, Michael Barr, who was vice chair for supervision, stepped down from that post but remained on the board to avoid a potential legal clash over whether Trump could fire him.

Should Trump try to fire Powell anyway, the ensuing fight would almost certainly end up at the Supreme Court.

What could the Supreme Court do?

We may get an early sign of how the Supreme Court would decide it this summer. There is already a case before the court on the issue of whether the president can fire top officials at independent agencies.

The case stems from Trump's firings of two officials, one from the National Labor Relations Board and the other from an agency that protects workers from

political interference. The Supreme Court last week let the firings stand while it considers the case. It could rule this summer that the president, as the head of the executive branch, could fire officials at any federal agency even if Congress had intended it to be independent.

The case would overturn a 90-year-old precedent known as Humphrey's Executor, in which the court ruled that the president couldn't fire such officials.

Powell said Wednesday he is watching the case closely, adding that it might not apply to the Fed. Lawyers for the Trump administration, seeking to narrow the focus of the case, have argued that it doesn't involve the Fed.

Both the Trump administration and the Supreme Court justices have carved out exemptions for the Fed before. In February, the White House issued an executive order that placed several financial regulatory agencies, including the Fed and the Securities and Exchange Commission, more directly under the president's control. Yet the order specifically exempted the Fed's ability to set interest rates from that order.

And in a case in 2023, Justice Samuel A. Alito Jr. said in a footnote that the Fed is a "unique institution with a unique historical background" that made it different from other independent bodies. If the court does give presidents more power over the heads of independent agencies, it could potentially exempt the Fed.

Rugaber writes for the Associated Press.

OPINION VOICES

Voices MICHAEL ERIC DYSON GUEST CONTRIBUTOR

Hegseth purged two of my books on race. But did he read them?

People skeptical of racial dogma should embrace the titles that are being targeted. They’re nuanced.

TWO OF MY BOOKS are among the 381 volumes that Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth ordered removed from the library of the U.S. Naval Academy because they were deemed to relate to the topics of diversity, equity or inclusion.

The arbitrary removal of these books reveals a sophomoric approach to history by word search. That amateurish tactic of linking title and theme has already resulted in comical yet depressing results. A recent DEI purge at the Pentagon led to the removal in its digital archive of images of the B-29 plane Enola Gay that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, presumably because of the word “gay” in the title. The Defense Department is at it again on a bigger scale, with higher stakes: our grand American democratic experiment.

Censorship by keyword search is not only anti-intellectual but also foolish, presuming that there is solidarity of thought or unanimity of vision when it comes to race, gender, sexuality or class — as though every author who uses a certain term is making the same argument on the issue. Scholars, writers and other thinkers are a notoriously cantankerous lot. We often find useful or sometimes petty ways to disagree even with those with whom we ought to agree.

Many of these removed books argue with prevailing notions of race, class, sex and gender. Some are critical of earlier or competing versions of these subjects and advocate relentless revision and tireless interrogation.

Ibram X. Kendi’s influential “How to Be an Antiracist” topped

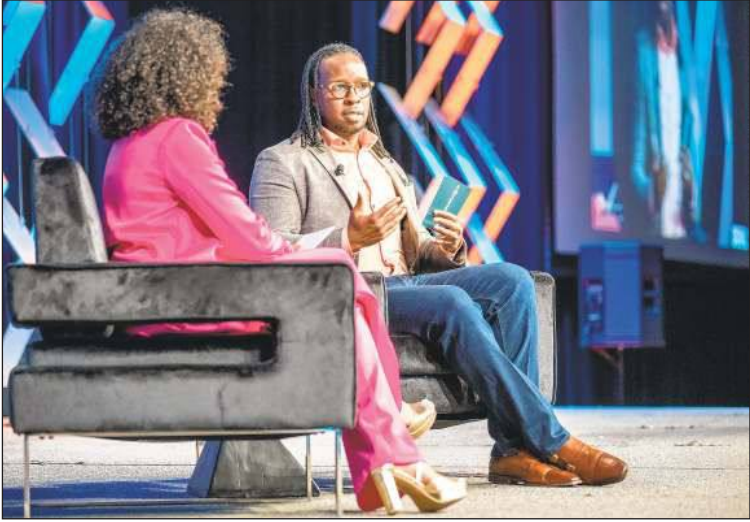
the list of removed books, but with more careful consideration the Defense Department might have kept it around, because it argues for a radically different view of racism than many of Kendi’s scholarly predecessors and colleagues.

Old-school race thinkers argue that racism concerns power. They would say that although Black folk can be bigoted, prejudiced and willfully biased, they technically can’t be racist. Kendi shatters such a paradigm and argues that one is either racist or antiracist, whatever one’s color or circumstance. That ought to suggest to white critics that Kendi is being evenhanded in grappling with the manifestation of racist belief or behavior from people of any background. The Trump administration stated in January that students should not be “compelled to adopt identities as either victims or oppressors solely based on their skin color.” In a far different political register, Kendi’s work comes to a similar conclusion.

In one of my banished books, “Tears We Cannot Stop: A Sermon to White America,” I argue against white guilt as a strategy for social change. In my other removed book, “Long Time Coming: Reckoning With Race in America,” I offer a harsh rebuke to cancel culture on the left as a proxy of sorts for the very white supremacy it aims to destroy.

Hegseth doesn’t seem to understand, or care to know, that most of the books he fears and disagrees with, and thus removes, offer nuanced and complicated visions of race and other forms of diversity.

These books are not dogmatic or indoctrinating; they are self-critical and invite readers to question their own understandings. Courageous curiosity and open-minded engagement should lead us to read widely to determine what we like and what we don’t like, what we agree with and what we oppose. This contributes to us being informed citizens upholding



JASON BOLLENBACHER SXS via Getty Images

IBRAM X. KENDI’S banned book, like the administration, resists identifying oppressors and victims based on skin color.

our democratic experiment. The state has no business shrinking reading lists from a perch of partisan fear.

It is bitterly ironic that the political party that rages against ideological orthodoxy, virtue signaling and purity tests is now their most brutal exponent. The war against “wokeness” is a war against enlightenment. Its advocates despise science and are allergic to curiosity and reason. Instead, they embrace denial, ignorance, avoidance, erasure and amnesia.

Hegseth’s move offers the nation a peek into the frightening fascist imagination. Its characteristics are noxious. It conceives of dissent as disloyalty. It misrepresents vulnerable populations as freeloaders and frauds. It turns healthy skepticism about government into unhinged paranoia about the “deep state.”

Yet there is good news. The fascist imagination is not yet the fascist state. The fascist imagination points toward a poisonous authoritarianism that masquerades as legitimate politics. We must oppose the fascist imagination with an emancipated world-

view that combats the illusion of security that fascism offers.

The emancipated worldview also draws connections between accepted “white” classics and spurned “Black” books — and those of other diverse communities — in this perilous moment. There may be 381 perspectives on diversity, equity and inclusion that are now purged from the Naval Academy, but there are literally thousands of classic literary avenues for those ideas to get back in.

If James Baldwin is slighted, Ralph Ellison ignored, W.E.B. Du Bois despised, Toni Morrison disdained and Maya Angelou dissed, we can read race and other identities through the work of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Michel de Montaigne, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. We can interpret complicated cultural concepts by using the poetry of Alfred Lord Tennyson or Thomas Gray.

Society must also push back as the Republican administration tries to whitewash the curricula of public schools, from kindergarten on up. We can also establish Saturday schools where we practice defiant pedagogy to teach our children the books that are

banned. We can creatively wrestle in Black communities with ideas that are deemed dangerous and troubling, but which matter greatly to Black folk under attack. Such schools might usefully counter the flurry of executive orders that seek to erase history, deny truth, perpetuate lies and eviscerate community.

We must also support local museums of Black history that preserve memory and transmit knowledge. It is tragic that Black folks for whom reading was once outlawed are brought full circle to a culture that is hostile to Black cultural literacy. It would be tragic to allow a renewed taboo against exploring the intellectual heritage of Black life and underscoring the crucial Black contribution to American democracy.

One of the best ways to combat autocracy is to remember that racism is a dry run for fascism. All the features of the fascist imagination have been rehearsed in the spitefully creative effort to suppress Black speech, oppress Black culture, control Black mobility and to curtail Black progress. Fascism applies to the broader culture the racist principles first applied to Black life.

Many other Americans become like honorary Black folk in the mistreatment they endure in the fascist imagination — which, beyond targeting many white folks who voted for Trump, tries to erase other racial and ethnic minorities, immigrants, LGBTQ+ people and women. Therefore, the fight to uphold Black liberty is the fight to uphold American liberty. The Black fight for democracy is the American fight for democracy.

Hegseth may have targeted “woke” America with his book ban, but his beliefs, and those of his boss, ridicule and threaten the entire nation. Today the peril is for 381 books with which the secretary of Defense assumes he would disagree; tomorrow it may be that our very freedom to openly disagree about the administration is at risk.

Instead of our democracy dying in the dark of an aspiring dictatorship, we must insist that our democracy be an open book to be read by all citizens.

MICHAEL ERIC DYSON is a professor of African American studies at Vanderbilt University and an author, most recently co-author of “Represent: The Unfinished Fight for the Vote.”

LETTERS



PAUL SANCYA Associated Press

MICHIGAN Gov. Gretchen Whitmer caught flak for accepting a photo op with President Trump in a recent White House visit to discuss state business.

Democrats need to step up, not hide

Re “Democrats should learn from Whitmer’s ‘play dead’ maneuver,” Opinion Voices, April 16

“**H**IDE?” That’s the best columnist Jonah Goldberg can come up with to counteract President Trump’s attacks on our economy and constitutional freedoms? If Democrats hide, they will ultimately be blamed, along with Trump, for all of this destruction. The real and only option here is to fight. Speak out. Stand up. Be loud. Show up. Call your representatives, call the Supreme Court, gather with your communities to protest. And, in the meantime, do some strategizing on how and what Democrats can do to provide for, and win back the respect of, the American people.

JB NEWTON, Studio City

Although I disagree with Goldberg 80% of the time, his analysis of what’s wrong with the Democratic Party is on point. Until the party learns from its mistakes of the last election, playing

dead is the only policy it should follow. The leadership should realize that the elitist policy of “we know what’s best for you” doesn’t work and being more centrist is where the majority of

the electorate are.

PAUL SUNDERLAND
Los Angeles

What says L.A. like a palm tree?

Re “For L.A., is it time for a frond farewell?,” California Voices, April 13

In her article about Los Angeles and its iconic palm trees, Patt Morrison wrote, “It’s universally known. Put a palm tree on it; it must be L.A.” How right she is. Years ago, when I was a copywriter at a Los Angeles ad agency, I traveled to our New York office. I met with a creative team there, and when they found out I was from L.A., they shared a little trick of theirs. If they wanted to shoot a commercial in L.A., all they had to do — regardless of the concept — was include a couple images of palm trees in the frames of

the storyboard. If the client bought the idea, they knew they were going to L.A.

DAVID GEORGE
Costa Mesa

Stunt Oscar ‘a pointless award’

Re “After decades of pushing, stunts will get their own Oscar,” April 10

So the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences is creating a new Oscar to debut in 2028 honoring stunt design? Try harder, Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The great stunt performers and stunt coordinators who thrilled us in the classics are largely gone and apparently forgotten. Much of stunt effects in modern cinema are done by computer-generated imagery.

This is a pointless award. Is the academy going to give the Oscar to a talented graphic artist who storyboards the “dangerous” stunt work? This is like creating an award in 2028 for silent movie title design.

BEN HERNDON
Los Angeles

Dodgers should make amends

Re “Dodgers are no longer agents of change,” Sports Voices, April 16

Like columnist Dylan Hernandez, I was saddened that the Dodgers chose to visit the White House. I understand that it would have taken some courage to do otherwise, but that still doesn’t make it right. I believe I have a way they can make amends that is diplo-

matic enough to avoid angering the White House. Make an announcement at every game: “Ladies and gentlemen, there is an American resident being wrongly imprisoned in El Salvador and, to date, efforts to obtain his release have failed. We would like to ask you to rise for a moment of silent prayer that our president, Donald Trump, may be successful in his efforts to bring Kilmar Abrego Garcia home.”

RON RUBIN
Valley Glen

::

Bravo to Hernandez for pointing out the hypocrisy of the Dodgers celebrating Jackie Robinson Day after yukking it up with a president who is anti-DEI and peddles, as Hernandez wrote, “casual racism.” Moreover, the president is a convicted felon and was found liable for sexual abuse in a civil case.

Any sports team — or person for that matter — who consorts with him tacitly condones this behavior. They dignify a man without dignity. They normalize an abnormal president. I doubt Robinson would have done that.

BILL CAREY
Sherman Oaks

::

To avoid repeating the hypocrisy of celebrating Jackie Robinson Day after visiting Trump, the Dodgers should cancel their Law Enforcement Night. How can they honor brave police officers after they normalized someone who pardoned several felons responsible for attacking and injuring brave police officers?

KELLY GALLAGHER
Santa Ana

Rare disease raises alarms

Re “Oregon officials probe rare brain disease in 2 deaths,” April 16

The knowledge that two individuals have died and another person is showing symptoms of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease is daunting indeed considering its fatal symptoms. It is critical that government funding of research into lethal diseases continues to be monitored and not fall prey to the current administration’s fund cutting.

Research into this and other such neurodegenerative health concerns must not be diminished, and the recent detections of Creutzfeldt-Jakob and chronic wasting disease are a reminder of the important need to stay alert on this front.

ELAINE LIVESEY-FASSEL
Los Angeles

A brief defense of ‘60 Minutes’

Re “Trump condemns ‘60 Minutes’ again after critical pieces,” April 15

So, President Trump thinks “60 Minutes” is a “Political Operative simply disguised as ‘News’” and thinks the show should lose its license.

Has he ever watched Fox News?

PHILIP MOYNIHAN
La Cañada Flintridge

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Lancaster mayor's stance on homeless stirs furor

Rex Parris calls for 'free fentanyl' for unhoused people and 'a purge' by Trump.

By JESSICA GARRISON

The mayor of Lancaster, Rex Parris, has ignited a controversy after musing during a council meeting that one approach to homelessness would be to "give them free fentanyl ... all the fentanyl they want."

Parris, a larger-than-life trial lawyer, made the incendiary comments about the drug — responsible for tens of thousands of overdose deaths — during a February City Council meeting, in a retort to a resident who objected to his musings of congregating unhoused residents into an "encampment."

It wasn't until Parris doubled down on his remarks during an interview with Fox LA that his statements went viral, provoking ire far beyond the high desert city where he has been mayor since 2008.

He said that he didn't think anyone had taken his comments literally, but that he did not regret them. In the interview, he said he wished for "a purge" of homeless people.

"I made it very clear I was talking about the criminal element that were let out of the prisons that have now become 40 to 45% of what's referred to as the homeless population," he said. "They are responsible for most of our robberies, most of our rapes, and at least half of our murders," he said, without providing evidence to back up those assertions.

He added: "Quite frankly, I wish the president would give us a purge. Because we do need to purge these [See Lancaster, B4]



Photographs by ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

HUMBERTO DURAN, now 51 years old, had been sentenced to life in prison for a 1993 gang killing in East L.A. Decades later, the case began to fall apart when the only eyewitness to the crime recanted her story.

Declared innocent after nearly 3 decades in prison

Man served time for 1993 East L.A. murder, despite alibi

By KERI BLAKINGER

Humberto Duran stood in a downtown Los Angeles courtroom Friday morning, nervously shifting his weight. But as Judge H. Clay Jacke spoke, Duran slowly began to smile, soaking in the words he'd been waiting so long to hear.

"The facts support the inescapable conclusion that Mr. Duran did not murder Albert Gonzalez or attempt to murder Ms. Rivera-Ortiz, as he was not present at the crime scene and is innocent."

Turning to face Duran, he added: "You are factually in-



DURAN HOLDS a photo of himself when he was 18. A judge finally declared him innocent on Friday.

nocent."

Duran walked back to hug his family. And began to cry.

The now-51-year-old had been sentenced to life in prison for a 1993 gang killing in East Los Angeles. Twenty-four years later, the case began to fall apart when Monica Rivera — the only eyewitness to the crime — recanted her story, telling Duran's attorney she'd lied on the stand when she swore she saw Duran shoot 17-year-old Gonzalez.

Duran's lawyers at California Innocence Advocates reinvestigated the case for seven years. Then in early [See Innocent, B4]

Pickleball noise prompts ordinance on quiet paddles

Senior living facility residents' complaints lead Laguna Beach to adopt divisive order.

By NOAH GOLDBERG

The growing popularity of pickleball has created a noisy dispute in Laguna Beach, where a new city ordinance requires players to use quiet paddles or risk a fine.

The Laguna Beach City Council adopted the new ordinance in March in response to complaints from residents in a senior living facility dubbed Vista Aliso who say the sound of pickleball matches at nearby Lang Park causes them severe anxiety and stress.

Pickleball players at Lang Park will have to pony up about \$100 each to switch to quieter paddles. If they fail to do so, the ordinance says, players can face a citation.

Pickleball is similar to tennis except the court is smaller, the ball is plastic and perforated and the paddles are not as big as tennis rackets.

The adoption of the new ordinance did not please everyone on both sides of the pickleball feud.

The council has already reduced the hours that pickleball can be played in the park and has built a fence around the park to block noise.

"While I am supportive of

this quiet paddle ordinance as a compromise, I support expanding the hours at Lang Park," Laguna Beach Mayor Alex Rounaghi said in a statement to The Times. "Pickleball is a life-changing sport for so many that brings community together, and I'm committed to creating more recreational opportunities for our town."

Some seniors at Vista Aliso said the ordinance would not do enough to mitigate the noise issues, while members of the pickleball com-

munity said they are tired of the council giving the seniors so much favorable treatment.

The law "will be ineffective," said Susana Cruciana, a resident of Vista Aliso, who has argued the pickleball courts should be moved entirely.

"They will continue to create a hostile environment," she said.

Pickleball players have yelled and insulted her for complaining about the [See Pickleball, B4]

Voices **GEORGE SKELTON** COLUMNIST CAPITOL JOURNAL

Newsom's tariff suit is political — and needed

You've got to stand up to a bully, and that's what the governor did in suing Trump



JUSTIN SULLIVAN Getty Images

GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM speaks at a news conference last week in Ceres, Calif., calling out congressional leaders. He is joined by state Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta.

SACRAMENTO
Give Gov. Gavin Newsom credit. You can call it grandstanding and opportunistic, but suing President Trump over tariffs was smart, bold and much needed.

Sure, it was political. Newsom adroitly leaped ahead of other potential 2028 presidential contenders by taking aim through the court system at Trump's allegedly illegal actions on tariffs.

Someone needed to seek a judicial ruling on whether the president can raise tariffs himself without congressional approval.

Republican congressional leaders — Republican politicians generally — are too intimidated by their president to sneeze without his blessing. They're meekly ceding their co-equal legislative power to the president. And that's worrisome for democracy.

It's about self-preservation. Republican members of Congress who must survive GOP primaries to win reelection fear getting on the bad side of the vengeful president and being "primaried."

"Where the hell is Congress? Where the hell is Speaker [Mike] Johnson? Do your job!" Newsom proclaimed while announcing his lawsuit last week at an almond orchard near Ceres in the agriculture-rich San Joaquin [See Skelton, B2]

Move to shutter juvenile facility escalates

Court orders plan for transfer of 270 youths from troubled Los Padrinos complex.

By JAMES QUEALLY

A Los Angeles County judge took a major step Friday toward shutting down Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall in Downey, months after a state oversight body found it "unsuitable" to house youth.

Judge Miguel Espinoza issued a tentative ruling that it was "unlawful" to allow the L.A. County Probation Department to continue housing juveniles at the facility.

Espinoza did not immediately order the hall closed but told the Probation Department to submit a plan by early May detailing how it will relocate approximately 270 juveniles — mostly ages 15 to 18 — to other secure locations. The parties are due back in court next month.

The ruling escalates a months-long legal battle. California's Board of State and Community Corrections ordered Los Padrinos shut down in December, finding that the department did not have enough staff to safely operate.

But probation officials ignored the order with the backing of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors. The L.A. County public defender's office immediately filed a legal challenge on behalf of one of its clients, which put the matter before Espinoza.

"The Probation Department's chaos creates dangerous ripple effects on our youth's safety. Time and again, in report after report, we've seen neglect, mismanagement, and abuse, all while officials insist that change is coming," Luis Rodriguez, chief of the public defender's office's Youth Services Division, said in a statement. "The Court's order today is a step in the right direction."

Board of State and Community Corrections Chair Linda Penner also celebrated Espinoza's ruling.

"We believe today's order is an important and meaningful step in ensuring the safety and well-being of youth in the custody of Los Angeles County," she said.

Probation Department Chief Guillermo Viera Rosa was present for the hearing Friday and declined to comment outside the East L.A. courtroom. In light of the order, the department "will move swiftly to implement a depopulation plan for Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall that aligns with our broader facilities strategy and prioritizes public safety," Vicky Waters, communications director for the Probation Department, said.

Roughly three-quarters of the youths housed at Los Padrinos are awaiting court hearings connected to violent offenses including murder, attempted murder, assault, robbery, kidnapping and gang crimes, according to Waters.

Viera Rosa traveled to Sacramento this month to appeal the Board of State and Community Corrections' decision, arguing the department had met minimum staffing requirements. [See Los Padrinos, B5]



MYUNG J. CHUN Los Angeles Times

JUDGE Miguel Espinoza in court in April 2020.

Newsom’s suit over tariffs is political, necessary

[**Skelton**, from B1]
Valley.

“They’re sitting there passively [as Trump] wrecks the economy of the United States.”

Actually, Newsom seemed to be crashing Atty. Gen. Rob Bonta’s party.

Newsom and Bonta jointly filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in San Francisco. But Bonta — often working with other states’ Democratic attorneys general — already had filed 14 lawsuits challenging Trump policies. Bonta’s staff had spent significant time drafting the tariff suit before Newsom publicly surfaced as a plaintiff.

“The president is acting as if he’s above the law. He isn’t,” Bonta said before introducing Newsom at the almond farm. “Congress has the duty to set taxes, duties and, yes, tariffs.”

For Newsom and California, challenging Trump in court is a bit risky. The president has threatened to retaliate against California by withholding federal funds if state policies conflict with his. That includes money to help rebuild fire-ravaged sections of Los Angeles.

That’s not just an idle threat, as Trump has shown in pulling back federal funds promised for universities and strong-arming law firms that have opposed him in court cases.

But as most of us learned as kids, you’ve got to stand up to a bully. And that’s what Newsom did.

“No doubt, Trump isn’t going to give California anything anyway,” says Democratic political consultant David Townsend. “This is a good political move by Newsom to position himself as anti-Trump on a solid policy issue.

“All Democratic voters are looking for a strong anti-Trump leader.”

OK, so Newsom is reading the tea leaves and realizes that lots of people are clamoring for a crusader to carry the fight against Trump’s policies.

That was demonstrated on the night before Newsom’s announcement when



GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

SEN. BERNIE SANDERS speaks to about 36,000 at the “Fighting Oligarchy” rally this month at Gloria Molina Grand Park in L.A. The day before Newsom’s announcement, Sanders and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez drew nearly 30,000 to an event near Sacramento.

Sen. Bernie Sanders and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez — two East Coast democratic socialists — attracted nearly 30,000 people at an anti-Trump rally in a Republican congressional district near Sacramento.

An essential ingredient of democracy is elected officials following the citizens’ will. And that’s clearly what Newsom is now trying to do on tariffs.

“I can’t imagine anything more unifying” for California than challenging Trump on tariffs, Newsom said. “We were hoping we didn’t need to go down this path. But we [are] prepared to go down this path.”

Trump’s “unlawful tariffs are wreaking chaos on California families, businesses

and our economy — driving up prices and threatening jobs,” Newsom said in a prepared statement.

The lawsuit represents a shift in Newsom’s strategy toward Trump. Previously, he has been practically mute, seemingly trying to play nice to avoid Trump’s wrath that could cost California federal money for disaster relief, higher education and Medi-Cal health-care.

Contrast that soft-tongue tactic with another Newsom announcement last week unveiling a lawsuit challenging Trump cuts to the AmeriCorps service program in California.

“We’ve gone from the New Deal, the New Frontier and the Great Society to a federal government that

gives the middle finger to volunteers serving their fellow Americans,” Newsom declared in a prepared statement.

Middle finger? Not exactly traditional gubernatorial lingo. But no bureaucratic bull, either.

Governors wouldn’t ordinarily file a court case contesting a president’s foreign policy. But this is not like suing Trump for cozying up to Russian President Vladimir Putin, puncturing our European alliances or bizarrely threatening to seize Greenland. On tariffs, California has judicial “standing” as an aggrieved victim.

“No state is poised to lose more than the state of California,” Newsom said.

“We talk about stupid-

ity,” Newsom continued. “This [tariff action] is the poster child for that.”

Newsom noted that California’s gross domestic product was \$3.9 trillion in 2023, which was 50% bigger than that of the next-largest state, Texas. If this were a country, it would be the fifth-largest economy in the world.

We’re the nation’s leading agriculture producer and there are more than 36,000 manufacturing firms employing 1.1 million people.

China, Mexico and Canada — special tariff targets for Trump — supply more than 40% of California’s foreign imports. They’re also the top three export countries. In all, California imported \$491 billion in products last year and

exported \$183 billion worth.

What the tariffs add up to is an expected economic downturn in California that will cost the state government tax revenue and drive the budget deeper into red ink. That will stem from collapsing businesses that rely on foreign imports or exports — exacerbated by reduced consumer spending as prices rise on everything from food to cars.

Although Newsom and Bonta insist that Trump can’t impose tariffs without congressional consent, this isn’t a clear-cut case. The Trump-friendly Supreme Court undoubtedly will eventually decide.

Newsom did the right thing by being the first governor to seek a court answer.

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CITY & STATE

Fontana police are sued in fatal shooting

Family alleges use of excessive force in the death of an unarmed man in a driveway.

By Connor Sheets

It was around dinnertime at the family home in Fontana when one of Jaime Valdez's loved ones called 911 to ask for help.

"I have a relative that's not supposed to be here," the unnamed caller told the dispatcher, according to a recording released by authorities. "He's one of my cousins that's been coming around, he's on drugs and he's threatening to kill us."

Police arrived that evening on Nov. 11, 2023, and found Valdez, 33, unarmed and lying in the driveway of the residence, where his mother lived.

Exactly what happened next is under dispute, but Valdez ended up dead after being shot in the back of the head by a Fontana police officer.

While authorities have said that Valdez tried to grab the officer's gun and Taser, his family alleges police unnecessarily escalated the confrontation, then misled them about the killing.

"[An] officer basically shot an unarmed person in the back of the head and then lied to the family about it for a year or more," said Bradley Yourist, a lawyer for the Valdez family. "It's pretty egregious."

Valdez's mother, Isabel, and his two daughters are now suing the Fontana Police Department in federal court, alleging excessive force.

"I want justice for my son," Isabel Valdez said in Spanish in between sobs. "The officer who took his life [should pay] just like any other criminal would pay. Just because he's a police officer he shouldn't avoid jail."

She claims the police stopped her from leaving her house after the shooting, preventing her from seeing her son's body. The family alleges officers said they would take Valdez to a hospital, but the autopsy report states that he died within seconds of being shot. Valdez's family didn't learn of his death until the next morning, their lawsuit says.

The Fontana Police Department declined to comment, citing the ongoing investigation.

In a social media post more than eight months after the shooting, the department said the officer who fired the fatal shot, Alex Yanez, had been "violently assaulted" and maintained that he and other officers who responded to the scene did nothing wrong.

Yanez could be heard before the shooting yelling at Valdez, "Let go of my gun," according to California Department of Justice investigative records. The department, which launched an investigation two days after the shooting, declined to comment because the inquiry is ongoing.

Yanez told investigators that DNA testing would corroborate his claim that Valdez had "gotten ahold of" his gun after disobeying commands and getting into a struggle.

But the DNA results from Yanez's weapon came back inconclusive, state Bureau of Forensic Services records show, and Valdez's family contends that the edited version of body-worn camera video from the confrontation released by au-



Photographs by ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times
JAIME VALDEZ'S family, from left: his sisters Rita Brandon and Angie Franco; one of his two daughters; his mother, Isabel Valdez; his other daughter; and his girlfriend, Yessenia Torres. Jaime Valdez was killed on Nov. 11, 2023, in a shooting involving Fontana police.



ISABEL VALDEZ weeps as she sits between Jaime's sisters. "I want justice for my son," she says. Exactly what happened is under dispute, but the 33-year-old ended up dead after being shot in the back of the head.

thorities leaves several questions unanswered.

Valdez's family described him as a music lover and dedicated Los Angeles Dodgers and Dallas Cowboys fan. He had struggled with meth and heroin addiction, his family said in the lawsuit, which argues that when police found him lying in the driveway that evening he was unable "to follow commands because of his altered state from drugs and mental health problems."

The edited body-cam video shows Yanez, who was hired by the Fontana Police Department in 2019, approaching Valdez, calling out repeatedly and receiving no response.

Eventually, Valdez becomes alert enough to tell the officer he wants to "go back inside."

The officer replies, "You're not supposed to be here though. ... What's up with you, dude?"

They go back and forth for a few moments before Valdez tells Yanez, "Go knock on the door, bro."

"You're gonna be put in [expletive] handcuffs if you keep talking to me like that,"

Yanez responds, his words censored in the clip released by police.

Seconds later, Yanez orders Valdez to keep his hands out of his pockets, then tells him to "put your hands behind your back, dude."

The video is then interrupted by an onscreen message from the Fontana Police Department: "The officer attempts to handcuff the suspect and he resists."

When the clip resumes, Valdez is still on the ground and can be heard telling Yanez to "chill" as the officer tries to put him in handcuffs.

The video doesn't provide a good view of Valdez at this point, but he can be heard saying, "I'm not doing nothing to you, bro." The sounds of a scuffle and a dog barking are audible before Valdez says, "You're hurting me."

Yanez then repeatedly yells, "Put your hands behind your back," before using his Taser.

"Put your hands behind your back," Yanez yells twice more as Valdez screams in agony.

The video cuts to a mes-



VALDEZ holds a photo of her and her son. Police said on social media that officers did nothing wrong.

sage from the police: "The officer and the suspect begin to struggle over the officer's handgun and an officer involved shooting occurs."

Three gunshots can be heard back to back. "Send backup," Yanez says over his radio. "I'm hurt."

Valdez's family members say the police made false statements about the shoot-

ing and his condition. "They lied about everything," his sister, Rita Brandon, told The Times. "They came and they told my mom that my brother was gonna be OK, that he'd been shot and he was on the way to the hospital, and the whole time he was outside in the driveway dead."

The family's lawsuit, filed

in December in Los Angeles federal court, seeks damages for a list of alleged misdeeds, including denial of medical care, battery and negligence. The defense has filed a motion to stay the proceedings, with the next court hearing set for Thursday.

Michael Carillo, a lawyer for the Valdez family, said that "what immediately jumped out about the video to me is the immediate escalation of force that was totally unnecessary and led to the unreasonable use of force."

Carillo said Valdez was not physically imposing — only 5 feet 3 and 130 pounds. "Instead of de-escalating it, calling in a mental health unit or supervisor, the officer escalated and escalated and ultimately shot [him]," Carillo said.

The coroner's report stated that one bullet hit Valdez in the back of his head and the two others hit his left shoulder.

Additional body-worn camera video reviewed by The Times depicts emergency personnel cutting Valdez's clothing away as he lay in the driveway and performing chest compressions in an attempt to revive him before declaring him dead.

The state Department of Justice is still investigating the shooting, as required by law when a police shooting victim is unarmed.

Valdez's teenage daughter — whose name The Times is withholding at the family's request because she is a minor — said she sleeps every night with a digital picture frame that loops photos of him, along with a treasured video of the two of them playing when she was 4 years old.

The girl's biological father left when she was very young, and Valdez — whom she refers to affectionately as Jime — got together with her mother when she was 2. A year later, she started calling him dad.

"I didn't even know what a dad was until Jime came along. My sister didn't come along until years later," she said, referring to Valdez's biological daughter as tears streamed down her face. "So it was always us two, so that was all I knew. Jime was my dad."

Drummer is charged with possessing child porn in Riverside County

New Pornographers member Joseph Seiders is accused of videotaping boys.

By Richard Winton

Joseph Seiders, the drummer for the indie rock band the New Pornographers, has been charged with possession of child pornography after being arrested, allegedly over videotaping unsuspecting boys in a Palm Desert Chick-fil-A restroom.

Seiders, 44, is charged with felony child pornography possession, a misdemeanor of annoying a child under 18, concealing a camera with intent to invade privacy and attempting to conceal a camera. He pleaded not guilty to the charges April 11, two days after he was taken into custody by Riverside County sheriff's deputies.

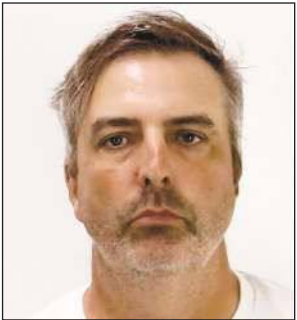
In the aftermath of the arrest, the Canadian band announced that Seiders was no longer part of the group.

Seiders was taken into custody by deputies after a

second incident in which he is alleged to have entered a Chick-fil-A restroom when juveniles were inside.

Staff at the restaurant recognized him from the previous alleged incident and alerted deputies. Sheriff's officials say that on April 7, an 11-year-old boy reported that "an unknown male adult recorded him on a cellphone while he was using the restroom at the location." According to deputies, the staff later identified that man as Seiders.

Riverside County sheriff's investigators said they served "search warrants for



Riverside County Sheriff's Office
JOSEPH SEIDERS is facing multiple charges.

Seiders' residence, vehicle and cellphone. Evidence was located implicating him in

the two reported incidents, along with additional crimes, including possessing child pornography."

Seiders was booked into the John J. Benoit Detention Center in Indio on suspicion of possession of child pornography, annoying or molesting a child, invasion of privacy and attempted invasion of privacy. Investigators said the investigation remains ongoing and "there may be additional victims."

Riverside County Sheriff's Office booking records show he remains in custody in lieu of \$1-million bail. In a court filing, prosecutors de-

scribe the victim as "particularly vulnerable," and "the crime indicates planning sophistication and professionalism."

"Everyone in the band is absolutely shocked, horrified and devastated by the news of the charges of Joe Seiders — we have immediately severed all ties with him," the band statement said. "Our hearts go out to everyone who has been impacted by his actions."

Sheriff's investigators are asking those with information to contact them at (760) 836-1600 or sheriff's dispatch at (951) 776-1099.

A wrongfully convicted man is finally cleared

[Innocent, from B1]
2024, they filed a petition asking a judge to overturn the conviction.

In their 147-page filing, attorneys Megan Baca and Arianna Price said deputies — one of whom they described as Rivera's cousin — “framed” Duran, targeting him for prosecution. They said there was no other evidence implicating Duran, and he had an alibi: He had been with his girlfriend and her mother.

In October, the Los Angeles County district attorney's office conceded in a 10-page letter that there was evidence of “actual innocence.” A day later Jacke overturned Duran's conviction.

But before agreeing to the defense team's request to have Duran formally declared innocent — a finding that clears the way for state compensation for the years he spent wrongly imprisoned — prosecutors wanted to investigate further. Earlier this month, the district attorney's office filed a letter agreeing with Baca's request.

“While justice often arrives at arrest, conviction and sentencing, there are cases where justice has to set aside a conviction,” Dist. Atty. Nathan Hochman told the court Friday, thanking his prosecutors and the diligent work of Duran's defense team.

“It's a pleasure to be here,” he said. “We don't get too many days like this.”

Duran is the third person found factually innocent of murder since Hochman took office last year.

A week before Christmas 1993, Duran — then 19 — went to his girlfriend's house on Fraser Avenue in East L.A. By his account, they watched TV together at home and made a quick trip to Taco Bell. At about 1:30 a.m., Duran said, an older friend from the neighborhood came over to walk him home.

When Duran got back to his parents' house, his sister opened the door and told him the news: A kid he knew growing up — Gonzalez — had been shot.



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

MEGAN BACA, founder of California Innocence Advocates, reinvestigated Humberto Duran's case. Then in early 2024, she and fellow attorney Arianna Price filed a petition asking a judge to overturn the conviction.

After East L.A. deputies arrived at the crime scene, Rivera told them she and Gonzalez had been in a back room of his family's home when they heard someone shouting for his older brother, Vidal. The teens went out to the driveway and saw a young man in a dark hoodie, who allegedly told Gonzalez that someone named “Beto” did not like him, according to the department's case file.

Then, the young man pulled out a gun and fatally shot Gonzalez. Afterward, Rivera told the deputies, the shooter climbed into a Cadillac in a nearby alley and left.

At first, Rivera told deputies she didn't know the names of either the shooter

or the driver but said she knew they were members of the Rascals street gang.

When detectives formally interviewed her three days later, she still mentioned only one shooter. A detective pulled out a photo of Duran that he'd brought along to the interview, but Rivera said she hadn't seen him that night and that he was not the killer.

Later that day, one of the detectives — Sgt. Robert Perry — briefed Deputy Danny Batanero on the case and said Duran may have been a suspect, even though Rivera had excluded him just hours earlier.

Afterward Batanero visited Rivera at her family's home. The two already knew

each other, and Rivera later said in a sworn statement that they were cousins.

During the visit, Batanero didn't record the conversation, but later wrote in his report that Rivera said there were two shooters and the second was someone she “personally knew as ‘Beto.’”

Near midnight, he brought Rivera back to the sheriff's station for another interview. This time, the teen said that after the first man shot Gonzalez, Duran jumped out of the back of the Cadillac and shot Gonzalez in the leg, then pointed his gun at Rivera. When it didn't go off, he threatened her and fled, she told detectives.

Deputies arrested Duran

the day after Christmas. As word of his arrest got around, other people came forward with tips. Peter “Rocky” Paez told investigators that a fellow Rascals gang member who went by Spooky had confessed to a killing when he showed up to a party a few hours later covered in blood.

When the case went to trial, Duran's lawyer — who State Bar of California records show was later disbarred for unrelated “acts of moral turpitude” — put on what Baca described as a “grossly ineffective” defense. He didn't offer proof to back up Duran's alibi, Baca wrote, and, during trial he showed up late so many times the judge held him in contempt,

according to court minutes and a payment receipt.

When reached for comment last year, the former attorney, Donald Ainslie, said “some of the allegations” against him were “absolutely fabrications.”

After a weeklong trial, Duran was convicted. The judge gave him two life sentences.

More than 20 years later, the case landed on Baca's desk. She sent Rivera a Facebook message, and the erstwhile star witness recanted.

“I know Beto is innocent,” she wrote in a sworn declaration in 2021. “My role in sending an innocent man to prison has haunted me for the past 27 years.”

She also swore there were two shooters and that the second wasn't Duran but rather a dangerous gang member she could have identified if deputies hadn't “insisted” she name Duran.

Last year, Batanero told The Times he'd found Rivera's story credible at the time and said any accusations of misconduct against him were a “nefarious attempt ... to discredit me and the fact that Monica on her own identified and implicated the petitioner in this gang-related murder.”

Two detectives involved in the case did not respond or could not be reached for comment.

When Duran came up for parole in summer 2022, Baca compiled a parole packet that included Rivera's recantation. A few months later, he walked out of prison a free man.

But Baca still pushed forward with her effort to prove his innocence. And now that both the district attorney's office and the court have agreed, Duran can seek money for his time behind bars.

“I am happy this is finally done,” Baca said. “This means that Mr. Duran can seek compensation from the Victim Compensation Board for every day he was wrongfully incarcerated. But more importantly, his name is cleared and the truth is out.”

City aims to address pickleball noise

[Pickleball, from B1]
noise, Cruciana said.

“Allegations that I hate children, outdoor sports or laughter are ludicrous and false. Unlike general traffic noise or other park activities, the noise from pickleball is high-pitched and excessive,” she said.

But pickleball players have volleyed back.

“The pickleball players have acquiesced to losing days. ... I'm not quite sure what the gal behind me has acquiesced to,” said Hillary Caston, referring to one of the complaining Vista Aliso residents.

Caston called on the council to bring back some of the play hours that pickleball players lost due to the complaints. The council closed the courts to pickleball on Mondays and reduced the hours on Tuesday and Thursday afternoons.

“I think we've come to the point where as pickleball players we've acquiesced enough. ... It's time to recognize this is our community,”



MARK VON HOLDEN Associated Press

LAGUNA BEACH has adopted an ordinance requiring the use of quieter paddles for pickleball matches.

Caston said.

In the long term, City Councilmember Sue Kempf told the Orange County Register, the council is considering moving the pickleball courts farther away from the senior living facility.

Battles over the noise

from pickleball courts have raged from coast to coast as the game took off in popularity over the last decade. In 2020, 4.8 million people played the sport at least once, a 40% increase from just two years earlier.

Lawsuits have been filed

over the noise associated with the game all across the country. Researchers say that the sound of a solid pickleball being struck can be 25 decibels louder than the loudest tennis racket strike.

“The medical effects of this are so profound and people don't understand it, but it triggers a fight-or-flight response that triggers all kinds of stress hormones,” said Nalini Lasiewicz, who runs a non-profit called Pickleball Noise Relief that has helped conduct studies on the harmful effects the sounds of pickleball can have on nearby residents.

Lasiewicz testified last month at the City Council hearing about the quiet paddles, saying they did not do enough to address the harm to seniors.

“Even when the players stop hitting, people who suffer from this syndrome continue to hear the noise even when it's not happening,” she said.

Mayor seeks ‘a purge’ of homeless people

[Lancaster, from B1]
people.

“Now, is it harsh? Of course it is harsh. But it is my obligation as the mayor of the city of Lancaster to protect the hardworking families that live here, and I am no longer able to do it. ... It's an untenable situation. ... I want these people out of our city.”

Parris did not respond to a request for comment from The Times.

His political opponents say they are outraged.

“Anyone willing to give homeless people all the fentanyl they want, or to suggest that President Trump should allow a purge of the homeless population, has no business in public office,” said Johnathon Ervin, a Democrat who challenged and lost to Parris in last year's mayoral election.

Ervin has now banded together with the third-place winner in that contest, Mark Maldonado, to try to recall the mayor.

Parris has been a fixture in Lancaster for decades, first as a trial lawyer and civic leader and for the last 15 years as its mayor.

The city, which sits in the Mojave Desert in northern Los Angeles County, has a population of about 175,000.

According to figures from the Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count, reported in the Antelope Valley Press, there were 6,672 people experiencing homelessness in 2024, 1,989 more than in 2023. That includes the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, as

well as surrounding areas.

Lancaster residents have become accustomed to a mayor with proposals that are often grand, and sometimes quixotic.

In 2013, he made headlines when, in a bid to woo Chinese investment, he talked of opening a trade office in Beijing and building a Buddhist temple in his city.

In 2018, he was back in the news for a proposal to make neckties optional among workers in the city, citing studies that they diminish blood flow to the brain.

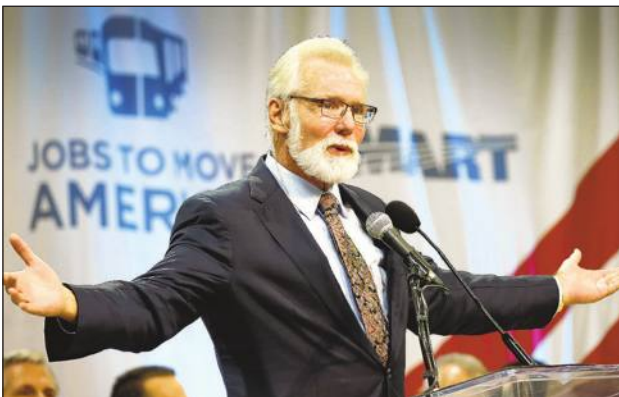
He's also long been a voice for law and order, and many in his city have taken a dim view of homelessness.

In 2021, the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California released a report alleging widespread abuse of homeless people in Lancaster.

The ACLU contended that the city had created a “dragnet of criminalization” in which deputies and city code enforcement officers “regularly bulldoze encampments of unhoused people and order them to move by threat of citation.”

At the time, Parris said the city had done more than its share to serve its homeless population.

He also said that he was “trying to create an environment where people who are disabled can thrive” and that he was “not going to just let people live wherever they want, camp where they want, extort money from people who are shopping.”



AL SEIB Los Angeles Times

“I WANT these people out of our city,” Mayor Rex Parris has said about unhoused people in Lancaster.

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Los Angeles Times

JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

FSTIH

UBDTO

SUUJTN

ZIFLZE

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Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

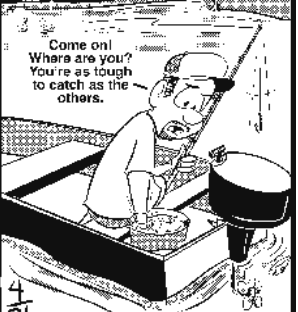
Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Jumbles: FORTY CYNIC DEFIED THRASH
Answer: After the sergeant told him to stop slouching, the private was going to — STAND CORRECTED

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek



THE ANGLER SAW ONE LAST MINNOW LEFT IN HIS BAIT BUCKET, SO HE ---

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Jumbles: FORTY CYNIC DEFIED THRASH
Answer: After the sergeant told him to stop slouching, the private was going to — STAND CORRECTED

love is...



...anticipation!

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EMPLOYMENT 1500

Employment

Project Manager, Pet Food Product Development, 100% telecom job reporting to El Segundo, CA (\$88,109-\$95,125 per/yr). Email resume w/Job Code # SY-1002 to U.S. Pet Nutrition, LLC at cosl.recruiting@thaiunion.com. EOE

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THE WEATHER

Today in Southern California

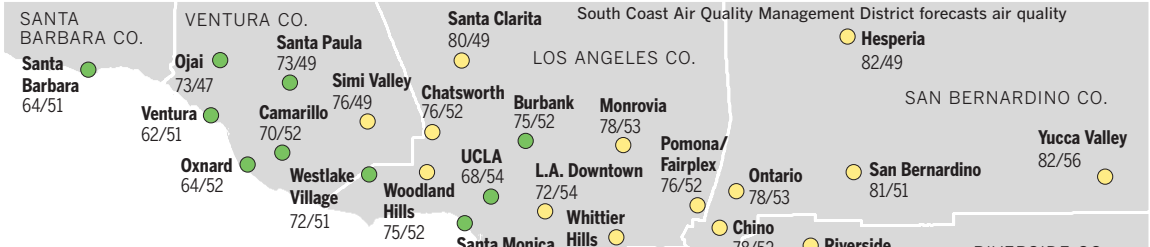
Nice weather to start the workweek: A flat upper-level ridge of high pressure will remain in control of Southern California on Monday. Expect sunshine and comfortable afternoon temperatures. A weak onshore flow will lead to some morning low clouds at the coast, but they will lift for afternoon sunshine. The onshore flow will increase on Tuesday and Wednesday, causing more morning low clouds and a cooling trend.

5-day forecasts

High/low temperatures are average forecasts for entire zone.

	L.A. Basin	Valleys	Beaches	Mountains	Deserts
Today	72 54 Mostly sunny	76 52 Mostly sunny	65 54 Fog to sun	66 35 Mostly sunny	93 64 Mostly sunny; warm
Tuesday	Mostly sunny 70/55	Mostly sunny 74/54	Fog to sun 64/54	Sunny 65/35	Sunny; warm 92/63
Wednesday	Clearing 69/56	Mostly sunny 71/51	Clearing 65/55	Sunny 62/37	Breezy 90/62
Thursday	Mostly cloudy 70/57	Partly sunny 70/51	Mostly cloudy 67/56	Partly sunny 61/33	Breezy 89/60
Friday	Clouds, sun 69/56	Partly sunny 71/52	Partly sunny 65/53	Sunny; cool 52/31	Breezy 84/56

Air quality



Surf and sea

POINT CONCEPTION TO MEXICO
Inner waters: Wind northwesterly at 10-15 knots. Seas 2-4 feet. Swell west at 1 foot at 11 seconds and southwest 2 feet at 16 seconds.
Surf zone: The risk of strong rip currents is moderate at the L.A. and Ventura county beaches and low elsewhere.

County	Height	Period	Direction	Temp
Santa Barbara	1-3'	13 sec	WSW	55
Ventura	2-4'	13 sec	WSW	55
Los Angeles	2-4'	17 sec	SSW	59
Orange	1-3'	17 sec	SSW	59
San Diego	1-3'	17 sec	SSW	61

Tides

L.A. Outer Harbor, in feet.				
Today	3:40a	4.3 Hi	11:40a	0.1 Lo
	6:57p	3.7 Hi	11:35p	2.7 Lo
Tue.	5:10a	4.4 Hi	12:23p	0.0 Lo
	7:10p	4.1 Hi	-----	Lo

UV index

Minutes to burn for sensitive people
Las Vegas, 25
Phoenix, 25
Los Angeles, 25
San Francisco, 25

California cities*

City	Sun.* Hi Lo	Today Hi Lo	Tue. Hi Lo
Anaheim	77 53	-- 73 55	71 56
Avalon/Catalina	61 52	-- 62 49	60 49
Bakersfield	84 58	-- 86 58	86 58
Barstow	85 57	-- 88 59	88 59
Big Bear Lake	60 32	-- 66 35	65 35
Bishop	78 45	-- 79 42	80 42
Burbank	77 52	-- 75 52	71 54
Camarillo	69 49	-- 70 52	67 54
Chatsworth	77 51	-- 76 52	73 53
Chino	79 49	-- 78 52	75 54
Compton	70 54	-- 71 56	70 58
Dana Point	66 54	-- 64 55	64 58
Death Valley	94 66	-- 98 77	99 77
Del Mar	66 54	-- 61 55	61 55
Escondido	75 47	-- 72 49	71 52
Eureka	58 44	-- 57 43	55 41
Fallbrook	77 47	-- 73 49	71 52
Fresno	82 56	-- 85 57	86 56
Fullerton	78 53	-- 73 56	70 56
Hemet	82 44	-- 81 44	77 49
Hesperia	74 49	-- 80 51	78 50
Huntington Beach	67 56	-- 64 57	64 58
Idyllwild	68 49	-- 69 48	69 47
Irvine	71 54	-- 71 55	68 57

City	Sun.* Hi Lo	Today Hi Lo	Tue. Hi Lo
L.A. D'town/USC	72 52	-- 72 54	70 55
L.A. Int'l. Airport	63 53	-- 65 55	66 54
Laguna Beach	63 54	-- 64 55	62 56
Lancaster	80 52	-- 81 52	81 54
Long Beach	74 54	-- 71 57	68 58
Mammoth Lakes	59 25	-- 64 29	61 29
Mission Viejo	74 51	-- 72 52	68 55
Monrovia	80 52	-- 78 53	74 55
Monterey	62 47	-- 65 48	62 48
Mr. Wilson	60 47	-- 53 45	54 46
Needles	83 57	-- 92 62	94 66
Newport Beach	63 56	-- 65 57	63 60
Northridge	78 51	-- 76 52	73 53
Oakland	66 49	-- 74 51	70 52
Oceanside	72 50	-- 69 52	67 55
Ojai	73 49	-- 73 47	71 46
Ontario	80 53	-- 78 53	76 52
Palm Springs	89 63	-- 93 64	92 63
Pasadena	76 51	-- 74 53	71 52
Paso Robles	80 41	-- 83 43	78 44
Redding	82 58	-- 85 54	82 57
Riverside	80 48	-- 79 46	77 49
Sacramento	79 47	-- 84 50	83 49
San Bernardino	82 51	-- 81 51	79 52

City	Sun.* Hi Lo	Today Hi Lo	Tue. Hi Lo
San Diego	67 56	-- 68 57	67 57
San Francisco	64 48	-- 71 50	66 51
San Gabriel	78 52	-- 75 55	73 57
San Jose	73 50	-- 80 52	77 50
San Luis Obispo	66 46	-- 68 47	66 48
Santa Ana	71 55	-- 69 57	67 57
Santa Barbara	65 50	-- 64 51	63 51
Santa Clarita	78 47	-- 80 49	79 52
Santa Monica Pier	62 52	-- 65 54	64 54
Santa Paula	70 49	-- 73 49	73 50
Santa Rosa	70 44	-- 79 46	75 42
Simi Valley	73 48	-- 76 49	73 51
Tahoe Valley	61 27	-- 63 28	60 32
Temecula	76 46	-- 77 47	75 50
Thousand Oaks	69 48	-- 72 51	71 52
Torrance	65 55	-- 66 56	63 57
UCLA	66 53	-- 68 54	67 55
Van Nuys	79 52	-- 76 52	72 52
Ventura	61 50	-- 62 51	61 54
Whittier Hills	74 53	-- 74 55	72 57
Woodland Hills	81 51	-- 75 52	71 53
Wrightwood	65 48	-- 65 49	65 47
Yorba Linda	77 50	-- 74 53	71 53
Yosemite Valley	66 36	-- 70 39	67 35

ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

LOS PADRINOS Juvenile Hall in Downey has been the site of numerous scandals, including allegations of “gladiator fights” allowed by officers, overdoses among teens and accusations of sexual abuse by staff members.

Judge orders relocation of youths at troubled Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall

[Los Padrinos, from B1] merits.

But the board rejected the appeal, noting that “staff shortages” were still leading to situations in which youths were not receiving proper medical attention, missing school time and being left unattended after being hit with chemical spray that is at times used to quell disturbances.

“We continue to have concerns with the ability of the department to develop a long-term sustainable solution to address deficiencies with staffing,” the board’s last report read. “Facility staffing documentation continues to indicate that deployed staff are used to back-fill youth supervision staffing, an indication that the department continues to rely on a solution that was intended to be a short-term

solution as far back as 2022.”

In the months since probation ignored the Board of State and Community Corrections’ order, news of misconduct and injuries to youths at Los Padrinos has continued to pile up.

The California attorney general’s office indicted 30 officers last month, accusing them of allowing so-called gladiator fights between youths for months inside Los Padrinos.

A surveillance video first published by The Times in April 2024 showed a group of officers standing by while eight youths took turns attacking one teen, who suffered a broken nose and other injuries. Some officers could be seen laughing and shaking hands with the assailants.

This month, at least three teens suffered drug

overdoses at Los Padrinos. In March, a teen was stabbed in the eye during school hours, according to multiple sources with direct knowledge of the incident who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss an ongoing investigation. A Probation Department spokesperson said the victim suffered “non-life threatening injuries.”

A 19-year-old also alleged last month that he’d been sexually abused by a 29-year-old Department of Mental Health employee for nearly a year at Los Padrinos, according to court records. His attorney, Jamal Tooson, claimed the abuse was only uncovered when probation officers found explicit pictures sent by the employee during a search of the teen’s room.

Representatives for the

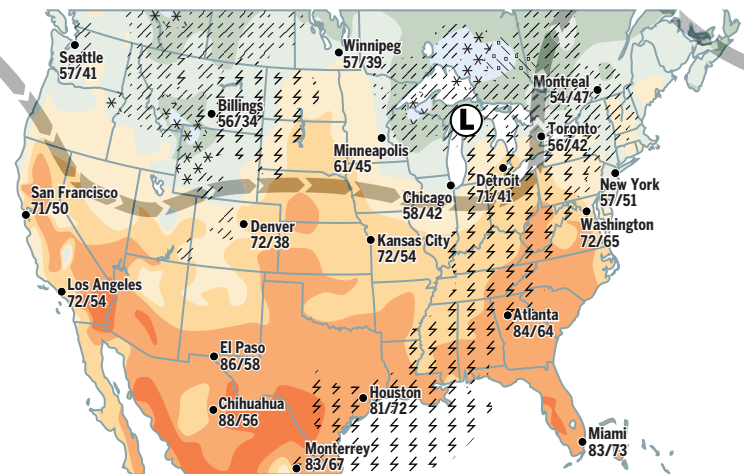
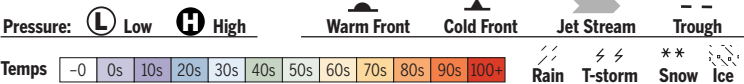
probation and mental health departments declined to comment on that incident. It was not clear whether a criminal investigation had been opened into the alleged abuse.

Los Padrinos was shut down in 2019 because of a decrease in the number of youths jailed in L.A. County and allegations of excessive force by officers concerning their use of pepper spray. The facility was reopened in July 2023, after the Board of State and Community Corrections shut down L.A. County’s two other juvenile halls.

Within a month, a chaotic incident occurred in which seven youths smashed apart a table and used the pieces as weapons, attacking staff and attempting to break out into the surrounding neighborhood.

Today in North America

Thunderstorms and hail in the East: A cold front tracking southeastward will bring strong thunderstorms, leading to small hail and gusty winds from southwestern New York state southward to Mississippi. Meanwhile, warm and dry weather will lead to a high fire risk in Florida.



U.S. cities

SUNDAY’S EXTREMES AS OF 2 P.M. FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES

High 91 in Punta Gorda, Fla. Low 13 in Leadville, Colo.

City	Sunday* Hi Lo	Today Hi Lo	City	Sunday* Hi Lo	Today Hi Lo
Albany	60 45	-- 60 49	Seattle	55 45	.05 57 41
Albuquerque	67 34	.03 73 46	Tampa	88 71	-- 87 70
Anchorage	49 30	-- 45 36	Tucson	84 44	-- 91 56
Aspen	49 26	.01 57 29	Tulsa	69 51	2.42 76 52
Atlanta	82 65	-- 84 64	Washington, D.C.	77 67	-- 72 65
Austin	88 67	.31 88 65	Wichita	51 44	.73 75 53
Baltimore	74 64	-- 69 60			
Boise	66 38	-- 62 36			
Boston	63 57	Tr 55 48			
Buffalo	54 37	-- 68 44			
Burlington, Vt.	53 40	Tr 60 50			
Charleston, S.C.	82 62	-- 83 66			
Charlotte	83 64	-- 84 65			
Chicago	58 45	.49 58 42			
Cincinnati	76 54	.01 73 48			
Cleveland	54 44	-- 74 47			
Columbia, S.C.	85 63	-- 85 63			
Columbus	72 51	-- 76 49			
Dallas/Ft.Worth	77 67	.14 83 60			
Denver	63 25	-- 72 38			
Detroit	57 42	-- 71 41			
El Paso	75 44	-- 86 58			
Eugene	60 37	.01 61 39			
Fort Myers	88 65	-- 89 66			
Hartford	62 49	-- 63 50			
Honolulu	85 74	.02 86 71			
Houston	87 74	.16 81 72			
Indianapolis	75 51	.02 82 46			
Jacksonville, Fla.	84 58	-- 86 64			
Kansas City	53 46	.90 72 54			
Knoxville	84 59	-- 81 62			
Las Vegas	84 53	-- 86 63			
Louisville	84 61	.04 76 52			
Medford	70 40	-- 70 39			
Memphis	80 67	Tr 77 58			
Miami	83 72	-- 83 73			
Milwaukee	47 39	.15 54 38			
Minneapolis	55 39	.15 61 45			
Nashville	85 62	-- 76 56			
New Orleans	83 72	-- 81 70			
New York	67 35	-- 57 51			
Northak	81 69	-- 76 65			
Oklahoma City	63 50	2.25 77 53			
Omaha	48 45	.43 74 54			
Orlando	87 64	-- 89 65			
Philadelphia	71 66	-- 92 65			
Phoenix	85 59	-- 95 58			
Pittsburgh	69 51	-- 77 52			
Portland, Ore.	59 48	.05 59 43			
Providence	65 56	-- 58 46			
Raleigh/Durham	86 66	-- 86 66			
Reno	75 44	-- 73 44			
Richmond	85 62	-- 81 66			
St. Louis	79 55	1.16 72 50			
Salt Lake City	68 45	-- 63 43			

Key: Su sunny; Pc partly cloudy; Cy cloudy; Fg foggy; Prcp precipitation; Dr drizzle; Hz hazy Sh showers; Ts thunderstorms; R rain; Sn snow; Sf snow flurries; I ice; Rs rain/snow; W windy; Tr trace. Notes: National extremes exclude Alaska and Hawaii. * - data estimated. Sunday’s readings as of 2 p.m.

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Escaped murderer is arrested in Tijuana after pursuer is killed

By CLARA HARTER

A convicted Los Angeles County murderer who escaped from custody in California and then fled to Mexico — where he allegedly shot and killed a police officer who was trying to apprehend him — was arrested in Tijuana last week, Mexican authorities said.

The attorney general’s office of Baja California announced that Cesar Hernandez, 35, had been captured Thursday in a special operation dubbed “Gacela,” meaning gazelle.

He was wanted in Mexico in connection with the April 9 shooting death of Mexican police commander Abigail Esparza Reyes, which took place during an attempt to arrest him in Tijuana.

Reyes was a member of a specialized investigative unit known as “Gringo Hunters,” which works to apprehend fugitives who have fled to Mexico from the U.S., according to reporting from Reuters.

Authorities told the wire service that Reyes had led the unit’s regional team for eight years and carried out more than 400 operations.

“Abigail’s life will be honored, and her death will not

go unpunished,” Baja California Gov. Marina del Pilar Ávila Olmeda said in Spanish in a statement on social media.

In 2019, Hernandez was sentenced to 80 years to life for killing a man outside a bar in Los Angeles, a second-strike offense, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Hernandez escaped custody in December while he was being transported to an appearance at Kern County Superior Court in Delano, according to the department.

After arriving at the courthouse, he jumped out of the van, evaded staff and fled the area on foot.

Despite the significant law enforcement effort to capture him, he made it to Mexico.

Hernandez “had been on the run from justice in both Mexico and the U.S., making him a top priority for law enforcement,” the Baja California attorney general’s office said in a statement in Spanish.

“In Baja California, if you break the law, there are consequences,” the statement said.

Authorities have not yet announced whether Hernandez will be prosecuted in Mexico or California.



Baja California attorney general’s office

OFFICIALS announced Cesar Hernandez had been captured Thursday in an operation dubbed “Gacela.”

The Lyrid meteor shower puts on a show just in time for Earth Day

Head to the desert, mountains for the best views of the event set to start late Monday.

By KAITLYN HUAMANI

Shooting stars will usher in Earth Day starting late Monday night as the Lyrid meteor shower reaches its peak — and Californians will have some of the best views in the country.

The annual meteor shower event is most visible in April and is named after the constellation Lyra, the harp, located near the point

in the sky where the Lyrids appear to originate. The shower is one of the oldest on record, with observations dating back more than 2,700 years.

The peak of the event will be Monday night into the early-morning hours of Tuesday, Earth Day. Thanks to clear skies, almost all of California is forecast to have good viewing conditions, along with some regions of other Western states, parts of the Southwest and a pocket of the Midwest, including areas west and south of Chicago, according to AccuWeather.

In Los Angeles and other major cities where light pollution is pervasive, stargazers will have some difficulty seeing the shower despite the ideal weather conditions because of the light pollution from homes, businesses, streetlights and cars.

“These events are notoriously invisible for the average person because we’re all drowning in artificial light, and so there’s really not a prayer for most people to get to see this at all,” said Ed Krupp, the director of Griffith Observatory.

To get a clearer view of the stars, Krupp suggests those in Southern California should head out to the mountains or desert. Once hopeful viewers are “far from urban encroachment,” their chance of catching more shooting stars is much better, he said.

Krupp, who’s been serving as the L.A. observatory’s director since 1974, said it’s important for people to temper their expectations of what they could see from the



DANIEL REINHARDT DPA

THE LYRID meteor shower is seen April 20, 2018, on the Baltic Sea island of Fehmarn off Germany. In the U.S., California is forecast to have good viewing conditions for the Lyrids, which will peak late Monday night.

meteor shower.

“The very name sort of suggests that there are meteors pouring down on you,” he said. “You’re not likely to see more than one meteor a minute, and the Lyrids are not that populous, so the average time between one and then the next might be three minutes or so. It’s a process that demands patience and attention.”

The name “meteor shower” might also incorrectly imply that what viewers are seeing are meteors themselves, or the leftover comet particles and bits from broken asteroids, instead of the trail left behind them.

“You’re seeing a glowing tunnel of hot air that might be 10 miles in diameter produced by this very tiny little pebble that’s passing through the atmosphere and burns up,” Krupp said.

Still, Krupp said, seeing just one shooting star is a special experience, and one that will often elicit cheers if you’re in the company of other stargazers. He de-

scribed the celestial lights as “charmings,” saying there is an “emotional, uplifting” feeling you get when you witness one pass through the sky.

Krupp’s best tips for an optimal viewing experience include dressing warm and making yourself as comfortable as possible, given that dedicated viewers could be staring up at the sky for at least a few hours, going well past midnight.

Shooting stars can be easy to miss, he added, so staying focused and being patient are key. He warns against cellphone use, both because of the light it emits and the distraction it causes.

With the peak of the shower coming during the first few hours of Earth Day, Krupp chuckled at the alignment of the galaxy’s display and our observance of the holiday.

“The cosmos is a cold, random and uncaring place, but somehow it manages to converge with our own emotional bonds,” he said.

Two killed in Easter morning crashes on 10 and 405 freeways

By SUSANNE RUST

There were two fatalities on area highways on Easter morning.

A wrong-way crash on the 10 Freeway near downtown Los Angeles led to one fatality and a bottleneck for holiday travelers. Another was reported on the 405 Freeway in the North Hills area, although the interstate remained open.

According to the California Highway Patrol, officers were called to the west-bound span of the 10 Freeway just east of Central Avenue about 5:25 a.m.

One person was pronounced dead at the scene

and four others were transported to hospitals; their conditions were unknown.

Several cars were involved and a SigAlert was in effect, with just one lane open in each direction.

It was unclear whether the driver in the wrong-way collision was impaired, a CHP spokesperson said.

There was also a fatality on the 405 Freeway south of the Nordhoff Street exit in the southbound lane. The accident involved two cars.

The CHP arrived at the scene at 2:19 a.m.; one person was pronounced dead.

The CHP provided no further details about the accident.

Man who bit Orange County police officer dies in custody after arrest

By BRITTNY MEJIA

A man who police said was “erratic” and bit an officer during his arrest suffered a medical emergency and died in custody early Sunday, according to authorities.

A Fullerton police officer first spotted the man

around 12:31 a.m. after closing hours at Lemon Park, according to a department news release.

Police said the man looked to be holding a smoldering cardboard box and “was acting erratic.”

As more officers arrived, police said, the man became uncooperative and began to physically resist. More offi-

cers were called to provide assistance and, according to the department, it took several of them to gain control of the man and place him in restraints.

Police said that as officers were taking the man into custody, he “violently bit an officer on the arm causing injuries.”

The Fullerton Fire De-

partment responded to treat both the suspect and the officer. Several minutes later, according to the release, the arrestee appeared to have a medical emergency. Police said paramedics began lifesaving measures and took the man — who has not yet been identified — to a nearby hospital, where he was pronounced

dead.

The officer who was bitten was treated at a hospital and released, according to the department.

Investigators with the Orange County district attorney’s office responded for an independent investigation into the death, according to the Police Department.

Vandal hacks dozens of trees in downtown L.A.

It’s a loss for the urban core. Some hope security cameras will help solve the crime.

By SUSANNE RUST

L.A.’s fragile urban canopy was dealt a vicious blow this weekend when a chainsaw-wielding vandal cut down a number of shade trees along South Grand Street and other areas of downtown, according to media posts and photos uploaded to Reddit and Instagram.

The Los Angeles Police Department told The Times it had no information about the tree destruction, and an email and phone call to the city’s Urban Forestry Division went unanswered Sunday.

Social media images showed a number of trees that were severed at the base, while others were cut several feet above the pavement. A few of the felled trees were still connected to their trunks by just a thread of bark or wood.

According to Reddit user TipTapMyWipWap, every tree between 1st Street and Wilshire Avenue was cut down. However, a review of photos suggests a few remain standing.

Photos from Instagram show downed trees at the intersections of Olympic Boulevard and Hope Street, Olympic Boulevard and Figueroa Street, and Broadway and Cesar Chavez Avenue.

A number of the trees appeared to be a drought-resistant species known as Indian laurel fig, or *Ficus microcarpa*.



Photographs by CARLIN STIEHL Los Angeles Times

A NUMBER of trees were severed at the base; others were cut several feet above the pavement. Trees benefit urban areas by capturing storm runoff, replenishing groundwater and slowing the deterioration of streets.



ON SOCIAL MEDIA, some noted the timing of the destruction, which occurred just ahead of Earth Day.

Trees provide myriad benefits to urban areas. They capture stormwater runoff, replenish groundwater and slow the deterioration of streets. They also clean the air and help to cool their surroundings. One study by the UCLA Luskin Center found that shade can reduce heat stress in the human body by 25% to 30% throughout the day.

Social media users condemned the culprits, and some noted that the cuts were done just ahead of Earth Day.

“So, eco terrorism on the day where most are having

their earth day celebrations? Seems very intentional,” said user @JankyCiborium438.

Others wondered whether it was a grand conspiracy.

“Someone needed these trees removed — either some city employee or private developer — and decided this was way easier than getting actual permission,” said @Difficult_Color4336.

Many noted that security cameras are omnipresent, so video evidence should be available for investigators to review.

Obituaries

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Joan Mary Phillips

November 18, 1928 - April 4, 2025

Joan was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on November 18th, 1928, to Harold and Cecilia Bonifas, joining older brother James Bonifas. Joan attended Holy Angels High School, now Divine Savior HS and recently established a scholarship fund endowment at Divine Savior. She graduated from Marquette University with a degree in Journalism. She met her first husband Jack at Marquette, and they married in August 1949. They moved to El Paso, Texas, and settled in the Upper Valley and welcomed their first 3 children. A few years later they moved to Houston and then moved back to El Paso in 1960. By then they had added 3 more children to the family. They were very active in the community, members of El Paso Country Club, and kept busy with 6 children under the age of 9. When her marriage to Jack ended, she worked in sales for a short time. She was set up on a blind date with Charles W. Phillips, a major in the US Army, by mutual friends. They married in 1965, and Chuck transferred to Los Angeles CA where they started a new adventure in Woodland Hills and added another daughter to the family.

Joan’s hobbies included genealogy, volunteering at the Southern California Genealogy Library for many years, bridge, entertaining and swing dancing. She loved the Green Bay Packers, college basketball, games and puzzles, gardening, reading and playing nickel slots at the casinos. She worked for many years managing the China and Crystal Department at Robinson’s department store. Her greatest joy was being with her family. She loved family celebrations and organized several reunions across the country. Her love for her family was immeasurable.

She is survived by her 6 children, Mike, Kathy (Bill), Mark (Pam), Joanie (Paul), John (Susan) and Patti (Jason), 16 grandchildren, Phillip, Michael, Brian, Kendall, Justin, Alexis, Courtney, Justin, Christopher, Payton, Kailey, Hunter, Marshall, Madison, James and Claire, 10 great grandchildren, and her nephews Jim and Bill Bonifas, and niece Sue Ganser.

She is preceded in death by her late husband Charles, and her son Kit (Melanie).

A funeral mass will be celebrated Wednesday May 7th, 2025 at 11:00 a.m. at St. Bernardine Catholic Church, 24410 Calvert St. Woodland Hills.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions can be made to Divine Savior High School, Milwaukee Wisconsin. Joan Bonifas Phillips Scholarship Fund.

SPORTS

MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2025 • LATIMES.COM/SPORTS

NBA PLAYOFFS • LAKERS VS. MINNESOTA

TIMBERWOLVES LEAD BEST-OF-SEVEN SERIES, 1-0 | **GAME 2:** TUESDAY AT CRYPTO.COM ARENA, 7 P.M. | TV: TNT, TRUTV, MAX



Photographs by ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

LAKERS guard Luka Dončić shoots over Minnesota center Rudy Gobert at Crypto.com Arena on Saturday. L.A. was blown out by the Timberwolves in Game 1, 117-95.

Looking for a better L.A. story

Voices
DYLAN HERNÁNDEZ COLUMNIST

Lakers should still win this series, but they will have to adapt fast

Lights, camera ... freeze? What was *that*? Seriously, what was that? After a blockbuster trade that changed the trajectory of the entire league, after a 50-win regular season that restored the faith of their despondent fan base, the Lakers were outmuscled, outshot and pretty much out-everythinged in a 117-95 defeat to the underdog Timberwolves on Saturday in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series. Goodbye, momentum. Goodbye, home-court advantage. The Lakers trailed by as many as 27 points, their performance at Crypto.com Arena so shameful that even one of the worst coaches in franchise history felt emboldened enough to criticize their current sideline leader. “Coach JJ Redick did a great job all season but he didn’t do a good job for Game 1,” Magic Johnson posted on X. “The Lakers stood around on [See Hernández, D3]



THE LAKERS' LeBron James, right, gets his hands on the ball as Timberwolves forward Julius Randle attempts to pass. Randle was held to 16 points.

Dončić’s early surge masks how Minnesota had control in opener

BY DAN WOIKE

For 12 minutes to begin the 2025 playoffs, Luka Dončić rewarded the Lakers’ fans in the packed arena, showing that all the hopefulness that they entered Crypto.com Arena on Saturday wasn’t just some foolish dream. It could really happen; he’s that good. But for as much as a brilliant Dončić start can be the opening paragraphs in the story of a Lakers win, it can also be a bit of a mask. Because while Dončić got whatever he wanted, Austin Reaves struggled against Minnesota’s pressure, missing easy shots at the rim and struggling to get the Lakers into offense. LeBron James, whom we last saw on the court grimacing after a hip flexor strain, didn’t have much burst to the basket or much touch on his shot. And with Dončić on the bench after a 16-point first quarter, that mask came off. The Lakers couldn’t score. They couldn’t outrun ball movement or chase down rebounds. Opposing shooters were open. Driving lanes on the other end were closed. And they [See Lakers, D3]



A STURDY DODGERS bullpen came to the rescue after Tyler Glasnow left in the fifth. It’s not believed to be serious and he’s expected to make his next start.

Glasnow exits, but bullpen steps up in Dodgers’ victory

Starter suffers cramps before L.A. prevails despite managing only three hits off Rangers.

BY JACK HARRIS

ARLINGTON, Texas — Tyler Glasnow stood on the back of the mound, flexed his right leg to test how it felt, then threw his first pitch of the fifth inning on Sunday afternoon. In the Dodgers’ 1-0 defeat of the Texas Rangers, it proved to be the right-

hander’s last one of the day. Though the Dodgers salvaged a series win at Globe Life Field, riding a stout bullpen and eighth-inning sacrifice fly from Freddie Freeman to victory in the series rubber match, they had to overcome another injury concern from Glasnow, who left the game after four innings with what he later said was cramping in his legs. “Ankles, calves, feet. Both sides,” Glasnow said. “After a while, it just gets to the point where it’s fully locked up. I’m not sure why.” The good news for the Dodgers: Glasnow’s issue is

not believed to be serious. Among the many injury problems that have plagued his big-league career, occasional bouts of cramping have been among the most benign. “We expect him to make his next start on Sunday at home,” manager Dave Roberts said. “So hopefully this is a one-time occurrence.” Glasnow’s early exit didn’t derail the Dodgers (16-7) either. Instead, a sturdy bullpen came to the rescue once again. Luis García and Anthony Banda each got two outs af- [See Dodgers, D2]

FLIP SECTION FOR KINGS COVER



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PRO CALENDAR

	MON 21	TUE 22	WED 23	THU 24	FRI 25
 DODGERS		at Chi. Cubs 4:30 SNLA	at Chi. Cubs 4 SNLA		PITT. 7 SNLA
 ANGELS		PITT. 6:30 FDW	PITT. 6:30 FDW	PITT. 6:30 FDW	at Minnesota 5 FDW
 LAKERS		MINNESOTA 7* SpecSN, TNT			at Minnesota 6:30* ESPN
 CLIPPERS	at Denver 7* FDSC, TNT			DENVER 7* FDSC, NBA TV	
 KINGS	EDMONTON 7& FDW, ESPN2		EDMONTON 7& FDSC, TBS		at Edmonton 7& TNT, truTV, Max
 GALAXY	NEXT: APRIL 27 VS. PORTLAND, 6 P.M., APPLE TV+				
 LAFC	NEXT: APRIL 27 VS. ST. LOUIS, 4 P.M., APPLE TV+				
 ANGEL CITY					at Orlando 5 Amazon Prime

*NBA playoffs, &NHL playoffs Shade denotes home games. Times Pacific.

TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
BASEBALL		
8 a.m.	Chicago White Sox at Boston	TV: MLB
3:30 p.m.	San Diego at Detroit	TV: FS1, FOXD
6:30 p.m.	Milwaukee at San Francisco	TV: MLB
BASKETBALL: NBA PLAYOFFS, FIRST ROUND		
4:30 p.m.	Game 2, Detroit at New York	TV: TNT, TruTV
7 p.m.	Game 2, Clippers at Denver	TV: FDSC, TNT, TruTV R: 570, 1330
COLLEGE SOFTBALL		
2 p.m.	Penn State at Iowa	TV: Big Ten
4 p.m.	Minnesota at Wisconsin	TV: Big Ten
4 p.m.	Kentucky at South Carolina	TV: SEC
HOCKEY: STANLEY CUP PLAYOFFS, FIRST ROUND		
4 p.m.	Game 1, Montreal at Washington	TV: ESPN
4:30 p.m.	Game 2, St. Louis at Winnipeg	TV: ESPN2
6:30 p.m.	Game 2, Colorado at Dallas	TV: ESPN
7 p.m.	Game 1, Edmonton at Kings	TV: FDW, ESPN2 R: 710
MOTOCROSS		
7 a.m.	FIM, MX2, Switzerland	TV: CBSN
RUNNING		
6 a.m.	Boston Marathon	TV: ESPN2
SOCCER		
9 a.m.	Saudi Arabia, Al Hilal vs. Al Shabab	TV: FS2
11 a.m.	Saudi Arabia, Al Ittihad vs. Al Ittifaq	TV: FS2
11:45 a.m.	Italy, Parma vs. Juventus	TV: Paramount+, FOXD
Noon	England, Tottenham Hotspur vs. Nottingham Forest	TV: USA, Universo
Noon	Spain, Girona vs. Real Betis	TV: ESPN+, ESPND
TENNIS		
2 a.m. (Tue.)	WTA, Madrid, early rounds	TV: Tennis

Glasnow leaves early but Dodgers get win

[**Dodgers**, from D1] ter Glasnow's departure. Rookie standout Ben Casparius collected five more after them, marking his sixth-straight outing of more than one inning.

Another rookie surprise, left-hander Jack Dreyer, recovered from a leadoff walk in the eighth by retiring his next two batters. Evan Phillips then finished off that inning, before Tanner Scott got his eighth save of the season in the ninth — the game ending when Rangers baserunner Wyatt Langford was tagged out by second baseman Miguel Rojas after popping off the bag on a bang-bang play while trying to steal a base.

The Dodgers' offense only produced three hits against the Rangers (13-9), but got their lone run in the top of the eighth inning. Will Smith led off with a pinch-hit single, moved to second on a walk from Shohei Ohtani — who was returning to the lineup after missing two games for the birth of his daughter — then advanced all the way home on back-to-back fly balls from Mookie Betts and Freeman.

"It was just a great manufactured inning," Roberts said.

In the end, the only real question was the severity of Glasnow's cramping issue — and whether it signaled reason for concern given his history of injuries.

Glasnow said his legs started bothering him in the third inning. In the fourth, he initially stayed in the game after being checked on the mound by a trainer once. But when the problem persisted into the fifth — his lone pitch that inning was a 93.7 mph fastball, one of his slowest this season — signs of this discomfort were visible again, prompting Roberts and the training staff to re-

move him from the game.

"I've done all the hydration stuff. I do all the supplements," Glasnow said. "I think we'll try and figure straight out soon. And just hopefully it doesn't happen again."

Glasnow had a similar cramping episode last April in Toronto. Though he bounced back from that to complete a strong first half to the season, earning him his first career All-Star selection, he ultimately succumbed to an elbow injury in August that sidelined him for the rest of the season.

Roberts wasn't concerned about Glasnow's long-term health after Sunday's game, but did acknowledge a sense of frustration from the 31-year-old veteran — who has a 3.71 ERA in four starts this year, but only 17 total innings pitched.

"I'm sure no one's more frustrated than he is, especially when you're pitching well," Roberts said of Glasnow, who had another short start two weeks ago in Philadelphia when he failed to complete the third inning amid a light rain shower.

"But the bullpen has picked him up. And hopefully this one and some other things are behind us and he can give us some length [next] Sunday."

Given the shorthanded state of the Dodgers' rotation (which is awaiting the return of Blake Snell and Tony Gonsolin) and the heavy early-season workload that has fallen on the bullpen (which leads the majors with 96 2/3 combined innings this season), the Dodgers will need it.

"It's not a good feeling, just to have the bullpen throw so many innings this year," Glasnow said. "But like I said, they've done an amazing job, and they helped me out today a lot."



GEORGE WALKER IV Associated Press

QUARTERBACK NICO IAMALEAVA enjoys a Nov. 30 win with Tennessee. The Long Beach native will have to learn the offense fairly quickly upon joining the Bruins, who had been training Joey Aguilar at quarterback.

Former Tennessee quarterback Iamaleava commits to UCLA

Messy split involving name, image and likeness money sparks return to Southland.

By BEN BOLCH

College football's highest-profile transfer is coming home.

After a falling out with Tennessee, Nico Iamaleava has agreed to play for UCLA next season in a move that will generate buzz for the Bruins after they added a quarterback who took his previous team to the College Football Playoff.

But the nature of Iamaleava's departure, which reportedly involved a desire for more name, image and likeness money from the Volunteers at a time when most teams had lined up a starting quarterback for next season, could make Iamaleava a polarizing figure before he sets foot on his new campus.

Iamaleava announced his commitment to the Bruins on his Instagram account Sunday, ending more than a week of speculation about his future.

"My journey at UT has come to an end," his post read. "This decision was incredibly difficult, and truthfully, not something I expected to make this soon. But I trust God's timing, and I believe He's leading me where I need to be."

It was not immediately clear how much Iamaleava,

a Long Beach native whose initial college deal reportedly was set to pay him more than \$2 million to pay for Tennessee next season, agreed to accept from the Bruins as part of his move back to Southern California.

An unnamed friend of Iamaleava's family told Front Office Sports that the dissatisfaction with the Volunteers centered on the need to bolster the offensive line and receiving corps, not a demand for additional compensation.

UCLA appeared to have substantial leverage in negotiations given that most teams had committed to a starting quarterback for next season, significantly reducing demand for a high-priced transfer. Further limiting Iamaleava's options, he couldn't have gone to another Southeastern Conference school without sitting out a season as part of conference rules associated with entering the transfer portal in the spring.

The redshirt sophomore will have three seasons of remaining eligibility, though he could declare for the NFL draft as soon as next year.

Moving from a CFP participant to a team that hasn't won a conference championship in more than a quarter of a century presents some risk for Iamaleava in his bid to win at the highest level of college football before moving on to the NFL. He'll have to learn a new offense relatively quickly after presumably missing the rest of spring

practice and joining the team upon his enrollment this summer.

Iamaleava, who wore No. 8 at Tennessee, will also have to change numbers unless he receives permission to use the number that was retired to honor former Bruins quarterback Troy Aikman.

The addition of Iamaleava leaves in doubt the future of Joey Aguilar, who spent the first three weeks of spring practice as UCLA's presumed starting quarterback next season after putting up prolific numbers at Appalachian State. Iamaleava's arrival could nudge Aguilar back into the transfer portal considering he only has one more season of eligibility left.

Aguilar did not let speculation about Iamaleava immediately alter his plans; he participated in the Bruins' "Friday Night Lights" event as if nothing had changed about his preparation for next season.

The Bruins nearly added Nico's younger brother, Madden, to their roster on signing day in December before the Long Beach Poly High quarterback and teammate Jace Brown backed out of their verbal commitments and signed with Arkansas. Nico's decision to join the Bruins signals that whatever hard feelings emerged from his brother's situation have been smoothed over between the team and the Iamaleava family.

UCLA had one strongly in its pursuit of Nico Iamaleava because Stacey Ford, the team's director of player personnel, was on the coaching staff at Warren High when the quarterback emerged as a star during the 2021 season. Iamaleava later reportedly signed a four-year, \$8-million name, image and likeness contract with Spyre Sports Group, Tennessee's name, image and likeness collective, with a six-figure payment while he was still in high school.

After playing sparingly in his first college season, the 6-foot-6, 215-pounder starred during a 2024 season in which he led the Volunteers to the playoff before they lost to eventual national champion Ohio State in the first round. Iamaleava completed 63.8% of his passes for 2,616 yards with 19 touchdowns and five interceptions, though critics pointed out that eight of those touchdowns came against lightly regarded Texas El Paso and Vanderbilt.

UCLA will open the season against Utah on Aug. 30 at the Rose Bowl, its quarterback vying to become the local hero the Bruins have long needed to reclaim long-lost glory. UCLA quickly capitalized on the arrival of its new star, sending an email to fans featuring a graphic of the quarterback in a Bruins jersey and a link to season ticket deposits for next season.

"Now is your chance," the email said, "to be part of this electric new era of UCLA football."

NBA PLAYOFFS, FIRST ROUND

WESTERN CONFERENCE
1 **Oklahoma City** vs. 8 **Memphis**
Thunder lead, 1-0

61	Oklahoma City 131, Memphis 80
62	Tuesday at OKC, 4:30, TNT
63	Thursday at Memphis, 6:30, TNT
64	Sat. at Memphis, 12:30, TNT
65	April 28 at OKC, TBD
66	May 1 at Memphis, TBD
67	May 3 at OKC, TBD

2 **Houston** vs. 7 **Golden State**
Best-of-seven series

61	Sunday at Houston, late
62	Wednesday at Houston, 6:30, TNT
63	Sat. at Golden St., 5:30, Ch. 7
64	April 28 at Golden St., 7, TNT
65	April 30 at Houston, TBD
66	May 2 at Golden St., TBD
67	May 4 at Houston, TBD

3 **LAKERS** vs. 6 **Minnesota**
Timberwolves lead, 1-0

61	Minnesota 117, LAKERS 95
62	Tuesday at LAKERS, 7, SpecSN, TNT
63	Friday at Min., 6:30, SpecSN, ESPN
64	April 27 at Minnesota, 12:30, Ch. 7
65	April 30 at LAKERS, TBD
66	May 2 at Minnesota, TBD
67	May 4 at LAKERS, TBD

4 **Denver** vs. 5 **CLIPPERS**
Nuggets lead, 1-0

61	Denver 112, CLIPPERS 110 (OT)
62	Today at Denver, 7, FDSC, TNT
63	Thur. at CLIPPERS, 7, FDSC, NBA TV
64	Sat. at CLIPPERS, 3, FDSC, TNT
65	April 29 at Denver, TBD
66	May 1 at CLIPPERS, TBD
67	May 3 at Denver, TBD

Games 5-7 if necessary

EASTERN CONFERENCE
1 **Cleveland** vs. 8 **Miami**
Best-of-seven series

61	Sunday at Cleveland, late
62	Wednesday at Cleve., 4:30, NBA TV
63	Sat. at Miami, 10 a.m., TNT
64	April 28 at Miami, TBD
65	April 30 at Cleveland, TBD
66	May 2 at Miami, TBD
67	May 4 at Cleveland, TBD

2 **Boston** vs. 7 **Orlando**
Celtics lead, 1-0

61	Boston 103, Orlando 86
62	Wednesday at Boston, 4, TNT
63	Friday at Orlando, 4, ESPN
64	Sunday at Orlando, 4, TNT
65	April 29 at Boston, TBD
66	May 1 at Orlando, TBD
67	May 3 at Boston, TBD

3 **New York** vs. 6 **Detroit**
Knicks lead, 1-0

61	New York 123, Detroit 112
62	Today at New York, 4:30, TNT
63	Thursday at Detroit, 4, TNT
64	unday at Detroit, 10 a.m., Ch. 7
65	April 29 at New York, TBD
66	May 1 at Detroit, TBD
67	May 3 at New York, TBD

4 **Indiana** vs. 5 **Milwaukee**
Pacers lead, 1-0

61	Indiana 117, Milwaukee 98
62	Tuesday at Indiana, 4, NBA TV
63	Friday at Milw., 5, ESPNU/NBA TV
64	Sunday at Milwaukee, 6:30, TNT
65	April 29 at Indiana, TBD
66	May 2 at Milwaukee, TBD
67	May 4 at Indiana, TBD

All times PDT, p.m. except noted

NBA PLAYOFFS

Thunder romp over Grizzlies by 51 points

ASSOCIATED PRESS

The Oklahoma City Thunder beat the Memphis Grizzlies 131-80 in Game 1 of their first-round Western Conference playoff series on Sunday, the fifth-biggest margin of victory in NBA postseason history.

The 51-point margin was seven points shy of the record and was the largest Game 1 win in NBA playoff history.

Aaron Wiggins scored 21 points, Jalen Williams scored 20 points and Chet Holmgren had 19 points and 10 rebounds. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the league's scoring champion with nearly 33 points per game, scored just 15. The Thunder still shot 50.5% from the field.

"We played to our identity," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "Nothing more, nothing less than that. We were who we were all year ... and it's going to be the key to our success, just staying true to who we are."

Ja Morant scored 17

points for Memphis on just six-for-17 shooting. Jaren Jackson Jr. scored four points on two-for-13 shooting. The Grizzlies shot just 34.4% overall.

at Celtics 103, Magic 86: Derrick White scored 30 points and Jayson Tatum had 17 points and finished the game after a scary late fall as Boston took Game 1 of their first-round series.

Payton Pritchard added 19 points off the bench for Boston. Jaylen Brown played 31 minutes and had 16 points on six-of-14 shooting after missing the final three games of the regular season with a lingering knee issue.

at Knicks 123, Pistons 112: Jalen Brunson scored 34 points and Cam Payne had 11 of his 14 in the fourth quarter as New York stunned Detroit with a 21-0 run in the final period in Game 1 on Saturday night.

Karl-Anthony Towns had 23 points and 11 rebounds in his first playoff game with the Knicks.

‘They did all the things that we wanted to do’

[**Lakers**, from D1] couldn't stop an avalanche that hit them with the kind of force that knocked all the energy out of the building.

The game, which Minnesota won 117-95, didn't end during that stretch, at least not in an official sense. But everything that followed as the Timberwolves scored 64 of the game's next 90 points should be a reminder of just how easily hopefulness can be punctured.

It wasn't that the Lakers needed less of Doncic, who glibly said "I guess I gotta pass more" when asked about his teammates' early lack of rhythm. It was that they needed to be better in the areas of the game other than the ones Doncic crafted in the first quarter.

Because while he cracked the Timberwolves' defense open, the Lakers flew around the court. The Lakers contested shots. The Lakers sprinted to secure every available possession.

It took 19 minutes of court time for the Lakers' moment — the first time they've hosted a Game 1 since 2012 — to unravel, for it to fall out of reach, for the season to feel in jeopardy for the first time since well before Doncic was a part of it.

"They did all the things that we wanted to do," Reaves said of Minnesota.

The concerns for the Lakers moving forward can be found all over the final box score, the 19-point edge in fast-break points showing how much faster Minnesota played. The 21 second-chance points the Lakers allowed showing Minnesota's determination. The 48 combined points for Jaden McDaniels and Naz Reid showing how capable Anthony Edwards and Julius Randle's co-stars are.

The Lakers held Edwards to just 22 points on 22 shots. And lost. The Lakers kept Randle to 16 and Rudy Gobert to just two. And lost. The Lakers got 37 points (but only one assist) from Doncic. And lost.

"They're a great opponent. They're one of the best teams in basketball," JJ Redick said. "It's not to say our guys weren't ready to withstand a playoff-level basketball game. We were mentally ready. I thought our spirit was right. I thought even when they made runs, our huddles were great. The communication was great.

"I'm not sure physically we were ready, if that makes sense. And



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

MINNESOTA guard Donte DiVincenzo and Lakers forward Jarred Vanderbilt wrestle for the ball during the second half of Game 1.

really when they started playing with a lot of thrust and physicality, we just didn't respond to meet that."

They should've known it was coming. No one has guarded the Lakers quite as well as the Timberwolves have this year. Nine times this season, the Lakers have been held to under 100 points — and, now, three of those times have been because of Minnesota's defense.

"Obviously we gotta do a better job of controlling the controllables," James said afterward.

"And I don't think we did a good enough job after the first quarter."

And while the makeup of the Lakers' roster has changed significantly in their offensive clunkers, the challenges the Timberwolves give — their size, their long arms, their quick feet and their active hands — haven't really been solved by Redick and the players.

"You know this Minnesota team, they're gonna be physical," James said. "That's what they bring to the table. Maybe it took us

one playoff game to now get a feel for it and know what type of intensity, the type of physicality is gonna be brought to the game. But that's just the way they play. So we should be more than prepared for that on Tuesday night."

Maybe more force will be the difference; no one on the Lakers thought that it wouldn't. But maybe, it's even simpler than that.

"Just be physical. Play like we played in the first quarter," Doncic said. "I think when we played in the first quarter, we were at our best.

Just limit their threes. Limit transition and second-chance points. And play our game."

Saturday, they squandered an opportunity to sustain things long enough to take one step closer to their goals. And even if there are bigger signs for concern, the focus can't change.

"You've gotta get beat four times; you've gotta win four times. So that's the outlook," Reaves said. "We know we didn't play very well. We didn't play to our standards. And we'll get better."

Lakers must adapt quickly to stay in it

[**Hernández**, from D1] offense, played too much one-on-one basketball, and he didn't make any necessary adjustments."

Johnson knows something about the inability to make necessary adjustments, as he was just 5-11 when he received his shot on the bench.

Redick looked as if he might stiffen under the postseason spotlight, the rookie coach uncharacteristically a man of few words and no smiles in his pregame news conference. And in the critical moments of the game, there was nothing Redick could do to counter the Timberwolves. The visitors opened the second quarter with a 26-6 run to take control of the game and scored the first 11 points of the second half to move the game out of the Lakers' reach.

"We were mentally ready," Redick said. "I thought our spirit was right. I thought even when they made runs, our huddle was great. The communication was great. I'm not sure physically we were ready, if that makes sense. And, really, when they started playing with a lot of thrust and physicality, we just didn't respond to meet that."

In other words, his team wasn't

ready.

The Lakers weren't ready even though they knew about the Timberwolves' size and the matchup problems it could produce. They scored fewer than 100 points in only seven games in the regular season, and two of those games were against the Timberwolves, against whom they were 2-2 before Saturday.

"You know this Minnesota team, they're gonna be physical," LeBron James said. "That's what they bring to the table."

The Timberwolves finished with a 25-6 edge in fast-break points and a 44-32 edge in points in the paint, with forward Jaden McDaniels scoring a team-high 25 points and center Naz Reid adding 23.

"They just played a lot better than us, a lot harder than us, and they did all the things that we wanted to do," Lakers guard Austin Reaves said.

Forward Jarred Vanderbilt called the deflating loss "a wake-up call," but shouldn't the Lakers have known what was coming, especially in a competitive Western Conference in which only two victories separated the third seed from the eighth seed?



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

LUKA DONCIC'S 37 points couldn't save the Lakers from losing big to the Timberwolves on Saturday at Crypto.com Arena.

The 40-year-old James was predictable calm.

"Sometimes it takes a quarter, two quarters, a full game to get used to playoff basketball once again," said James, who finished with 19 points after being shut out in the first quarter.

Nonetheless, James acknowledged a change in the dynamics of the best-of-seven series.

"They took home court from us tonight, as far as the series," he said. "But we have an opportunity to even the series on Tuesday [in Game 2]. We have to play a much

better game than we did today. We have to control the controllables, and if we do that, we're gonna give ourselves a much better chance than we did."

The Lakers can, and should, still win this series. The Timberwolves won't make half of their threes in every game, as they did on Saturday. Reid won't make six of his nine shots from behind the arc in every game, as he did on Saturday.

But the road to the Western Conference finals suddenly doesn't look as wide open as it

SATURDAY'S PLAYOFF BOX												
T'WOLVES 117, LAKERS 95												
MINNESOTA												
	Min	FG-A	FTA	OR-T	A	P	T					
McDaniels.....	33	11-13	0-0	4-9	2	3	25					
Randle.....	34	6-11	0-1	2-5	5	4	16					
Gobert.....	24	1-2	0-0	1-6	1	3	2					
Conley.....	22	3-5	1-1	0-3	3	2	9					
A.Edwards.....	35	8-22	2-2	2-8	9	4	22					
Reid.....	30	8-12	1-2	0-5	2	0	23					
DiVincenzo.....	24	4-9	0-0	1-5	4	2	9					
Alexander-Walker.....	20	2-9	2-2	0-1	3	2	7					
Clark.....	3	0-0	2-2	0-0	0	1	2					
Minott.....	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Shannon Jr.....	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Garza.....	2	1-1	0-0	1-1	0	0	2					
Miller.....	2	0-0	0-0	0-1	0	0	0					
Totals	44-86	8-10	11-44	29	21	117						
Shooting: Field goals, 51.2%; free throws, 80.0%.												
Three-point goals: 21-42 (Reid 6-9, Randle 4-6, A.Edwards 4-9, McDaniels 3-3, Conley 2-3, DiVincenzo 1-5, Alexander-Walker 1-6, Minott 0-1). Team Rebounds: 6. Team Turnovers: None. Blocked Shots: 4 (Reid 2, Alexander-Walker, Gobert). Turnovers: 10 (Randle 7, A.Edwards, Clark, DiVincenzo). Steals: 8 (Conley 3, DiVincenzo 2, A.Edwards, Clark, McDaniels). Technical Fouls: coach Chris Finch, 2:37, third.												
LAKERS												
	Min	FG-A	FTA	OR-T	A	P	T					
Hachimura.....	29	3-9	0-0	0-5	2	0	9					
L.James.....	36	8-18	2-2	1-5	3	0	19					
Hayes.....	8	0-2	1-2	2-3	0	0	1					
Doncic.....	40	12-22	8-9	1-8	1	3	37					
Reaves.....	36	5-13	3-3	0-3	3	3	16					
Finney-Smith.....	22	1-5	0-0	2-3	2	2	3					
Vincent.....	24	1-3	0-0	0-0	1	1	3					
Vanderbilt.....	13	1-3	0-0	2-4	2	0	2					
Goodwin.....	5	0-0	0-0	0-0	1	0	0					
B.James.....	3	0-2	0-0	0-0	0	0	0					
Knecht.....	3	2-4	0-0	2-3	0	0	5					
Len.....	3	0-1	0-0	3-4	0	0	0					
Milton.....	3	0-1	0-0	0-0	0	1	0					
Totals	33-83	14-16	13-38	15	10	95						
Shooting: Field goals, 39.8%; free throws, 87.5%.												
Three-point goals: 15-41 (Doncic 5-10, Hachimura 3-7, Reaves 3-8, Finney-Smith 1-3, Knecht 1-3, Vincent 1-3, L.James 1-5, B.James 0-2). Team Rebounds: 8. Team Turnovers: None. Blocked Shots: 4 (L.James 3, Vincent). Turnovers: 13 (Doncic 5, L.James 4, Reaves 2, Goodwin, Hachimura). Steals: 5 (Doncic 2, L.James 2, Vanderbilt). Technical Fouls: None.												
Minnesota	21	38	35	23	117							
LAKERS	28	20	30	17	95							
A-18,997. T-2:14.												

once did, and the Lakers' negligence in Game 1 is threatening to waste one of only a handful of remaining chances to take advantage of having James on the team.

CLIPPERS REPORT

They're determined to take better care of the basketball

BY BRODERICK TURNER

DENVER — A day later, the Clippers didn't hide from the primary cause of their demise in Game 1 of their Western Conference playoff series against the Denver Nuggets.

Twenty turnovers doomed the Clippers and put them in a 0-1 hole in the best-of-seven series Saturday. Four turnovers in the extra five minutes during overtime left the Clippers proclaiming they must do a better job taking care of the basketball in Game 2 on Monday night at Ball Arena.

"It's a little frustrating, just because it's self-inflicted and it's that we have been really good at this the last few weeks," Clippers guard **James Harden** said late Saturday night after Game 1. "But [we're] even-keeled, you know what I mean? Come back in Game 2 ready to go even better."

Clippers coach **Tyronn Lue** said they watched film and his staff showed the group how some of the

turnovers transpired. Lue said 11 of their turnovers were "unforced errors that were "uncharacteristic" of his team.

Kawhi Leonard had seven turnovers, including one with 33.5 seconds left in the fourth quarter and the Clippers ahead 96-95 and another during overtime.

It was the turnovers in the overtime that spelled the difference.

Norman Powell turned the ball over with 3:36 left and the score tied at 100.

Harden turned the ball over with 2:08 left and the Clippers down 105-102.

Leonard turned the ball over with 49.3 seconds left and the Clippers down 108-104.

Nicolas Batum gave up his turnover after he took the ball out of bounds and had his pass intended for Harden tipped by **Russell Westbrook** off Harden's hand with 9.1 seconds left and the Clippers down 110-107.

"The biggest thing for us was our turnovers and it was the careless turnovers," Lue said Sunday.

"Like, Denver is playing, they are blitzing, they are aggressive, their physicality — so you are going to have 10 turnovers because of that. But you can't have 20, especially on the road. So a lot of those turnovers were careless. We just got to do a better job of cleaning that up."

"There's not much to say," Clippers center **Ivica Zubac** said Sunday. "We all know where we made mistakes. There was a lot of unforced turnovers. I mean, a lot of them were forced by them. They played really well after that first quarter. So, we all know we got to be better. We can't turn the ball over that much, so there's not much we can say to each other. We all know what's at stake. We all know where we messed up, so I'm sure everyone will be better next game."

Another problem for the Clippers was the Nuggets' offensive rebounding — especially in the overtime.

The Nuggets had four offensive rebounds during the extra period, two apiece by **Aaron Gordon** and

Westbrook.

The Nuggets had 12 offensive rebounds during the game, five by Gordon and four by Westbrook.

Mentally, Lue said, his group is still in a good space. They have room for improvement and they have seen the error of their ways and how they can clean up those issues.

"Yesterday is behind us already," Lue said. "We got to move on. It was one game and we got to be better in the second game if we want to go home with the series tied up at 1-1 and we understand that. So, just being better all around the board. We know we can do some things better defensively. Offensively, we have the blueprint and we just have to execute it time and time again."

Harden's foul problems

To a degree, Lue said, Harden was affected by his foul trouble.

Harden played 42:48. He scored 32 points and was 11 for 22 from the field, four for nine from three-point range and six for six from the free-

throw line. He had seven points in the overtime, making all three of his shots.

But Harden finished the game with five fouls, picking up two in the first quarter, three by halftime and four by the middle of the third quarter.

Harden, a 6-foot-5, 220-pound point guard, was assigned to defend 6-foot-8, 235-pound power forward Gordon, and Lue thinks that may have been part of the reason for all the fouls.

"You could see a few possessions where he wasn't as aggressive," Lue said. "He kind of opened the door, opened the gate a little bit not wanting to get that foul. But we needed him on the floor. So, when he's down under the basket wrestling with Gordon the whole game, that's going to happen. We just got to be smart about it. Maybe mix those matchups a little bit more so he's not on him for the whole game. But I thought he got a lot of them just trying to wrestle around with Gordon and **Joker [Nikola Jokic]** down on the block."

Providing more than a fighting chance

Kings’ success driven by a specialized support staff that includes a ‘toughness’ coach

By KEVIN BAXTER

The Kings’ practice rink in El Segundo is empty save for two men circling each other near the blue line, ready to fight. One, roughly the size and shape of a small vending machine, is in street clothes while the other towers over him in skates and a white-and-black hockey sweater.

If they come to blows it will be a mismatch, especially since the taller guy is wearing a helmet and carrying a stick. But teaching players to defend themselves in situations like this is kind of the point.

The heavily muscled man in street clothes is Jeremy Clark, a black belt in Brazilian jiu-jitsu whom the players all call the fight coach. And the first rule of fight coach is don’t talk about the fight coach. At least not in those terms.

“He’s our confidence coach,” Glen Murray, the director of player development for the playoff-bound Kings, says of the man who teaches the team to fight.

“We prefer to call him our toughness coach,” a team spokesperson said.

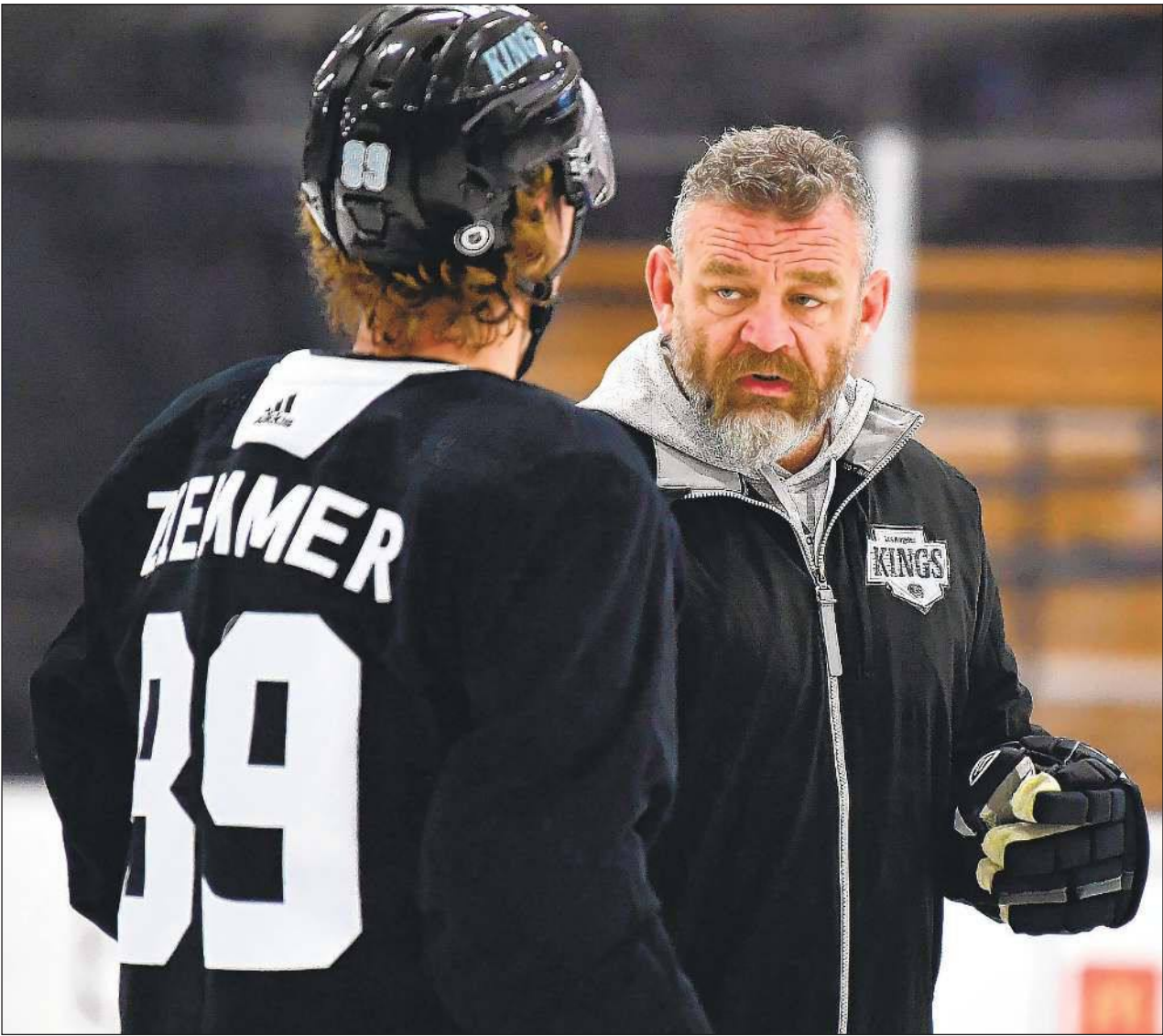
As for what Clark prefers to call himself, that’s not known because the second rule of fight coach is no one is allowed to talk to the fight coach. But whatever you call him, Clark, the owner of a CrossFit and combat-training gym in Minnesota, is a key part of a player-development program that has left no idea unexplored if it has a chance to make the Kings better.

So in addition to a fighter, confidence coach, the team has four strength and conditioning coaches, a sports dietitian, a psychologist, a skating coach, a video coordinator and a director of goaltending. There are specialists who work on shooting and others who work on face-offs. Add it all up and the Kings have more player-development people, about two dozen in all, than they have players. And that doesn’t count the four coaches the team puts behind the bench each game.

It’s an expensive commitment, one few other teams in the NHL have tried to match. But with the line separating the top teams from the also-rans getting thinner and thinner, it’s an investment that helped the Kings match single-season franchise records for wins (48) and points (105) this year while claiming the home-ice advantage for the first round of the playoffs. They’ll open the postseason Monday at Crypto.com Arena against the Edmonton Oilers, the team that eliminated them in the first round each of the last three seasons.

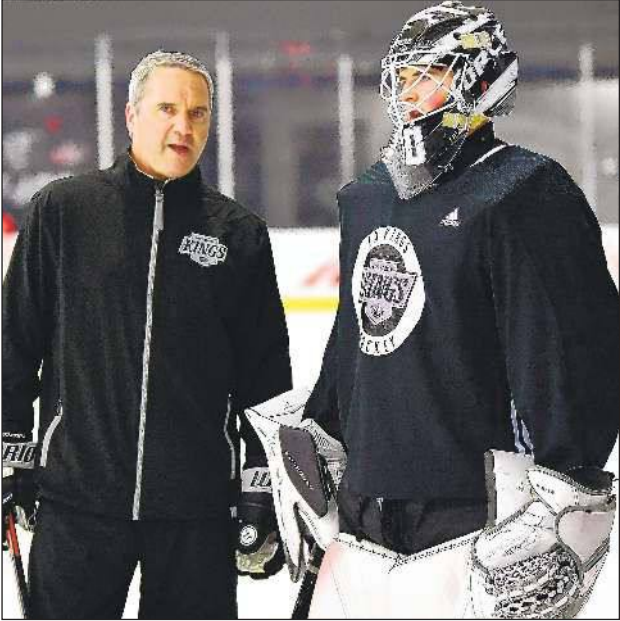
“This is a necessary expense,” Murray said. “Ultimately the most important people in the organization are the players and we have to prepare them the best we can with the tools we have. We’re going to make sure you have the best of everything to be able to perform.”

The process of building out that philosophy began under former general manager Dean Lombardi, who introduced some sports science pieces and other technologies while leading the



Photographs by GARY A. VASQUEZ NHLI via Getty Images

JEREMY CLARK, right, is a martial artist who helps Kings players when it comes to dropping the gloves. He’s part of a unique development staff for L.A., which opens the playoffs Monday against nemesis Edmonton.



BILL RANFORD, left, with goalie prospect Hamp-ton Slukynsky, helps give the Kings an edge in net.

team to two Stanley Cups.

“He always talked about gaining that extra 3%. Trying to make the team better,” said Bill Ranford, the director of goaltending for the Kings, a job Ranford estimates just a half-dozen NHL teams have. “Teams are always looking for that edge.”

But chasing that edge became a priority under Rob Blake, who replaced Lombardi before the 2017-18 season. Among his first moves was promoting Murray.

“Rob’s fairly calculated. He’s patient, methodical. But when there’s clear evidence that we need to make changes to add or to grow, he’s never hesitated,” Matt Price, the Kings’ director of strength and performance science, said of Blake, who has taken heat from fans over his roster decisions but has proven a visionary with many of the things he’s pushed off the ice.

Price has seen his department triple in size under Blake, adding a full-time die-

titian, two additional strength coaches, and a dietitian and strength coach for the team’s AHL affiliate in Ontario.

“We have player-tracking data that gets collected every day that needs to be analyzed and processed and presented. There’s a mountain of information that gets collected every day,” Price said. “So it’s just sort of the evolution of the NHL, the Kings sort of being early adopters of this. We’ve really been at the tip of the spear on a lot of these things.”

Murray estimates the overall investment in strength and nutrition alone at “well over \$1 million” a season, a bargain considering what that investment has bought.

“The sort of feeling is, maybe the work we do for the course of 82 games gets us three points,” said Price, who is in his 11th season with the Kings. “It could be how we handle players on the second night of a back-to-back

NHL PLAYOFFS FIRST-ROUND

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Winnipeg 1C vs. St. Louis WC2
Jets lead, 1-0

G1	Winnipeg 5, St. Louis 3
G2	Today at Winnipeg, 4:30, ESPN2
G3	Thursday at St. Louis, 6:30, ESPN2
G4	Sunday at St. Louis, 10 a.m., TBS
G5	April 30 at Winnipeg, TBD
G6	May 2 at St. Louis, TBD
G7	May 4 at Winnipeg, TBD

Dallas 3C vs. Colorado 2C
Avalanche lead, 1-0

G1	Colorado 5, Dallas 1
G2	Today at Dallas, 6:30, ESPN
G3	Wednesday at Colorado, 6:30, ESPN
G4	Friday at Colorado, 6:30, TBS
G5	April 28 at Dallas, TBD
G6	May 1 at Colorado, TBD
G7	May 3 at Dallas, TBD

Vegas 1P vs. Minnesota WC1
Best-of-seven series

G1	Sunday at Vegas, late
G2	Tuesday at Vegas, 8, ESPN
G3	Thursday at Minnesota, 6, TBS
G4	Saturday at Minnesota, 1, TBS
G5	April 29 at Vegas, TBD
G6	May 1 at Minnesota, TBD
G7	May 3 at Vegas, TBD

KINGS 2P vs. Edmonton 3P
Best-of-seven series

G1	Today at KINGS, 7, FDW, ESPN2
G2	Wednesday at KINGS, 7, FDSC, TBS
G3	Friday at Edmonton, 7, FDW, TNT
G4	Sun. at Edmonton, 6:30, FDW, TBS
G5	April 29 at KINGS, TBD
G6	May 1 at Edmonton, TBD
G7	May 3 at KINGS, TBD

Games 5-7 if necessary

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Toronto 1A vs. Ottawa WC2
Best of seven series

G1	Sunday at Toronto, late
G2	Tuesday at Toronto, 4:30, ESPN2
G3	Thursday at Ottawa, 4, ESPN2
G4	Saturday at Ottawa, 4, TBS
G5	April 29 at Toronto, TBD
G6	May 1 at Ottawa, TBD
G7	May 3 at Toronto, TBD

Tampa Bay 2A vs. Florida 3A
Best-of-seven series

G1	Tuesday at Tampa Bay, 5:30, ESPN
G2	Thursday at Tampa Bay, 3:30, TBS
G3	Saturday at Florida, 10 a.m., TBS
G4	April 28 at Florida, TBD
G5	April 30 at Ottawa, TBD
G6	May 2 at Florida, TBD
G7	May 4 at Tampa Bay, TBD

Washington 1M vs. Montreal WC2
Best-of-seven series

G1	Today at Washington, 4, ESPN
G2	Wednesday at Washington, 4, ESPN
G3	Friday at Montreal, 4, TNT
G4	Sunday at Montreal, 3:30, TBS
G5	April 30 at Washington, TBD
G6	May 2 at Montreal, TBD
G7	May 4 at Washington, TBD

Carolina 2M vs. New Jersey 3M
Hurricanes lead, 1-0

G1	Carolina 4, New Jersey 1
G2	Tuesday at Carolina, 3, ESPN
G3	Friday at New Jersey, 5, TBS
G4	Sunday at New Jersey, 12:30, TBS
G5	April 29 at Carolina, TBD
G6	May 2 at New Jersey, TBD
G7	May 4 at Carolina, TBD

All times PDT, p.m. except noted

and we got that game to overtime and we got the point. It could be a decision that’s made with the coaching staff how to manage load.”

Or it could be what Price and the team’s medical staff did to get future Hall of Fame defenseman Drew Doughty back from a broken ankle in just four months.

“Across a long season there’s so much actionable data that somewhere in there, we feel we’ve banked a

few points,” Price said.

Kari Oliver, who joined the team as its sports dietitian midway through the 2020-21 season, said few teams in the NHL offer the kind of nutrition support the Kings do. Oliver, who also manages the players’ dietary supplements and lab work, has a culinary staff of more than a half-dozen, including two sous chefs at the team’s El Segundo practice facility, where players are served two individually tai-

lored meals and a recovery shake every day the team is there.

“Nutrition is massive nowadays,” Murray said. “Some kids have no clue what they’re supposed to eat and how much and what gives them more energy. I’m surprised not every team has it. We’re lucky.”

To make sure the players don’t stray from their diets, Oliver plans and oversees every meal players receive from the team, including the food served on the team’s charter flights.

“I feel like I’m planning a wedding every single time that we go on a road trip,” she said. “Even if we go out to a restaurant as a team — we do that often in the playoffs — I’ll go ahead to the restaurant and make sure everything’s set up exactly how we want it. I work with every hotel we stay at and send them menus.”

She said she gains an appreciation for just how different the team’s support program is every time a new player arrives.

“They tell us their experience [else]where,” said Oliver, who has taken players on supermarket visits and given them cooking demonstrations as part of their nutrition education. “When they get here I’ll sit down with them and kind of just rapid fire try to figure out a profile of them from a nutrition standpoint.”

One of this season’s converts is goaltender Darcy Kuemper, who played half a season with the Kings shortly after Blake took over, then was traded back to the team last summer. The difference between then and now, he said, was dramatic and he credits Oliver, Price, Ranford and the rest of the sprawling support staff with helping him to the best season of his career.

“You see the different people they have in place, whether it’s nutrition, strength. From an organizational standpoint, they want to give us all the tools so that we have everything we need to [be] the best version of yourself,” said Kuemper, whose goals-against average of 2.02 was second-best among regular goalkeepers this season. “So there’s no excuses but to go out and perform.”

One reason the Kings’ approach succeeds is the support staff, like the team on the ice, know their roles and they stay in their lanes. But they also complement one another and quietly share the credit for the team’s success.

“We want to do our job, but we don’t make a lot of fanfare out of what we do,” Oliver said. “We just want to make sure that we’re giving them really good resources and kind of staying behind the scenes.”

“We’re here to maximize potential. And, for the most part, players see this as a significant help,” Price added. “They see this as something that can really boost their performance. They all know better performance equals bigger contracts. Better performance means more wins.”

Credit Blake for finding a way to squeeze out those extra wins.

“The difference between doing nothing and doing something,” Price added “is a pretty big gap.”

THE DAY IN SPORTS

U.S. women top Canada in world hockey championship

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tessa Janecke scored the winner as the United States prevailed in overtime over defending champion Canada 4-3 to win the women’s ice hockey world championship on Sunday in the Czech Republic.

Janecke struck with 2:54 left in overtime for the Americans to claim their 11th title at the worlds.

Taylor Heise set up the winning goal.

Abbey Murphy and Heise scored a goal and had an assist, and **Caroline Harvey** also scored for the U.S.

“Shock and awe,” U.S. goalie **Gwyneth Phillips** said after the drama. “I’m ecstatic.”

Logan Stankoven scored two second-period goals in his first playoff game with

Carolina as the Hurricanes beat the New Jersey Devils 4-1 to open their first-round series in the Stanley Cup playoffs.

ETC.

Akie Iwai grabs co-lead in LA

Akie Iwai shot an eight-under 64 playing alongside her twin sister Saturday for a share of the third-round lead in the JM Eagle LA Championship with **Lauren Coughlin** and **Ingrid Lindblad**.

Coughlin made a 5-foot birdie putt on par-four 18th for a 66, and Lindblad — tied for the second-round lead with **Ashleigh Buhai** after a career-best 63 — shot 68 to match Iwai at 17-under 199 at El Caballero Country Club in Tarzana.

Top-ranked **Nelly Korda** was three strokes back after a closing three-putt bogey in her final start before her title defense next week in Houston in the major Chevron Championship.

Iwai, the 22-year-old Japanese player in her first season on the LPGA Tour, holed a 60-yard wedge shot for eagle on the par-five first and had six birdies in her bogey-free round.

Justin Thomas ended nearly three years without a victory by making a birdie putt from just outside 20 feet in a playoff at Harbour Town to beat **Andrew Novak** in the RBC Heritage. ... **Garrick Higgo** took advantage of **Jole Dahmen**’s late meltdown to win the windy Corales Puntacana Championship in the Dominican for his second PGA Tour victory. ... **Wu Ashun** made a charge on the

back nine with five birdies for a six-under 65 that enabled him to overcome a four-shot deficit and win the China Open for the second time.

Milwaukee’s **Giannis Antetokounmpo**, Oklahoma City’s **Shai Gilgeous-Alexander** and Denver’s **Nikola Jokic** were announced as finalists for NBA’s MVP.

New York Yankees starter **Max Fried** lost a no-hit bid when the official scorer changed a sixth-inning call to a hit as he was about to start the eighth inning of a 4-0 win over the host Tampa Bay Rays. Official scorer **Bill Mathews** at first called a grounder by **Chandler Simpson** that bounced off the glove of first baseman **Paul Goldschmidt** an error. ... The Milwaukee Brewers

broke a 33-year-old franchise record for stolen bases in a game with nine through the first four innings against the Athletics.

Coming off an overtime restart, **Jesse Love** won the first Xfinity Series race at Rockingham (N.C.) Speedway in over two decades on Saturday. Love led a race-high 77 laps to pick up his second Xfinity Series win of the season. ... **Oscar Piastri** went on top of the Formula 1 standings with victory at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix. Piastri started second alongside **Max Verstappen** and took the lead after Verstappen had to serve a five-second penalty.

Trinity Rodman is taking time away from the Washington Spirit as she deals with back issues, the NWSL team said. The for-

ward, who also plays for the U.S. women’s national team, will be sidelined indefinitely. ... **Denis Bouanga** converted a penalty kick in the 90th minute to pull LaFC into a 3-3 draw against the host Portland Timbers on Saturday night.

Michigan edged five-time defending champion Stanford (332.961) on Saturday night for its first NCAA men’s gymnastics title since 2014.

Missouri State safety **Todric McGee** died early Saturday from what authorities say was a possible accidental and self-inflicted gunshot wound. He was 21. ... **Jay Sigel**, widely viewed as America’s best amateur golfer since **Bobby Jones**, has died of pancreatic cancer, the U.S. Golf Assn. said. He was 81.

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Los Angeles Times photo
illustration; photographs by
Associated Press

Can they bury this chance?

The Kings get another shot at Edmonton after three straight first-round playoff ousters by Connor McDavid and Co. Fresh off one of the best seasons in franchise history, captain Anze Kopitar and sniper Adrian Kempe may be poised to break the spell.

PACKING A PUNCH WITH THIS PERSONNEL

From a “toughness” coach who helps with fighting to dietitians, conditioning specialists and a goalie guru, the Kings employ a unique player-development staff that has helped drive their success. **D5**

Los Angeles Times

SPORTS EXTRA

A TIMES E-NEWSPAPER EXCLUSIVE :: MONDAY, APRIL 21, 2025



JESSIE ALCHEH Associated Press

ROOKIE INGRID LINDBLAD managed to fend off the top-two ranked women’s golfers Sunday at the LA Championship at El Caballero Country Club in Tarzana.

Lindblad outlasts field for first tour win

BY BENJAMIN ROYER

Ingrid Lindblad grew up figure skating. The dynamic sport of balance and precision tested her limits before she ultimately surrendered the ice for the green full-time.

The individuality, besting yourself rather than an opponent to achieve your goals, drove the Swedish golfer as a young athlete — and to top amateur status at Louisiana State. As one of two LPGA rookies atop the JM Eagle LA Championship leaderboard Sunday afternoon, Lindblad needed to channel her success, which propelled her to becoming the 2024 Honda Award winner for golf, the same under-pressure skillset that helped her qualify for the LPGA tour in the first place.

Lindblad, 25, converted six birdies Sunday, enough to weather the field and win the LA Champi-

onship at El Caballero Country Club in Tarzana — her first LPGA victory in her third career tour start. Lindblad, who missed out on the top 10 in her first two starts, charged into the conversation Friday with a career-low nine-under 63 to tie the tournament scoring record. She bookended the second round with four-under performances in the first and third rounds.

Lindblad was unaware of her first victory until cameras swarmed her as she nervously snacked in front of the clubhouse. Her shocked expression turned to glee as her mother, Cecilia, and peers celebrated her milestone.

Sunday’s finale wasn’t in her hands. Fellow rookie Akie Iwai missed a 13-foot putt on the 18th hole that would have forced a playoff after tying the score at 21-under with a 16th-hole birdie.

“You expect your opponent to make, make the chip, make the putt,” Lindblad said. “She played

really well this week too.”

Iwai, who played alongside her identical twin sister, Chisato, on Saturday, curved a last-chance shot from behind a tree to try to cut into the lead to set up her birdie putt.

“I saw Ingrid [was ahead],” said Akie Iwai, who finished 20-under as the runner-up. “I must catch up... so I will give it a try. It was a really good shot.”

Earlier in the round, Iwai, who entered Sunday tied with Lindblad and tour veteran Lauren Coughlin at 17 under, stalled after her sixth-hole bogey.

Lindblad also lost steam, settling for par on every hole after the 11th. But she found a lucky touch to maintain her lead. On the eighth hole, after driving the ball into the rough — a sand patch near a fan viewing zone — Lindblad skipped a ball about 50 yards onto the green to create a short putt opportunity. She sank the birdie, her fifth of

the day, to place her at 20 under with a two-stroke lead with 10 holes remaining.

Even when her drives left plenty to be desired, struggling to find the fairway on multiple holes, Lindblad would save par to keep distance between second place. Lindblad sliced a ball on the 13th hole that sailed far wide and off a tree.

“I was not always friends with my driver,” Lindblad said.

The ball, however, ricocheted off the tree and toward the fairway rather than out of bounds. Lindblad eventually made par.

The 10th hole — a par four — appeared to be a potential bogey after Lindblad left the ball short of the putting green and into a bunker on her second shot. But after a nifty chip, she was able to keep par with a 15-foot putt.

Lindblad outpaced attempts to cut into her lead from the top-two ranked women’s golfers. Nelly Korda, No. 1 in the world, began the

day tied for third and finished at 14 under. Just below Korda in the rankings, Jeeno Thitikul made a run toward the top of the standings by birdieing her first four holes, but ultimately settled in a tie for ninth place, going 16 under.

Australian Hannah Green, who won the last two LA Championships, finished ninth as well.

Coughlin, who was part of the first-place tie to start Sunday, ended the LA Championship tied for third at 19 under with Esther Henseleit and Miyu Yamashita.

With the Chevron Championship — the first LPGA major of the year — coming next week, Lindblad said it may be time to reassess her rookie-season goals after her first tour win. And with the \$562,500 in prize money now to her name, she quipped only one thing was on her mind.

“I said, if I win, I’m gonna bump myself up to first class tomorrow,” Lindblad said she joked Saturday.

Curry scores 31 as Warriors hold off Rockets in Game 1

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Stephen Curry scored 31 points and the Golden State Warriors built a huge lead and held on to beat the Houston Rockets 95-85 on Sunday night in Game 1 of their first-round playoff series.

The seventh-seeded Warriors led by 23 in the third quarter, but second-seeded Houston cut it to 69-60 entering the fourth.

A basket by Amen Thompson with about 5½ minutes remaining got the Rockets within four. Curry hit his fifth three-pointer of the night a few seconds later to make it 82-75.

The Rockets cut it to four again with about 2½ minutes left on a three by Fred VanVleet. This time Moses Moody hit a three-pointer to start a 7-0 run that made it 91-80 and sent fans streaming for the exits.

Game 2 of the best-of seven series is Wednesday night.

It was the 100th career playoff coaching victory for Golden State’s Steve Kerr, who moved into a tie with Larry Brown for sixth-most postseason wins.

Curry was 12 of 19 from the field, hitting five of nine three-pointers. Jimmy Butler added 25 points, seven rebounds, six assists and five steals in his playoff debut for the Warriors after joining them in a

trade from Miami in February.

The Rockets, who returned to the playoffs for the first time since 2020, got 26 points from Alperen Sengun in his first career postseason game. But VanVleet and Jalen Green struggled, making just seven of 34 shots.

VanVleet was two of 13 from three-point range on a night Houston made just six of 29 three-pointers and was 11 of 20 on free throws.

The Warriors got a spot in the playoffs with a 121-116 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies on Tuesday night in the play-in tournament.

They got yet another playoff victory over the Rockets after eliminating them four times from 2015 to 2019.

Mitchell comes up big again in Cavaliers’ win

Donovan Mitchell quickly put any doubts to rest about whether his left ankle was 100% going into the playoffs for the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Mitchell scored 30 points and tied a playoff career high with four steals and the Cavaliers beat the Miami Heat 121-100 in Game 1 of the Eastern Conference first-round series.

“He can get in the lane and finish and he’s a great shooter. Such a complete player,” Cavaliers coach Kenny Atkinson said.



ASHLEY LANDIS Associated Press

HOUSTON’S Dillon Brooks, right, defends against Golden State’s Stephen Curry in the first half of the visiting Warriors’ 95-85 victory. Curry was 12 of 19 from the field, with five three-pointers.

“Whatever we ask him to do, he’ll do it. He never shies away when we ask him to do the dirty work.”

It was the seventh straight series where Mitchell has scored at least 30 points in Game 1, tying Michael Jordan, who had two streaks of seven games.

“Just setting the tone. I have to be aggressive and see how the defense reacts to me,” Mitchell said.

Ty Jerome had 16 of his 28 points in the fourth quarter for the top-seeded Cavaliers, who host Game 2 on Wednesday night.

Darius Garland added 27. Garland and Jerome each had five three-pointers and the Cavaliers

were 18 of 43 from beyond the arc.

Bam Adebayo had 24 points and Tyler Herro added 21 for the Heat. They are the first No. 10 seed to advance to the playoffs out of the play-in tournament.

Cleveland had a 16-point lead midway through the second quarter, but Miami steadily cut it down and got to 98-90 with 7:26 remaining in the fourth. Cleveland put it out of reach with a 13-4 run that included 10 straight points by Jerome, who was taking part in his first playoff game.

Jerome was six of seven from the field and made all three of his three-point attempts in the fourth quarter.

“He turned the game for us. He did it all tonight,” Atkinson said.

It is the most points the Cavaliers have scored in a playoff game since they had 128 in Game 4 of the 2018 Eastern Conference semifinals against Toronto.

“We played super hard and competitive. We made some unforced errors, just some decision making that was not elite but they [the Heat] had something to do with that. Our decision making has to be on point,” Atkinson said.

It was tied at 22 with three minutes remaining in the first quarter before Cleveland went on a 9-2 run to go up by seven after 12 minutes, a lead it would not relinquish.

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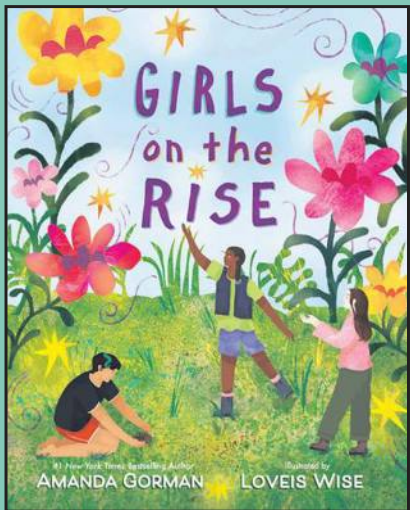
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ENTERTAINMENT

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Review
AMY NICHOLSON
FILM CRITIC

Remake lacks food for the soul

Overly complicated plot trips up the good-hearted ‘Wedding Banquet.’

Gay marriage was illegal when Ang Lee released 1993’s “The Wedding Banquet,” a New York-set romantic dramedy about a queer Taiwanese man, his white male partner and the female Chinese immigrant he marries to placate his conservative parents. But Lee, wise to how the heart stutters, didn’t pander to audiences with bromides like *love is love*. That small, assured masterpiece (only Lee’s second film) insisted that love is also selfish, hurtful, short-sighted and confusing, and that many of its wounds come from worrying about what outsiders think.

Today, the cultural battle lines have been redrawn, so the director Andrew Ahn (“Spa Night,” “Fire Island”) has rebooted “The Wedding Banquet” with more characters and higher stakes. Teaming up with Lee’s long-time co-writer James Schamus, he’s concocted an out-there plot that’s all complications and little soul.

Instead of one couple, we now have two: boyfriends Chris (Bowen Yang) and Min (Han Gi-chan), and girlfriends Angela (Kelly Marie Tran) and Lee (Lily Gladstone). The foursome lives at Lee’s home in Seattle, with the women in the main house and the lads in a barn-like bunker in the yard. Over the course of the film they’ll fight, kiss and crack jokes, and ultimately walk down the aisle with the wrong person.

Chris and Angela have been codependent chums [See ‘Banquet,’ E2]

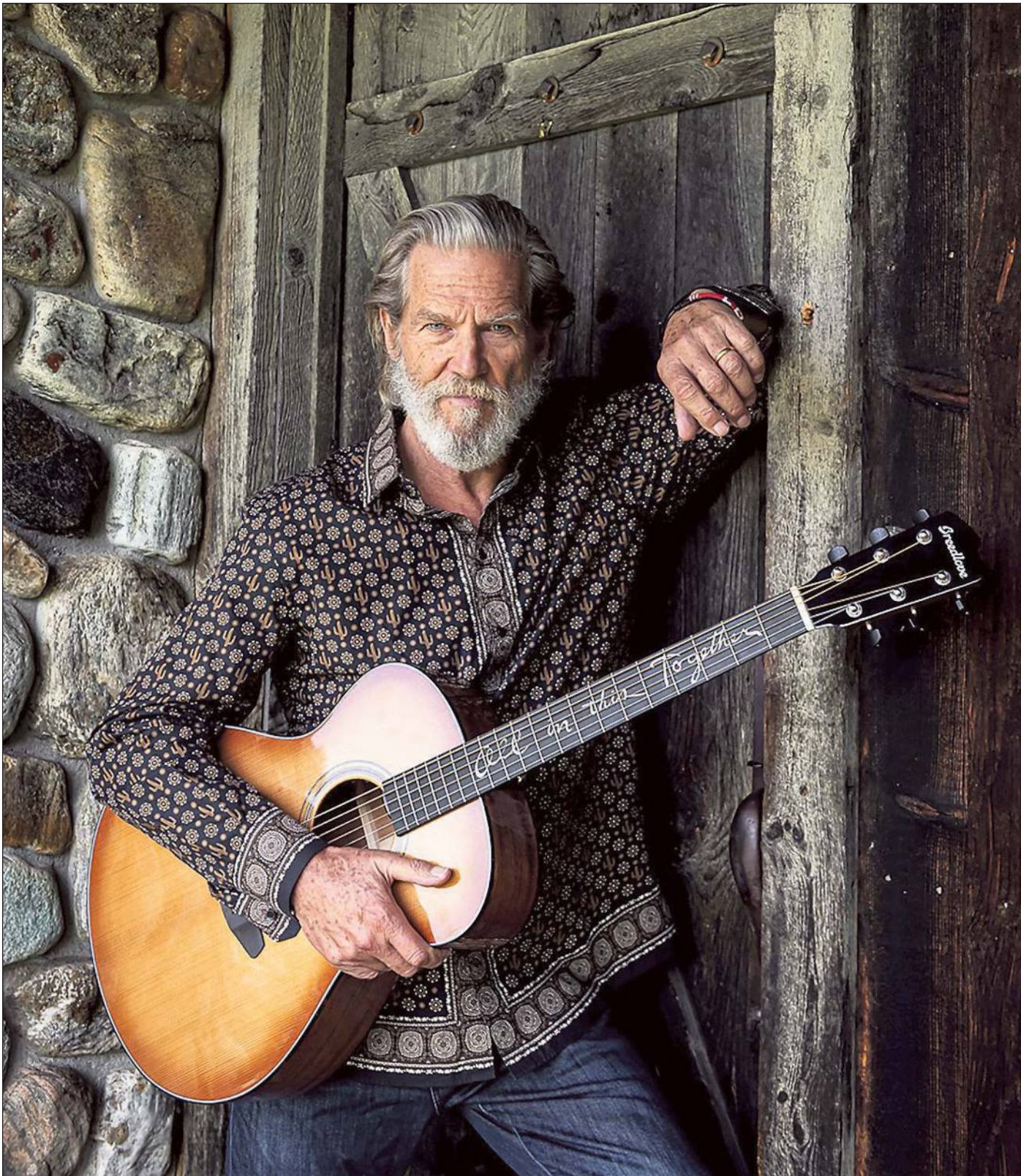
Fantastical tale short on feeling

A rich world of fantasy doesn’t go too deep in “The Legend of Ochi.” Review, E2

A flawed fact-checker

Austin Kelley’s debut centers on a distorted reality. Review, E3

Comics E4-5
Puzzles E5



AUDREY HALL

“SLOW MAGIC, 1977-1978,” is Jeff Bridges’ first record since his 2015 spoken-word/ambient album, “Sleeping Tapes.”

Jeff Bridges finds magic in old tracks

The actor’s new album features archival recordings from his ’70s roots rock era

By PAMELA CHELIN

With his extraordinary acting prowess, it’s no surprise that Jeff Bridges made “the Dude” as iconic as the greatest rock stars. However, most fans of “The Big Lebowski” probably aren’t aware that Bridges is a real rocker in his own right, a gifted singer-songwriter who plays both guitar and piano. Beyond his acclaimed performances in classic films like “Starman” and “The Last Picture Show,” cult hits like “The Fisher King” and his unforgettable turn in “Crazy Heart,” the legendary actor boasts a music résumé that rivals most full-time musicians’.

Bridges released his debut album, “Be Here Soon,” in 2000. He also co-produced the record with Chris Pelonis and the Doobie Brothers’ Michael McDonald, who sang guest vocals, along with David Crosby. His 2011 self-titled follow-up album, produced by T Bone Burnett, made waves, landing on the Billboard 200 as well as country, folk and rock charts. Ahead of the album’s release, Bridges performed at the Troubadour, where he was introduced onstage by Quincy Jones, who told the star-studded crowd (Jackson Browne among them) that music is Bridges’ “true calling.” Bridges even has his own signature models of Breedlove guitars. [See Bridges, E6]

Review KATHERINE TURMAN

AC/DC rocks the Rose Bowl

Band’s high-voltage passion and classic radio staples electrify the Pasadena crowd.

Precious few bands can fill a stadium 52 years into their career — let alone play to an audience heavily populated by parents and their children, both generations sporting red devil horn headbands and cheering for 77-year-old singer Brian Johnson and white-haired guitar icon Angus Young, 70.

But AC/DC did just that Friday at the Rose Bowl, playing 21 instantly recognizable sing-along tunes of considerable heaviness — the majority of them classic-rock radio staples and cul- [See AC/DC, E6]



ERIC THAYER For The Times

FRONTMAN Brian Johnson, left, and guitarist Angus Young lead AC/DC at the Rose Bowl. The show featured classics like “Back in Black” and “Thunderstruck.”

One last case for Harvey Specter?

Gabriel Macht on his three-episode arc on ‘Suits LA’ and his fan-favorite character.

By YVONNE VILLARREAL

Not all heroes wear capes. This one is an impeccably dressed lawyer who is often armed with a tumbler of whiskey. And the new “Suits” spinoff has called him back for duty.

When NBC announced that it was capitalizing on the success of the glossy legal drama — which concluded its USA Network run nearly six years ago but became the most-streamed show of 2023 with its arrival on Netflix — with “Suits LA,” a Los Angeles-set spinoff revolving around a new group of ambitious lawyers and their dealings within the entertainment industry, creator and showrunner

Aaron Korsh kept any plans for appearances by characters from the original series more tightly under wraps than the logistics of the mysterious can opener ritual.

Rather than play the odds, he played the man and got Gabriel Macht to play Harvey Specter again.

Across nine seasons and 134 episodes, Macht took viewers on the smug but charming corporate attorney’s journey of emotional and personal maturation as he teamed up with — for most of the show’s run — wayward genius Mike (Patrick J. Adams), whom he hired to be his associate even though the young man had never attended law school. Between cases, Harvey confronted his demons and by the series’ 2019 finale was a married man headed to Seattle to reunite with his sidekick to do some legal good for the little guys. (Macht, meanwhile, intentionally [See ‘Suits LA,’ E3]

Review ROBERT ABELE

‘Legend of Ochi’ dazzles, but lacks full immersion

Isaiah Saxon’s feature debut is a rich world of magical creatures in need of real emotion.

Getting swept away by a fantasy world is one of movie-going’s more rarefied pleasures, disbelief dissolving as readily as a pill on the tongue. That makes achieving it a tricky endeavor. Count first-time feature director Isaiah Saxon among the more hard-working and dedicated magicians to attempt it of late with his mist-laden cryptozoological fable “The Legend of Ochi,” a wade in the waters of Hayao Miyazaki and Steven Spielberg (that is, the Spielberg of “E.T.” and “Gremlins,” mind you).

A great deal of care — the handmade, digital and location kind — has gone into realizing this earnest, archly amusing tale of a brooding teenage girl bonding with a threatened furry forest creature. Indeed, figuring out where the rapturous, realistic Carpathian geography ends and the effects wizardry begins is something of a thankless (and, to be honest, buzzkillily) endeavor. At the same time, writer-director

Saxon’s own virtuosity, occasionally aggressive, eventually leaves our hopes for real emotions wanting, once we’ve become attuned to the dazzle.

High in the mountains of their island community, Yuri (Helena Zengel) is the black sheep in her motherless family. A gentle soul with a barely disguised contempt for the hunting culture fostered by her warrior-fetishizing dad Maxim (a reliably grizzled Willem Dafoe) and silently accepted by her sensitive-looking older brother Petro (Finn Wolfhard), Yuri has been taught to fear what lies beyond their open farmland.

But the true paranoia is saved for the mysterious, primate-like species called ochi, beasts that once again evade a nighttime hunt led by Yuri’s father, ludicrously armor-accessorized like a cosplay centurion, leading a posse of rifle-wielding boys from the area. Her hilariously deadpan assessment of it all over the family meal is a grumble: “It’s stupid.”

Later, checking the bear traps, however, Yuri encounters a big-eared baby ochi cowering in a hole, its hind leg bloodied. Squirreling the creature home in her backpack, she assuages its hissing-and-squawking terror with some simple nursing, then decides the right thing to do is reunite her new friend with its family. That this sincere notion dovetails with an itch to vacate her dour, oppressive home only adds to her determination. The quest takes further dimensions when the pair’s language barrier inexplicably collapses, followed by Yuri encountering her long-absent mother (a deliciously grimy and weathered Emily Watson), a solitary sheepherder who’s an ochi expert, it turns out.



HELENA ZENGEL in “The Legend of Ochi,” a fantasy adventure film written and directed by Isaiah Saxon.

Like a lot of folk-fantasy movies grounded in recognizable reality, “The Legend

of Ochi” explains too much about its mythical critters — a job Watson is regrettably saddled with — when what’s called for is a defter storytelling touch. Especially since we know where this quirky human-versus-beast showdown is headed in terms of ecological lessons about harmony between species and dramatic resolutions regarding the stubbornness of parents and children.

A graduate of music videos, Saxon — like the Michel Gondrys and Spike Jonzes before him — excels at sheathing his yarn in idiosyncratic humor, atmosphere and technique. Bur-

‘The Legend of Ochi’

Rated: PG, for violent content, a bloody image, smoking, thematic elements and some language
Running time: 1 hour, 36 minutes
Playing: In limited release

nished by Evan Prosofsky’s painterly cinematography, “The Legend of Ochi” is a beautiful case for the tactile spectacle of puppetry as maybe the most intimate en-

chantment tool.

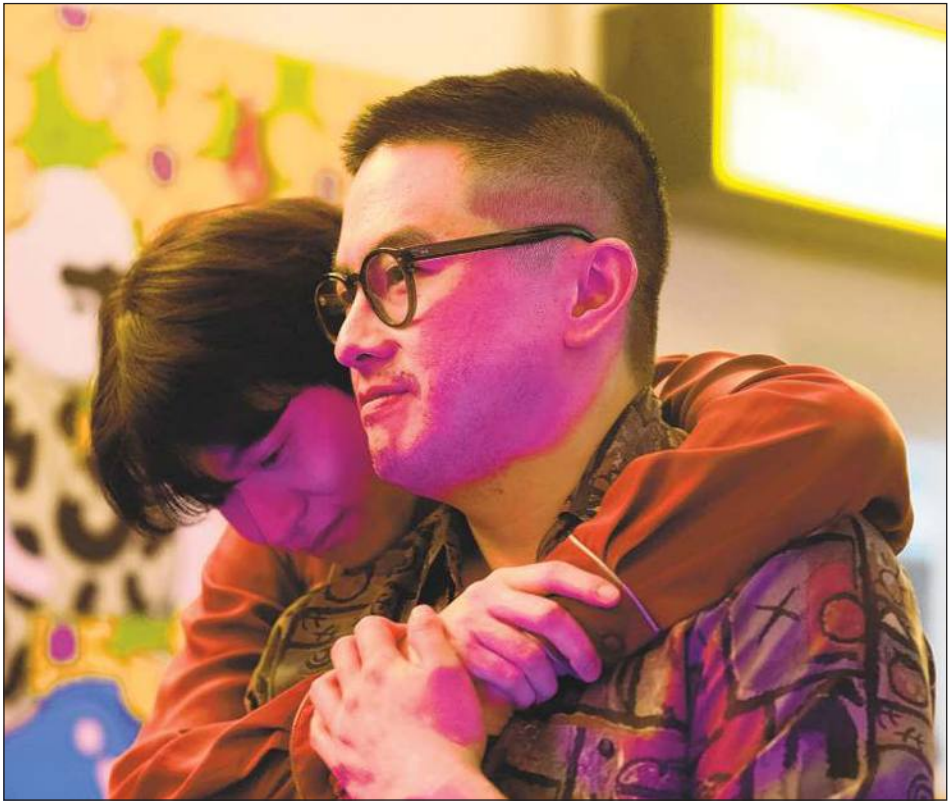
And yet, by film’s end, we’re left with smiling admiration for its peculiarity and artistry instead of a catharsis, because too much of “The Legend of Ochi” feels like a presentation. Good actors are game pieces more than characters, settings are backdrops more than environments and David Longstreth’s crescendo-packed orchestral score (like avant-garde John Williams in its best moments) too often feels insistent than convincing. It’s a jewel box of a film, for sure, with a nice message inside, but losing yourself in its world is where it falls short.

Four-way remake has more plot than heart

[‘Banquet,’ from E1] since college. They hooked up briefly as teenagers, presumably as part of freshman (dis)orientation, although their sexual fluidity is blurry. What’s clear is they’re twin souls, two flip and emotionally risk-averse forever-children afraid of adulthood, as the dialogue’s millennial parlance might put it. Today, each one can legally marry their significant others. They just don’t want to. The blame has shifted from society to personal inertia.

Their respective partners, however, want to settle down. Min, a fabric arts student, already has an engagement ring in his pocket. The scion of a billionaire Korean fashion conglomerate, Min cashes checks from his grandmother, Ja-Young (Youn Yuh-jung), while dodging her request to take over as its creative director. “You are not working for the company — you *are* the company,” she insists.

Meanwhile, Lee is an earthy bohemian goddess who spends much of her screen time gardening. (Gladstone’s flowery knitted outfits are a fun contrast to Tran’s Metallica roadie duds — great work across the board by costumer Matthew Simonelli.) An aid-worker for LGBTQ+ youth on a ticking-clock quest to bear children of her own, Lee has endured two wrenching rounds of in vitro fertilization and, just as painfully, her partner’s ambivalence about having kids at all. An-



BOWEN Yang, foreground, and Han Gi-chan portray one of two queer couples whose complicated scheme unravels in marriage farce “The Wedding Banquet.”

gela’s strained relationship with her own mother, May (Joan Chen, diva-fabulous), a showy ally who is closer to her PFLAG buddies, has made her unrehearsed in maternal warmth. The most credibly-written character, Angela is terrified to play mom herself; it’s improv without a net. (One great comic beat comes when May consoles her daughter by cooing that Angela might

not be as awful of a mom — she could be worse.)

Min needs a green card. Lee needs cash for a third shot at IVF. Chris and Angela need more runway for their inertia. So Min and Lee brainstorm an unusual proposal: a partner swap that will solve one set of problems while creating a pile-up of others. For reasons too eye-rolling to explain, Min and Angela must marry and

commit to the ruse when Ja-Young arrives to investigate whether her grandson’s fiancée is a gold-digger. The four leads are yanked not by their heart strings but by the machinations of a plot that steers them from one contrived scene to another, just so it can point to the skid marks and call them a sketch of the new American family.

In 2025, unlike 1993, Ahn and Schamus don’t take it for granted that foreigners like Min want to live in America at all. “Your trains are so slow!” he groans. Rich, charming and pop star-pretty (his skincare regimen is a playful runner), Min only wants to stay in the states for Chris, which is too much pressure to put on Yang’s callow and underwritten role. Despite those limits, this is one of Yang’s best parts. Now that he’s established himself as larger than life on “Saturday Night Live,” he has the confidence to play a human being.

Han knows he must exaggerate Min’s daffy naivete to get us to buy into his zeal to live in a small shack with noncommittal Chris. He and Chen give the film’s least naturalistic and most delightful performances. (“My own daughter, marrying a man!” Chen’s preening progressive wails despondently.) They’re the only actors who’ve internalized that this is screwball stuff, despite the realistic cinematography that throws wet burlap on the nonsense.

The cast is strong enough to sell us on the movie’s idea of love, even when it bends conventionality into a balloon animal. But its conception of mega-wealth is truly



LILY GLADSTONE, left, plays a woman longing for a child with her reluctant partner, Kelly Marie Tran.

‘The Wedding Banquet’

Rated: Rated R, for language and some sexual material/nudity
Running time: 1 hour, 43 minutes
Playing: In wide release

phony. Min’s lack of ego would be unusual if he was merely upper-middle class, but as the sole heir of a lineage that makes headline news, it’s preposterous. I’m not saying that Min has to be a privileged twit. But if he can impulse-buy IVF as casually as a round of beers, then the film has to respect the viewer enough to answer the obvious follow-up questions: How unbalanced is this marriage-for-medical-treatment proposition? If Min is this desperate to escape his grandmother’s fashion business, why does he sew her an impressive jacket for her hanbok? And, at minimum, why can’t the guys rent their own house next door?

The overall tone feels like Ahn asking us to trust him to make this modern romance work. But he hardly includes any of the genuinely true stuff like tough conversations about mistakes and forgiveness. There are no bonding scenes between Min and Angela. These long-term friends suddenly act like the other has cooties. Odder still, Ahn has a too-clever tic of cutting away from big confrontations. It’s as though we’ve been invited into this home only to be ordered to butt out.

When the drama is at its most compelling, the camera instead chooses to focus on Youn’s grandmother staring at the youngsters from a window. The goings-on affect her Ja-Young least of all, but we’re stuck watching her and whatever thoughts she’s too reserved

to express. I get that Youn, who won a supporting actress Oscar in 2021 for “Minari,” is a lucky talisman. However, the way the film forces her into moments she doesn’t belong in makes her feel like an albatross — especially when it forgets that Gladstone’s Lee exists for an insultingly long stretch and never gives that more central character a chance to speak her peace.

There’s something about the homespun aesthetics, in the gravity of Gladstone and Youn’s expressions — trapped within scenes where the dead air is filled by the sound of birds — that make this good-hearted movie seem embarrassed that it’s a comedy. When the gags arrive, they’re clumsy and desperate: a discordant vomit explosion, some shenanigans at a courthouse. The humor comes off like a wallflower at a party who is racing with so many awkward thoughts that when it’s finally time to speak, they blurt out something rude.

How strange that everyone involved here loves the 1993 film so much that they’ve remade it — or in Schamus’ case, rewritten it — without much of its cultural and character-driven wit. Ahn gets a couple giggles in his depiction of a hasty, half-baked Korean marriage ceremony with Chris promenading around with a wooden duck and the unlucky couple getting pelted with chestnuts and dates, symbology that no one in attendance totally understands. It’s a neat way to make the point that traditions must be reexamined.

But I still prefer a punchline Ang Lee delivered personally in his original “The Wedding Banquet.” Playing a reception guest surrounded by drunken high jinks, he quips, “You’re witnessing 5,000 years of sexual repression.” Come to think of it, this redo doesn’t even have a banquet. There are just leftovers.

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ROYAL 11523 Santa Monica Blvd. West L.A. THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE NR 1:00 3:10 5:15 7:30 THE TROUBLE WITH JESSICA 7:00 PM A MAN AND A WOMAN 1:20 4:20 7:10 WHEN FALL IS COMING 1:10 PM THE PENGUIN LESSONS PG-13 4:00 PM MONICA 1332 Second Street Santa Monica ONE TO ONE: JOHN & YOKO NR 1:30 4:10 7:00 SACRAMENTO NR 1:00 3:05 5:10 7:30 THE UNINVITED NR 1:20 PM WARFARE NR 1:00 3:05 5:10 7:30 THE FRIEND NR 1:10 4:00 7:10 ART FOR EVERYBODY 7:00 PM THE BALLAD OF WALLIS ISLAND PG-13 1:10 4:00 7:10 ALL THE LOST ONES 4:20 PM	TOWN CENTER 1700 Ventura Blvd. Encino THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE NR 4:30 PM THE WEDDING BANQUET NR 1:20 4:00 7:00 ONE TO ONE: JOHN & YOKO NR 1:30 7:00 WARFARE NR 12:50 3:00 5:10 7:30 THE FRIEND NR 1:00 7:10 ART FOR EVERYBODY 7:00 PM THE BALLAD OF WALLIS ISLAND PG-13 1:10 4:00 7:20 AIRPLANE 2025 4:20 PM GLENDALE 207 N. Maryland Ave Glendale IT FEEDS 4:20 PM SINNERS NR 1:00 4:10 7:15 THE TEACHER 1:10 4:00 7:00 WARFARE NR 12:50 3:00 A NICE INDIAN BOY 4:30 PM GAZER NR 1:20 7:10 WHEN FALL IS COMING 1:30 PM ART FOR EVERYBODY 7:00 PM	NEWHALL 22500 Lyons Ave. Santa Clarita SINNERS NR 1:00 4:10 7:10 THE WEDDING BANQUET NR 1:20 4:20 7:10 DROP PG-13 12:50 3:05 THE AMATEUR PG-13 1:10 4:00 7:00 THE KING OF KINGS PG 1:20 4:00 7:00 WARFARE NR 12:50 3:05 7:40 A MINECRAFT MOVIE PG 1:30 4:30 7:20 ART FOR EVERYBODY 7:00 PM THE BALLAD OF WALLIS ISLAND PG-13 5:15 PM	NoHo 7 5240 Lankershim Blvd. No. Hollywood SINNERS NR 1:00 4:10 7:10 THE WEDDING BANQUET NR 1:20 4:20 7:00 DROP PG-13 12:50 3:05 5:15 7:30 THE AMATEUR PG-13 1:10 4:10 7:10 WARFARE NR 12:50 3:05 5:15 7:30 HIGH ART NR 1:30 4:30 7:20 THE BALLAD OF WALLIS ISLAND PG-13 1:10 4:00 7:00 CLAREMONT 450 W. 2nd Street Claremont SINNERS NR 1:00 4:10 7:15 THE WEDDING BANQUET NR 1:20 4:20 7:00 THE AMATEUR PG-13 1:10 4:10 7:10 WARFARE NR 12:50 3:00 7:30 A MINECRAFT MOVIE PG 1:30 4:30 7:30 ART FOR EVERYBODY 7:00 PM THE BALLAD OF WALLIS ISLAND PG-13 5:10 PM
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BARGAIN IN () CLOSED CAPTION NON-STANDARD PRICING FOR 4/21/2025 ONLY

Review ILANA MASAD

When the fact-checker is not a reliable narrator

A magazine underling is captivated by a Manic Pixie Dream Girl in debut novel.

The cover of Austin Kelley's debut novel, "The Fact Checker," will be immediately recognizable to a certain type of person: Ah, the New Yorker, they might think, before blinking and realizing that it isn't.

I am that kind of person; the famous weekly has been around my whole life, issues piled on the bathroom counter or lying open on the kitchen table, and I eventually read them as well. At some point, I learned about its famous fact-checkers, the people who toll away in relative obscurity (the magazine doesn't list them anywhere, though you may find some by trawling LinkedIn) in order to make sure that every factual statement the magazine publishes is correct — even if those facts appear within poetry.

"The Fact Checker" is narrated by a man holding the titular title who is, essentially, a flâneur: a literary type who wanders around

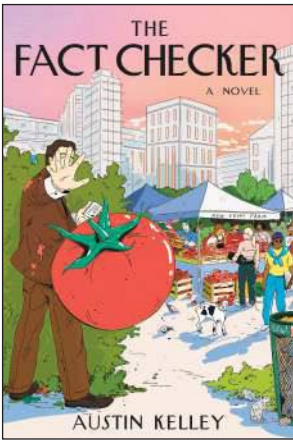
his urban environment, observing and commenting on society from a somewhat detached position. While the magazine he works for remains unnamed, it's clearly meant to be the New Yorker; but readers hoping for juicy insider gossip will be disappointed (actual insiders — those who were around in the mid-aughts, anyway — may recognize the types and tempers Kelley's narrator interacts with at work). The title, the cover, the font — they're all rather effective bait.

Fact-checking is a feature in the novel, of course. The main plot, which takes place in July and August 2004, kicks off when the narrator is given an article to check about the Union Square Greenmarket — referred to as Mandeville/Green for its author and subject, respectively. It's a simple enough piece, and the fact-checker deals with much of it in short order. But one quote, about "nefarious business" going on at the market, makes him pause, and he goes in search of the source, Sylvia, in order to confirm what she told the author and ask for details.

Sylvia is a classic Manic Pixie Dream Girl: Man-

deville says she's "interesting," which the narrator recognizes might be a euphemism for her being insane and/or sexy. She has a distinctive feature (a scar) that seems to heighten her beauty to the narrator's eyes, and is passionate about things, including the tomatoes she grows. She takes the narrator on a journey, first to a cemetery and then to a secret supper club run out of a squatted-in office in the Financial District of Lower Manhattan; she grew up on a commune and claims it was a cult, really, but she likes the idea of cults: "If you are in a cult, you are really committed, worshipping the Deity. Worshipping the good. That's all I want to do in this life. Worship the good."

After sleeping with the narrator, she leaves him a note promising to call and promptly disappears. He spends the rest of the novel trying to track her down. Much like critic Nathan Rabin's definition of the Manic Pixie Dream Girl type who exists "in the fevered imaginations of sensitive writer-directors," Sylvia is there "to teach broodingly soulful young men to embrace life and its infinite mysteries



The Fact Checker

By Austin Kelley
Atlantic Monthly Press: 256 pages, \$27

and adventures."

The Fact Checker, who isn't entirely over an ex-girlfriend who cheated on him with her dissertation advisor — another familiar type — is one such young man. As he tries to find her, he ends up in a series of interesting places (an anarchist meeting in a boat, for example), talking to interesting people (Sylvia's friends and co-workers, mainly, but also an

apparently lonely and chatty Tony Curtis), and having interesting thoughts, many of which are concerned with factoids — he obviously learned while doing his job (Audrey Munson, the "American Venus"; the transition to new street signs in New York).

The Fact Checker is an unreliable narrator not only because he's telling his story from a remove of at least seven years (he mentions Lyft in the last chapter, which was founded in 2012), but also because whenever he's not in the office, he's unceremoniously yet steadily drinking, often to the point of blackout. This seems to be more of a problem than he's admitting, and it's not the only self-deception he practices.

He wants to be a good guy: he's always nervous he's going to be perceived as creepy by the women he encounters, he questions his assumptions about people he sees, and he's uncomfortable with the sexism he witnesses among male friends and acquaintances. But he also never interjects when privy to such "guy talk" and he downplays how much his own obsession with finding Sylvia is linked to his fantasy

of her, as well as how her disappearance reminds him of his ex's own behavioral patterns.

The Fact Checker is an engaging figure not for his own sake — a friend of Sylvia's, Agnes, tells him at one point that he's "a blank man" and she's not wrong — but for the inconsistencies in his behaviors, and the dramatic irony inherent in the mismatch between his own narration and what we, as well as those around him, begin to see in him. "I remember that day well," the Fact Checker tells us on the book's first page, but by the end of his first encounter with Sylvia, when she hands him a bag of tomatoes, he thinks, "It seemed intimate, almost flirtatious. Or maybe I'm misremembering the whole thing."

While "The Fact Checker" is uneven, it's a fun and quick read, and it does raise some of the most relevant questions du jour: What is a fact? What is truth? And who gets to decide?

Masad, a books and culture critic, is the author of the novel "All My Mother's Lovers" and the forthcoming novel "Beings."

Gabriel Macht steps back into Harvey's suit

['Suits LA,' from E1] stepped away from acting to focus on his family once the series wrapped.)

Now, it's early March and Macht's on the set of "Suits LA" on the NBCUniversal lot putting the finishing touches on his three-episode arc, which was crammed into roughly a week of filming: "I really thought I was shutting the door on this character at the end of the original," says Macht, with a set of dark-framed glasses the only thing distinguishing him from his character during a break.

Harvey's arc primarily occurs in flashbacks circa 2010, establishing his friendship with "Suits LA" frontman Ted Black (Stephen Amell) around the time the latter was wrapped up in a case involving notorious mobster John Pellegrini (Anthony Azizi) that ultimately triggered his move to the West Coast. Ted was prosecuting federal cases for the U.S. attorney's office in New York City and on a mission to put the mafioso behind bars; Harvey worked in the district attorney's office. Later, when the murder case fell apart, Harvey, who by this time was working in the corporate sector, clandestinely helped Ted convict Pellegrini on racketeering charges. But with the criminal set to be released from prison in the present day, Harvey makes a trip to L.A. to rally Ted so they can get Pellegrini back behind bars. The arc concludes with Sunday's episode, titled "Bat Signal," which finds the dynamic duo in New York City to (successfully) execute their plan.

But is this the last viewers will see of Harvey Specter? Macht has learned not to say no to anything.

"Look, if everything fails in my life, I think I can go to Times Square, put on the suit and just pose for pictures, maybe?" he says with a wide smile as he ambles his way back to shoot a scene in the present-day timeline.

Like the Naked Cowboy? "Yeah, I'll be right next to him."

The Times checked in with Macht a few weeks later over a video call to discuss the reprising of his character. Here are excerpts from the conversation.

Since the resurgence of "Suits," you've been asked about reprising your role for a revival or even a movie of the OG series. You've largely had some playful responses quashing the likelihood of that happening. What was the initial reluctance and how did this way become appealing for you?

When I was finished with "Suits," I was ready to be done. I feel like we told those stories and we really stuck

the landing. We left with integrity. At that time in my personal life, I was ready to be done and move on and focus on different things. I wanted to travel the world, and I wanted to fill up the daddy well, and, you know, really spend time with my kids and make up for lost time. That was really the focus. That's where maybe those responses [came from].

Jump a few years, when Netflix picked it up, it dominated the viewership in so many ways that it just felt like it was sort of bigger than anyone could really understand and imagine. I'm seeing that there's a new generation. Who knows, there might be a "Suits: The Musical" on Broadway in 20 years. It created a bunch of opportunities for a lot of the players from the original show. And when Aaron [Korsh, the creator and showrunner of both series] came to me and said [mimics Korsh's pitchy voice], "Hey, I know you haven't wanted to get back in this..." I said, "What is it? What's the story?" All I was interested in was how he was doing and how's the show going and support the show. He said, "Look, there's a character that might have been friends with Ted, and I can make his name in the script Harvey, if you'd be willing to consider..."

And over the next days, I started to think about the fans and how much the fans are really so committed to this show. That was my first instinct... if they can make it happen, I want to do it for the fans.

Did it take some time for you to feel like you were locked in? We don't see Harvey in a suit right away and I would imagine that's what helps you get there.

It kind of was like riding a bike, *especially* when you put the suit on. Aaron has this way of writing where he's got a lot of double negatives. They gave me one or two speeches where I had to get into that dynamic and I was like, "Oh, my God, I'm gonna have a panic attack. This is not why I came back."

On set you mentioned that the baseball scenes were shot at Rancho Park, which is where you used to practice for your high school baseball team. That must have felt like a surreal, full-circle moment to be coming back to this seminal character in your career while returning to a place that had meaning in real life.

It was nostalgic in so many ways. I played up until my freshman year of high school. They put me on the bench. I didn't really play that much. I loved baseball and I still love baseball, but I was like, "Oh, God, I should



NICOLE WEINGART NBC

GABRIEL MACHT, left, and Stephen Amell in the spinoff drama "Suits LA."



SHANE MAHOOD NBCUniversal

MACHT and Sarah Rafferty as fan-favorite couple Harvey and Donna in the 2019 series finale of "Suits."

really be thinking about my future. Maybe I should go into the drama class or something." They happened at the same time, so I can either do baseball every day or do drama and acting.

Going back to Rancho Park and being in a uniform, playing shortstop, and actually seeing my dad [actor Stephen Macht, who had a recurring role in "Suits"] come out was nice. I said, "Dad, I'm shooting at Rancho, if you want to come and visit." He comes out and he's sitting in the stands; apparently he asked them, "Where's Gabriel?" And someone was like, "Who are you?" And he's like, "I'm his father!" It brought him right back to when I was in high school or little league. And they're like, "Oh, he's playing shortstop." He's been in the business 50 years. And he was like, "Well, when's the game starting?" It was a real moment for me to see him in the stands. During one of the takes, I was like, "Dad, you're sitting with background, you're like an extra right now. Go behind video village! You can watch the scene there." It was a full-circle moment for us.

When it was announced that you were returning, it quickly became clear that one of the key cameo fans were anticipating with your return is Harvey's wedding band. The Darvey shippers, myself included, wanted some assurance that Aaron did not mess with their favorite TV couple. Did you see some of that? And were you curious where Harvey would be at in life?

Yes, I was curious to see what it was and what was going to happen and what the storyline is; it could have gone in so many different directions.

There's no reference that they're married and still together, but there is a reference that there's a child. I was moved by that moment. I was moved when I read it, I was like, "Oh, that's cool." I said "Guys, in the flashbacks, obviously I don't have a ring, but I think I should have a ring for the present time." And they were like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah." So, that's how we basically said that this [Harvey-Donna] relationship is still continuing. It was a nice moment. It was a really nice moment. Now why we never mentioned anyone with the name Ted in 134 episodes [of "Suits"], but these guys are really great friends and he names his son after him...

Wait. Do you think he really named their son after him? I thought he was just teasing.

I think he [Harvey] was just playing with him [Ted]. But you never know with Harvey; he keeps so many things close to the chest. He could have really connected with him years ago. With television, with characters, you don't know.

Fans on the show know that Harvey lost both his parents. With his appearance on "Suits LA," we learn his only sibling, Marcus, has passed in the time since. [Actor Billy Miller, who portrayed Marcus, died in 2023.] Have you asked Aaron why he has

made Harvey endure so much pain and loss? Can we have some assurance that Harvey is at least going to the doctor and getting himself checked out?

That's a good question. How do I answer this? The human in me says, look, there's tons of loss in our lives and humans go through loss every day. There's always been a real sense of abandonment issues that Harvey has had throughout his life, and I think that has been a dramatic tool that has been helped by writing for that. I don't think Harvey really plays a victim, but I think it's a way to feel for him. If you look at any Disney movie, the parents die within five seconds and that's to get you on the hook of feeling like you gotta feel for this character.

I know it was brief and we don't get too much of present-day Harvey, but what was it like playing Harvey at this stage of his life and this stage in your life?

It was fun. He's a little bit more settled. He's a little bit more in touch with himself. He likes to still take the piss out of his friends and the people that are close to him. But what we love about Harvey is his sense of what's right and making things right and his loyalty and his heart. There's plenty of times he's playing with the system. I think he's doing what's best. That was nice to play and just to be in touch with that.

It's interesting because there's many versions of Harvey that I'm not a fan of and that I'm not crazy about and that I don't like to engage in or support. I don't like supporting the narcissistic elements of him. I don't like supporting the aggressive, toxic masculinity that Harvey has in his toolbox. In these last six years, I have done a lot of work on myself and just seeing, what are the behaviors of Harvey that align with me? There's elements of behavior where, as the actor and as the character, you're having to beat people down and manipulate and use so many negative behaviors that don't align with me, or more so, align with the child in me, that I have been keenly aware that I need tend to.

What worked well for Harvey was my [inner] child. So, to be able to dismantle that or observe all the behaviors of the child — digging his heels in and saying, "This is what I need! This is how to do it!" — that selfish, sort of narcissistic coping mechanisms that you make as a kid, that's the work to be done [on myself] to move away from him.

I'd love to see a documentary where somebody takes characters where the actors have really lived in their shoes for so long that they become them in different ways, and how do they shake them at the end of the day and come back to themselves? I think it'd be really interesting.

Could you see a day when you consider doing another TV series or returning to the screen?

I'm way more interested right now in this partnership that I'm doing with Bear Fight Whiskey. The small narrative stories where I can be creative are where my heart is right now. A television show is a big commitment. You're basically owned by the show and the network and the stories and you really have to give up so much of your life. Maybe when my kids go to college or whatever, and there's more time in my life that I can devote to that.

Your friends and "Suits" co-stars, Sarah Rafferty and Patrick J. Adams, recently wrapped rewatching the first season on their podcast. They're on hiatus now, but do you think you'll ever stop by as a guest? I need you on this podcast.

At some point, yeah. I don't know when. The stars have to align. I think they're doing great and I think they're really enjoying it. I don't know how I would go on there and talk — I have a bad memory as it is. I do not know if I would come in with much substance. I've seen clips [of "Suits"] here and there and I'm like, "I said that? I have no idea! I have no recollection of that!"

I do feel like Harvey has some explaining to do with Mike for using the whole Batman thing with Ted.

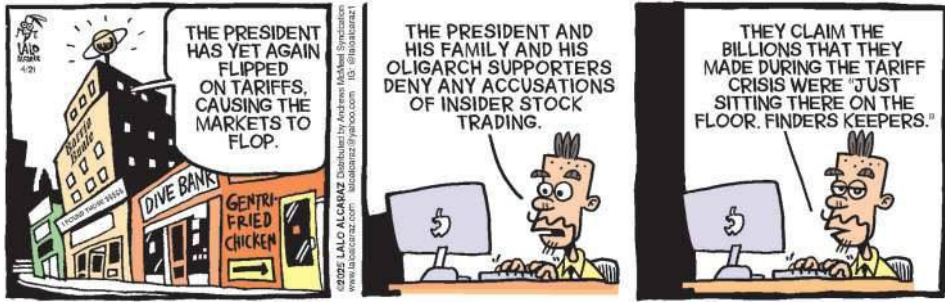
I think you're right. You have to go after Aaron. He thought it was a little too meta and too much of a wink to the audience, but I'll tell you, we said "Green Arrow" and "The Spirit." [Amell played Oliver Queen in the CW's "Arrow" and Macht portrayed the title character in Frank Miller's 2008 film adaptation of Will Eisner's "The Spirit."] There's a version of that that would have been gold, but [Aaron's] a Batman guy, so you got to just say what's on the page sometimes.

You grew up here. What's the L.A. spot Gabriel would tell Harvey to visit?

Marty's. I'm telling you, Marty's burgers — it's right near Rancho Park. It's a greasy spoon. It's the home of the combo. It's where I used to eat all the time. I'm a vegetarian now, so I can't go back there and eat there, but Harvey could.

COMICS

LA CUCARACHA By Lalo Alcaraz



CRABGRASS By Tauhid Bondia



CURTIS By Ray Billingsley



LOOSE PARTS By Dave Blazek



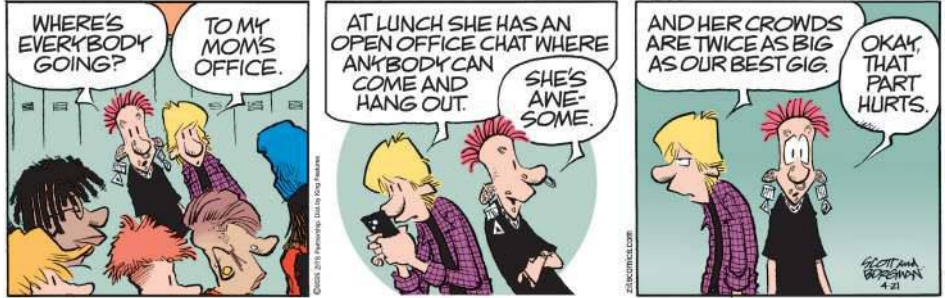
PEARLS BEFORE SWINE By Stephan Pastis



LIO By Mark Tatulli



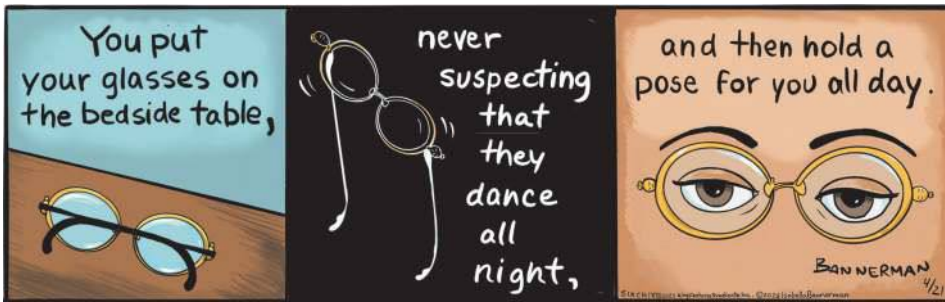
ZITS By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



TUNDRA By Chad Carpenter



SIX CHIX By Isabella Bannerman



FRAZZ By Jef Mallett



NON SEQUITUR By Wiley



PICKLES By Brian Crane



BABY BLUES By Jerry Scott & Rick Kirkman



CRANKSHAFT By Tom Batiuk & Chuck Ayers



JUMP START By Robb Armstrong



MACANUDO By Liniers



BLONDIE By Dean Young & John Marshall



BETWEEN FRIENDS By Sandra Bell-Lundy



COMICS

SUDOKU

		3			1	6	5	
		6	5			9		
					7		1	
		5		2				4
	8							3
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	6		7		9			
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	7	2	3			8		

#106 The Mephist. Grid Distributed by Tribune Content Agency. All rights reserved.
Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 or 2-by-3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 (or 1 to 6 for the smaller grid). For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit www.sudoku.org.uk.

KENKEN

Every box will contain a number; numbers depend on the size of the grid. For a 6x6 puzzle, use Nos. 1-6. Do not repeat a number in any row or column. The numbers in each heavily outlined set of squares must combine to produce the target number found in the top left corner of the cage using the mathematical operation indicated. A number can be repeated within a cage as long as it is not in the same row or column.

EASY					
7+	2÷	3	2X		
2-		9+			
7+					

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CHALLENGING					
2÷		12X	2÷		4-
4-		24X		12+	
					72X
6+		3÷	6+		
15X	3				16+
	4-				

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PREVIOUS ANSWERS					
3+	2÷	2-	6X	5+	
2	4	1	3		
1	2	3	4		
4	3	2	1		
3	1	4	2		
1	3	4	5	6	2
4	6	3	2	5	1
2	1	6	3	4	5
5	4	1	6	2	3
6	5	2	1	3	4
3	2	5	4	1	6

4/21/25

HOROSCOPE

By HOLIDAY MATHIS

Aries (March 21-April 19): There's nothing in your world today that requires your constant vigilance, analysis or judgment. It's OK to decide not to decide.

Taurus (April 20-May 20): There is possibility and support all around you. See it once and you recognize it everywhere.

Gemini (May 21-June 21): Self-awareness is tricky. When you observe others who lack the abilities you possess, it gets easier to see your own value.

Cancer (June 22-July 22): Make your rules if you need them to feel secure, but know your instincts will handle all life throws at you.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): Every step you take need not be a grand victory — progress itself is valuable. Focus on keeping things moving.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Something going on in your

life is too complex to be tackled directly, at least for now. Take an approach like astronomers studying black holes: Observe their effect on things around them.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): Today it's the veterans — those who understand the work and personal cost — who will be your biggest fans, helpers and mentors.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): You've tended to your needs and responsibilities without acknowledging or appreciating your efforts. Recognize yourself for all you do to keep this show on the road.

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Relationships are a dance. A bit of pushing and pulling is to be expected. Even when you're leading, you'd rather pull than push.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You know that area of your life that hasn't fully developed yet? You'll see changes in your circumstances that allow this potential to unfold.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You'll get answers to questions you didn't ask, which may include uncomfortable or surprising information that deepens your understanding of others.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): Those who don't know what is expected of them will be unlikely to guess it today, so be clear.

Today's birthday (April 21): It will be a year of beautiful relationships and productive workflows that keep the good vibes plentiful. Acting fast is your gift: You'll move on sweet investments and turn bright ideas into adventures. Highlights: creative and spiritual highs, self-education you will teach and/or publish, a sport or fitness goal realized. Gemini and Leo adore you. Lucky numbers: 7, 28, 1, 18, 33.

Mathis writes her column for Creators Syndicate Inc. The horoscope should be read for entertainment.

CROSSWORD

Edited By Patti Varol
By Hannah Slovut-Einerston

- ACROSS
- Flies high
 - Prepare for cooking, perhaps
 - Scrabble piece
 - Ration out
 - Mexican greeting
 - Another name for the Roman god Cupid
 - Haphazard, haphazardly
 - Mascara smudger, maybe
 - "I Can't Let Go" singer Sands
 - Mined resource
 - Olympians' predecessors
 - Far side of a zero-entry pool
 - B in chemistry class?
 - Casual, casually
 - Homo sapiens
 - Earth orbiter
 - Actress Thurman in a Fall Out Boy hit
 - Bosun's greeting
 - "Dope!"
 - Like an etiquette coach, perhaps
 - Turn from yellow to brown, as a banana
 - Springtime Hindu festival
 - Irks
 - Nonsensical, nonsensically
 - Turn from green to yellow, as a banana
 - Round figures
 - Meat counter tool
 - DOJ branch
 - Nonsharp part of a sword
 - Shade
 - Mushy, mushily
 - Possesses
 - When ties are broken, briefly
 - Lemonade ingredient
 - Start of a quiet sentence
 - "Have I got __ for you!"
 - Spotify Wrapped figures

- DOWN
- Used a toothed blade on lumber, say
 - __ branch: peace symbol
 - "Kate & __": 1980s sitcom
 - Participate in a D&D campaign

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14						15					16			
17						18					19			
20						21			22	23				
24					25			26						
				27				28					29	30
31	32	33						34					35	
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39					40	41			42	43				
44				45					46					
				47					48				49	50
51														
52	53							54				55		
56							57	58				59		
60							61				62			
63							64							

- Pigpen
- Some musical intervals
- One of 18, in golf
- Reply
- "You did great!"
- Permanent art
- "Not thrilled, but that's fine"
- Give temporarily
- __ on the side of caution
- Things to avoid
- Nutrient in spinach
- Ages and ages
- "We're not providing alcohol," initially
- Slack alternative
- Emanate
- Orange root vegetables
- Logo on a pint of Guinness
- "Shoot"
- Road trip stops
- Custardy dessert
- Intimidate with mind games
- Go on about
- Ohio college whose mascot is an albino squirrel

- Bring together
- Each
- Most upscale
- Eight-member ensembles
- Wife of Augustus
- Choose to lead
- Eye sores
- "Do not proceed!"
- Highs and —
- Swear
- Denominator of a whole number
- FM radio hosts

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE

A	B	B	E	S		A	L	A	R	U	S	S	E
S	A	Y	S	I	I	V	A	N	I	S	I	E	D
S	I	T	O	M		O	U	T	G	O	I	N	G
I	H	A	I	S		M	I	N	E		I	A	I
						E	P	S		A	D	D	S
C	L	S	C			A	G	A	R		R	U	N
C	E	L	E	B	R	I	T	Y		E	R	O	D
L	E	I		R	E	C	A	N	I	S		S	E
A	C	C	R	A		P	L	I	E	S		S	Q
T	H	E	A	S		O	L	G	A		U	R	L
						T	H	A	T	C		D	A
E	P	E	E			R	I	O	T		G	R	R
L	O	S	I	N	O	S		L	O	T	I	O	N
S	E	T	P	O	I	N	T		O	N	F	S	I
A	I	A	G	U	E	S		M	E	H	E	S	I

4/21/25

BRIDGE

By FRANK STEWART

Unlucky Louie says that the school of experience wouldn't be so hard if there were occasional breaks. There seem to be none for Louie; he continues to play too fast.

At today's 3NT, Louie put up dummy's king of hearts, winning, and next ... led a club from dummy. That ended matters early: East rose with his ace and led the jack of hearts, and West took four hearts for down one.

"The missing spades didn't split 3-3," Louie shrugged, "so I had only eight tricks."

"After you win Trick One," I told Louie, "cash the A-K of diamonds, lead a diamond to your 10 and take the queen. West must discard

three times. He can't throw a spade, and if he throws a heart, you can safely force out the ace of clubs. So he must let go three clubs. Then you take the top spades and exit with dummy's fourth spade, and West must give you your queen of hearts."

"Every time I think I may graduate from the school of experience," Louie groaned, "they add a new course requirement."

You hold: ♠ A Q 6 3 ♥ K 6 ♦ K 9 8 2 ♣ Q 10 4. Partner opens one diamond, you respond one spade and he bids two clubs. What do you say?

Answer: If, in your partnership's style, a jump-preference in opener's minor suit is forcing, you can bid three diamonds. If instead it would be invitational, you must risk a jump to 3NT or try a stalling "fourth-suit"

bid of two hearts. The main thing is to know how your partnership treats this basic situation.

South dealer N-S vulnerable			
WEST		EAST	
♠ 10 9 5 2		♠ J 4	
♥ A 10 9 5 2		♥ J 7 3	
♦ 3		♦ 17 6 5	
♣ 9 3 2		♣ A 8 7 5	
SOUTH		WEST	
♠ K 8 7		♠ 10 9 5 2	
♥ Q 8 4		♥ J 7 3	
♦ A Q 10 4		♦ 17 6 5	
♣ K 10 6		♣ A 8 7 5	
Opening lead — ♥ 5			

Tribune Content Agency

ASKING ERIC

Dear Eric: I was an attorney when I started having memory problems at age 65. I retired and subsequently learned that I had a devastating rare dementia with a very short lifespan.

Instead of providing me support, my friends disappeared, at the time I needed them most. Friends may rally around you when you have cancer, driving you to chemo treatments, dropping off food and other things to support you; when you have dementia, everyone just disappears.

I've always been a sociable person and I'm missing that so much, but I have no idea how or where to start. Any ideas?

LEFT BY FRIENDS

Dear Friends: People sometimes don't know what to do or say when confronted with illness, but that's no excuse for your friends' behavior and I'm sorry. The Alzheimer's Assn. (alz.org) has a wealth of resources for people with dementia, including support groups, both online and in-person. Being able to talk with others about what you're experiencing and feeling will help with isolation.

This also might be a time for you to explore volunteer opportunities or social groups that have nothing to do with dementia, depending on your care plan and abilities. You are a person who is worthy of connection,

with a wealth of experiences and knowledge from which others can benefit. Your company would be welcomed at a senior center, a local outing group or an organization that aligns with your interests and values. If you have anxiety about navigating these spaces with dementia, or need accommodation in order to feel safe, please don't hesitate to talk to a group leader about how you can participate most comfortably.

Dear Eric: My husband is 72 and I am 68. He is still working and I am retired and work part time. We have been married for six years. We keep our finances separate, yet both contribute to basic expenses. He has much more in assets than I do.

When we married, I signed a prenup that he designed, saying he would set up a trust and give me lifetime rights to the home we live in if he passed away and I would not receive anything else. So far, he has not set up the trust or written a will.

I find I am getting more and more resentful about this. I could survive if he passed away, but I would have to relocate to a more affordable situation. Should I push this issue so I can make plans for my old age while I am still healthy, or wait it out? We get along fine otherwise. Am I wrong for expect-

ing him to set up a trust to take care of me, or leave me some assets? I wonder if a prenup even applies if the marriage lasts until death. I know times have changed and expectations of roles seem to have also.

PRENUP PROBLEM

Dear Prenup: It would be wise of you to go over the prenup with an attorney as soon as possible so that you can get a better sense of what you signed, what your husband's obligations are, and what recourse you have. It sounds like the prenup is supposed to work in conjunction with more complex estate planning that your husband hasn't done. Or, at the least, hasn't updated.

It would be helpful to know if he has a will that pre-dates your marriage and leaves the house to someone else, for instance. Getting as much information as you can about your joint financial situation and talking about it with an attorney isn't greedy; it's responsible.

The consultation you have with an attorney may give you some options for how you can and should proceed. Having a plan of action may take the bite out of your resentment, thereby making space for a clear-eyed conversation with your husband.

Email questions to eric@askingeric.com.

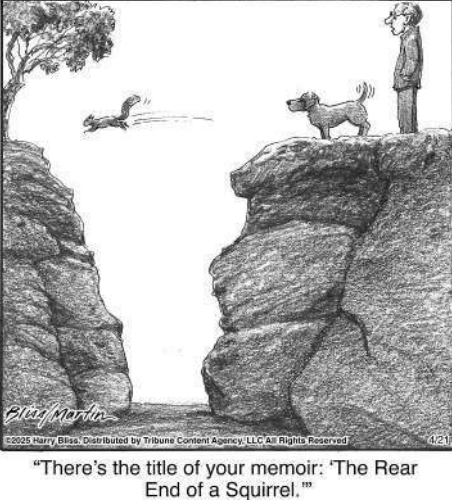
FAMILY CIRCUS By Bil Keane



FREE RANGE By Bill Whitehead



BLISS By Harry Bliss



DENNIS THE MENACE By Hank Ketcham



MARMADUKE By Brad & Paul Anderson



SPEED BUMP By Dave Coverly



AC/DC electrifies fans of all ages at the Rose Bowl

[**AC/DC**, from E1] tural touchstones — rendered with a power and passion that belies their many decades of service.

Kicking off with 1978's "If You Want Blood (You've Got It)," Young, in his trademark schoolboy outfit (red velvet for this show) with the recognizable black and white Gibson SG, took the stage to thunderous appreciation. Next was "Back in Black," the song and album that marked Johnson's 1980 entry to the lineup after the death of singer Bon Scott.

The frontman proved expressive and animated despite serious hearing issues that sidelined him for a few scary years and a voice that, understandably, doesn't always have the power of earlier days. The quintet played a few tracks from its latest, 2020's "Power Up," but the hits ruled — from "Shot Down in Flames" to "Hells Bells" to latter-day crowd favorite "Thunderstruck."

The band's set, despite the relentless, strident perfection and power of the rhythm section, wasn't a quick flow, with fairly frequent darkened-stage breaks between songs. The second half of the two-hour-plus performance proved the stronger — Johnson's energy seemingly renewed on this third show of 13 for this leg of the Power Up tour.

Like a Dickensian Andy Capp, Johnson is an uber-charming rogue, an everyman bluesy belter. However, on Feb. 28, 2016, in the midst of AC/DC's Rock or Bust tour, doctors told Johnson that if he didn't stop performing immediately, he risked total hearing loss.

By May 17, 2016, Guns N' Roses frontman Axl Rose joined AC/DC as a fill-in vocalist for two dozen shows, a move that shocked many and thrilled others. They're at once a band of brothers, literally — founded by Angus and his late sibling Malcolm Young — but also not. As the middle-aged concertgoer next to me noted: "Angus is all about the money and he and his brother own the band." That said, it was the fan's 10th show across several continents, though he purposely avoided seeing the Rose-fronted version of AC/DC.

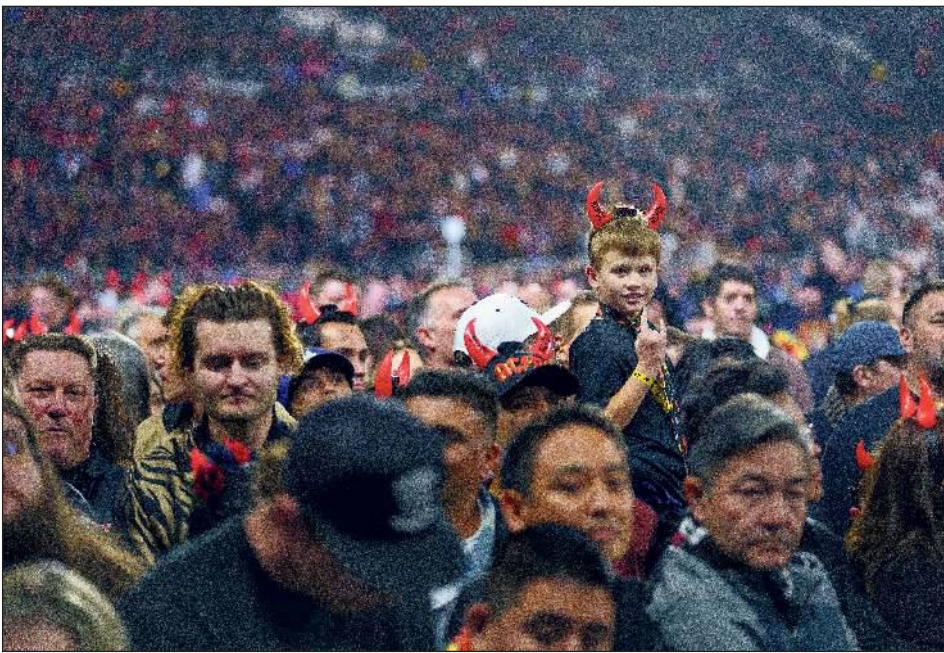
Johnson, his hearing issues managed, was back in the fold by 2019 and playing live with AC/DC by October 2023. Interestingly, one of the other bands still filling stadiums is indeed Guns N' Roses. Rose and guitarist Slash, the Johnson and Young of American rock, were in attendance at the Rose Bowl — their walk through the crowd inciting thousands to gasp and crane their necks for a look

at the duo.

But all eyes were onstage. AC/DC has written winking songs about sexually transmitted diseases ("The Jack"); large women ("Whole Lotta Rosie"); voracious encounters ("You Shook Me All Night Long," "She's Got Balls"); and of course, hell (in the abstract). The tunes are all exuberant, and even with a new era of political correctness, never offensive.

Despite challenges of health and member attrition, AC/DC remains unstoppable and undeniable — Young's own version of Chuck Berry's duckwalk proved his preternatural energy, as did his expected and always lengthy (10 minutes? 15?) solo during "Let There Be Rock." At least six songs in the set were made famous by original frontman Scott, including "Sin City," "Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap," "Riff Raff," "Let There Be Rock" and "Highway to Hell," but they're so much a part of the band's oeuvre it matters not that Johnson has been singing them longer than Scott did.

Another constant: AC/DC song titles are frequently convivial lowbrow bon mots — "Have a Drink on Me," "Hells Bells," "Stiff Upper Lip" — now so common in the vernacular that AC/DC might have invented the



ERIC THAYER For The Times

AC/DC FANS fill the Rose Bowl in Pasadena on Friday. The two-hour-plus concert featured classic rock staples like "Shot Down in Flames" and "Hells Bells."

phrases.

One valid complaint leveled at the band is also the (not-so) secret to AC/DC's strength and continued, deserved worldwide success: It makes the same record every time. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. And when things do "break," they're quickly fixed.

Instead of hoped-for drummer Phil Rudd, rounding out the live lineup are drummer Matt Laug, with the band for two years; and skilled journeyman bassist Chris Chaney of Jane's Addiction infamy. He replaced Cliff Williams, who first joined AC/DC in 1977. And there are two "Young people" on guitar; Angus and his nephew, Stevie, 68, who re-

placed his uncle Malcolm in the band in 2014.

So will AC/DC keep going? Clearly, for as long as it can. It's what it does. Will audiences, fans young and old, keep showing up? They will. It's what they do. The world circa 2025 could use two hours of an ear-splitting sing-along with 70,000 like-minded denizens, celebrating the working-class joys of booze, broads and rock 'n' roll. AC/DC remains the band to deliver that joyful, bipartisan escapism. As Scott sang (and Johnson never has) on the bagpipe-belter "It's a Long Way to the Top (If You Wanna Rock 'n' Roll)," AC/DC indeed hit that top, and remains ensconced there.

AC/DC did its audience a great service in having the Pretty Reckless as openers. Singer Taylor Momsen had a big presence on the massive stage, looking like the Runaways' Cherie Currie circa '70s, her commanding voice as genuine as her positively magnetic stage presence. Overheard from a nearby seat: "I was thoroughly blown away."

Like AC/DC, the band is guitar-driven and write great songs, its approach the perfect blend between accessible rock with the danger, volume and power of metal. It's a shame AC/DC is so by-the-book onstage, because a Momsen-Johnson duet would be a pairing for the ages.



From Loretta Ayeroff

JEFF BRIDGES, left, with jam buddy Steve Baim, recorded music in the 1970s, now released as "Slow Magic."

Songs from the Dude's soul

[**Bridges**, from E1]

Now, Bridges is poised to release "Slow Magic, 1977-1978," his first record since his 2015 spoken-word/ambient album, "Sleeping Tapes." The 10-year gap between records might seem like a long time, but these songs actually have been waiting almost 50 years to make their debut. "Time is so bizarre. I can't believe we recorded this half a century ago," Bridges, 75, says during a Zoom call, wearing a brown cable-knit sweater, with his reading glasses perched on his nose, and sporting a bushy white beard.

Sitting in his garage-turned-ceramics studio that doubles as a jam space at his home in Santa Barbara, surrounded by framed photos, artwork and various mementos, including a "The Big Lebowski"-themed bannana, Bridges seems just as incredulous that "Slow Magic" is even coming out. He explains that the journey to release it was rather unexpected. He credits Keefus Ciancia, his "Sleeping Tapes" collaborator, for the record making its long-overdue public debut. Bridges had played the decades-old cassette of his songs for Ciancia, who, without Bridges' knowledge, passed it along to Matt Sullivan, founder of indie label Light in the Attic, who was eager to release it. Bridges was stunned but delighted.

For fans of Bridges' films, "Slow Magic" is a rare treat, offering a glimpse into a more personal side of his life that was previously hidden from the public eye. In his 20s, as his big-screen career was taking off — with two Oscar nominations, for "The Last Picture Show" and "Thunderbolt and Light-

foot," already under his belt — Bridges would join a group of his high school friends for weekly nighttime jam sessions. Keeping the vibe loose and spontaneous, they drank whiskey and improvised instrumentals. "Occasionally we'd spout words," Bridges recalls. "And people who didn't play a particular instrument were encouraged to play that instrument."

And, man, were they high. How high? "Pretty damn high," Bridges says, laughing, recalling late-nights fueled by pot, quaaludes, cocaine and psychedelics. After all, he notes, it was the '70s, a time of experimentation.

Inspired by these sessions, Bridges would write songs on his own, recording them between film shoots. To co-produce the tracks, he enlisted Ken Lauber, who had arranged and composed the music for 1975 film "Hearts of the West," in which Bridges starred. It's rumored that Lauber, who also had worked with Bob Dylan and the Band, contemplated the latter to back Bridges on the recordings, but instead chose Bridges' crew of jammers due to their unique, irreplaceable chemistry.

Clocking in at approximately 40 minutes, "Slow Magic" offers an eclectic ride, reflecting Bridges' diverse influences — spanning from Captain Beefheart and Motown to the Beatles, Moondog, the Rolling Stones and Dylan. The lead single, the self-satirizing "Obnoxious," released in February, finds Bridges singing hilariously about self-indulgence, eating and drinking excessively, and popping pills. The album also features a pair of atmos-

pheric instrumentals, "Space 1" and "Space 2," co-written by the jammers.

The album's highlights include the soulful, sax-infused title track, "Slow Magic"; the Band-esque "This Is the One," a blissful love song Bridges wrote about his wife, Susan; and the upbeat, radio-friendly "You Could Be Ready."

The record closes with the epic eight-minute "Kong," which Bridges wrote after director John Guillermin rejected his idea for an alternate ending to the 1976 "King Kong" remake, in which Bridges starred. In his version, the giant monkey turns out to be a machine. The song features the disco-inspired chorus "Do the King Kong, baby," with actor Burgess Meredith simulating the historic Hindenburg disaster radio broadcast as he narrates the massive ape-machine's fiery crash to the ground.

The bananas track was detailed in Rolling Stone in 1977, when Bridges graced the magazine's cover to promote the sci-fi fantasy blockbuster. Titled "What Is Jeff Bridges Afraid of?," the article chronicles his relentless self-doubt and anxiety, which Bridges confesses still plague him to this day.

It's an admission that seems curiously at odds with his laid-back demeanor, though. "I think maybe what you're seeing these days is a version where I've covered a lot of that up. All of those fears are still going on, but I polish that s— out," Bridges says. "I don't think I've changed much. I feel about the same."

While he acknowledges his "pretty good reputation of being well-liked," he reveals, "liking myself, having understanding, affection

and empathy for myself — that's what I could use some work on."

What's more, he shares that as an actor he's imprisoned by his perfectionism, which he describes as "a self-imposed hell." "Creatively, the sweet spot comes from getting out of the way and letting things come through you," he says. "And my anxiety comes from feeling that I've got to do it 'just right,' but I don't know if I have the goods to come up with ... so that's what I struggle with."

To illustrate his point, he

he contracted COVID-19, which, he says, left him "on death's doorstep." In remission since 2021, he says his latest CT scan showed no trace of the cancer, making it especially poignant that Bridges is currently learning to play Leonard Cohen's "Waiting for the Miracle" on guitar.

Self-taught on the instrument, which he first picked up at 14, Bridges began writing songs soon after. When Bridges was 20, Quincy Jones put his song "Lost in Space" in the 1969 film "John and Mary," starring Dustin Hoffman and Mia Farrow.

Bridges calls it an "amazingly cool" moment. Still, he says he didn't fantasize about becoming a professional musician. Passionate about ceramics, painting, photography and music, he reveals that he was never particularly career-driven. "I've never really been an ambitious person. I never had that kind of drive," he says.

Even acting was not initially a goal for Bridges, who admits he feared the scrutiny of following in the footsteps of his famous father, Lloyd, who was best known for starring in the TV series "Sea Hunt." "I had a desire to share what I had to offer, but I didn't want to be labeled ... what do they call it? ... 'Nepo baby,'" Bridges says. "I could understand why people would resent that, and I didn't want to be resented."

Nonetheless, his father encouraged him to pursue acting, pointing out that it would bridge his various interests, allowing him to play a musician in a film someday.

Truer words were never spoken. In 1989, Bridges starred in the critically lauded "The Fabulous Baker Boys" alongside his older

Ironically, Bridges initially passed on the part. It felt too risky to play a role so personal to him. "Subconsciously, I think I was turning it down because playing something that was so dear to my heart ... exploring my [kind of] music and stuff ... if you keep it in the dream world, you're safe," he says. "But when it becomes real, you know you could easily fail, and all of your dreams could be shattered."

The turning point came when Bridges ran into Burnett, who was set to oversee the film's music, and encouraged him to take the role. "I thought, 'Wow, this is too cool of an invitation,'" Bridges reflects. "So, I said, 'F— it. I'm just gonna do it.'"

It was music to the ears of "Crazy Heart" director Scott Cooper. "Jeff changed my life by saying yes to a screenplay that I wrote specifically for him," Cooper, who made his directorial debut with the film, tells The Times. "I was somewhat besieged by other actors to play the part — all of whom are great actors and movie stars — but which actor can portray an incredibly flawed character, make us see ourselves in that character and, in the end, uplift us? For me, it was only Jeff Bridges."

Even when Bridges isn't playing a musician, his cinematic path often intersects with music, whether it's his cover of Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire" with Kim Carnes that plays over the opening scene of "The Contender" or his role in "Masked and Anonymous," acting alongside his longtime musical hero, Dylan, who co-wrote the 2003 film.

Bridges recalls a particularly surreal moment when the music icon came knock-knockin' on his trailer door, guitar in hand, for an impromptu jam. Initially trembling with nerves, Bridges says he felt increasingly at ease playing music with Dylan, finding him to be disarmingly down to earth.

"It's a great blessing to just be alive with that guy," he says. "It's like being alive during Shakespeare's time."

Bridges has crossed professional paths more than once with Dylan, whose song "The Man in Me" plays during the opening titles of "The Big Lebowski" and a later scene as well.

Soon, Bridges will host a series of "The Big Lebowski" screenings on the West Coast. "They'll show the movie, and then I'll do a talk and show my experience through the photographs that I took during [the making of] it," he says.

In the meantime, as he contemplates what's next after the cancellation of his TV series "The Old Man," Bridges says "Slow Magic" has reignited his desire to make music. He's thinking about getting in touch with "Kenny Lauber and some of the old guys" to reunite the group. As Bridges tells it, playing with a band allows him to act out his longstanding "Beatles fantasy," and remains one of his most rewarding roles.

‘Creatively, the sweet spot comes from getting out of the way and letting things come through you.’

— JEFF BRIDGES, actor and musician

references "The Big Lebowski." " 'Sometimes you eat the bar and sometimes the bar, well, he eats you,' " Bridges says, laughing as he delivers the famous line just like actor Sam Elliott in the film, his Southern drawl turning "bear" into "bar."

It's humor that helps to alleviate his anxiety, he says, which includes laughing at himself "for being so ridiculous about it all." What's more, Bridges expresses gratitude for his wife's frequent reminders to lighten up and have fun. "And then it's like, oh yeah, I forgot — joy. The miracle is available. It's right there, going on all the time," he says.

It's miraculous that Bridges is even alive. In 2020, he was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Meanwhile, as he battled cancer,

brother, Beau, as a waning lounge act duo of piano-playing siblings who hire a talented, beautiful singer, played by Michelle Pfeiffer, to revitalize their act.

After his success in "The Fabulous Baker Boys," Bridges took a sharp turn in 2005 with his next musician character, embracing a darker role in "Tideland," portraying an electric guitar-toting, drug-addled failed rock star in Terry Gilliam's surreal tale.

But it was his captivating, starring turn as chain-smoking, alcoholic, washed-up country star Otis "Bad" Blake in the heart-stirring, redemptive "Crazy Heart" several years later that earned him Oscar gold, as well as a Golden Globe, Screen Actors Guild Award and an Independent Spirit Award.