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DAILY NEWS



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Sharing a tradition

Charles Wheatley, a retired educator on Tortola, teaches his grandson, 4-year-old Amari Wheatley, the art of plaiting tyre palm, which can grow in height to 30 feet, to complete straw work left unfinished last year by his late wife, also a retired educator. Wheatley, who was taught the craft by his mother, said the splits are passed on for use in making straw hats and bags. **MORE ON PAGE 2**

Daily News photo by DEAN GREENAWAY

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Retired Stoutt College president continues the work of his wife, a BVI cultural icon

By **DEAN GREENAWAY**
Special to The Daily News

TORTOLA — Longtime educator Charles Wheatley is spending his retirement carrying on the legacy of his late wife, Jennie.

A month after the retired British Virgin Islands High School educator, author, historian, cultural icon and baker passed, her husband, who is also a retired educator, decided to pick up where she left off.

The Wheatley matriarch had begun plaiting several “splits” from Tyre palm, which can grow to a height of around 30 feet tall and is easily recognizable for its starburst-shaped leaves, and used to make straw hats and bags. She died last October at age 84 without finishing her work.

Wheatley, two years older, is the former president of the H. Lavety Stoutt Community College. He is also a former Ministry of Education Permanent Secretary, and the first native BVI High School principal and author of four books.

According to Wheatley, he was walking from his living room to the bedroom he once shared with his wife when he saw her unfinished work. He decided then that he would finish the plaiting.

“I just felt like doing it. I was doing it for pleasure. This is what we used to go when we were growing up,” Wheatley told The Daily News recalling the skill he mastered as a child. “Remember this was what the land had to give. The children had to plait so that their parents or grandparents could make the hats. My mother taught me how to do this as a child.”

At the time of the interview, Wheatley was plaiting several “splits” noting there were various style patterns that could be used.

“It’s easy to weave, once you start weaving it right,” he said. “But if you make a mistake, everything goes wrong. You have to make sure that the splits are set out evenly.”

The completed “splits” were passed on to Adina Penn, a hat maker on Tortola.

Wheatley said he’d be satisfied to see the finished product, but even more important, he’d like to keep the longtime craft alive.



Daily News photo by DEAN GREENAWAY

Retired BVI educator Charles Wheatley began plaiting Tyre palm for use in making straw hats and bags that were left unfinished by his late wife, Jennie, also an educator.

“But you’ll have to find people who’ll be interested in it,” he said. “I would like to see it revived ... I have an interest in seeing others who want to do it. It’s part of our legacy, our heritage.”

Wheatley, who’s actively involved in the community and in the process of writing a book, said there’s always tyre palm to plait, which also keeps him busy.

When he is not weaving the splits for the hats, Wheatley stays busy with other childhood traditions. He also bakes, tarts specifically, although he hasn’t done so since his wife’s death.

Over the Christmas holidays, he kept up a 60-year tradition of making guavaberry that is served to family and visitors. Sunday School students from East End Methodist Church,

where he plays the piano and preaches, got sugar cakes, which he also made.

Wheatley also teamed with Anna Durante to make “Miss Blyden,” a traditional Christmas drink made from one of the prickly pear family. The pods are mostly found in remote seaside areas around Tortola. It’s also a cultural tradition slowly slipping away that Wheatley hopes can continue with future generations.

Charles Wheatley, a retired educator on Tortola teaches his grandson Amari Wheatley, 4, the art of plaiting tyre palm that can be used to make straw hats, bags, baskets and even fish nets. While he learned the artform as a child, he started doing so again last year to complete the straw work left unfinished by his later wife, also an educator.

East End Substation repairs hit snag as WAPA looks to boost STT power resiliency

By **KIT MACAVOY**
Daily News Staff

The V.I. Water and Power Authority Governing Board approved two measures aimed at improving St. Thomas’s power infrastructure during a regular meeting on Thursday.

The board approved a no-cost time extension toward repairs at the East End Substation. The substation suffered a catastrophic failure during hurricanes Irma and Maria, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency is funding 90 percent of \$3.3 million project through a hazard mitigation grant.

Project Management Director Chavanté Marsh told board members on Thursday that while the transformer is energized, it’s not carrying load because WAPA personnel found a crack in one of the transformer’s seals.

The Donald Francois Substation is currently supporting customers’ electrical needs for the central and eastern portions of the islands, Marsh said, and is being “stressed significantly.” That substation also requires repairs, which cannot be conducted until the East End Substation is up and running.

Marsh told board members that funds for the East End project had been expended and that they should have a clearer picture of how much more will be needed by mid-March, after they’ve reached out to vendors.

The additional costs could amount to 50-60 percent of the originally forecasted amount, she acknowledged.

The other measure approved was a time extension and cost increase of up to \$89,875 toward electrical interconnection activities at the Randolph Harley Power Plant.

Marsh said introducing a five-way switch would add “redundancy and resiliency.” The current configuration, she told the board, shows a single point of failure.

“So right now, if we have to do any type of maintenance on any one of these transformers, such as station service, we actually have to have an outage in one of our generation units,” she said.

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AG's office representing some defendants in lawsuit filed by Jeffrey Epstein victims

By **SUZANNE CARLSON**
Daily News Staff

The VI. Attorney General's Office is representing two former government officials in a lawsuit filed by victims of sex offender Jeffrey Epstein — Gov. Kenneth Mapp and Attorney General Vincent Frazer — but the government's lawyers are not representing several other former officials also named as defendants.

It's unclear why Attorney General Ariel Smith has granted representation to some government officials but not others, and Justice Department spokeswoman Sandra Goomansingh did not respond to questions from The Daily News.

The lawsuit was originally filed in November by five of Epstein's victims, and a sixth plaintiff was added in an amended class action lawsuit filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York in December. The court has granted the victims anonymity in the civil proceeding, and they are identified in court documents as "Jane Doe" one through six.

Defendants named in the lawsuit include the Virgin Islands government and seven officials — Epstein's long-time employee, former VI. first lady Cecile deJongh; former governors John de-



Kenneth Mapp



Vincent Frazer

Jongh Jr. and Mapp; former senators Celestino White Sr. and Carlton Dowe; VI. Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett; and Frazer. There are also 100 unnamed "John Doe" defendants, including law enforcement officers who are accused of turning a blind eye to Epstein's crimes.

Cecile DeJongh worked for Epstein for two decades, before and after his conviction for sexually abusing underage girls in Florida in 2008, and during her husband John deJongh's tenure as governor of the Virgin Islands. She denied knowledge of Epstein's crimes in a 2023 deposition as part of the VI. government's lawsuit against JPMorgan Chase bank.

The lawsuit filed by Epstein's victims accuses the deJonghs and other Virgin Islands officials of protecting Epstein in exchange for money and favors, even after he was required to register as a sex offender.

Epstein was never investigated or prosecuted in the U.S. Virgin Islands, and he died by suicide in August 2019, while awaiting trial on new charges in a New York jail.

In January, attorneys for former Gov. John deJongh, Daniel Cevallos of New York and David Cattie of St. Thomas, filed a 26-page motion to dismiss the case, or have it transferred to the Virgin Islands District Court.

"Rarely are there so many grounds to ask for dismissal of a complaint at this stage," according to the motion, which argues the lawsuit makes "insufficient allegations" against John deJongh, and that he cannot be held liable for allegations against his wife.

The other defendants have not yet filed a response to the complaint.

According to publicly available court records filed as of Thursday, Dowe is proceeding pro se and representing himself, and White filed a request for more time to hire counsel.

Assistant VI. Attorney General and Chief of the Civil Division, Venetia Velazquez, has filed an appearance on behalf of the government, Mapp, and Frazer, and requested until March 8 to file a 40-page response to the complaint.

Judge Arun Subramanian granted the request, "However, the Court has observed that longer briefs are usually worse briefs," he wrote in the order. "Counsel should make every effort to file a concise brief as close to 20 pages as possible, and as an incentive, plaintiffs' responsive brief will be limited to the pages defendants used."

Attorneys Amelia Schmidt, Matthew Kaiser, and Courtney Forrest of Kaiser Law in Washington D.C. filed appearances on behalf of Cecile deJongh.

Eric Breslin of the firm Duane Morris filed an appearance for Plaskett Tuesday, and asked Subramanian for an extension of time to respond to the complaint.

"We anticipate filing a substantial motion to dismiss, addressed to some or all of the counts that will require time to research and write. Further, Ms. Plaskett is an elected official in the United States House of Representatives and has a very demanding work and travel schedule, which impacts her availability and our ability to meet and confer with her," Breslin wrote.

Subramanian granted the request Wednesday, and ordered motions to be filed by March 28.

An initial pretrial conference is scheduled for May 3.

Fort Christian parking fees increase today

By **SUZANNE CARLSON**
Daily News Staff

ST. THOMAS — Parking rates at the Fort Christian lot in Charlotte Amalie are increasing today for the first time since 2001, as the Public Works Department grapples with a budget deficit for the lot's operation and maintenance.

"The impetus for our raising the prices has been to kind of bridge the operational gap in the parking lot," Public Works Commissioner Derek Gabriel said in an interview with The Daily News on Thursday.

While the department initially announced that the maximum daily rate would increase from \$5 to \$16, public outcry led officials to reconsider.

"We have heard the concerns and we're going to go ahead and do it at \$10," Gabriel said.

The first 15 minutes are free, and hourly rates will double from \$1 to \$2.

Gabriel encouraged those who frequently use the lot to purchase a monthly parking pass for \$160, which is about half of what the cost of the daily rate, and \$100 for government employees.

Revenue from the increased fees will be used for paving, striping, restroom enhancements, and staff wages.

In addition, "we are reevaluating parking across the downtown," Gabriel said, and examining instances where underutilized taxi stands could be used for resident and visitor parking, and other areas that could be restriped to maximize available spaces.

Gabriel has served as commissioner since 2021, and said he's heard many complaints about the need to fix potholes and other issues in the Fort Christian lot.

But Assistant Commissioner Reuben Jennings said the lot's current fees haven't even covered personnel costs, especially because the lot is closed for two months to serve as the main event space for St. Thomas Carnival.

Over the last year, Jennings said the department has collected \$230,000 in parking fees, but the annual cost for five employees is \$290,000, and that does not include any materials for upkeep of the lot itself.

"Just on the personnel side, it's a



Derek Gabriel

Florida to release Epstein grand jury docs in abuse probe

By **CURT ANDERSON**
The Associated Press

Grand jury transcripts from a 2006 Florida investigation into Jeffrey Epstein's abuse of dozens of underage girls will be released publicly later this year under legislation signed into law Thursday by Gov. Ron DeSantis. A local judge cited the new law in denying release of the records for now.

The measure, which takes effect July 1, would carve out a limited exception to the secrecy that generally shrouds grand jury testimony in specific cases such as that involving Epstein, DeSantis said at a signing ceremony in Palm Beach, Florida, where many of the crimes took place at Epstein's home.

"There needs to be a mechanism in some of these rare circumstances where people can get the truth," the Republican governor said. "This is in the interest of justice to disclose this. We don't think we can just turn a blind eye."

Epstein, a wealthy financier, cut a deal with South Florida federal prosecutors in 2008 that allowed him to escape more severe federal charges and instead plead guilty to state charges of procuring a person under 18 for prostitution and solicitation of prostitution. He was sentenced to

18 months in the Palm Beach County jail system, followed by 12 months of house arrest. He was required to register as a sex offender.

"What happened was clearly wrong and the punishment was wholly inadequate for the crime," DeSantis said.

Epstein in 2018 was charged with federal sex trafficking crimes in New York — where he also had a mansion that was a scene of abuse — after the Miami Herald published a series of articles that renewed public focus on the case, including interviews with some victims who had been pursuing civil lawsuits against him. Epstein was 66 when he killed himself in a New York City jail cell in August 2019, federal officials say.

Epstein's former girlfriend, socialite Ghislaine Maxwell, is serving a 20-year prison sentence after being convicted in 2021 of luring girls to his homes to be molested.

Haley Robson, who was victimized by Epstein as a 16-year-old high school student in Florida, said she and others like her are grateful for the closure that release of the grand jury records would mean. The Associated Press does not generally report names of sexual assault victims unless they consent, and Robson appeared at the governor's news conference to share her thoughts publicly.

"I can't express enough how we've all been so affected by all of this," Robson said. "This is not something we should be forgetting about."

Although some material could still be edited out, most of the grand jury transcripts should be released fairly soon after the new law's July 1 effective date once a petition is filed seeking them, DeSantis said.

"I don't think it should take forever and a day," the governor said.

Also Thursday, mentioning the new law, a state judge decided not to release the grand jury records as part of a lawsuit filed by The Palm Beach Post and said he would consider any petition seeking them once the law takes effect in July. Circuit Judge Luis Delgado said he can't order the release under today's statutes.

"The release of the records will not further justice as our law currently prescribes," Delgado wrote in a ruling denying that they be made public for now.

Joseph Abruzzo, the Palm Beach County court clerk and comptroller, said in a statement that the legislation, which lawmakers formally sent to DeSantis on Wednesday, was essential for "full transparency" in the Epstein case given the judge's position on current law.

McCurdy, Petersen sworn in to lead Finance, Agriculture departments

By **KIT MACAVOY**
Daily News Staff

Two key Cabinet positions were filled on Thursday with the swearing in of Finance Commissioner Kevin McCurdy and Agriculture Commissioner Louis Petersen Jr. Moletto Smith Jr. was also appointed to serve as executive director of the V.I. Law Enforcement Planning Commission.

McCurdy thanked supporters and family during prepared remarks and said he accepted the role even though it was outside of his comfort zone.

"Throughout my journey, I've learned to appreciate the value of stepping out of my comfort zone. Each time I dare to venture beyond my familiar boundaries, I experience growth," he said. "I discovered with

each step, a fragment of fear of the unknown was replaced with a sense of empowerment."

Though acknowledging the challenges facing the Finance Department, including an ongoing cash shortage, McCurdy expressed confidence in his team's ability to meet the moment. At one point, he recalled advice he received during his nomination hearing before the 35th Legislature to not try to fix all of the department's problems at once.

"And I must confess, that is very difficult," he said. Not because he thinks he can, he explained, but because he intends to build on the shoulders of those who came before and leave the department better than when he found it.

"That is my goal, and I intend to

keep it — so help me God," he said.

McCurdy steps into the role during a difficult time for the finances of the U.S. Virgin Islands. During a January meeting of the Finance Committee, he and other members of the Governor's financial team told lawmakers that the government owed its vendors to the tune of \$89 million — a fact Gov. Albert Bryan Jr. referenced when he quipped that McCurdy was probably upset that the ceremony was being broadcast, because now "everyone in the Virgin Islands know who to call if they ain't getting paid."

"That's right — call him, not me," he said. Bryan returned to the subject while lauding Petersen for what he accomplished during his previous tenure as Agriculture Commissioner.

"And now we have money. Not for

vendor payments," he clarified. "But for agriculture."

Petersen too thanked family, supporters and those he's worked alongside during his career in government and higher education. Recalling when his family moved to Tutu in 1969, Petersen said he planted his first crop soon after — a crop of tomatoes.

But he was disappointed, he said, because his tomatoes didn't look like the ones on TV or in pictures. He showed it to his mother, and before he could voice his disappointment, she exclaimed, "what a big tomato!"

"And then she said to me, 'thank you, we're going to share this tonight and have this for dinner,'" he recalled. Petersen said that moment of encouragement took him this far, and he told the audience to never hesitate to encourage

young people.

Bryan seemed to address some of the criticism aimed at his administration during his remarks. Wherever he goes, people are "dumbfounded" to learn that the person their talking to isn't perfect, he said.

"Cause every time I go anywhere, people are always telling me about these commissioners I have to get rid of," he said, before doing an impression of an ornery constituent saying just that.

"Why? Because they're not perfect," he said. "People are not perfect. So we need to release the assumption of them being perfect. And these three people that you have today, these are good people with good intentions and solid intent for their people — the community of the U.S. Virgin Islands."

PARKING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

lose-lose, so the citizens are subsidizing a parking lot," Jennings said.

While there is some free parking around Emancipation Garden and farther down Veterans Drive, the Fort Christian lot serves an essential function for individuals who work or do business downtown.

The lot is crucial for those who need to access the V.I. Police station and the federal courthouse, especially elderly or disabled people, and the court system does not validate parking, even for those serving jury duty.

Fort Christian has about 500 spaces, but a significant number are taken up by V.I. Police vehicles, and Gabriel said his department has been in discussions with other agencies about how best to accommodate govern-

Parking is still free on nights and weekends, but Gabriel said they're looking to install an electronic system that would generate revenue around the clock without the need for staff to take tickets and cash.

ment employee parking.

Parking is still free on nights and weekends, but Gabriel said they're looking to install an electronic system that would generate revenue around the clock without the need for staff to take tickets and cash.

The department is also working with the V.I. Energy Office, which

has funding to install electric vehicle charging stations, and Gabriel said Public Works has acquired two electric buses for the Vitran system, which are expected to be deployed on St. Croix and St. Thomas within the next few weeks.

Overall, Gabriel said the budget simply isn't enough to fund all of the maintenance and projects that Public Works wants to tackle, and the parking lot is no exception.

"For us, it's a struggle," Gabriel said. "Here, we're running at a significant deficit."

Gabriel said they're exploring internal austerity measures and "we're applying for every grant. Every tranche of funds that we're eligible for, we're applying for."

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Florida-resident Kimberly McCollum and St. Croix-resident Morris Anselmi are being indicted for conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, mail fraud and making false statements to the U.S. Small Business Administration and a financial institution.

STX business owners charged with theft of COVID relief funds

By **KIT MACAVOY**
Daily News Staff

ST. CROIX — Prosecutors are alleging that the co-owners of St. Croix-based Island Services Group used emergency federal financial assistance meant to help American businesses impacted by COVID-19 for personal enrichment, according to documents unsealed in the U.S. District Court of the Virgin Islands on Thursday.

Florida-resident Kimberly McCollum and St. Croix-resident Morris Anselmi are being indicted for conspiracy to commit wire fraud, wire fraud, mail fraud and making false statements to the U.S. Small Business Administration and a financial institution.

An online profile lists McCollum as “owner and engineer” of the company, and also lists a nine-year membership with the St. Croix Chamber of Commerce, including two years as president.

In March 2020, the U.S. Congress passed a \$2.2 trillion stimulus bill to stanch the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Then-President Donald Trump signed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act — or CARES — into law on March 27 of that year.

That act authorized up to \$849 billion in forgivable loans to small businesses to support job retention and other expenses through the Paycheck Protection Program. Congress authorized \$300 billion more in PPP funding in April 2020. Businesses seeking PPP loans were required to submit an application stating how the funds were to be used.

According to the grand jury indictment, Anselmi submitted an application in June 2020, and Island Services Group received \$494,700 in PPP loans.

The following month, \$200,000 were transferred out of the company’s account and into McCollum’s personal United Fidelity Bank account. Less than a week later, on July 21, those funds were transferred again into McCollum’s personal Bank of America Account.

Island Services Group received a second tranche of PPP loans — also in the amount of \$494,700 — in March 2021. The following day, \$300,000 were transferred to McCollum’s United Fidelity account.

In April, McCollum transferred \$200,000 from that account to Bank of America, and then subsequently purchased a \$200,000 annuity for herself from Jackson National Life.

Prosecutors allege that the company would not have been able to transfer half a million dollars into McCollum’s personal bank account were it not for the PPP loans.

Further, McCollum applied for loan forgiveness on the first draw, and Anselmi submitted an application for forgiveness on the second. The second application claimed that Island Services Group spend


\$369,727.44 in “covered operational expenditures.”

McCollum was scheduled to turn herself in on Wednesday, and Anselmi has been hospitalized in Texas with a serious medical ailment, according to court documents.


The documents did not specify which jurisdiction McCollum was scheduled to turn herself in on Wednesday, and The Daily News was unable to immediately ascertain whether she did.

— Contact Kit MacAvoy at kmacavoy@dailynews.vi or 340-714-9131

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Officials mourn former VIHA director Robert Graham



Robert Graham

By **SUZANNE CARLSON**
Daily News Staff

Government officials are mourning the death of former V.I. Housing Authority Executive Director Robert Graham.

"I was saddened to hear of the passing of Director Graham. He served our community at the V.I. Housing Authority (VIHA) over many years," V.I. Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett said in a statement Thursday.

Appointed in 2008 by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to lead the V.I. Housing Authority, "Mr. Graham left a legacy of transformational work, not just in the Virgin Islands but across states like New Jersey and Connecticut where he was known for leading successful turnarounds of housing authorities," according to the statement.

"Mr. Graham believed in changing the stigma of public housing and providing a mechanism to create transformative communities in public affordable housing spaces after our storms. He has left a roadmap for those in his agency and elsewhere on how to utilize setbacks as set-ups for great things!" Plaskett added. "I send my prayers for

“
Robert's visionary leadership and compassionate approach to service left an indelible mark on our islands. He worked tirelessly to ensure that every family had a place to call home, and his efforts have spearheaded the transformation of our housing communities that is currently underway.

— Gov. Albert Bryan Jr.

comfort and peace to his family, loved ones, and friends."

Graham had recently retired from government service, and was "a towering figure in our community, dedicated to improving the lives of all Virgin Islanders through his unwavering commitment to providing safe, affordable housing," according to a statement issued by Gov. Albert Bryan Jr.

"Robert's visionary leadership and compassionate approach to service left an indelible mark on our islands. He worked tirelessly to ensure that every family had a place to call home, and his efforts have spearheaded the transformation of our housing com-

munities that is currently underway," according to the statement. "On behalf of the people of the Virgin Islands, I extend my deepest condolences to Robert's family, friends, and colleagues during this difficult time. We have lost a true leader and advocate for our people, but his legacy will live on through the countless lives he touched."

Bryan added that, "As we remember Robert, let us honor his memory by continuing his work with the same passion and dedication he exemplified. His contributions to our islands will never be forgotten, and he will be sorely missed. May he rest in peace."

Community Calendar

St. John

Sunday

Plaque ceremony: The office of V.I. Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett is hosting a Ram Head plaque ceremony and unveiling at 10 a.m. Sun-

day at the Salt Pond in Coral Bay. The plaque honors the 1733 slave rebellion on St. John. For more information call 340-778-5900 or 340-774-4408.

Sunday

Film screening: The St. John

Film Society will host "Stewards of the Land," a 90-minute documentary that will be screened at 6 p.m. on Sunday at Bajo del Sol Gallery in Cruz Bay. Filmmakers Juanma Teitelbaum and Mariolga Reyes Cruz will hold a Q&A session after the screening.

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Otto Guzman

The family of the late Otto Rene Guzman Estrada is saddened to announce his passing on Feb. 17, 2024.

He was survived by his spouse, Marilyn Guzman; daughters, Jeannette K. Guzman, Jessica N Guzman; grandchildren, Daisy Torres, Jadel Torres, Solei Torres, Davian Camacho; great-grandchildren, Kailee Annalise Francis, Izabelle D. Roebuck, Ysrael A. Roebuck; brothers, Carlos Guzman, Julio Guzman, Jose Guzman;



Otto Guzman

aunt, Elvira Mora; uncles, Julio Estrada-Garcia, Jorge Mario Estrada-Guzman; nieces, Dafnee Guzman, Mary Guzman, Jasmin Guzman, Vivian Guzman, Demyrha Ramsey, Jeralys Guzman; nephews, Carlos, Julio, Carlos Guzman, Fabricio Guzman, Jayden Kelly, Anderson Cuevas, Demetrius Ramsey, Carlos L. Guzman, Michael Y. Guzman; special cousins, Julio C. Estrada Garcia, Luis Estuardo Estrada-Umana, Rosario Mora, and many more cousins to mention; sons-in-law, Ricardo Romero, Kaisle Francis; daughters-in-law, Elizabeth Guzman, Yolanda Simileer, Blanca Valdez-Guzman; brothers-in-law, Philmore Joseph, Giovanni Simileer; special friends, Milton Martinez, Ramon Tati; and best friend, Pedro Castillo.

The viewing for family and friends will be held on Thursday, March 7, 2024, between 4 and 6 p.m. at Divine Funeral Services and Chapel at 129 Peter's Rest, St. Croix

Funeral services will be held on March 8, 2024, at Holy Cross Church, Christiansted. The viewing is at 10 a.m. and services are at 10:30 a.m. Interment is at Kingshill Cemetery.

Funeral arrangements are by Divine Funeral Services.

Audrey Leonard

The family of Audrey Smith Leonard of St. Thomas, V.I., would like to announce her passing on Feb. 5, 2024, in Baltimore, Md.

She is mourned by her daughters, Denise and DeAnne; and son, Keith Leonard; along with sisters, Gloria Scatliffe and Joyce Fahie; her brother, David Smith; sisters-in-law, Doris Braithwaite, Nomi (Muriel) Smith and Edris Smith; and many nieces and nephews too numerous to mention



Audrey Leonard

Funeral services will take place at Christchurch Methodist in Market Square, St. Thomas, on Tuesday, March 5, 2024, with viewing at 9 a.m. and services to follow at 10:30 a.m. Interment

is at Western Cemetery No. 2.

For online condolences or to share a special memory, visit www.hurleydavisfuneralhome.com

Delroy Iles

The Iles family regrettably announces the passing of our beloved father, brother, and uncle, Delroy Iles.

Deli, as he was affectionately known, passed away on Feb. 2, 2024, at the Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami. A memorial service will be held on Thursday, March 14, 2024, at 9 a.m. at the St. John's Episcopal Church.



Delroy Iles

He is preceded in death by son, Leodel Iles; parents, Edgar Milton Iles and Thelma Benjamin Poree; uncles, Ulric Federico Benjamin Sr. and Heartsill Benjamin, Sr.; aunts, Leona Williams, Ruth Thomas, Merle Benjamin Webster, Leatrice Benjamin, Marilyn Benjamin Petersen and Doreen Benjamin Davis; and niece, Pashanique Brown.

He is survived by sons, Michael Iles, Kyron Iles, and Tiant Iles; daughter, Ashli Iles; grandchildren, Kylaiya Iles, Kyron Iles Jr., Amaya Iles, Imani Iles, Erika Iles, Atila Iles, Tiala Iles, Azai Iles, Tafarai Iles, and Idel Iles; sisters,

Sherri Poree, Juanita Iles Richards, Kisha Iles, and Kim Urgent Iles; brothers, Ray "Haseen" Iles, Dean "Shakuma" Iles, Charles "Neal" Iles, and Derek Iles; sister-in-law, Celia "Kima" Joseph-Iles; aunts, Doris Benjamin Miller, Sherrill Nadine Benjamin Ryan, Sharon Benjamin Dennis; uncle, Marvin Benjamin, Sr.; nieces and nephews, Omari Poree', Ajani Poree', Zaire Poree', Ganja Iles, Kaleem Iles, Takisha Iles, Lakeisha Iles, Dumau Iles, DumaRay Iles, Laquida Iles, Rashid Iles, Malik Iles, Shaquille Iles, Quinn Iles-Moss, Daja Brooks-James, O'Darrie King, Eshé Rivers, Zuri Rivers, Yiyara Rivers, Princess Kadecia Iles, Princess Keytania Iles, Judayah Iles, Julia Iles, and Osyris Iles.

He is also survived by special cousins, Darryl Miller and Gregroy Miller, Jr.; special friends and families, Alva Clarke, Otis "Sule" Alexander, Kurt McBean, Lloyd "Sonny" Barnes, Camp Simmic at Lagoon, Messer family, Stanley family; and other relatives and friends too numerous to mention.

Joan Ledee

The family of Joan Julian Ledee announces her passing on Dec. 29, 2023 in St. Petersburg, Fla.

Joan was born Jan. 8, 1951, to Joseph E. and Emelda M. Ledee on the beautiful island of St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, where she resided and spent most of her life until traveling to live with her daughter in Florida after hurricanes Maria and Irma.

Joan was a vibrant personality, a very caring and kind person with a huge heart and boisterous laugh. Joan believed in family and friendships. She was always willing to help and gave without question. She was multifaceted, career wise, not averse to learning and trying new ways of employment. She worked as a salesperson, caregiver, professional cleaner and a gardener. Her strength, faith, resilience and fervor for life endured her through life's trials until she was called home to God's arms.



Joan Ledee

She is preceded in death by her parents, Joseph and Emelda Ledee; her sisters, Evelyn Ledee and former senator Lorraine L. Berry. She is survived by her children, Eileen Matthew, Charles and Peter Mojhar, Mojhar; son and daughters-in-law, Michael Matthew, Lilia and Analie Mojhar; grandchildren, Jenee' and Anije Matthew, Caelen and Jaden Mojhar, Peter Ryu, Jasper and Elijah Mojhar; sisters and brothers, Ursula Bryan, Celeste Brin, Esther Ledee, Simon Ledee, Gregory Ledee, and Winston Ledee and many nieces and nephews.

An intimate memorial service will be held today with family and close friends at Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

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Eustace Valmond

Eustace E. Valmond of Estate Catherine's Rest, St. Croix, transitioned into eternal peace on Feb. 4, 2024. He was 70 years old.

He is survived by his wife, Maria Valmond; daughters, Melicer Jones (Terrance), Neusolia Valmond, and Brittany Adewoye (Tunde); son, Devon Valmond; grand-



Eustace Valmond

children, Caleb O'Neil, Madison Jones, Taylor Jones, and Logan Valmond; sisters, Edith Joseph, Yvette Hanley, and Albertha Austrie; brothers, Julius Dubique, Odile Valmond, Bernard Valmond, Francis Valmond, and Dr. Augustus Valmond; nieces, Keturah Reed, Marie-Therese Valmond, Lisa Valmond, Stacey Valmond, Natasha Hanley, Melissa Fontenot, Alisha Hanley, Francine Valmond and Tricia Lagarde; nephews, Lester Valmond, Dominic Valmond, Peterson Challenger, Earl Drigo,

Egbert Drigo, Anson Dubique, Bernard Valmond Jr., and Francis Valmond, Jr.; and uncles, Conrad Prevost, George Prevost, and Paul Prevost.

He is also survived by brothers-in-law, William Joseph, Eugene Hanley; sisters-in-law, Agatha Dubique, Carol Valmond, and Melisa Valmond; cousin and other relatives, Abraham Edwards, Martin Edwards, Hugh Edwards, Barrington Edwards, Cuthbert Vigilant, Jashua Vigilant, Joyce Nau, Christine Shillingford, Victor Prevost, Joseph Prevost, Helena Daniels, Mathias Prevost, Noeline Prevost, Barbara Prevost, Marlene Prevost, Joseph Prevost, George Prevost Jr., Paul Prevost Jr., Melba Prevost, Cece Prevost, Claudia Prevost, Curtis Prevost, and Pearl Prevost; and other relatives and friends too numerous to mention.

Funeral services will be held on Saturday, March 2, 2024, at Church of God Holiness in Peter's Rest, with viewing at 9 a.m. and services beginning at 10 a.m. Interment will follow at Kingshill Cemetery.

Funeral arrangements are by James Memorial Funeral Home.

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IMPORTANT UPDATES ARE COMING YOUR WAY!

NEW RIDE STRUCTURE:

A revision to the Senior Citizen Free Ride Policy will begin March 18, 2024. Free rides will be available from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., but will no longer be available during the peak morning and evening commute hours.

PROPOSED FARE INCREASE:

An increase in the fares for fixed-route bus services and paratransit services will also begin April 15, 2024. See suggested changes below:

Current Rate: \$1.00 Fixed Route Bus | \$2.00 Paratransit Van

New Rate: \$2.50 Fixed Route Bus | \$5.00 Paratransit Van

*Discounts for Medicare Cardholders and free rides for seniors will remain in effect.

The public is asked to submit comments on the fare changes by March 26, 2024, by email to vitrانplanning@dpw.vi.gov, or leave a voice message comment by calling 340-244-2269



Cruise Ships

St. Thomas-St. John

Today, March 1

Norwegian Jade (2,402) 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Havensight

Saturday, March 2

Norwegian Viva (3,950) 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Havensight
 Viking Sea (930) 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Havensight

Sunday, March 3

Eurodam (2,104) 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Havensight

Tuesday, March 5

Norwegian Escape (4,266) 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. Havensight
 Emerald Sakara (100) 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. St. John

Wednesday, March 6

Nieuw Amsterdam (2,106) 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. Havensight
 Norwegian Encore (3,998) 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Havensight
 Disney Fantasy (4,000) 6:45 a.m. 4:15 p.m. Havensight
 Wonder of the Seas (5,518) 2 p.m. to 9 p.m. Crown Bay



The Virgin Islands Energy Office announces the official launch of the

Weatherization Assistance Program

Monday, February 5th, 2024

The Virgin Islands Energy Office Weatherization Assistance Program's goal is to improve energy efficiency for low-income families, particularly for the elderly, people with disabilities, and families with children under 5 years old, by improving the energy efficiency of their homes while ensuring their health and safety.

This program is distributed through the Virgin Islands Energy Office Weatherization Assistance Program Formula Grant EE0009936. For more information, please visit <https://energy.vi.gov/wap> or call (340) 713-8436 (St. Croix) or (340) 714-8436 (St. Thomas)



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Black soldiers honored, name by name, at a Civil War battlefield

By **EMILY WAGSTER PETTUS**
The Associated Press

VICKSBURG, Miss. — Thelma Sims Dukes grew up during the 1940s and '50s in a segregated Mississippi town steeped in Civil War history.

As a small Black girl, she would walk to school through Vicksburg National Military Park — the hilly battlefield where Union and Confederate soldiers fought and died over whether the U.S. would continue allowing slavery in the South.

Union forces won a pivotal campaign to capture the town of Vicksburg and gain control of the Mississippi River in 1863, hastening the war's end. But during Dukes' childhood, Vicksburg venerated the Confederacy and ignored the history of Black soldiers who fought for the Union, including her great-great grandfather, William "Bill" Sims.

"The superintendents and the museum curators — they said we didn't fight in the Civil War," Dukes said recently.

The Black soldiers' valor and service to the country is no longer ignored, thanks to the efforts of historians, park employees and citizens like Dukes. On crisp morning in mid-February, Dukes and her niece, Sara Sims, and four park employees — two of them Black men wearing reproductions of U.S. Army uniforms from the Civil War — placed American flags on 13 graves where a group of recently identified Black soldiers are buried in Vicksburg National Cemetery, which is part of the military park.

A historian working for the military



Photo by ASSOCIATED PRESS

Vicksburg National Military Park Chief of Interpretation Brendan Wilson, left, conducts a ceremony of remembrance with two Civil War re-enactors and Thelma Sims Dukes, center, and her niece Sara Sims at the burial site of 13 soldiers of the United States 1st Mississippi Infantry (African Descent) at Vicksburg National Cemetery in Vicksburg, Miss. The flags were placed at the graves of Black soldiers killed in an 1864 massacre at Ross Landing, Ark., who were buried as unknowns but have recently been identified.

park, Beth Kruse, identified the soldiers through research of military records, newspapers and other sources. Their remains lie beneath white marble headstones carved with numbers rather than names, as are most veterans buried in the cemetery.

In recent years, the National Park Service has broadened how it presents history in parks nationwide. In the Vicksburg military park, which is dotted with more than 1,400 monuments, markers and tablets and is one of the largest tourist attractions in Mississippi,

drawing visitors from around the globe, the visitor center now includes information about Black history, and a monument to Black soldiers was dedicated 20 years ago.

Sunlight dappled the graves under a towering magnolia tree during the flag-planting ceremony on Feb. 14. Dukes said the men and other Black Union soldiers were "freedom fighters," not only for themselves but for all Americans.

"They are not unknowns anymore," she said. "This is a start. This is good.

Let's put history right."

The newly identified soldiers had enlisted in the Vicksburg-based 1st Mississippi Infantry (African Descent) as the town was under federal occupation. In early 1864, 18 soldiers and two white officers traveled by boat some 95 miles north along the Mississippi River to Chicot County, Arkansas, to forage for crops to feed people and horses.

On Feb. 14, 1864, at Ross Landing near the town of Lake Village, irregular Confederate troops from Missouri

shot the Union soldiers and officers, killing most and leaving some for dead. They used the Union soldiers' own bayonets to impale the dead and wounded, pinning them to the ground, according to research by Kruse.

Brendan Wilson, chief of interpretation, education and partnerships for Vicksburg National Military Park, said on the 160th anniversary of the gruesome day in Ross Landing that it's still not known which of the 13 Black soldiers from that massacre is in which specific grave. Records show where the group is buried.

"And now we have their names and can bring those names back to life," Wilson said.

Kruse is working in Vicksburg through the National Park Service's Mellon Humanities Postdoctoral Fellows program. She said at least 11 soldiers of the 1st Mississippi Infantry (African Descent) were previously enslaved on southern plantations.

"For these soldiers, it was not abstract ideology," she said. "They knew what it was to be unfree."

Vicksburg National Cemetery was established in 1866 and now holds more than 18,000 graves — veterans from six wars and a few former park employees. More than 17,000 of them fought for the Union in the Civil War, including more than 5,500 Black soldiers, designated by the U.S. War Department in 1863 as United States Colored Troops.

Vicksburg is the largest cemetery for Union soldiers and sailors, its dead brought from Mississippi, Louisiana, Arkansas and other states. Nearly 13,000 are buried as unknown.

Our ancient animal ancestors had tails. Why don't we?

By **CHRISTINA LARSON**
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Our very ancient animal ancestors had tails. Why don't we?

Somewhere around 20 million or 25 million years ago, when apes diverged from monkeys, our branch of the tree of life shed its tail. From Darwin's time, scientists have wondered why — and how — this happened.

Now, researchers have identified at least one of the key genetic tweaks that led to this change.

"We found a single mutation in a very important gene," said Bo Xia, a geneticist at the Broad Institute and co-author of a study published Wednesday in the journal *Nature*.

The researchers compared the genomes of six species of apes, including humans, and 15 species of monkeys with tails to pinpoint key

differences between the groups. Once they identified a significant mutation, they tested their theory by using the gene-editing tool CRISPR to tweak the same spot in mouse embryos. Those mice were born without tails.

Xia cautioned that other genetic changes may also play a role in losing tails.

Another mystery: Did having no tails actually help these ape ancestors — and eventually, humans — survive? Or was it just a chance mutation in a population that thrived for other reasons?

"It could be random chance, but it could have brought a big evolutionary advantage," said Miriam Konkel, an evolutionary geneticist at Clemson University, who was not involved in the study.

As to why having no tails may have helped, there are many tantalizing theories — including some that

link being tailless to humans eventually learning to walk upright.

Rick Potts, who directs the Smithsonian Institution's Human Origins Project and was not involved in the research, suggests being tailless may have been a first step toward some apes adopting a vertical body posture, even before they left the trees.

Not all apes live on the ground today. Orangutans and gibbons are tailless apes that still live in trees. But Potts notes that they move very differently than monkeys, who scamper along the tops of branches, using their tails for balance. Those apes hang below branches, swinging between them while hanging largely upright.

New York University biologist Itai Yanai, a co-author of the study, said that losing our tails was clearly a major transition. But the only way to certainly know the reason "would be to invent a time machine," he said.



Photo by the ASSOCIATED PRESS

Skeletons of a human and a monkey await installation at the Steinhardt Museum of Natural History in Tel Aviv, Israel.



Letters to the Editor

VIPD praised for 'exemplary service'

Dear Editor,

I am writing to express my sincere gratitude and praise for the outstanding service provided by the officers of the Virgin Islands Police Department on the evening of Feb. 28.

On that unfortunate night, we experienced the theft of a vehicle from our business premises. Despite the distressing circumstances, your officers were on the scene within minutes of our notification. Their prompt response was not only impressive but also greatly appreciated during a time of heightened anxiety.

We were particularly struck by the professionalism exhibited by the V.I. Police Department team. The officers handled the situation with the utmost dedication, demonstrating a commitment to their duty that did not go unnoticed. Their positive attitude was a source of comfort and helped put us at ease amid the turmoil.

While we regretfully did not capture everyone's names, we did have the privilege of speaking with Officer M. Hilaire. His demeanor and actions reflected the high standards of the V.I. Police Department, and we wanted to extend our

heartfelt thanks to him and all the officers who were present that night.

In the face of adversity, the dedication and efficiency displayed by the officers were truly commendable. It is reassuring to know that our community is served by such a capable and compassionate police force.

Once again, thank you for your exemplary service. We are grateful for the sacrifices and commitment of the Virgin Islands Police Department.

—Alex Belmonte, St. Thomas

EMTs responded promptly, showed compassion

Dear Editor,

I would like to applaud the EMTs who promptly responded to my call of distress a week ago today. The customer service was excellent and they demonstrated a great sense of

empathy.

The health workers at the front desk and receptionist area of the hospital should take a page from their book. I was really impressed. Unfortunately, I didn't get their names. Keep up the

good work so that more retirees from the U.S. mainland can return home to settle down and enjoy their retirement.

You all did super great. Kudos to you all.

—Augustina Cora Francis, St. Thomas

The Daily News' opinions are expressed only in its editorials.

The opinions expressed in columns, letters, cartoons and guest editorials are those of the particular author or artist.

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Stacey E. Plaskett hosts

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Russian onslaught targets more Ukrainian towns and villages

By ILLIA NOVIKOV
The Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces are pushing hard against more Ukrainian towns and villages in eastern and southeastern Ukraine as Moscow tries to press its current advantage in weapons and troops, Kyiv officials said Thursday.

Despite Russia's apparent offensive momentum on the ground, Ukraine said it has shot down 13 Russian warplanes this month, including three on Thursday, as the Kremlin's forces pushed forward.

With the full-scale war now into its third year, Russian forces have been bludgeoning some Ukrainian defensive positions into submission, deploying overwhelming amounts of artillery and troop numbers in an effort to punch through defensive lines at targeted points.

Though Russia's gains have been small, slow and costly, Ukraine doesn't have enough reservists and has a severe shortage of artillery shells as the supply of military aid from Western partners has waned.

The Russian army is trying to seize the towns and villages of Tonenke, Orlivka, Semenivka, Berdychi and Krasnohorivka in the eastern Donetsk region, Ukraine's army chief, Col. Gen Oleksandr Syrskyi, said on social media.

Those are places where Ukrainian military officials had said they would form a new line of defense after Ukrainian troops pulled out of Avdiivka on Feb. 17.

In the southeastern Zaporizhzhia region, Russian forces are focusing on retaking Verbove and Robotyne, towns that Ukraine won back in last

summer's counteroffensive in 2023, Syrskyi said.

Syrskyi, who was appointed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy to lead the country's military on Feb. 8, accused some of his commanders of making "miscalculations" in assessing the enemy and taking countermeasures.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's Defense Ministry said that its forces shot down three Russian Su-34 jets overnight.

That made a total of 11 warplanes, including an early warning and control A-50 plane, that Ukraine claims to have downed since Feb. 17, and 13 in February — the highest monthly tally, it said, since October 2022.

"The enemy has increased its air presence in the east. Our top military leadership reacted accordingly," air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said on national television.

A major question for Kyiv officials is how they can unlock further military help from their partners. Emergency U.S. national security funds for Ukraine are still on hold amid a political dispute in Washington.

Ukrainian parliamentary Speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk addressed an open letter to U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, asking him to put to a vote the Biden administration's proposal to send \$60 billion of aid to Ukraine.

The letter Stefanchuk posted on X, formerly Twitter, on Wednesday was also signed by 23 speakers and heads of parliament in European countries.

Eight Ukrainian civilians, including a 6-year-old girl, were killed, and at least 12 people were wounded in the southeast over the previous 24 hours, the Ukrainian president's office said Thursday.



Photo by ASSOCIATED PRESS

A woman cries during a funeral ceremony of Volodymyr Golubnychi, Ukrainian senior lieutenant of 72nd Mechanized Brigade, in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Wednesday. Golubnychi was killed during the fighting with Russian forces in Vodyane village, Avdiivka direction, on Feb. 19.

Scientists create new idea on how to hack a warming planet: drying the upper atmosphere

By **SETH BORENSTEIN**
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Government scientists have cooked up a new concept for how to potentially cool an overheating Earth: Fiddle with the upper atmosphere to make it a bit drier.

Water vapor — water in its gas form — is a natural greenhouse gas that traps heat, just like carbon dioxide from burning coal, oil and gas. So researchers at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and NASA figure if they can just inject ice high up in the air, water vapor in the upper atmosphere would get a bit drier and that could counteract a small amount of the human-caused warmth.

It's just the spark of an initial idea, said the lead author of a study in Wednesday's journal *Science Advances*.

The idea of drying the upper atmosphere is the newest addition to what some scientists are calling a last-ditch toolbox to deal with climate change by manipulating the world's atmosphere or oceans. Known as geoengineering, it's often rejected because of potential side effects, and is usually mentioned not as an alternative to reducing carbon pollution, but in addition to emission cuts.

"This isn't something that we can even implement right now," said Joshua Schwarz, a NOAA physicist who is lead author of a study in Wednesday's journal *Science Advances*. "This is about exploring what might be possible in the future and identifying research directions."

The way it would conceivably work is that high-tech planes could inject ice particles about 11 miles high, just below the stratosphere, where the air slowly rises. Then the ice and cold air rise to where it's coldest and gets the

water vapor to turn to ice and fall, dehydrating the stratosphere, Schwarz said. So far there is no workable injection technique, he said.

At its maximum, injecting 2 tons a week, it could conceivably take out enough water vapor to reduce heating a small amount, about 5% of the overall warming created by carbon from the burning of fossil fuel, Schwarz said. It's not much and shouldn't be used as an alternative to cutting pollution, he said.

Schwarz is not quite sure about what side effects could occur, and that's the problem, other scientists said.

Purposely tinkering with Earth's atmosphere to fix climate change is likely to create cascading new problems, said University of Victoria climate scientist Andrew Weaver, who wasn't part of the study. He said the engineering side of this makes sense, but he compared the concept to a children's story where a

king who loves cheese is overrun with mice, gets cats to deal with the mice, then dogs to chase away the cats, lions to get rid of the dogs and elephants to eliminate the lions and then goes back to mice to scare off the elephants.

It makes more sense to deal with the initial problem — the cheese or the carbon dioxide, Weaver said.

Scripps Institution of Oceanography atmospheric chemist Lynn Russell, who wasn't part of the research, said the idea is worth examining, but the study "doesn't have a lot of answers given all the uncertainties."

Groups from the U.S. National Academy of Sciences to the United Nations Environment Programme have looked at the ethics, side effects, legal complications and benefits of geoengineering with various degrees of skepticism and cautious interest.

At the UN environment assembly, nations are considering a resolution

to study solar radiation modification — essentially putting particles in the air to reflect sunlight and cool the atmosphere — and possible regulations on countries or companies that would do it.

"If you're going to do lab experiments indoors, maybe that's all right," UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen told The Associated Press. "But we do believe, from a UNEP perspective, that the moment we step outdoors and we begin to do small- and large-scale experimentation outdoors we need actually need to have a global conversation."

"I do think that solar radiation modification is a little bit like artificial intelligence," Andersen said. "Once a genie is out of the bottle, you can't put it back in. It's a technology that is there. We do not think in any way shape or form that it should be considered as a climate solution."

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Humanoid robot-maker Figure partners with OpenAI



Photo by ASSOCIATED PRESS

AI engineer Jenna Reher works on humanoid robot Figure 01 at Figure AI's test facility in Sunnyvale, Calif.

By **MATT O'BRIEN**
The Associated Press

ChatGPT-maker OpenAI is looking to fuse its artificial intelligence systems into the bodies of humanoid robots as part of a new deal with robotics startup Figure.

Sunnyvale, California-based Figure announced the partnership Thursday along with \$675 million in venture capital funding from a group that includes Amazon founder Jeff Bezos as well as Microsoft, chipmaker Nvidia and the startup-funding divisions of Intel and OpenAI.

Figure is less than two years old and doesn't have a commercial product but is persuading influential tech industry backers to support its vision of shipping billions of human-like robots to the world's workplaces and homes.

"If we can just get humanoids to do work that humans are not wanting to do because there's a shortfall of humans, we can sell millions of humanoids, billions maybe," Figure CEO Brett Adcock told The Associ-

ated Press last year.

For OpenAI, which dabbled in robotics research before pivoting to a focus on the AI large language models that power ChatGPT, the partnership will "open up new possibilities for how robots can help in everyday life," said Peter Welinder, the San Francisco company's vice president of product and partnerships, in a written statement.

Financial terms of the deal between Figure and OpenAI weren't disclosed. The collaboration will have OpenAI building specialized AI models for Figure's humanoid robots, likely based on OpenAI's existing technology such as GPT language models, the image-generator DALL-E and the new video-generator Sora.

That will help "accelerate Figure's commercial timeline" by enabling its robots to "process and reason from language," according to Figure's announcement. The company announced in January an agreement with BMW to put its robots to work at a car plant in Spartanburg, South Carolina, but hadn't yet determined

exactly how or when they would be used.

Robotics experts differ on the usefulness of robots shaped in human form. Most robots employed in factory and warehouse tasks might have some animal-like features — a robotic arm, finger-like grippers or even legs — but aren't truly humanoid. That's in part because it's taken decades for robotics engineers to develop robots that can walk effectively on two legs or reliably manipulate small objects.

Whitney Rockley, co-founder and managing partner of Toronto-based venture capital firm McRock Capital, said she understands the appeal of humanoids because they're relatable, evoking emotions and starting conversations. In practice, however, she said they're still awkward and pose huge technical challenges, which is why she's sticking to investing in non-humanoid robots.

"We look at robotics and automation really practically and say, 'What kind of timeline are we willing to commit to in order to really see commercial liftoff and deployments and applications?'" Rockley said. "And I think that the groups that are backing a lot of humanoid solutions right now, they're in there for the long haul, which is great because you need that, but it's going to take decades upon decades."

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman hinted at a renewed interest in robotics in a podcast hosted by Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and released early this year in which Altman said the company was starting to invest in promising robotics hardware platforms after having earlier abandoned its own research.



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Miles apart, Biden and Trump tour U.S.-Mexico border

By SEUNG MIN KIM, JILL COLVIN and COLLEEN LONG
The Associated Press

BROWNSVILLE, Texas — On the banks of the same Rio Grande but 300 miles apart, President Joe Biden and GOP challenger Donald Trump on Thursday surveyed the U.S.-Mexico border and tussled from a distance over who is to blame for the nation's broken immigration system and how to fix it.

Immigration has emerged as a central issue in the 2024 presidential campaign, which is widely expected to be a Biden-Trump rematch, and each man is seeking to use the border problems to his own political advantage.

Their itineraries were remarkably similar: They arrived in Texas within a half-hour of one another. Each chose an optimal location from which to make his point, got a briefing on operations and issues, walked along the scrub brush by the Rio Grande and spoke directly to the public. Their remarks even overlapped in time for a bit.

But that's where the parallels ended. Biden sought to spotlight the necessity of a bipartisan border security bill that was tanked by Republicans on Trump's orders, and flat-out asked the Republican frontrunner to join him in supporting a congressional push for more funding and tighter restrictions.

"Here's what I would say to Mr. Trump," Biden said. "Instead of playing politics with the issue, join me, or I'll join you in telling the Congress to pass this bill. You know and I know it's the toughest, most efficient, most effective border security bill this country's ever seen."

Biden went to the Rio Grande Val-



President Joe Biden and former President Donald Trump

ley city of Brownsville, which for nine years was the busiest corridor for illegal crossings. The numbers have dropped in recent months, which officials credited in part to Mexico for stepping up its own border security. The visit was a nod to how the Biden administration views migration: as a regional and global issue, not just a U.S. problem.

The president walked along the Rio Grande and received a lengthy briefing from Homeland Security officials, who spoke bluntly about what they needed to do their jobs effectively — in short, more money to hire more officers along the border and for use across the asylum process to help clear out massive backlogs.

"I want the American people to know what we're trying to get done," Biden said. "We can't afford not to do this."

Trump simply blamed Biden.

He traveled to Eagle Pass, roughly 325 miles northwest of Brownsville, in

the corridor that's currently seeing the largest number of migrant crossings. He met with Republican Gov. Greg Abbott and Texas National Guard soldiers who have commandeered a local park and put up razor wire fencing at the river's edge to keep migrants from crossing illegally. The park has become a Republican symbol of defiance against the federal government.

"This is like a war," Trump said.

Gazing out over the river, Trump raised his fist and waved and shouted to people on the Mexico side, who waved back. Then, he declared that migrants arriving to the border were criminals and some were terrorists, a dialed-up version of the accusations he often used during the 2016 campaign. This time, he's started to harness rhetoric once used by Adolf Hitler to argue migrants are poisoning the blood of America.

"They're being let into our country and it's horrible," Trump said.

"It's horrible."

Trump also brought up the killing of a 22-year-old nursing student in Georgia recently. The suspect is a Venezuelan migrant.

"Crooked Joe has the blood of countless innocent victims," Trump said. "It's so many stories to tell, so many horrible stories."

Despite Trump's claims, many studies have found immigrants are less drawn to violent crime than native-born citizens. One published by the National Academy of Sciences, based on Texas Department of Public Safety data from 2012 to 2018, reported native-born U.S. residents were more than twice as likely to be arrested for violent crimes as people in the country illegally.

As the politicians traded barbs

over who was to blame, migrants were still making the dangerous journey into the U.S. Trump stood on a concrete boat launch where a day earlier, a man had been pulled from the river, drowned, trying to cross. In Brownsville where Biden spoke, a group of migrants had crossed illegally overnight.

Across the border from Brownsville, in Matamoros, makeshift shelters dotted the ground for migrants who hope to come to the U.S.

"I come completely alone on this journey, I have been on this journey for about six months and the only important thing I have in my life are my mom, my little sister and nobody else," Joseph Elián Gutierrez Castillo, a Nicaraguan migrant, said in Spanish. "With God's favor everything will go well."

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Palestinians say Israeli troops fired at people seeking food

By **WAFAA SHURAF**,
KAREEM CHEHAYEB
and **MELANIE LIDMAN**
The Associated Press

RAFAH, Gaza Strip — Israeli troops fired on a crowd of Palestinians racing to pull food off an aid convoy in Gaza City on Thursday, witnesses said. More than 100 people were killed in the chaos, bringing the death toll since the start of the Israel-Hamas war to more than 30,000, according to health officials.

Israel said many of the dead were trampled in a chaotic stampede for the food aid and that its troops only fired when they felt endangered by the crowd.

The violence was quickly condemned by Arab countries, and U.S. President Joe Biden expressed concern

it would add to the difficulty of negotiating a cease-fire in the nearly five-month conflict.

The Gaza City area was among the first targets of Israel's air, sea and ground offensive, launched in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack into Israel.

While many Palestinians fled the invasion in the north of the enclave, a few hundred thousand are believed to remain in the largely devastated and isolated region. Several deliveries of aid reached the area this week, officials said.

The deadly chaos in Gaza City will likely fuel criticism of Israel when it comes to allowing aid in.

Aid groups say it has become nearly impossible to deliver supplies in most of Gaza because of the difficulty of coordinating with the Israeli military,

ongoing hostilities and the breakdown of public order, with crowds of desperate people overwhelming aid convoys. The U.N. says a quarter of Gaza's 2.3 million Palestinians face starvation; around 80% have fled their homes.

Military officials said the pre-dawn convoy of 30 trucks driving to northern Gaza were met by huge crowds of people trying to grab the aid they were carrying. Dozens of Palestinians were killed in the stampede, and some were run over by the trucks as the drivers tried to get away, said Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the chief military spokesperson.

Israeli troops guarding the area fired warning shots toward the crowd because they felt endangered, he said.

"We didn't open fire on those seeking aid. Contrary to the accusations, we didn't open fire on a humanitarian aid convoy, not from the air and not from land. We secured it so it could reach northern Gaza," he said.

Kamel Abu Nahel, who was being treated for a gunshot wound at Shifa Hospital, said he and others went to the distribution point in the middle of the night because they heard there would be a delivery of food. "We've been eating animal feed for two months," he said.

He said Israeli troops opened fire on the crowd as people pulled boxes of flour and canned goods off the trucks, causing the Palestinians to scatter, with some hiding under cars. After the shooting stopped, people went back to the trucks, and the soldiers opened fire again. He was shot in the leg and fell over, and then a truck ran over his leg as it sped off, he said.



Photo by ASSOCIATED PRESS

Palestinians wait for humanitarian aid on a beachfront in Gaza City, Gaza Strip, Sunday. Israel and Hamas are inching toward a new deal that would free some of the roughly 130 hostages held in the Gaza Strip in exchange for a weeklong pause in the war, now in its fifth month.

At least 112 people were killed, Gaza Health Ministry spokesman Ashraf al-Qidra said. The ministry described it as a "massacre" and said more than 700 others were injured.

Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan accused Israel of targeting civilians in the incident. In separate statements, they called for increased safe passages for humanitarian aid. They also urged the international community to take decisive action to pressure Israel to abide by international law and to reach an agreement for an immediate cease-fire.

Biden spoke with the leaders of Egypt and Qatar about the deaths, according to U.S. officials, and the U.N. Security Council scheduled emergency closed consultations on them for later

Thursday.

"We are urgently seeking additional information on exactly what took place," State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said.

The increasing alarm over hunger across Gaza has fueled international calls for a cease-fire, and the U.S., Egypt and Qatar are working to secure a deal between Israel and Hamas for a pause in fighting and the release of some of the hostages Hamas took during its Oct. 7 attack.

Mediators hope to reach an agreement before the Muslim holy month of Ramadan starts around March 10. But so far, Israel and Hamas have remained far apart in public on their demands.

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U.S. asylum measure aimed at curbing claims has limited impact

By **ELLIOT SPAGAT**
The Associated Press

TUCSON, Ariz. — Inside giant white tents that house about 1,000 migrants near Tucson International Airport, Border Patrol agents demonstrate clockwork efficiency to release detainees within two days of arrest with orders to appear in immigration courts at their final destinations. Agents transmit information from the field to colleagues who prepare court papers while migrants are bused hours away to a processing center, minimizing time in custody.

Notably missing from the operations hub in the busiest corridor for illegal crossings into the U.S. are asylum officers who do initial screenings, which are intended to weed out weak claims that don't meet narrowly prescribed grounds for seeking protection, such as race, religion and political opinion.

Asylum officers were instructed nearly a year ago to apply a higher screening standard on those who cross the border illegally after passing through another country, such as Mexico, but they are too understaffed to have much impact. The Biden administration hails the higher standard as a cornerstone of its border policy in legal challenges, but its application in only a small percentage of arrests shows how budgets can fail to match ambitions.

Strained budgets continue to loom large as the White House again considers sweeping measures to limit asylum at the border.

The failure of a \$20 billion spending plan on border security this month has caused the administration to as-



Photo by ASSOCIATED PRESS

Agents walk among rooms at a Border Patrol holding facility in Tucson, Ariz. U.S. asylum officers were instructed nearly a year ago to apply a higher screening standard on people who cross the border illegally to claim asylum after passing through another country. But they are too understaffed to have much impact.

sess its priorities. U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, facing a \$700 million hole this year, is considering cutting the number of detention

beds from 38,000 to 22,000 and facilitating fewer deportation flights. These possible steps were first reported by The Washington Post and confirmed

to The Associated Press by a U.S. official who spoke on the condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss it publicly.

The failed spending package crafted by Senate negotiators would have given \$4 billion to U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, including to add 4,338 asylum officers to screen applicants and make final decisions on claims — more than four times current staffing.

Arrests for illegal border crossings from Mexico plunged to the second-lowest monthly rate of Joe Biden's presidency, a month after the higher standard replaced COVID-19 pandemic-related asylum restrictions. The rule "is working as intended and has already significantly reduced encounters at the border," Blas Nuñez-Neto, assistant homeland security secretary for border and immigration policy, said in a court filing at the time.

Asylum-seekers subject to tougher screenings had a 59% pass rate through September, down from 85% in the five years before the pandemic, Nuñez-Neto said in another court filing.

While that suggests the policy has made a difference, its scope has been limited. Officers interviewed only 57,700 migrants under the new rule through September, according to Nuñez-Neto. That represents only about 15% of the nearly 365,500 migrants released by Border Patrol from June to September with notices to appear in immigration court.

The Department of Homeland Security declined to provide more recent numbers. It insists the higher screening standard is working as intended, while acknowledging it has failed to keep pace with unprecedented migration flows and calling on Congress to adequately fund the efforts.

Asylum officers did more than 130,000 screenings, known as "credible fear interviews," at the border during the 2023 budget year, which was more than double the year before. But more than 600,000 migrants were released with notices to appear in immigration court in that time and another 300,000 with orders to report to an immigration office for a court date, a practice that has largely ceased.



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Caribbean Roundup

Barbuda residents win appeal to protect land from development

By **DANICA COTO**
The Associated Press

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico — A top court in London ruled Tuesday that two residents of the tiny Caribbean island of Barbuda have the right to challenge construction of an airstrip that critics say endangers fragile ecosystems and was begun without any permits.

The ruling by the Privy Council is considered a big win for John Mussington, a marine biologist, and Jacklyn Frank, a retired teacher, who launched a legal fight against the government of the twin-island nation of Antigua and Barbuda in July 2018.

The government of Antigua and Barbuda had argued that Mussington and Frank had no standing to mount a legal fight.

Leslie Thomas, one of the U.K. attorneys representing the Barbudans, said the plaintiffs now plan to ask the government to tear down what has been built. “This is a real David and Goliath battle,” Thomas said. “We’re up for another big fight.”

Mussington said the ruling would have “significant implications for citizens of Antigua and Barbuda who have long been suffering from the lack of transparency and accountability from key institutions and officials charged with implementing the planning laws.”

The ruling also is expected to set a precedent for other Caribbean



Photo by ASSOCIATED PRESS

Hotel clubs and homes stand on Princess Diana beach in Barbuda, Antigua and Barbuda, on Oct. 23, 2023, six years after Hurricane Irma slammed into the tiny Caribbean island as a powerful Category 5 storm.

nations fighting to protect land that wealthy foreign developers seek to develop, especially after investors seize upon economic opportunities following a catastrophe or national disaster.

A spokesperson for the office of Prime Minister Gaston Browne and a representative for the development did not respond to messages seeking

comment about the decision.

Sarah O’Malley, an attorney with the U.K.-based nonprofit Global Legal Action Network, which helped attorneys representing the Barbudians, noted that it took nearly a half-dozen years to reach the verdict.

“Environmental activists around the globe are often bogged down with procedural impediments mak-

ing litigation costly and time-consuming, a subterfuge employed by those destroying the environment for their own profit,” she said. However, O’Malley said the decision would make it easier for “all who seek to protect nature” to legally challenge government actions.

The ruling by the Privy Council allows the two Barbudians to chal-

The ruling also is expected to set a precedent for other Caribbean nations fighting to protect land that wealthy foreign developers seek to develop, especially after investors seize upon economic opportunities following a catastrophe or national disaster.

lenge an April 2021 decision by the Court of Appeal of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court that found the residents were not allowed to take legal action against the government.

While Antigua and Barbuda obtained its independence from the U.K. in 1981, it remains under a constitutional monarchy with King Charles as its head of state and the Privy Council as its final court of appeal.

One Privy Council judge, David Hope, argued that environmental issues can be raised by someone even if they are not personally affected by

See **BARBUDA**, page 21

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Briefs

Seven in Cayman Islands seriously injured by gunfire

At least seven people were shot at a crowded soccer match in the Cayman Islands and were hospitalized with serious injuries, police said earlier this week.

The shooting that police believe could be gang-related occurred late Sunday in West Bay, located in the northwest point of Grand Cayman island, authorities said.

As of late Monday afternoon, four of seven victims were discharged from the hospital, Police Commissioner Kurt Walton said at a press conference.

He noted that while the investigation is ongoing, the hypothesis is that a lone shooter opened fire on a small group of people gathered in the stadium's northeast corner, seeking to kill at least two of them.

"This was a targeted attack," he said.

Walton noted that four gangs originally operated in the Cayman Islands: two of them in the capital of George

Town and two others in West Bay where the shooting occurred. Three of those gangs have since merged, but it's not clear if a certain gang was involved.

Jamaican woman accused of throwing baby from roof

A 27-year-old woman has been charged with murder for allegedly throwing her 5-month-old daughter from a roof late last year, Jamaican police said Sunday.

Authorities said in a statement that the woman was at home with some relatives and her partner in early December when she became angry that he didn't want to immediately talk about their relationship and stormed out of a room with the baby.

Police said she then went to the building's third floor and threw the girl, named Destiny, to the concrete below.

The girl was taken to a hospital, where she died, police said.

—The Associated Press

BARBUDA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 20

a certain action. He gave an example of construction of wind turbines on a route used by an osprey.

"The osprey has no means of taking that step on its own behalf, any more than any other wild creature. If its interests are to be protected, someone has to be allowed to speak on its behalf," he wrote.

The ongoing airport construction on Barbuda is part of a deal involving the government, the Barbuda Council and PLH (Barbuda) Ltd., established by U.S. billionaire John Paul DeJoria, co-founder of the Paul Mitchell hair products company. Also involved is U.S.-based Discovery Land Co., founded by Michael Meldman of Casamigos Tequila.

The companies plan to build 495 upscale homes, an 18-hole golf course, a beach club and a natural gas storage facility on more than 600 acres of protected wetland.

The developers began work on the airstrip around September 2017, after the government evacuated the entire island of Barbuda following Hurricane Irma, a Category 5 storm that was the strongest hurricane ever observed in the open Atlantic.

Among those evacuated to Antigua for at least a month was Frank, who on her return to Barbuda wondered about a light flickering in the distance.

"It turns out it was an airport being built without the proper permissions," she said, adding that the government never consulted residents. "They were breaking their own laws."

Construction also began without an environmental impact assessment or a license from the Barbuda Council to clear forest, according to Global Legal Action Network. In addition, there were no public meetings notifying anyone of the construction, and an application for a development permit wasn't submitted until after construction began.

About 400 acres that is home to the Barbuda fallow deer and red-footed tortoise already have been cleared to build the airport.

Mussington and Frank also have argued the construction could impact the island's groundwater supply.

The airstrip is largely completed, and government officials have said that "even if the airstrip was built in violation of development control the airstrip could not be 'unbuilt,'" according to Monday's ruling.

The Privy Council noted that if a court finds that the government's Development Control Authority acted outside of its power, "the remedies potentially available would include an order requiring the land be restored to its original state."

Mussington and Frank celebrated the ruling, but Frank remained cautious. Another lawsuit filed by a fisherman and tour guide against the government of Antigua and Barbuda over construction of two private villas in a national park is pending in court.

"Despite having won, we Barbudans recognize that the fight for our land is not over," she said. "We plan to continue to keep fighting in order to protect what is ours and preserve it all for our future generations, just as our ancestors have done for us."

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A boring capital for a young democracy. Just the way residents like it.

BY SIMON ROMERO
The New York Times

BELMOPAN, Belize — Mention Belmopan, Belize's capital that sits deep in the country's interior, and many Belizeans will belittle the city as a bastion of pencil-pushing bureaucrats that's not just dull, but also devoid of nightlife.

"I was warned, 'Belmopan is for the newlyweds or the nearly dead,'" said Raquel Rodriguez, 45, owner of an art school, about the reactions when she moved to Belmopan from coastal, bustling Belize City.

Not exactly known as an Eden for young urbanites, Belmopan figures among the smallest capital cities anywhere in the Americas. It has only about 25,000 residents and a cluster of hurricane-proof, heavy-on-the-concrete, Maya-inspired Brutalist buildings.

The capital of Central America's only English-speaking nation can feel jarringly different from the frenetic capitals of neighboring countries. In terms of its origins and design, Belmopan has more in common with the capitals of other former British colonies, especially in Africa.

But Belmopan is also, perhaps, a prism through which to view the development of Belize, which has emerged as something of an exception in Central America. In a region where rulers are embracing authoritarian tactics, Belize has developed into a relatively stable (albeit young) parliamentary democracy with a history of peaceful transitions of power.

The capital, serenely calm at times, boasts a reputation for safety



Photo by THE NEW YORK TIMES

The National Assembly in Belmopan, Belize's capital. The British-designed capital is bureaucratic and, some say, boring. Some in the city want it to stay that way.

and quality of life. In a sparsely populated country with fewer than half a million people, Belmopan's welcoming vibe also showcases Belize's extraordinary ethnic diversity, and its propensity to absorb migrants from other parts of Central America.

Consider the open-air market where many residents buy their food. Peddlers greet customers in Belize's official language, English, or Kriol, the patois formed centuries

ago when Britons brought enslaved Africans to what is now Belize.

Other vendors speak Mayan languages such as Kekchí, Mopán and Yucatec, spotlighting the Indigenous peoples who have long lived in Belize or who moved to the country from Guatemala or Mexico. Reflecting different migration waves, others ply their trade in Spanish, Chinese or Plautdietsch, an archaic Germanic language influenced by Dutch.

Like many others in Belmopan, Johan Guenther, 71, a Mennonite farmer, came from somewhere else. He was born in Mexico's Chihuahua state, the site of large Mennonite communities, and came to Belize at 16.

He then tried his luck in Bolivia for a while but decided he preferred Belize's mellower lifestyle. He lives with his wife in a small farming settlement outside Belmopan, coming

into the capital to sell cheese, butter, cream and honey at the market.

"I'm not a city man, but I like Belmopan," Guenther said in a mixture of English, Plautdietsch and Spanish. "It's calm, good for selling my production, easy to get in and easy to get out."

Making Belmopan a linchpin for agricultural development in Belize's interior, and a haven from natural disasters, was top of mind when British colonialists developed plans to build the city after Hurricane Hattie in 1961 laid waste to the old capital, Belize City, leaving hundreds dead.

At the time, planned cities were popping up in various parts of the world, a trend turbocharged by the inauguration in 1960 of Brazil's futuristic capital, Brasília. In Britain's disintegrating empire, especially in Africa, the new capitals included Dodoma, in Tanzania; Gaborone, in Botswana; and Lilongwe, in Malawi. Designers largely envisioned them, like Belmopan, as "garden cities" with ample open spaces, parks and pedestrian walkways.

Political tensions shaped the city's plans. George Price, the architect of Belizean independence, viewed Belmopan's construction as a way to forge a sense of national identity transcending ethnic differences. And with Guatemala laying claim to Belize in a territorial dispute persisting to this day, Belize's colonial rulers chose a site about midway between Belize City and the Guatemalan border, in a bid to populate to the interior.

See **BELIZE**, page 23

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Haitian PM in Kenya to try to salvage country's deployment of police to Haiti

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Haiti's prime minister arrived Thursday in Kenya to try to salvage a plan to have the African country deploy 1,000 police officers to the troubled Caribbean nation to help combat gang violence.

Kenya agreed in October to lead a U.N.-authorized international police force to Haiti, but the Kenyan High Court in January ruled the plan unconstitutional in part because of a lack of "reciprocal agreements" between the two countries.

The office of Haitian Prime Minister Ariel Henry said he was traveling at the invitation of Kenyan

President William Ruto to "finalize modalities" for agreements between the countries on the deployment, which would send 1,000 Kenyan police officers to Haiti.

It was not immediately clear how, or if, the agreements could circumvent the court's ruling, which also said that Kenya's National Police Service cannot be deployed outside the country.

Ruto and Henry met Thursday at the State House in Nairobi.

Ruto said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that Kenya associates itself with the people of Haiti because of a common heritage. "We are offering

the experience and expertise of our police" for the proposed Multinational Security Support Mission in Haiti, Ruto said.

Ekuru Aukot, an opposition leader who has challenged the deployment in court, has said that even if the Kenyan government establishes an appropriate agreement with Haiti, its prime minister lacks the legitimacy to sign the document on behalf of the country.

Henry has repeatedly pledged to hold elections since being sworn in as prime minister and interim president after the July 2021 assassination of President Jovenel Moïse, but he

and other officials say gang violence has not allowed them to move forward on those promises.

Caribbean leaders said late Wednesday that Henry has agreed to hold general elections by mid-2025.

Aukot says he also opposes the deployment because Kenya is facing security challenges that require police intervention. Among them are the Somali-based al-Qaida-linked extremist group al-Shabab who have been carrying out retaliatory attacks since 2011 on Kenya for sending its troops to Somalia to fight the militants. He also has cited high rates of crime, including cattle rustling in

Kenya's northwest.

Human rights groups also have noted that the Kenyan police have been implicated for years in human rights abuses, including extra-judicial executions.

In Haiti, gangs have grown more powerful and political instability has increased since the assassination of President Moïse, who had faced protests calling for his resignation over corruption charges and claims that his five-year term had expired.

More than 8,400 people were reported killed, injured or kidnapped in Haiti in 2023 — more than double the number reported in 2022.

BELIZE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

Sturdy concrete government buildings like the National Assembly evoke the pyramidal design of a Maya temple, perched on an artificial mound where breezes could cool the structure. They were designed to be both hurricane proof and economical, at the time avoiding the need for air conditioning.

At the same time, authorities tried to lure public employees to Belmopan by offering them homes, essentially in the form of concrete shells, on streets where people from different economic backgrounds were intended to live.

"Belmopan is a social experiment," said John Milton Arana, 51, a Belizean architect whose family moved here in 1975. Noting the footpaths still connecting residential areas to Belmopan's concrete-laden core, he added, "The pedestrian was

the priority of this vision."

Still, Arana said the notably slow-paced city can also be disorienting with its traffic circles, ring road and dearth of teeming commercial areas. "People visit and ask me, 'Where's downtown?'" Arana said. "I tell them, 'You just passed it.'"

Not everyone is sold on Belmopan. Tourists tend to neglect the city, preferring the snorkeling near remote islands or stunning Maya archaeological sites. When Belmopan was inaugurated in 1970, it was forecast to grow quickly to a population of 30,000 — a figure it has still not reached more than five decades later.

Some attribute that slow growth to perennial budgetary restrictions giving Belmopan a perpetually unfinished look. The fortresslike structures where many civil servants toil are showing their age, adorned with noisy air-conditioning units; airy

new buildings like the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a gift from Taiwan's government replete with hanging gardens, show how the authorities have moved on from Belmopan's spartan origins.

Arana, the architect, said that departures from Belmopan's original designs were changing the city for the worse. Ramshackle development outside central areas, he said, particularly where Spanish-speaking migrants from neighboring El Salvador and Guatemala have settled, underscore problems like substandard housing and untreated sewage.

Among diplomats, views on Belmopan are divided. Countries like Panama and Guatemala, along with the self-governing island of Taiwan, maintain their embassies in Belize City, which has more than double Belmopan's population. Even after Belize gained full independence in 1981, the United States

took 25 years to move its embassy to Belmopan.

Michelle Kwan, the U.S. ambassador to Belize and a decorated Olympic figure skater, said she had grown fond of Belmopan after relocating from Los Angeles. She compared life here to her days training in Lake Arrowhead, a small resort community in California's San Bernardino Mountains, where she could "really focus on what I had to do."

"It's no different here," Kwan said. "This is where we focus and where we work."

Others in Belmopan suggest the city has helped forge a multicultural Belizean identity incorporating Maya peoples and newer Latino immigrants that is distinct from that of Belize City, known more as a bastion of Kriols, people of African and British descent.



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Iowa star Clark declares for WNBA Draft, will skip final season of college

IOWA CITY, Iowa — Iowa's Caitlin Clark, who is on the verge of becoming the all-time NCAA scoring leader in college basketball, announced Thursday that she will leave the Hawkeyes after this season and enter the WNBA Draft.

"While this season is far from over and we have a lot more goals to achieve, it will be my last one at Iowa," Clark wrote in a post on the X social media platform. She thanked her teammates, coaches and the thousands of fans who have packed arenas across the country to watch her and the sixth-ranked Hawkeyes.

Clark emerged as a focal point for women's basketball, with her flashy play and 3-point shot, often from the on-court logo. Many players would have been benched for shooting from so far out, but Clark had the green light from her coach and she has delivered while



Caitlin Clark

also finding her teammates and hitting the boards.

The guard, with one more year of eligibility, became the all-time leading women's scorer in major college basketball by scoring 33 points to pass Lynette Woodard and post her 17th career triple-double in a 108-60 victory over Minnesota on Wednesday night.

Clark also broke the NCAA single-season record by sinking eight 3-pointers for a total of 156 in 2023-24. She now has 3,650 career points. Woodard had 3,649 points for Kansas from 1977-81, before the NCAA sanctioned the sport.

Earlier this month, Clark broke Kelsey Plum's NCAA scoring record (3,527 points).

Next up is the overall NCAA scoring record of Pete Maravich, who is just 17 points ahead of her.

— The Associated Press

College Basketball Roundup

WOMEN'S TOP 25

No. 17 Notre Dame 71, No. 5 Virginia Tech 58: Freshman Hannah Hidalgo had 23 points and 12 rebounds to help No. 17 Notre Dame beat fifth-ranked Virginia Tech on Thursday night.

Virginia Tech (23-5, 14-3 ACC) had its 10-game winning streak snapped, but ended up claiming its first ACC regular-season championship outright as No. 12 North Carolina State defeated No. 19 Syracuse 75-71 in overtime on Thursday. The Hokies won the ACC

Tournament crown last season and reached the Final Four.

Sonia Citron added 21 points and Maddy Westbeld had 19 points for Notre Dame (22-6, 12-5).

Georgia Amooore led Virginia Tech with 20 points. Matilda Ekh and Elizabeth Kitley scored 12 points each.

No. 12 North Carolina State 75, No. 19 Syracuse 71 (OT): Saniya Rivers scored 22 points, including the clinching free throws with 10.9 seconds left in overtime, as No. 12 North Carolina State defeated No. 19 Syracuse.

Mimi Collins had 15 points for the

Wolfpack (24-5), now 7-2 in Top 25 games, and River Baldwin had 13 points and 13 rebounds.

Dyaisha Fair scored 21 points for Syracuse (23-6), which was going for a school record for wins in the regular season but has now lost eight-straight in the series. Georgia Woolley and Izabel Varejao both added 14 points. Alyssa Latham had 10 rebounds.

No. 18 Utah 82, Washington State 67: Kennady McQueen scored 22 points to tie a career high, and Alissa Pili had 21 points and 12 rebounds as No. 18 Utah beat Washington State.

Ines Vieira had 13 points, six assists, and just two turnovers for Utah (21-8, 11-6). Lani White added 11 points and Dasia Young scored 10. McQueen made four of Utah's 11 3-pointers.

Bella Murekatete led Washington State (17-13, 6-11) with 14 points. Kyra Gardner scored a career-high 13 and Tara Wallack added 11.

Notes

Emina Selimovic scored 18 points, Janelle Brown added 13 points and Fairfield beat Quinnipiac 64-46 on Thursday night to extend the nation's second-longest active winning streak to 23 straight games.

Fairfield (25-1, 17-0 Metro Atlantic Athletic Conference) has tied a program record for most wins in a season. The Stags haven't lost since dropping a 73-70 contest at Vanderbilt on Nov. 12.

— The Associated Press



Photo by ASSOCIATED PRESS

Atlanta Hawks' Bogdan Bogdanovic, left, drives past Brooklyn Nets' Nic Claxton, whose parents are from St. Thomas, during the first half of Thursday night's game in New York.

NBA Roundup

Bucks 111, Hornets 99: Giannis Antetokounmpo had 24 points and 10 rebounds as Milwaukee swept the four-game season series with Charlotte, beating the Hornets on Thursday night to finish a home-and-home set.

Malik Beasley added 19 points — hitting five 3-pointers — and Bobby Portis had 14 points and 10 rebounds. The Bucks shot 16 of 39 from beyond the arc to give coach Doc Rivers his first four-game winning streak with the team.

The Bucks thrashed the Hornets by an average of 29.2 points this season — the largest margin in team history — after outscoring them by 38, 36 and 31 in the other three games. This game was closer, but not by much.

Brandon Miller led the Hornets with 21 points and Miles Bridges added 15 points and 10 rebounds.

Nets 124, Hawks 97: Cam Johnson scored a season-high 29 points, hitting a season-high seven 3-pointers in 11 attempts, to help Brooklyn beat Atlanta to open a two-game series.

Dennis Schroder had 23 points, eight rebounds and seven assists for balanced Brooklyn. Mikal Bridges scored 15 points, Day'Ron Sharpe had 12 points, Lonnie Walker IV

11 and Dennis Smith Jr. 10. Nic Claxton, whose parents are from St. Thomas, had five points and eight rebounds.



Dejounte Murray led Atlanta with 28 points. The Hawks — with star guard Trae Young sidelined by a torn finger

ligament — had won two in a row. They dropped to 26-33.

Magic 115, Jazz 107: Jalen Suggs hit three 3-pointers in the final three minutes and finished with 15 points as Orlando beat Utah.

Paolo Banchero, back in the lineup after missing two games due to the flu, had 29 points and nine rebounds for the Magic, who won for the 10th time in 13 games. The Wagner brothers, Franz and Moritz, each added 14 points.

John Collins, Keyonte George and Collin Sexton each scored 19 points and Lari Markkannen added 18 for the slumping Jazz, who lost their second straight and for the seventh time in eight games.

Notes

The Atlanta Hawks waived 15-year veteran guard Patty Mills on Thursday. The Hawks also converted the two-way contract of guard Trent Forrest to a standard NBA deal.

— The Associated Press



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Pirates' Skenes retires Orioles' Holliday in spring training matchup between top picks

The Associated Press

Pittsburgh Pirates starter Paul Skenes retired the Baltimore Orioles' Jackson Holliday on a grounder to second base Thursday in a spring training matchup of the top overall picks in the last two amateur drafts.

Skenes, a 6-foot-6 right-hander, was the first pick last year after going 13-2 with a 1.69 ERA and 209 strikeouts while leading LSU to the NCAA title. He agreed to a \$9.2 million signing bonus and pitched in five games with Low-A Bradenton and Double-A Altoona.

"I think the biggest thing was just getting out there and pitching in front of people, because adrenaline is a big thing," Skenes told reporters after the game in Sarasota, Fla. "Just kind of wanted to see where we're at."

Holliday, the first pick in the 2022 draft, is regarded as baseball's top prospect. The 20-year-old, a son of seven-time All-Star Matt Holliday, agreed to an \$8.19 million signing bonus. He batted .323 with a .442 on-base percentage, 12 homers, 74 RBIs and 24 steals in 125 games for four minor league teams last season.

Skenes followed the first-inning matchup against Holliday by facing Adley Rutschman, the No. 1 overall pick in 2019. The AL All-Star flied out to the right-field warning track.

Skenes threw 10 pitches while retiring the side in order in his lone inning. His fastball reached 102 mph. He also went 2 for 4 with a triple and an RBI in the Orioles' 9-8 victory.

Giants' Beck has aneurysm in arm: San Francisco reliever Tristan Beck was diagnosed with an aneurysm in his upper arm after visiting a vascular specialist at Stanford. The Giants said Beck will weigh his treatment options over the next few days.

Beck had gone to see the specialist after dealing with lingering soreness in his right hand. The 27-year-old right-hander went 3-3 with a 3.92 ERA last season in 33 appearances, including three starts. He had been projected to open the season in the Giants' starting rotation.

Rays add catching depth with familiar face: The Tampa Bay Rays agreed to a minor league contract with catcher Francisco Mejía, who will report to major league

camp. Mejía, 28, batted .227 with a .258 on-base percentage, five homers and 19 RBIs in 50 games with Tampa Bay last season. He has played with the Rays since 2021 and also had stints with Cleveland and San Diego in a major league career that began in 2017.

Rays' Lowe hurting: Tampa Bay's Josh Lowe is dealing with hip inflammation and isn't expected to play in a game for the next 10-to-15 days. Rays manager Kevin Cash told the Tampa Bay Times the team is not overly concerned about Lowe's availability for the season's start.

Lowe, 26, hit .292 with a .335 on-base percentage, 20 homers, 83 RBIs and 32 steals in 135 games last season.

Anderson making Marlins debut: Shortstop Tim Anderson was making his Miami Marlins spring training debut against the New York Yankees. The 2019 AL batting champion for the Chicago White Sox signed a \$5 million, one-year contract and is trying to rebound after hitting .245.

"It was a difficult year last year for him and then obviously the offseason probably didn't go as planned, you know, signing so late," Marlins manager Skip Schumaker said. "Never being a free agent before and never having gone to a different organization before. It was challenging for him. We're fortunate to get him. There's some work to do that we have hopefully identified to get him more back to where he was, and it's kind of that All-Star form."

Slimmer Stanton: New York Yankees slugger Giancarlo Stanton, who has looked much slimmer, is playing in the outfield for the first time this spring training after appearances at designated hitter.

"I know by all the assessments and everything he's in a great place strength-wise," Yankees coach Aaron Boone said. "Probably maybe the strongest guy still on the team and all that and definitely moving better. And it's, you know, noticeable. Definitely moving around, more athletic, being more of a presence running the bases, more of a realistic option in the field. You know, all those things."

—AP Sports Writers Steve Megargee and Will Graves, and AP freelance writer Mark Didtler contributed to this report.

24 Spring Training
ARIZONA • FLORIDA



Paul Skenes

NHL Roundup

Islanders 5, Red Wings 3: Mathew Barzal had a tiebreaking goal with 6:02 left in the third period and Brock Nelson scored twice, lifting the New York Islanders to a win Thursday night that ended Detroit's six-game winning streak.

Detroit pulled goalkeeper Alex Lyon to add an extra skater and Pierre Engvall took advantage, sealing the victory with an empty-net goal in the final minute.

Casey Cizikas scored in the first period and Nelson's second goal broke a tie early in the third period. Ilya Sorokin finished with 23 saves for the Islanders.

Olli Maatta matched a career high with two goals, and Lyon stopped 22 shots for the Red Wings.

Hurricanes 4, Blue Jackets 2: Teuvo Teravainen scored the game's first goal less than a minute into the second period, and Spencer Martin stopped 20 shots against his former team as Carolina rolled over struggling Columbus.

Sebastian Aho, Brady Skjei and Seth Jarvis also tallied for the Hurricanes. Martin, who was claimed off waivers from Columbus on Jan. 19, improved to 4-0-1 for Carolina.

Alexander Nylander had a goal and assist, his first points with Columbus. Cole Sillinger also scored, and Daniil Tarasov made 30 saves for the Blue Jackets.

Sabres 3, Lightning 2 (OT): Rasmus Dahlin scored a power-play goal in overtime as Buffalo rallied to beat Tampa Bay.

Alex Tuch and Tage Thompson also scored for the Sabres. Ukko-Pekka Luukkonen stopped 21 shots.

Brayden Point and Mitchell Chaffee scored for the Lightning. Andrei Vasilevskiy made 20 saves, and NHL points leader Nikita Kucherov had an assist to give him 104 this season.



Maple Leafs 4, Coyotes 2: Auston Matthews scored his NHL-leading 53rd goal as Toronto topped Arizona to send the Coyotes to their 14th straight loss.

Matthew Knies had a goal and an assist, Tyler Bertuzzi also scored and William Nylander added an empty-netter to go with two assists for Toronto. Joseph Woll made 30 saves in his return from a long injury absence.

Alex Kerfoot and Logan Cooley scored for Arizona, which dropped to 0-12-2 since its last victory on Jan. 22. Connor Ingram stopped 22 shots.

Notes

The NHL issued \$25,000 fines each to Buffalo Sabres coach Don Granato and Toronto Maple Leafs coach Sheldon Keefe for separate instances of unprofessional conduct directed at officials.

The league deemed Thursday that both coaches crossed the line during games on Tuesday night.

Granato was issued a bench minor in the third period of Buffalo's 3-2 loss at Florida, after questioning officials for penalizing Zach Benson for tripping, while suggesting they missed several calls against the Panthers earlier in the game.

The same night in Toronto, Keefe was ejected in the final minutes of a 6-2 loss to the Vegas Golden Knights, which snapped the Leafs' seven-game win streak.

— The Associated Press



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Virgin Islands School Sports Roundup

WEDNESDAY'S RESULTS

Varsity Boys Basketball Championship

Central High School 65, Educational Complex High School 44: The Caribs wrapped up their 2024 season by beating their long-time rival Barracudas to claim the St. Croix Interscholastic Athletic Association league title.

Central High only held a 16-13 lead over Educational Complex High after the first quarter, but stretched its lead to 29-21 at the halftime break. The Caribs then put the game and title away in the

second half by outscoring the Barracudas 36-23 over the final two quarters.

Reycoi Watson scored 11 points, Khamar Lockhard added nine points and Reynaldo Berry had eight points for Educational Complex High.

No information was available on the leading scorers for Central High in the championship game.

Varsity Girls Basketball Championship

Central High School 36, Educational Complex High School 23: The Lady Caribs completed a sweep of the St. Croix IAA league titles by rally-

ing from a slow start to beat the Lady Barracudas.

Educational Complex High led 9-7 after the first quarter, only for Central High to pull away in the second quarter for a 17-14 halftime lead. The Lady Caribs then outscored the Lady Barracudas 19-9 over the final two quarters to put the win away.

Anesha Deterville scored a game-high 18 points for Central High, with Denirah Nurse and Uniqua Williams adding six points each.

Mariah Harris led Educational Complex High with nine points, with Elisha Ramirez adding seven points.

Virgin Islands Sports Roundup

Breakthrough Basketball Clinic signups close today

Registration for the inaugural Breakthrough Basketball Clinic will close out today on St. Thomas.

The clinic, led by St. Thomas native and WNBA Rookie of the Year Aliyah Boston, will be held Saturday, March 16, at the University of the Virgin Islands' Elridge Blake Sports and Fitness Center on St. Thomas.

The basketball clinics and lead-



Aliyah Boston

ership workshops will be broken down into two sessions — from 8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. for girls in second- through sixth grades, and from 1 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. for girls in seventh- through 12th grades. A free lunch will be served for both sessions from 11:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Interested participants can email aliyahbostonbbc@outlook.com to get registration information.

42nd Women's Jogger Jam set for Sunday, March 10

Registration is open for the 42nd annual Women's Jogger Jam run/walk, scheduled for Sunday, March 10 on St. Thomas.

The two-mile race begins at

4:30 p.m., with the start outside of Schneider Hospital and the finish line in the parking lot of the Wheatley Center shopping complex (across from Lockhart Gardens Shopping Center).

Proceeds from the annual Women's Jogger Jam benefit The Family Resource Center Inc.

Interested runners and walkers can register at The Fruit Bowl in Wheatley Center during business hours. The entry fee is \$20 for adults and \$5 for juniors ages 18-under.

For more information, call **340-775-6373**.

VIBF coaching certification course in late May on STT

The Virgin Islands Basketball Federation, in conjunction with FIBA Americas, will hold its Level 1 Coaching Certification courses in late May.

The course, originally scheduled for April, will now be held May 20-25 on St. Thomas. The location and times are still to be determined.

The coaching certification course has 15 slots available. Those interested in taking the course should email the VIBF at vibasket62@hotmail.com or call **340-690-1614** as soon as possible.

Beach to Beach Power Swim registration opens

Registration has opened for the Friends of the Virgin Islands National Park's 21st annual Beach to Beach Power Swim, which will be held in late May on St. John.

The Power Swim is scheduled for Sunday, May 26, with races held over three courses — the one-mile short course from Maho Beach to Cinnamon Beach, the 2.25-mile intermediate course from Maho to Trunk Bay Beach, and the 3.5-mile long course from Maho to Hawksnest Beach.

On each race course, competitors

can enter in either the assisted (using snorkels, fins and/or exposure suits) or unassisted; on the long course, a three-person relay division is also open for entries in both assisted and unassisted classes.

The entry fee is \$65 for adults (18-over) and \$30 for youth (17-under). In the relay races, the entry fees are \$195 for adults and \$90 for youth.

Registration will close on Wednesday, May 22 or when race capacity is reached. The past two races, that has occurred in April, with 360 swimmers entering the 2023 Power Swim from 29 states and territories.

Interested swimmers (both individuals and relay teams) can register online at the Friends of the VINP's website, www.friendsvinp.org/power-swim.

For more information on the Power Swim, email info@friendsvinp.org or call **340-779-4940**.

2024 Bastille Day Kingfish Tournery set for July 14

The Northside Sportfishing Club will hold the 2024 Bastille Day Kingfish Tournament in mid-July in the waters off of St. Thomas.

The territory's largest annual kingfishing tournament will be held Sunday, July 14, with weigh-in and awards ceremonies being held at The Hideaway at Hull Bay on the north side of St. Thomas.

Last year's tournament attracted 187 anglers, including 30 junior anglers, on 45 boats. In addition to the Best Angler award, more prize categories include Best Boat, Best Captain, Best Angler, Best Junior Angler, and other fish species.

The tournament's Captain's Meeting and registration session will take place on Friday, July 12, starting at 7:30 p.m. at The Hideaway at Hull Bay. Fishing starts July 14, with lines in the water at 5:30 a.m. and ends at 12 p.m. sharp, when the weigh-in and beachside party begins. The Awards Ceremony follows.

For more information, visit the club's social media sites on Facebook and Instagram, email nssfvcvi@gmail.com, or call **340-998-0854**.

Olympic medalist Fetter calls for U.S.A. sailing officials' resignations over lawsuit dispute

The Associated Press

SAN DIEGO — With American sailors in an Olympic slump, two-time medalist JJ Fetter is calling for the resignations of U.S. Sailing's CEO, president and any other board member who supports a federal lawsuit against a sailing foundation and three of its principals, including former Olympic team boss Paul Cayard.

Fetter's letter, sent Monday to U.S. Sailing President Richard Jepsen and the board of directors, was obtained by The Associated Press. It offers the most pointed criticism yet of the governing body's lawsuit against the America One Foundation, Cayard, William Ruh and Jose Spina. The suit was filed in U.S. District Court in Rhode Island on Jan. 16, which many in sailing felt distracted from the recent Olympic trials.

Cayard, one of the United States' most successful sailors, resigned as executive director of the U.S. Olympic Sailing Team a year ago. U.S. Sailing's lawsuit seeks damages from One America, which had been a partner and financial supporter but now focuses on directly supporting athletes. It's the latest upheaval for a once-dominant squad that has faded to an afterthought on the world stage after winning just one medal in the last three Olympics.

When he stepped down, Cayard told the AP he couldn't work under a restructuring that would have him focus on fundraising while someone else ran the team. When he left, many donors followed him.

Fetter said the current board of directors has "repeatedly mucked up" its responsibility as a national governing body to support its athletes.

She said "the most egregious recent actions" were filing the lawsuit and promoting a link to a confidential U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Committee report on Cayard's management style on its website and by email to its membership.

Fetter wrote that Jepsen, CEO Alan Ostfield "and any other board members who are proponents" of the public fight with America One Racing "should resign and be replaced with experts in Olympic sailing success/development/maximizing the opportunity of LA2028."

NFL COMBINE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

you want me to help,” Stover said Thursday at the NFL’s annual scouting combine in Indianapolis. “I love playing tight end, but then again I’m there to do whatever we need to win a ballgame.”

The truth is Ohio State wanted the 6-foot-4, 255-pounder to play linebacker. But once he arrived on campus, the Buckeyes started experimenting with other positions.

First, they tried him at defensive end. For spring football in 2020, he moved to tight end. In January 2022, with the Buckeyes depleted by injuries and opt-outs, they asked him to play linebacker and he had six tackles in a 48-45 Rose Bowl victory over Utah before finally finding his calling at tight end.

Over those final two seasons, Stover emerged as one of the most athletic and productive tight ends in school history and now he’s one of the position’s top three draft prospects.

Not everyone is as versatile as Stover. But Brock Bowers of Georgia, Ja’Tavion Sanders of Texas and Stover do have one thing in common — each was once considered a future defensive star.

Playing for winless Napa High School as a sophomore, Bowers was lightly recruited. He had only one FBS scholarship offer, Nevada, before one of his coaches fought hard for him to be included at a Nike camp. There, he was so good, the offers started pouring in, including one from Notre Dame to play linebacker.

Eventually, the Fighting Irish changed course and asked Bowers to play tight end. The problem for Notre Dame was that Bowers dreamed of playing football in the South and took advantage of his opportunity in 2021 when Darnell Washington was injured.

A year later, Bowers beat out Notre Dame star Michael Mayer for the John Mackey Award as the nation’s best tight end and last season, despite his own battle with an ankle injury, he repeated as the Mackey Award winner.

Yes, he patterns his style after four-time Super Bowl champ Rob Gronkowski and, yes, the guy likely to be the first tight end selected in April’s draft has drawn comparisons to George Kittle and Travis Kelce.

Each of the three thrived after

contact, and Bowers thinks he has a similar style.

“I feel like I’m yards after the catch and just being able to make people miss. Just turn good plays into great plays,” Bowers said.

“You have to have a good relationship with the quarterback, build trust. That kind of comes through reps at practice, and I’ll try to work on that the first place I go.”

Sanders took a different path to the draft.

A two-sport athlete at Billy Runyan High School in Denton, Texas, he also was a prep star as a receiver and defensive end.

How good was he? Sanders was a finalist for the 2020 Texas Mr. Football Award.

The Longhorns thought he could play both sides, too, so when he arrived on campus that’s how he practiced.

Things changed quick when Steve Sarkisian took the Texas job in 2021.

He got his first big break in 2022 when Jahleel Billingsley, the Longhorns’ projected starter, was suspended for the first six games, and once Sanders had the job, he never let it go.

Instead, he started breaking school records as he found a perfect fit at tight end.

“Coming off that big national championship win (for Alabama where Sarkisian was the offensive coordinator before going to Texas), I knew I was too big to be a wide receiver in his offense,” Sanders said.

“But I was just big enough to be a tight end, so I knew I was going to be a tight end.”

And does that defensive moniker still fit? Well, Sanders said he’s aware defenders are wary of the spin move he once used to bother quarterbacks.

Stover, who spent his teenage years bailing hay and raising cattle on his parents’ Ohio farm, is far from a finished product, too. And with his mentality, Stover could make one team a big winner come draft weekend.

“I don’t think you can measure what’s inside of me, I don’t think you can measure the kind of person I am, and I don’t think you can measure how good of a football player I can be because I’m just scratching the surface,” said Stover, who intends to work out this weekend.

“I’m going to do everything you want me to do, exactly how it should be done, every single time with everything I’ve got.”



Brock Bowers



Ja'Tavion Sanders

BVI REGATTA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

in Europe — the Mediterranean Inshore and Offshore Maxi Challenges — since 2019. This also replaces the IMA’s Caribbean Maxi Challenge Series, which began in 2022.

“Multihull growth has exploded, the boats are fun to sail, competitive, and the measurers are refining the handicaps to make the

results more competitive,” Chris Haycraft, the regatta chairperson for the BVI Spring Regatta, said in a prepared release.

“Multihulls have a great class in BVI Spring Regatta where the race committee has constantly refined the needs of the sailors through close communication to give them the races that allow them to kick their heels up and have some great races.”

The BVI Spring Regatta, run out from the Nanny Cay Resort and Marina on Tortola from April 1-7, will be the final event on the Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series’ 2024 season.

Two events have already been held — the Caribbean Multihull Challenge Race and Rally out of St. Maarten from Feb. 1-4, and the Royal Ocean Racing Club’s Caribbean 600 out of Antigua on Feb. 19 — with the third event, the St. Maarten Heineken Regatta, beginning Thursday and running through Sunday.

“At present, there are groups of high-performance multihulls, some in the [United States] and others in Europe,” Andrew McIrvine, secretary general of the International Maxi Association, said in a prepared release announcing the new series.

“The Caribbean represents a natural annual meeting place for these two groups. As we’ve seen in the past, their numbers are greatest in the events there.”

As to whether the Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series would be expanded further, a likely option is the annual St. Thomas International Regatta, which has traditionally been held before the BVI Spring Regatta and usually draws many of the same entries.

An email sent to the International Maxi Association’s headquarters, which has offices in Sassari, Italy, and Geneva, Switzerland, was not responded to as of press time.

The new series is open to maxi multihulls 60 feet or longer. Teams wanting to contend for the Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series title must compete in at least two of the four events, with the series champion getting its name engraved on a silver perpetual trophy.

According to the updated entry list for the 51st BVI Spring Regatta on the event’s website at www.yachtscoring.com, at least six multihulls meet the Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series’



Chris Haycraft



Photo by CARLO BORLENGHI/ROLEX

“Allegra” and “Convexity2” will both compete in the 2024 BVI Spring Regatta, which will be the final event on the International Maxi Association’s inaugural Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series.

length requirements.

One of those is “Allegra,” a 25-meter (82-foot) custom Irens 84 catamaran owned by Adrian Keller out of Spain. Allegra and Keller are the defending Multihull Offshore Cruising and Racing Association champions, and are coming off a fifth-place finish at the RORC Caribbean 600.

The others are “Convexity2,” a Gunboat 68 owned by Pennsylvania sailor Kinley Fowler; “Lee Overlay Partners II,” a Swan 60 owned by Adrian Lee out of London, England; “Moementum,” a Gunboat 66 owned by Fredrik Moe out of Montego Bay, Jamaica; “Nemo,” an HH66 owned by Todd Slyngstad out of

Los Gatos, Calif.; and “No Limit,” an Outremer 5X owned by France’s Yann Marilley.

“We are always looking forward to great racing in fantastic locations,” Keller said in a prepared release. “Racing in the BVIs will be a new experience for the Allegra team. We always enjoy applying the boat and crews’ skill sets to new and challenging environments, not to mention the warm winds, beautiful scenery and challenging course and fun times ashore — a perfect Caribbean cocktail. We will certainly look forward to meeting new people and have some great racing on the water.”

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Sports

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Iowa star declares for WNBA Draft Page 24

Sailing

BVI Spring Regatta
51st regatta to
be final race on
Caribbean Maxi
Multihull Series

By **BILL KISER**
Daily News Sports Editor

There's going to be a little more at stake for the owners and captains of the large catamaran and trimaran sailboats in this year's BVI Spring Regatta.

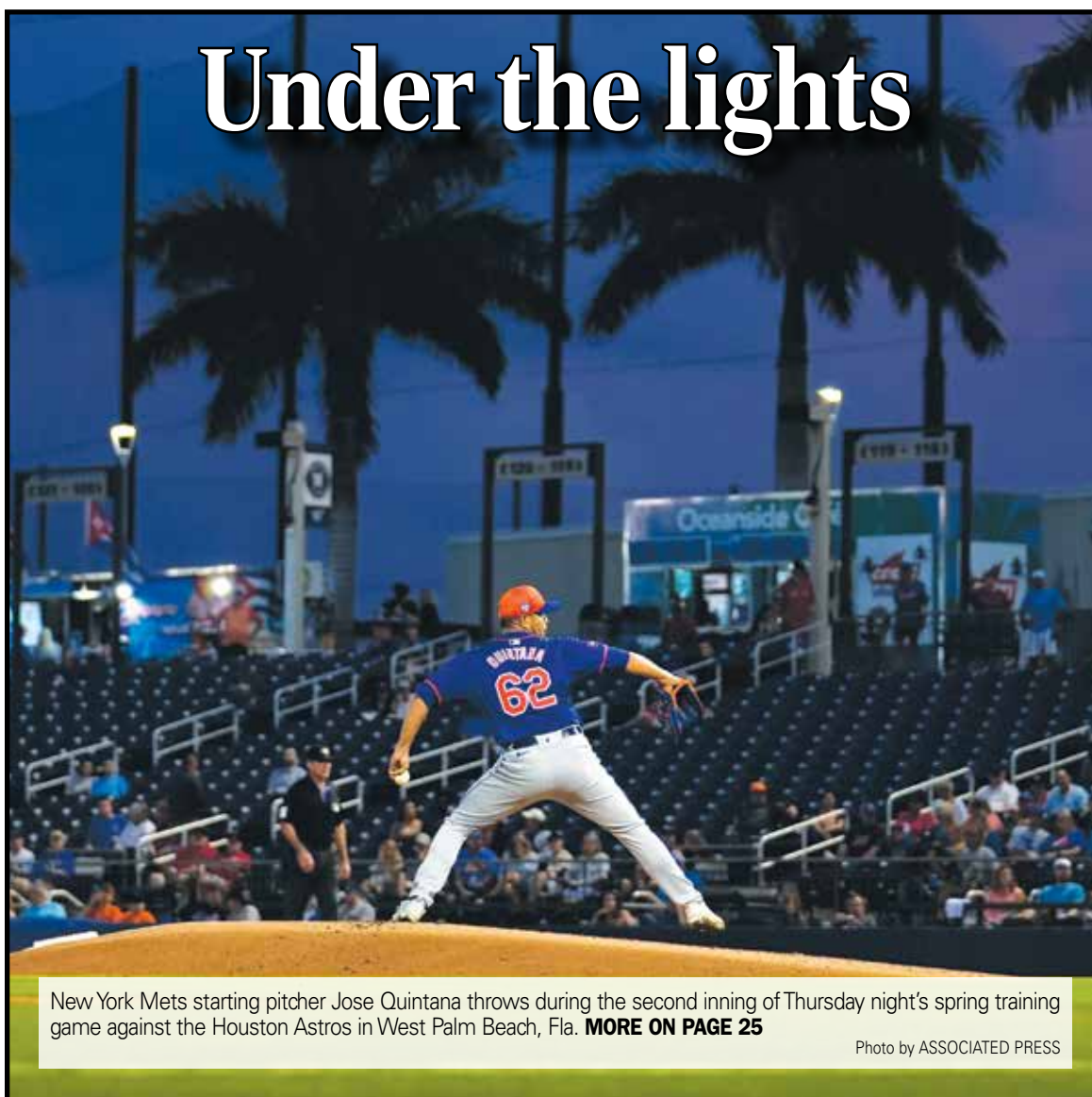
Officials with regatta organizers The Royal BVI Yacht Club announced Thursday that the 51st running of the BVI Spring Regatta would be the fourth event on the inaugural Caribbean Maxi Multihull Series.

The new series is the creation of the International Maxi Association, which has successfully run a similar series



See **BVI REGATTA**, page 27

Under the lights



New York Mets starting pitcher Jose Quintana throws during the second inning of Thursday night's spring training game against the Houston Astros in West Palm Beach, Fla. **MORE ON PAGE 25**

Photo by ASSOCIATED PRESS

NFL

Top 3 TEs at
combine bring
defensive mind
to 2024 draft

By **MICHAEL MAROT**
The Associated Press

INDIANAPOLIS — Cade Stover plays tight end with a linebacker's ferociousness.

He's aggressive, relentless and willing to do whatever it takes to succeed. When other NFL draft prospects opted out of bowl games rather than risk injury, Stover defied his agents and bucked the trend by playing in the Cotton Bowl. And he'd prefer being paid in tractors rather than NIL cash.

This is how Stover views football — hard and tough with no place for those who'd rather turn down a challenge. See, he's still a defensive player at heart.

"They've asked if I'm capable of helping defensively and there's no doubt about it, I can help wherever



See **NFL COMBINE**, page 27

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TODAY'S TOP DEALS

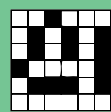
plus



COMICS



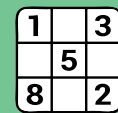
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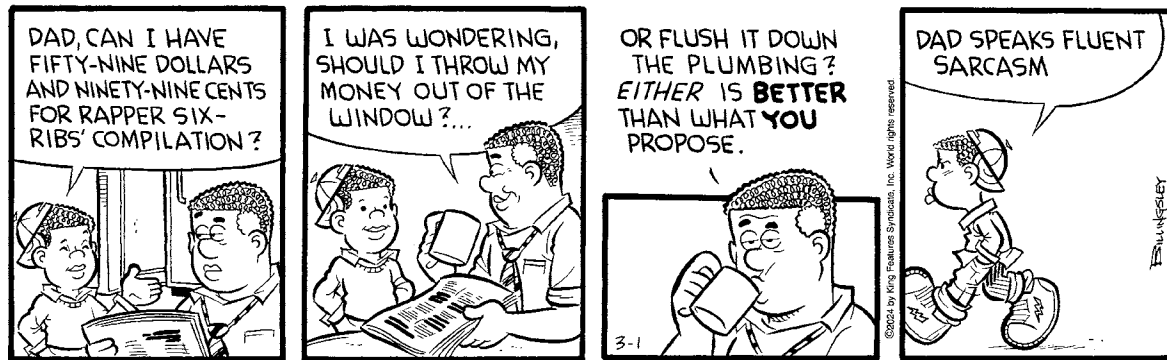


SALEM
FURNITURE
CENTER

SALEM FURNITURE CENTER

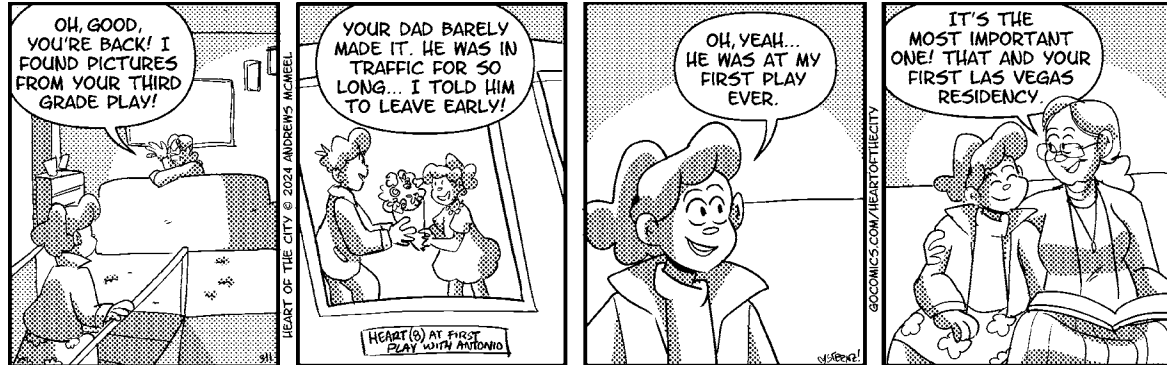
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Ray Billingsley

Heart of the City



Mark Tatulli

The Born Loser



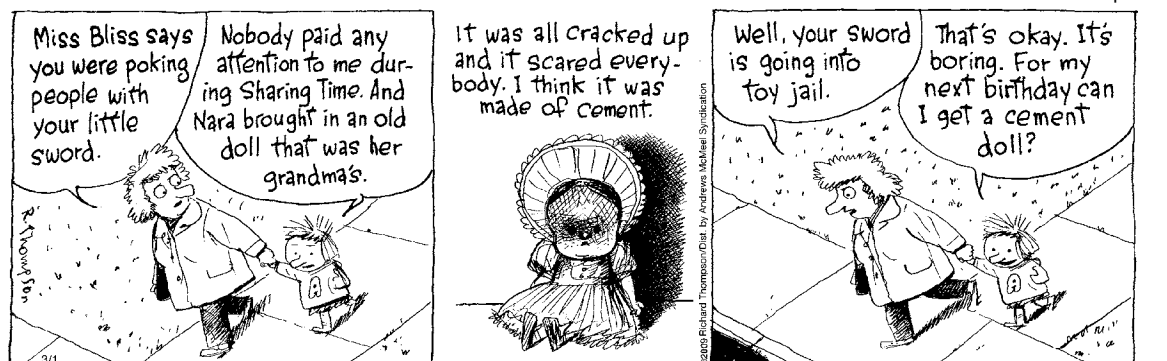
Chip Sansom

Garfield



Jim Davis

Cul De Sac



Richard Thompson



Sense & Sensitivity

By Harriette Cole

Overly blunt tone rubs people the wrong way

Dear Harriette: I have always valued honesty and transparency in my interactions with others. I strive to provide a realistic perspective and offer straightforward feedback or advice. However, it seems that this approach is not always appreciated or well-received. Rather than being seen as someone who is genuine and reliable, I find that my straightforwardness is often interpreted as insensitivity or even harshness.

On one hand, I want to maintain my integrity and authenticity by expressing my honest thoughts and opinions. On the other hand, I also want to foster positive and healthy relationships without causing unnecessary conflict or upsetting those around me. I want to find a way to express myself honestly while also being mindful of others' feelings and emotions. It is important for me to strike a balance between being straightforward and being sensitive to the needs and perspectives of those I interact with.

—Too Straightforward

Dear Too Straightforward: Before speaking, run your thoughts through the Four Gateways of Speech. Ask yourself these questions about what you are about to say: Is it true? Is it necessary? Is it timely? Is it kind? Pause to consider each of those questions before you open your mouth. When you do that, inevitably you will edit your words, choose a different moment or sometimes say nothing at all. Directness has its place. Learn when and how to be direct so that you are honest without being hurtful.

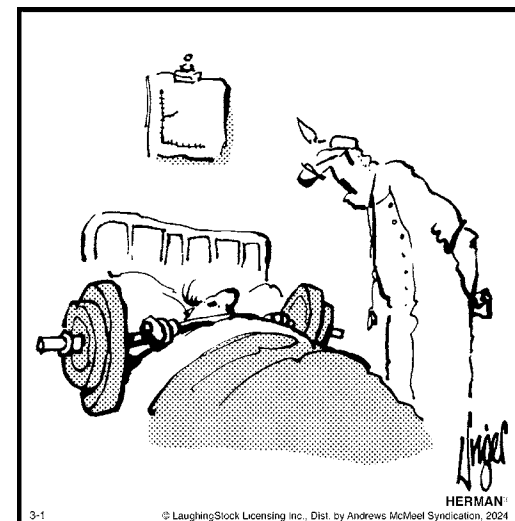
Dear Harriette: I have made a friend who is frustrating me because she never seems to take initiative or follow through on plans. I always have to reach out to her to hang out, and when we do make plans, she cancels half the time. When we manage to get together, she will show up on average one hour late. I feel as if she doesn't care about me, and my patience is wearing down because she has wasted hours of my time. We have been friends for two years, and I enjoy her company because she is very funny. Once she does manage to get to where we are meeting, I often forget all of the irritation she caused me. Still, her communication and flakiness are causing tension in our relationship. I'm not sure how to address this without her getting extremely defensive, but it's becoming frustrating. How can I communicate my concerns about her lack of initiative and follow-through without damaging our friendship?

—Is It Worth It?

Dear Is It Worth It?: Set boundaries around your engagement with this person. Don't allow your loneliness to give her a pass when she is being rude or thoughtless. Give her a short grace period for being late, after which you leave. Let her know your new rules — then enforce them. If she shows up an hour late and you aren't there, she will get the message. Tell her directly that you don't appreciate her blowing you off and generally being flaky. Ask her to honor the plans you make. If she doesn't get better with time, stop cutting her slack. Get out there and meet new people.

Herman

Jim Unger



"We found your knees."

Worth Noting

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Employment

DID YOU KNOW?

- The cheetah is the only cat that can't retract it's claws
- The coins thrown into the Trevi fountain in Italy are collected for charity
- The coloured part of your eye is called the iris
- The croissant was invented in Austria
- The D.C. in Washington D.C. stands for District of Columbia
- The Dead Sea is actually an inland lake
- The dot on top of the letter 'i' is called a tittle



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Moderately Confused

Jeff Stahler



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Today's Horoscope

Set yourself up for success. Put a financial plan in place and monitor your liabilities and your assets. A hands-on approach to conducting your daily expenses, routines and lifestyle will give you the power you need to reach your target this year. Revisit contracts, adjust agreements and promise only what you know you can deliver.

Pisces (Feb. 20-March 20) — Don't waste time; set your sights on your goal and refuse to let anyone lure you off track. Show your strength and courage by ignoring temptation and embracing what makes you feel alive.

Aries (March 21-April 19) — Take it upon yourself to do the legwork. Keeping busy will help you stay out of trouble. Live up to your promises, but don't deny yourself the time you need to soothe your soul.

Taurus (April 20-May 20) — Take a breather. Don't exhaust yourself physically. Accidents will happen if you are worn out and overly emotional. Focus on pampering yourself and rethinking what's in your best interest.

Gemini (May 21-June 20) — Don't be fooled by what others say. Get your facts straight before you participate in something. The time spent on personal growth and self-improvement will lead to better decisions.

Cancer (June 21-July 22) — Participate in events that can teach you something. A receptive attitude will allow your imagination to run free. Sometimes, the simple things in life are

best.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22) — Don't feel you have to make a move or follow in someone else's footsteps. Consider your options and what makes sense, and you'll discover a manageable path.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22) — Ignore outside influences and carry on with your plans. The changes you want to implement will open doors to new beginnings. Attend events or reunions that enable you to address questionable issues.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23) — Physical activity will clear your head. Decisions regarding joint ventures will cost you if you let your emotions call the shots.

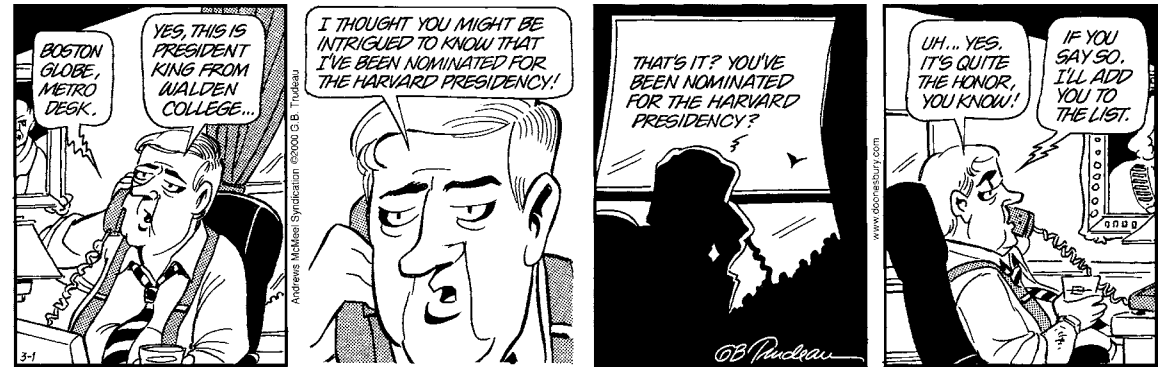
Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 22) — You'll face tough choices. Innovative thinking will be essential if you want to succeed. Take the blame for your mistakes and the credit for your triumphs.

Sagittarius (Nov. 23-Dec. 21) — Distance yourself from pushy, relentless individuals eager to mislead you and make you look bad. Trust in yourself and in what's tangible.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19) — Sidestep controversy and avoid being put in a precarious position. Take a unique approach to how you use your disposable funds to invest in yourself.

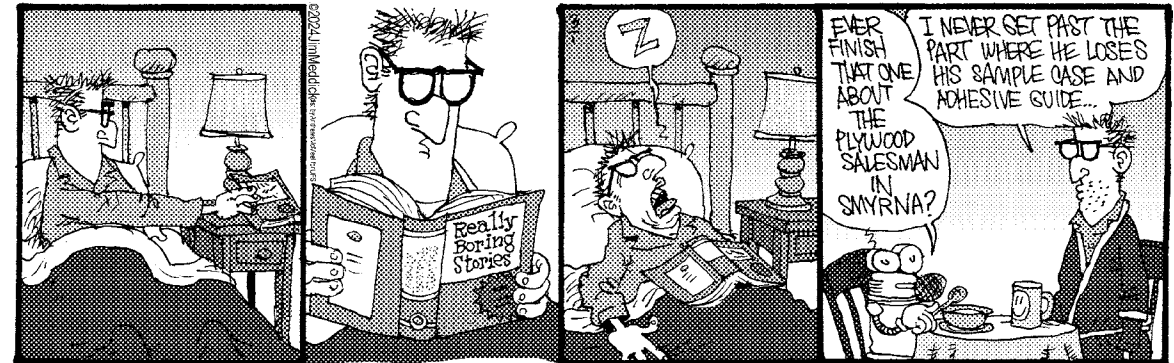
Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 19) — If you muscle your way forward, you will make mistakes or run into opposition. Patience and moderation will be necessary.

Doonesbury



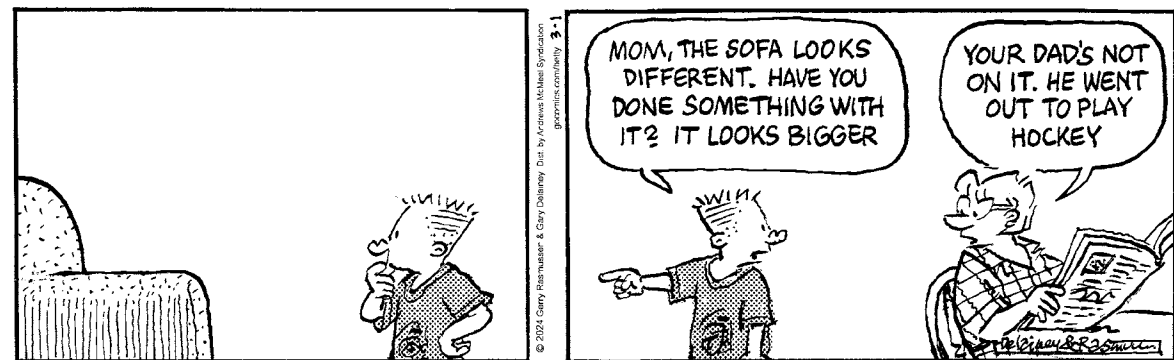
Gary Trudeau

Monty



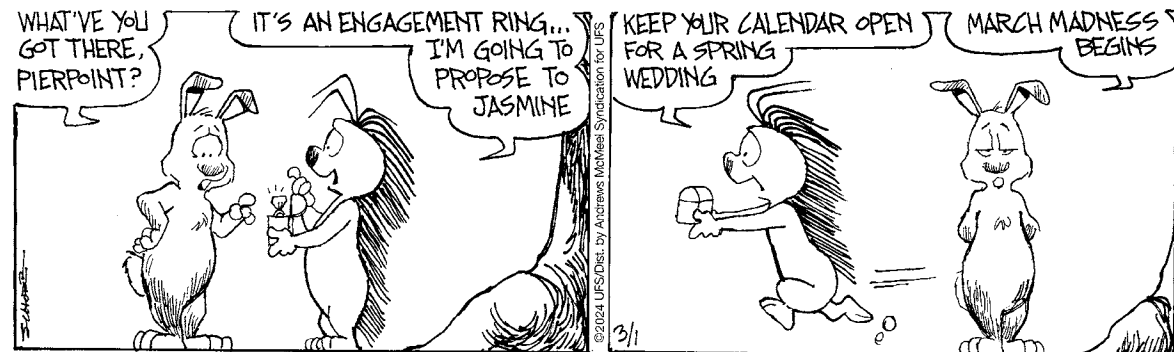
Jim Meddick

Betty



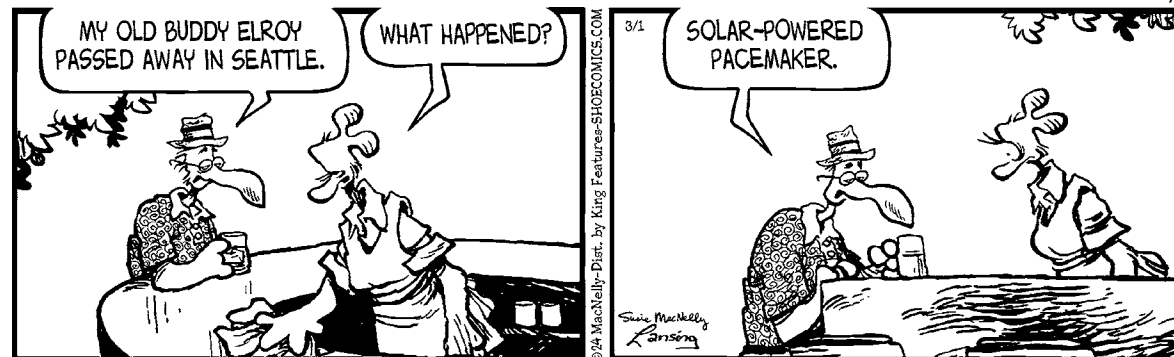
Gary Delaney & Gerry Rasmussen

The Grizzwells



Bill Schoor

Shoe



Jeff MacNelly

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SUDOKU

		4	2		6	3		
	3						4	5
6								
2		7		4				8
5			9	6				1
	8				7			
							5	
					2		8	7
			5	7				3

Level: Advanced

Here's How It Works:
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

Fun By The Numbers
Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

4	6	8	5	7	1	2	9	3
3	5	1	6	9	2	4	8	7
7	2	9	8	3	4	1	5	6
9	8	6	1	2	7	5	3	4
5	4	3	9	6	8	7	2	1
2	1	7	3	4	5	9	6	8
6	9	5	4	1	3	8	7	2
1	3	2	7	8	9	6	4	5
8	7	4	2	5	6	3	1	9

ANSWER:

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DID YOU KNOW?

- The average human brain contains around 78% water
- The average person falls asleep in 7 minutes
- The average person goes to the toilet 6 times a day
- The doorbell was invented in 1831

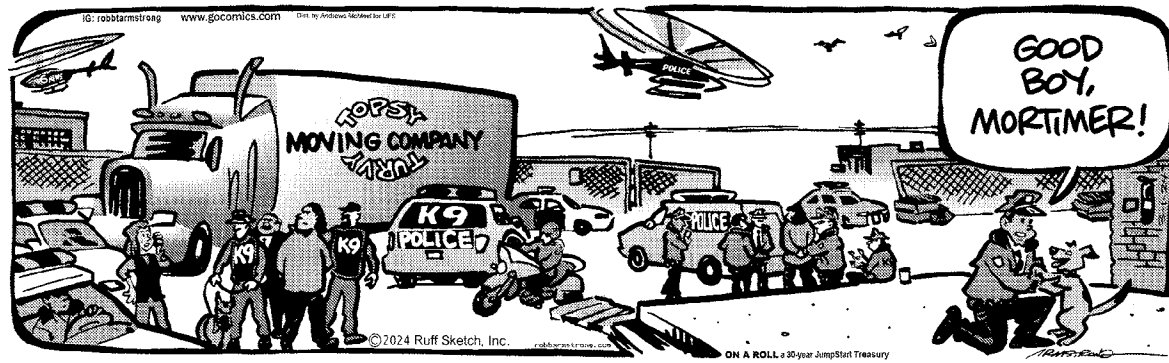


DID YOU KNOW?

- Bill Gates began programming computers at the age of 13
- Black on yellow are the 2 colors with the strongest impact
- Blonde beards grow faster than darker beards
- Bull's can run faster uphill than down
- Camels are born without humps
- Camel's milk doesn't curdle
- Birds need gravity to swallow

Jump Start

Robb Armstrong



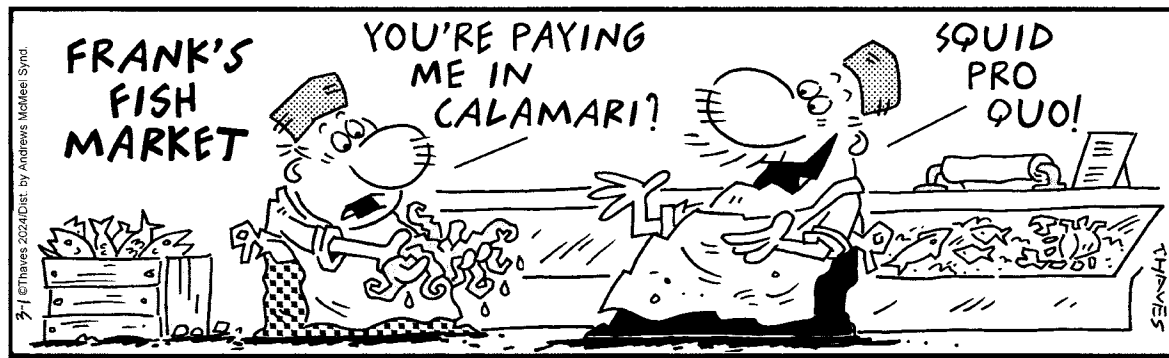
Thatababy

Paul Trap



Frank and Ernest

Thaves



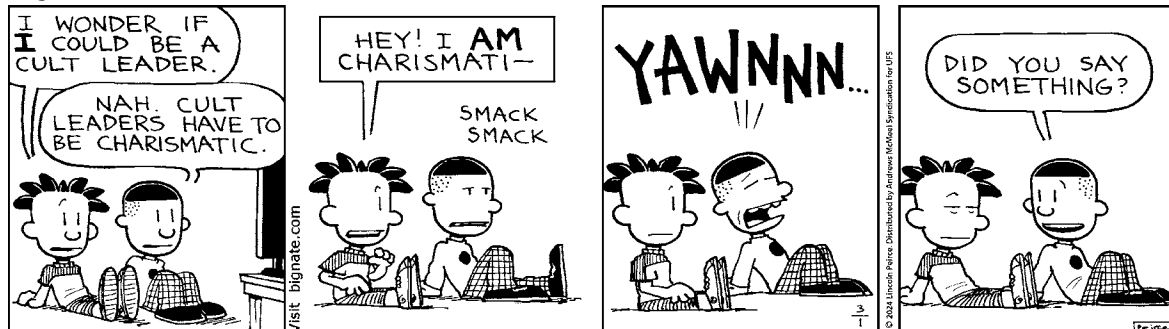
Arlo and Janis

Jimmy Johnson



Big Nate

Lincoln Peirce



Bridge

By Phillip Alder

North		03-01-24	
♠ J 6 4 3			
♥ A K 7 5 2			
♦ A 8 3			
♣ 6			
West		East	
♠ 2		♥ 9 8 7 5	
♥ 10 9 8 4		♠ Q J	
♦ Q J 10 9		♦ K 6 5 4 2	
♣ Q J 10 9		♣ 7 3	
South			
♠ A K Q 10			
♥ 6 3			
♦ 7			
♣ A K 8 5 4 2			
Dealer: South			
Vulnerable: North-South			
South	West	North	East
1♣	Pass	1♥	Pass
2♠	Pass	4NT	Pass
5♦	Pass	5♥	Pass
6♣	Pass	7♠	All pass
Opening lead: ♦ Q			

partner would then be sharing the failure with him.

In this deal, South reaches seven spades. After West leads the diamond queen, what should declarer do?

Although South had only 16 high-card points, he had so many playing tricks that he was right to jump-rebid two spades, which guaranteed at least five clubs (his first-bid suit) and was game-forcing. North then used two doses of Roman Key Card Blackwood, learning first that his partner had three key cards (two aces and the spade king, or three aces), and second that he had the spade queen and club king.

South starts with only nine top tricks: four spades, two hearts, one diamond and two clubs. He needs to establish his club suit, which will generate extra club winners and more trump tricks with ruffs in the dummy. And usually in this situation, it is right to play on the side-suit first.

Declarer wins with dummy's diamond ace, plays a club to his ace, ruffs a club low on the board, returns to his hand with a trump, ruffs another club with the spade jack, draws trumps, and claims.

Denis Waitley, a motivational speaker and author, said, "The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don't define them ...

or even seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will be sharing the adventure with them."

A bridge player knows his goal, but unless he counts winners and losers, he will often not reach it, and

Today in History

The Associated Press

Today is Friday, March 1, the 61st day of 2024. There are 305 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On March 1, 1974, seven people, including former Nixon White House aides H.R. Haldeman and John D. Ehrlichman, former Attorney General John Mitchell and former assistant Attorney General Robert Mardian, were indicted on charges of conspiring to obstruct justice in connection with the Watergate break-in.

On this date:

In 1815, Napoleon, having escaped exile in Elba, arrived in Cannes, France, and headed for Paris to begin his "Hundred Days" rule.

In 1867, Nebraska became the 37th state as President Andrew Johnson signed a proclamation.

In 1893, inventor Nikola Tesla first publicly demonstrated radio during a meeting of the National Electric Light Association in St. Louis by transmitting electromagnetic energy without wires.

In 1932, Charles A. Lindbergh Jr., the 20-month-old son of Charles and Anne Lindbergh, was kidnapped from the family home near Hopewell, New Jersey. (Remains identified as those of the child were found the following May.)

In 1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, back from the Yalta Conference, proclaimed the meeting a success as he addressed a joint session of Congress.

In 1954, four Puerto Rican nationalists opened fire from the spectators'

gallery of the U.S. House of Representatives, wounding five members of Congress.

In 1966, the Soviet space probe Venera 3 impacted the surface of Venus, becoming the first spacecraft to reach another planet; however, Venera was unable to transmit any data, its communications system having failed.

In 1971, a bomb went off inside a men's room at the U.S. Capitol; the radical group Weather Underground claimed responsibility for the pre-dawn blast.

In 2005, Dennis Rader, the church-going family man accused of leading a double life as the BTK serial killer, was charged in Wichita, Kansas, with 10 counts of first-degree murder. (Rader later pleaded guilty and received multiple life sentences.)

In 2010, Jay Leno returned as host of NBC's "The Tonight Show."

In 2012, online publisher and conservative blogger Andrew Breitbart died in Los Angeles at age 43.

In 2015, tens of thousands marched through Moscow in honor of slain Russian opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, who had been shot to death on Feb. 27.

In 2020, state officials said New York City had its first confirmed case of the coronavirus, a woman in her late 30s who had contracted the virus while traveling in Iran. Health officials in Washington state, announcing what was believed at the time to be the second U.S. death from the coronavirus, said the virus may have been circulating for weeks undetected in the Seattle area.

Taste Food

By Lynda Balslev

Miso is a paste made from fermented soybeans. It's a complete source of protein, rich in vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. Its fermentation process promotes the growth of probiotics and creates amino acids, including glutamic acid. Mushrooms are another umami-rich food, with a natural abundance of glutamate. The combination of these two ingredients brings savory meatiness to these little veggie wraps and will lure you back for second (and third) helpings.

When cooking with miso, it's important not to boil or overheat the paste. High heat will destroy its probiotics. Add miso into a recipe at the end of cooking to heat. Miso is also very salty, so moderate the salt in any recipe that includes it.

Miso Mushroom Lettuce Wraps

Active time: 15 minutes

Total time: 15 minutes, plus rice cooking time

Yield: Serves 2 to 4

Sauce:
2 tablespoons red miso paste
1 tablespoon soy sauce or tamari
1 tablespoon unseasoned rice vinegar

1 tablespoon mirin
1 tablespoon toasted sesame oil
1 tablespoon grapeseed oil
1 garlic clove, minced

Filling:
1 tablespoon grapeseed oil
12 ounces shiitake mushrooms, ends trimmed, chopped
2 celery ribs, finely diced
1 large carrot, finely diced

1 garlic clove, minced
3 scallions, white and green parts thinly sliced
1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems, plus more for garnish

1 cup basmati or jasmine rice, cooked per package instructions
Little gem lettuce leaves, about 10 to 12

Toasted sesame seeds for sprinkling, optional

Sriracha sauce for drizzling
 Combine the sauce ingredients in a bowl and whisk until smooth.

Prepare the vegetables: Heat the oil in a large cast iron skillet over medium heat. Add the mushrooms and cook until they release their juices and begin to brown at the edges, 5 to 7 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Add the celery and carrot and saute until the vegetables brighten in color and are crisp-tender, 2 to 3 minutes. Add the garlic and saute until fragrant, about 15 seconds. Add the sauce and stir to coat, then remove from the heat. Stir in the scallions and cilantro.

To serve, spoon a little rice in the center of a lettuce leaf. Top with some of the mushroom mixture. Garnish with toasted sesame seeds and additional cilantro, if desired, and a squeeze of Sriracha.

Ask the doctors

Dear Doctors: I've noticed that as I get older, jet lag hits me harder. I recently read that timing your meals on the day you fly can make a difference. Do you know if that's true? I'm also curious about apps like Timeshifter, which my son swears by. Can they help?

Dear Reader: Jet lag is the collection of unpleasant symptoms that occur when a flight takes you across multiple time zones. When you arrive, your body's inner clock is out of sync with your destination, and that exacts a physical toll.

Symptoms of jet lag include daytime fatigue, low mood, disordered sleep, brain fog and a general feeling of malaise. Some people experience gastric problems, including diarrhea or constipation. Traveling west is easier on the body clock than traveling east, because it prolongs the normal day-night cycle, but the more time zones that are involved, the greater the net effects of jet lag. And as you have discovered, the effects of jet lag can become more pronounced and harder to shake off as we age.

The challenge of jet lag lies in the complexity of our bodies' circadian rhythms. Also referred to as the body clock, they are synced to our planet's 24-hour cycle of daylight and darkness. Circadian rhythms trigger the hormonal, neural and other changes in the brain that oversee sleep and wake patterns. They also affect mood and cognition, are influenced by physical activity and control how our bodies process nutrients.

Making things even trickier is newer research that suggests each cell has its own internal clock. Emerging evidence also shows that exposure to as little as five minutes of bright light can cause the cir-

dian system to reset and recalibrate. With so many intricate and interlocking biological systems involved, it's easy to see how the problem of jet lag remains unsolved.

Resetting the body clock during travel typically takes about one day per time zone crossed. Popular strategies to speed recovery include scheduling exposure to light or dark, taking melatonin to signal sleep and using sleep medications.

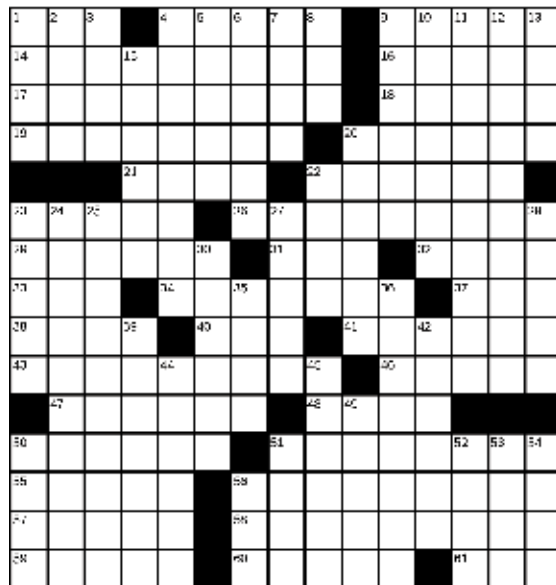
In a study published last fall, researchers from Northwestern University explored a possible role for food in managing jet lag. They found that scheduling meals to match the new zone helped to reset the body clock. Someone traveling to Europe from New York on an evening flight, for example, would have a light dinner and avoid eating on the flight. Upon arrival in the morning, they would have a hearty breakfast. That, along with deliberate exposure to bright daylight, was found to cut the typical six-day recovery time by as much as one-third.

Apps like the one your son recommends use each person's travel information to craft a detailed jet lag recovery schedule. This includes exposure to light and darkness and optimal sleep and wake times, both before the trip and after arrival at the destination. Some include an alarm function synced to gradually awaken the individual during a cycle of light sleep, which can help to minimize grogginess. Although scientific proof of their efficacy is lacking, anecdotal evidence suggests these apps can be helpful.

(Eve Glazier, M.D., MBA, is an internist and associate professor of medicine at UCLA Health. Elizabeth Ko, M.D., is an internist and assistant professor of medicine at UCLA Health.)

The New York Times Crossword

- ACROSS**
- 1 Record label for Pink, SZA and H.E.R.
 - 4 The "handsaw" in Hamlet's "I know a hawk from a handsaw"
 - 9 Song words preceding "his kiss"
 - 14 They're often caving, but not spelunking
 - 16 Everybody's opposite
 - 17 "That's genius!"
 - 18 Put off
 - 19 Show of Force?
 - 20 Attacked in a snowball fight
 - 21 A popular nightclub might have one
 - 22 Take risks
 - 23 Rutabaga, for one
 - 26 "It's all over for us!"
 - 29 Canine protector
 - 31 ___ system
 - 32 Stage of metamorphosis
 - 33 Syst. in which "Deaf Power" can be indicated by an open palm over one ear and the other hand forming a closed fist in the air
 - 34 Couches
 - 37 Hound
 - 38 Toni Morrison title
 - 40 Andre Young a.k.a. Dr. ___
 - 41 Architectural finish
 - 43 Foe-run land?
 - 46 Unnaturally white
 - 47 Work through seven stages, say
- DOWN**
- 1 World of Warcraft and Final Fantasy, for short
 - 2 Terse
 - 3 Offshore
 - 4 Starts off-key?
 - 5 ___-les-Bains, spa town on Lake Geneva
 - 6 Amended, as a map
 - 7 Some Minecraft blocks
 - 8 Org. that advises on ransomware risk mitigation
 - 9 Taking too much credit, say
 - 10 Simple skating jump
 - 11 Release of a new product to a limited audience
 - 12 "This relationship has been a bit overwhelming"
 - 48 Like holographic Pokémon cards
 - 50 Takes it easy
 - 51 Passage that might be a mess after a rainstorm
 - 55 Kidney-related
 - 56 Exonerating words
 - 57 Stand and deliver?
 - 58 "The Bachelor" outing
 - 59 Not natural, in a way
 - 60 Havens
 - 61 Rubik's Cube, once



PUZZLE BY SARAH SINCLAIR AND RAFAEL MUSA

- 13 Many a Comic-Con attendee
- 15 ___ Renaissance
- 20 Vexes
- 22 Skara ___, Scottish site of Europe's most complete Neolithic village
- 23 Ride
- 24 Pandemic health worker, say
- 25 Ones whose careers have turning points?
- 27 "The door's open!"
- 28 Attach
- 30 Some Best Buy offerings
- 35 "Fair point"
- 36 High-value ones are called "unicorns"
- 39 "Has the meeting already begun?"
- 42 Account recovery need
- 44 Gave a hoot
- 45 Bugles alternative
- 49 Lock horns
- 50 Cut down to size, maybe
- 51 Bilingual girl of TV and film
- 52 "Frozen" figure
- 53 Princess in "A Bug's Life"
- 54 Not natural, in a way
- 56 Many a humanitarian effort, in brief

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE



Reality Check

Dave Whamond



Online subscriptions: Today's puzzle and more than 7,000 past puzzles, nytimes.com/crosswords (\$39.95 a year).

Read about and comment on each puzzle: nytimes.com/wordplay.



DAVEY
Resource Group

**VIRGIN ISLANDS WATER
AND POWER AUTHORITY**

ELECTRIC FIELD INVENTORY ON ST. THOMAS

Davey Resource Group, a subcontractor for the project and a national leader in gathering accurate field data for utilities, will be visiting all the Authority's Transmission and Distribution assets including WAPA poles, customer meters, and padmount equipment.



BENEFITS OF GIS


Geographic Information Systems (GIS) will aid in assessments for disaster recovery, accelerate response time to system problems, offer asset tracking, load monitoring, and system analysis.



FEBRUARY 26–MARCH 8:

DRG crews will be tagging and collecting pictures with cameras & GPS tablets to take inventory from **February 26th-March 8th** on St. Thomas along sections of **Feeder 6B in the Main Street area and Feeders 6A/7A in the Botany Bay/Sorgenfri/Dorothea areas**. During this time there will also be manhole crews who will be directing traffic so that assessments can be safely done. Crews will be working along Highway 30 and Kronprindsens Gade from Frederiksberg Point northward through Charlotte Amalie West. A single lane closure will be required for a few locations along Highway 30 and a half road closure with 2-directional flagging will be required for the in-road features along Kronprindsens Gade. Traffic in all directions will be maintained.

Stay Connected

WWW.VIWAPA.VI    [@USVIWAPA](https://www.instagram.com/USVIWAPA)  [@VIWAPA](https://www.twitter.com/VIWAPA)

CONTACT WAPA:

Ambi Blyden, Project Manager, at 340-774-3552 x 2270 or email ambi.blyden@viwapa.vi or wapacommunications@viwapa.vi.

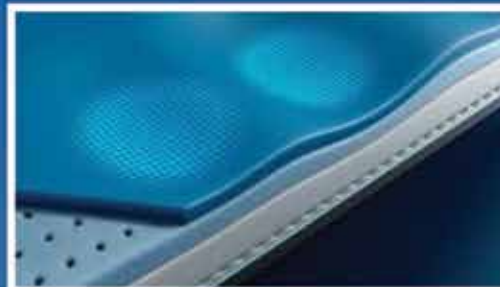


**Based on average heat index increase of TEMPUR-PROBREEZE compared to TEMPUR-PROAdapt models measured over 8 hour period.

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COOL AS YOU FALL ASLEEP



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CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 45 Floppy top

1 Betrayed nervousness

6 Accords mission

11 Texas isolated

12 Harrow blades

14 Historic riveter

15 Abound word on an octagon

17 Diamond corner

20 Makes a choice

22 Imitating meaty stew

26 Wanderer

28 Physicist Nikola

29 Yarns

31 Bit of wordplay

32 Lights-out tune

33 Table parts

34 Son of Zeus

36 Barking beast

38 Sewell of Dark City

40 Oklahoma city

43 Find darling

44 Sing like Bing



Yesterday's answer

DOWN

1 Knee protector

2 Boxing great

3 Chooses at the polls

4 Game host

5 Rx info

6 Hole number

7 John or Paul

8 Bewitches

9 Jazz combo

10 Dance unit

16 Barn sound

18 Lockup wife

19 Oodles horse

21 Places

23 Hold tightly

24 Wallop

25 Painter

27 Result of a mistake

30 Scrollwork shape

33 George W's

34 Swift wife

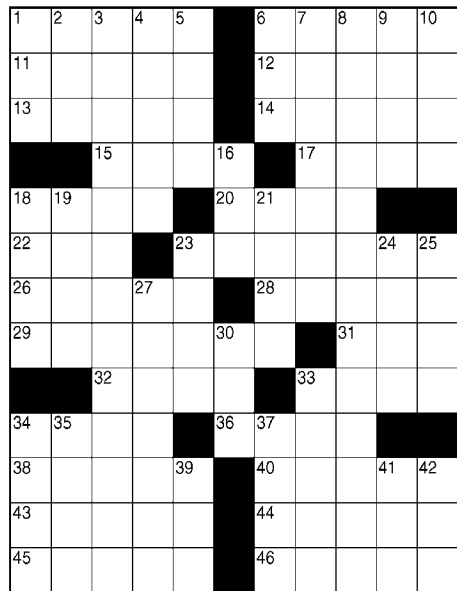
35 Uncivil horse

37 Make printing plates

39 Harden

41 Lawn material

42 One or more



3-1

AXYDLBAAXR is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-1 CRYPTOQUOTE

ETALX, VXCO RTKP TAC FCGGUOF WBOF, WCG G XK FABVUOF XBQAP NC PGABOF GB PCG AUF XG PBEC VUOGAK

VABOF. — LTABWUOC ETK

Yesterday's Cryptoquote: HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ALL YOU LEAPLINGS BORN ON FEBRUARY 29! — FROM YOUR PUZZLE FRIENDS

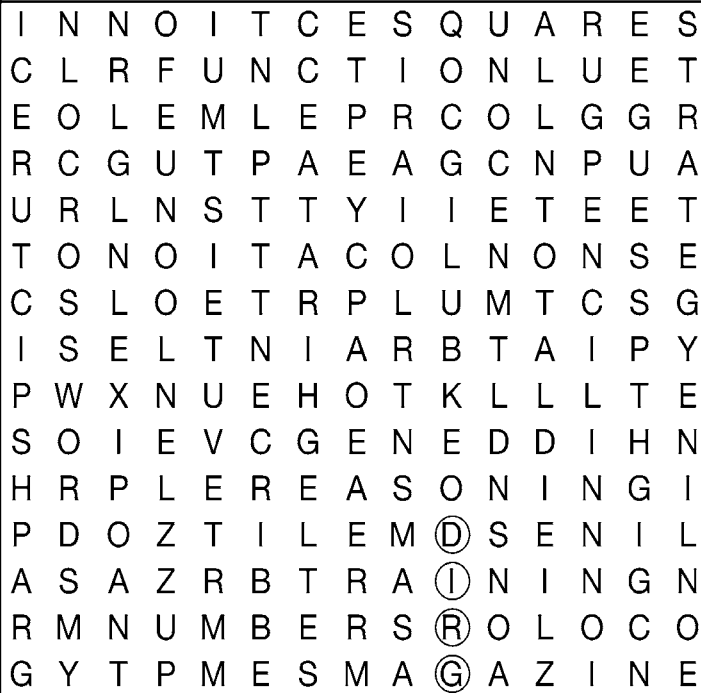
WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

NONOGRAMS

Solution: 9 letters



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3/1

Blank, Brain, Challenge, Clue, Cognition, Colors, Column, Crossword, Empty, Function, Graphs, Grid, Guess, Hidden, Illustrate, Image, Layout, Letter, Lines, Location, Logic, Magazine, Maze, Number, Online, Paint, Pattern, Pencil, Picture, Pixel, Print, Puzzle, Reasoning, Scale, Section, Solve, Squares, Steps, Strategy, Tile, Total, Training

Yesterday's Answer: Exciting

The NEW TELEWORD VINTAGE COLLECTION EDITION #1 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

CLUES

SOLUTIONS

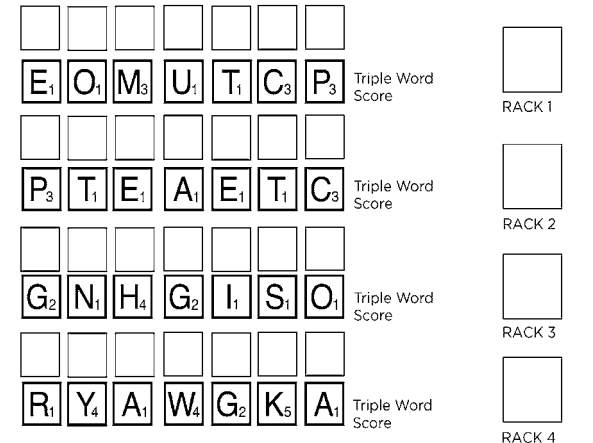
- 1 substantial (5)
2 adolescent girl's magazine (9)
3 Jessica and Ashlee (8)
4 the "W" in WD-40 (5)
5 until the cows come home (7)
6 fried potato fritters (6)
7 where a "flower" flows (8)



Thursday's Answers: 1. CHICAGO 2. VERSAILLES 3. FRECKLES 4. LEEWAY 5. CHOWDER 6. COLLEGES 7. ACHILLES

SCRABBLE

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PAR SCORE 200-210

by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

3-1-24

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Yesterday's answers

SCRABBLE GRAMS SOLUTION BY JUDD

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Table showing rack scores: RACK 1 = 18, RACK 2 = 9, RACK 3 = 20, RACK 4 = 24, JUDD'S TOTAL = 71, PAR SCORE 45-55

WUZZLES section with 'The He He Doghouse' puzzle and 'CHICKEN' vertical puzzle.

Yesterday's answers

WUZZLES Answers section with solutions for 'Fat chance' and 'It went from top to bottom'.

CROSSWORD

By THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 39 King or czar member
 - 40 Bile source
 - 41 Asparagus unit
 - 42 Perfect places

- DOWN**
- 1 Horrify
 - 2 Brain cases
 - 3 — up (got dressed)
 - 4 Track shape
 - 5 Like wind and solar energy
 - 6 Binary digit
 - 7 Peace, to Caesar
 - 8 Harmony
 - 9 Aegean island
 - 10 In setting shape
 - 16 Tea urn
 - 20 Esteemed
 - 21 Break off
 - 24 TVs Danson
 - 25 Join forces
 - 26 Sing like a bird
 - 27 Statue
 - 28 Flag
 - 29 Some fishers
 - 30 Carries base, in a way
 - 36 Pasture
 - 37 Make goofs

P	A	C	E	D	P	A	C	T	S
A	L	A	M	O	A	P	A	R	T
D	I	S	C	S	R	O	S	I	E
T	E	E	M	S	T	O	P		
B	A	S	E	O	P	T	S		
A	L	A	G	O	U	L	A	S	H
R	O	V	E	R	T	E	S	L	A
S	T	O	R	I	E	S	P	U	N
T	A	P	S	L	E	G	S		
A	R	E	S	S	E	A	L		
R	U	F	U	S	T	U	L	S	A
A	D	O	R	E	C	R	O	O	N
B	E	R	E	T	H	A	N	D	Y

Yesterday's answer

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					36 37				38
39									40
41									42

A X Y D L B A A X R
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

3-2 **CRYPTOQUOTE**
Q K K E Q X C K Y P N M R C D H V X
M N Q Z X Y F N X X D N R Z O Q F C.

— FRKKRQL CDQINCONQZN
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: MARCH, WHEN DAYS ARE GETTING LONG, LET THY GROWING HOURS BE STRONG TO SET RIGHT SOME WINTRY WRONG. — CAROLINE MAY

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD**.

MANDATORY RESORT FEES

Solution: 5 letters

S	T	S	B	T	S	T	S	E	U	G	T	D	L	F
F	N	S	A	O	C	A	S	I	N	O	R	I	A	E
A	E	O	L	Ⓟ	Ⓞ	Ⓞ	L	I	U	A	M	N	C	E
C	M	A	I	E	S	K	K	R	C	A	A	I	O	S
I	N	C	T	T	W	R	I	T	I	A	R	N	L	C
L	R	C	R	U	A	O	I	N	E	P	K	G	U	L
I	E	E	P	R	D	T	N	G	X	E	S	A	C	
T	V	S	V	O	E	E	O	R	E	N	T	V	E	L
I	O	S	O	R	N	H	S	M	A	O	I	S	Y	E
E	G	D	C	A	P	T	S	B	M	R	M	A	R	A
S	E	U	N	E	V	E	R	E	R	O	T	U	R	N
T	H	C	A	E	B	U	R	A	O	S	C	T	A	E
S	E	R	V	I	C	E	S	R	V	E	X	C	C	R
O	P	E	R	A	T	I	O	N	S	E	E	T	A	R
C	O	N	C	I	E	R	G	E	O	N	L	I	N	E

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Access, Accommodations, Arrival, Beach, Booking, Carry, Casino, Cleaner, Concierge, Costs, Cover, Credit Card, Customer, Dining, Door, Extra, Facilities, Features, Fees, Government, Guests, Local, Maintenance, Market, Online, Operations, Parking, Phone, Pool, Price, Rate, Rent, Revenue, Rooms, Secure, Services, Spas, Stay, Tour, Towels, Travel, Urban
Yesterday's Answer: Computers
The NEW Volume 76 can be purchased online at www.WonderWordBooks.com, or call 1-800-642-6480. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

7 LITTLE WORDS

Find the 7 words to match the 7 clues. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in each solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

- | CLUES | SOLUTIONS |
|------------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 gather once more (9) | _____ |
| 2 air in motion (4) | _____ |
| 3 champion (6) | _____ |
| 4 well-behaved (8) | _____ |
| 5 grasslands of eastern Africa (7) | _____ |
| 6 Canadian novelist Miriam (5) | _____ |
| 7 whim (7) | _____ |

ER	REC	ER	ND	VAN
NA	LY	ENE	CE	MA
ONV	CA	TO	NN	WI
EWS	WI	SA	NN	PRI

Friday's Answers: 1. MEATY 2. SEVENTEEN 3. SIMPSONS 4. WATER 5. FOREVER 6. LATKES 7. RIVERBED

SCRABBLE

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G ₂	N ₁	I ₁	F ₄	I ₁	F ₄	R ₁			
I ₁	L ₁	R ₁	T ₁	Y ₄	S ₁	G ₂			
G ₂	L ₁	A ₁	B ₃	R ₁	E ₁	A ₁			
O ₁	N ₁	U ₁	R ₁	N ₁	W ₄	E ₁			

PAR SCORE 155-165
by JUDD
FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

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Yesterday's answers

SCRABBLE GRAMS SOLUTION BY JUDD
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C ₃	O ₁	M ₃	P ₃	U ₁	T ₁	E ₁	RACK 1 =	<u>89</u>	
P ₃	E ₁	C ₃	T ₁	A ₁	T ₁	E ₁	RACK 2 =	<u>83</u>	
H ₄	O ₁	G ₂	G ₂	I ₁	N ₁	S ₁	RACK 3 =	<u>86</u>	
G ₂	A ₁	W ₄	K ₅	Y ₄			RACK 4 =	<u>48</u>	
PAR SCORE 200-210								JUDD'S TOTAL	<u>306</u>

WUZZLES
WORD PUZZLES BY WOOD TOM

Each Wuzzle is a word riddle which creates a disguised word, phrase, name, place, saying, etc. For example, NOON GOOD = GOOD AFTERNOON

3 WUZZLES BOOKLETS
"The Best of Wuzzles" (\$4.00), "More of the Best of Wuzzles" (\$4.50), and "Wuzzles for Kids" (\$4.25) are available, postpaid, from Wuzzles, Box 1141, Cedar Rapids, IA 52406

1. Baloney Baloney Baloney
Baloney Baloney Baloney
Baloney Baloney Baloney
Baloney Baloney Baloney
Baloney Baloney Baloney
Baloney Baloney Baloney
Baloney Baloney Baloney

2. **DOOR + DOOR**

Print Your Answers Here:
1.
2.

Yesterday's answers

WUZZLES Answers

1. He's in the doghouse
2. Chicken out

Vans / Trucks

DUMPTRUCK and LOW-BOY SET UP \$25,000 OBO.
1994 International 4,900 Dumptruck and 1986 Interstate 20 Ton Trailer, lowboy with airbrakes. Located St. Croix. Call: (340) 778-2446.

Vans / Trucks



For Sale: 2004 Delivery Box Truck. \$15k or best offer. For more information, please call 340-778-9671.

Cars / SUVs



2017 Toyota 4Runner TRD. Well cared for. Great condition. Grey. All services completed at Toyota of St. Thomas on schedule. 44,920 miles. \$36,500. Call/Text 340-344-6914.

2019 Jeep Rubicon. 26,000 miles. Just like new. Located on St. Croix. 1 Owner. Call 340-201-1314.

Legal Notices

Legal Ads: Please email Classifieds@DailyNews.vi or call 340-714-2222. Thank you.

Superior Court Division St. Croix The Estate of James Lander, Deceased. Case No: SX-23-PB-115 Notice to Creditors Notice is hereby given that the Probate has been filed in the above Estate. All persons having claims against the estate are required to present all claims within Thirty (30) days from the date of this notice, verified by affidavit, and all persons indebted to the estate are required to make payment, promptly, to **Elenor Lander - c/o Lydia L. Moolenaar, Esquire**, 2118 Company Street, Christiansted, VI 00820

Legal Notices

In the Superior Court of the Virgin Islands Division of St. Thomas and St. John In the Matter of the Estate of Estella A. Penn, Deceased. Case No. ST-2023-PB-00024 Notice to Creditors Notice is given that the **Estate of Estella A. Penn** has been admitted to probate without administration in this Court. All persons having claims against the Estate are required to present properly verified vouchers and all persons indebted to the Estate are required to present payment immediately to the Court and undersigned attorneys at the below address. **By Order dated 12/01/2023. SmockLaw, P.C.**, P.O. Box 1498, St. Thomas, VI 00804 Tel: (340) 777-5737/Fax: 777-5758

Professional Services



Legal Notices



PUBLIC NOTICE

In accordance with 44 CFR Part 9 for Executive Orders 11988 & 11990 VIDE Proposed Property Acquisition St. Thomas, USVI FEMA-DR-4340-VI

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is giving the public notice that the Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) intends to use FEMA funds to purchase land for the option to construct a Curriculum Center on St. Thomas. On September 19, 2017, Hurricane Maria caused extensive damage to the US Virgin Islands (USVI), resulting in the President declaring a major disaster on September 20, 2017. This declaration allows federal disaster assistance to be available to affected communities and certain nonprofit organizations in accordance with the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act of 1974 (Stafford Act; 42 U.S.C. 5172), as amended. FEMA is issuing this notice in accordance with 44 CFR Part 9, implementing Executive Orders (EO) 11988 (Floodplain Management) and 11990 (Protection of Wetlands).

VIDE proposes to purchase seven adjacent parcels of land for the option of relocating the Curriculum Center to the site while VIDE is in the process of designing their projects. The land is located within the designated floodplain, the proposed facility likely qualifies as a "critical action" under 44 CFR Part 9.4, thus FEMA is required to evaluate alternatives to the proposal. At this time, VIDE is only proposing the purchase of land so the alternatives FEMA is evaluating are; no action meaning not approving the purchase of the land or the proposed action to purchase the land. If the purchase proceeds and VIDE later proposes construction of the Curriculum Center at the site, FEMA anticipates writing an environmental assessment to further evaluate alternatives under applicable laws and executive orders.

The land VIDE proposes to purchase is located on Gasverks Gade adjacent to the Government Employee Retiree System building and north-east of the Arturo R. Watlington Sr. Post Office on Veteran's Drive. Together, the seven parcels of land amount to approximately four acres.

FEMA has developed an 8-step to evaluate the purchase of the property parcels in the special flood hazard area. The 8-step will be posted on FEMA's DR-4335/4340-VI Facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/FEMAUSVirginIslands/>; VIDE's websites at: www.vide.vi and www.newschooolsvide.com; and ODR's website at: www.usviodr.com. Comments about this project, potential alternatives, and floodplain impacts may be submitted in writing within 15 days of the date of this publication to: FEMA 4335-4340 JFO, Attn: Environmental Planning and Historic Preservation, 4500 Sunny Isle Shopping Center, Unit 37 and 38, Christiansted, VI 00820; or via email at FEMA-4340-Comment@fema.dhs.gov. If substantive comments are received, FEMA will evaluate and address the comments as part of the environmental documentation for this project.



TERRITORIAL HOSPITAL REDEVELOPMENT TEAM ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS



Invitation for Bids: **IFB-003-THRT-C-024 (C)**

Solicitation Period: **February 21, 2024 to March 22, 2024**

Pursuant to Title 19, Subsection 245 (a) of the Virgin Islands Code, the Government Hospitals and Health Facilities Corporation, hereinafter referred to as GHFHC, The Territorial Hospital Redevelopment Team (THRT) on behalf of the Governor Juan F. Luis Hospital & Medical Center is requesting bids from qualified and licensed contractors to furnish all labor, tools, equipment, machinery and supplies necessary for the **Development of the JFLH Five (5) Acre Leased Parcel**

Pre-Bid Conference: **Wednesday, February 28, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. via Microsoft Teams.**

Site visit will occur immediately following the Pre-Bid Conference.

Bid Due Date: **Friday, March 22, 2023 by 2:00 p.m. Atlantic Standard Time**

Bids will be received by The Territorial Hospital Redevelopment Team Division of Procurement at the following email address:

Electronic Submission: ebids.proposalsTHRT@thrtvi.org

Documents may be obtained from the Territorial Hospital Redevelopment Team at <https://thrtvi.org>. For information, please contact the THRT Procurement Division via email at ebids.proposalsTHRT@thrtvi.org.

Darryl A. Smalls
Executive Director

The Virgin Islands
DAILY NEWS
A Pulitzer Prize-Winning Newspaper
ST. CROIX ST. JOHN ST. THOMAS TORTOLA

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Grounded Café

4006 Estate Diamond St. Croix

Land For Sale

Real Estate, land for sale on St. Thomas: For Sale: Two (2), 1/2-acre building lots for sale (or combine for a 1 full-acre). Zone R-1, **Located: Upper Dorothea.** Brass view, with views of the beach and surf in Hull Bay. Quiet road. Reasonable slope, good approach for driveway from estate road. \$159K, \$169K. **Call 207-891-6024.**



Business Space For Rent

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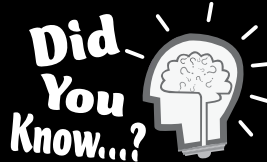
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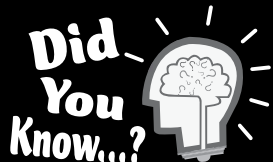
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Photo by Apple TV+

Noel Fielding in a scene from "The Completely Made-Up Adventures of Dick Turpin."

Tune in Tonight

'Dick Turpin' premieres tonight

"The Past is a foreign country; they do things differently there." So wrote L.P. Hartley, in his 1953 novel "The Go-Between." And the phrase has been cited ever since.

Unfortunately, it no longer applies to great swaths of our entertainment world. In an increasingly franchised media, the past is just another "brand" — a fact reflected in two new series premiering today.

As the title implies, "The Completely Made-Up Adventures of Dick Turpin" is more silly than serious. Streaming on Apple TV+, it stars Noel Fielding ("The Mighty Boosh," "The Great British Bake Off") in the title role as a legendary 18th-century British bandit, or highwayman, and follows his roguish gang as they steal from stagecoaches, speak saucily to wenches and confound pompous authorities and lawmen in the person of Jonathan Wilde, played by Hugh Bonneville ("Downton Abbey").

It's all terribly glib and studded with punchlines and knowing asides to contemporary concerns. Raised by a butcher with the expectation that he will follow in his gruff dad's footsteps, Turpin declares he's a vegan and can't slaughter creatures, and makes elaborate model houses fashioned out of vegetables instead.

Except to make such rather weak gags, there is no reason why the characters should be beset by 21st-century concerns. There is no real sense of what "Turpin" is trying to send up or satirize.

— Now streaming on Britbox, the period mystery adaptation "Agatha Christie's Murder Is Easy" is another good example of how historical periods can be whitewashed and made more palatable to contemporary audiences through the use of color-blind casting.

In "Easy," the lead sleuth is Luke Fitzwilliam (David Jonsson), a Nigerian national traveling by train through a picturesque British countryside, circa 1950, on his way to a diplomatic assignment in London. He strikes up a conversation with Miss Pinkerton (Penelope Wilton, "Downton Abbey"), who informs him that her bucolic village of Wychwood Under Ashe has seen a series of untimely deaths and that she fears there is a killer on the loose.

So, we are expected to believe that a foreigner and diplomat will insert himself into mid-20th-century village life and that all the rustic folk will think nothing of a mysterious African fellow snooping around their homes and thatch-roofed cottages.

Not to labor the point, but Christie's characters lived in a world far removed from our own. One need only look into the evolution of the title of the 1939 Christie novel that has come to be known as "And Then There Were None," to realize just how far that author was from the idea of a color-blind Britain.

But we're reminded time and again that not even viewers of BBC-produced period series want to think that hard, "go there" or consider how the past might have been different. So instead, we have a safe, rather sanitized experience, with historical eras completely absolved and shorn of all thorny notions.

Not unlike Hallmark's recent romp through the Jane Austen canon, "Easy" turns Christie's works and her world into a theme-park ride, with a historical lobotomy the price of admission.

— Franchise expansions of another sort, the 2023 animated movie "Megamind vs. the Doom Syndicate" and the new series "Megamind Rules!" stream on Peacock.

— The Roku Channel streams the new game show/competition series "Side Hustlers."

Tonight's Other Highlights

— Meech moves to Atlanta as "BMF" (8 p.m., Starz, TV-MA) enters its third season.

— The voices of Ben Kingsley, Bill Murray and Neel Sethi animate the 2016 adaptation of "The Jungle Book" (8 p.m., Disney, TV-PG).

— Family meals loom large on "Blue Bloods" (10 p.m., CBS, TV-14).

Cult Choice

Progressives (Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy, in his last role) have a hard time seeing their daughter (Katharine Houghton) engaged to an accomplished Black surgeon (Sidney Poitier) in the 1967 drama "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" (6 p.m., TCM, TV-PG).

Series Notes

Yakuza assassins arrive from Japan on "S.W.A.T." (8 p.m., CBS, TV-14) ... "Password" (8 p.m., NBC, r, TV-PG) ... "WWE Friday Night SmackDown" (8 p.m., Fox, TV-PG) ... Cruelty-free marshmallows on "Shark Tank" (8 p.m., ABC, TV-PG) ... As a conflagration rages, a family resists orders to evacuate on "Fire Country" (9 p.m., CBS, TV-14) ... "Dateline" (9 p.m., NBC) ... "20/20" (9 p.m., ABC).

Late Night

Matt Damon and Danielle Pinnock drop by "The Late Show With Stephen Colbert" (11:35 p.m., CBS, r) ... Jimmy Fallon welcomes Dave Bautista, Jesse Tyler Ferguson and Esther Povitsky on "The Tonight Show" (11:35 p.m., NBC) ... Sarah Paulson, Punkie Johnson and Brad Meltzer visit "Late Night With Seth Meyers" (12:35 a.m., NBC, r) ... Taylor Tomlinson hosts Billy Eichner, Nico Santos and Pete Holmes on "After Midnight" (12:35 a.m., CBS, r).

Briefs

Oprah Winfrey leaving WeightWatchers board

Former talk show host Oprah Winfrey is leaving WeightWatchers board of directors and donating all of her interest in the company to a museum.

Shares of WW International Inc. tumbled more than 23% in Thursday morning trading.

Winfrey, who told People magazine in December that she was using a weight-loss medication, has served on the company's board since 2015. She will not stand for re-election at WeightWatchers annual meeting in May.

WW International said in a regulatory filing that Winfrey's decision "was not the result of any disagreement with the company on any matter relating to the company's operations, policies or practices." The size of its board will go from 10 to nine members following its annual meeting, the New York company added.

"I look forward to continuing to advise and collaborate with WeightWatchers and CEO Sima Sistani in elevating the conversation around recognizing obesity as a chronic condition, working to reduce stigma, and advocating for health equity," Winfrey said.

According to FactSet, Winfrey's stake of about 1.1 million shares made her the company's largest individual shareholder, with a stake of 1.43%.

Bacon weighs in on Beyoncé's country hit

Is Beyoncé's "Texas Hold 'Em" a country song?

Of course it is. The single from the forthcoming "Renaissance, Act II" is loaded with the kind of country tropes that defines the genre.

It saddles up with a cowboy hat on and drinks "rugged whiskey" at an "all night hoedown" while emphasizing the banjo of Rhiannon Giddens, the Pulitzer Prize-winning folk-country artist who has been focused on the hidden history of Black country music, going back to her beginnings with the Carolina Chocolate Drops.

In fact, in terms of semiotic signifiers, "Texas Hold 'Em" — the work of a real life Texan, who grew up in Houston, which she refers to as "my city" in the song — is a great deal more "country" than much

of the slick, warmed-over pop that populates the country charts.

Now, the Philly-born actor and musician Kevin Bacon has weighed into the Beyoncé debate, musically speaking.

Bacon was inducted into the Philadelphia Music Alliance Walk of Fame last year, as the Bacon Brothers along with his older brother Michael. Back in 2022, they wrote and released "It's a Philly Thing," a song of hometown pride about all that entails with residing in the 215.

Followers of the "Diner" and "Footloose" star's Instagram feed know that he often posts videos of him playing music while hanging out with the barnyard animals on the Connecticut farm he shares with his wife, actress Kyra Sedgwick.

On Monday, the latest edition in the series caught Bacon and Sedgwick mingling with their ponies and pigs and covering "Texas Hold 'Em," in a decidedly countryfied version: Bacon plays mandolin and Sedgwick interjects the excitement with energetic cries of "Hoo!"

Despite the convincing musical argument and show of solidarity with Beyoncé, the argument rages on. The commenters on the post are mostly Bacon and Sedgwick fans, but there are still plenty of naysayers and gatekeepers, taking exception to Bacon covering the "non country song" or saying that "Texas Hold 'Em" is "hideous" and admonishing Beyoncé to "stay in her lane."

Cyndi Lauper inks deal with Swedish firm

— Legendary pop icon Cyndi Lauper, who rose to fame in the 1980s with hits such as "Time After Time" and "Girls Just Want To Have Fun," has entered a partnership with the Swedish masterminds behind the immersive virtual concert ABBA Voyage.

The partnership announced Thursday by the Pophouse Entertainment Group co-founded by ABBA singer Björn Ulvaeus, involves the acquisition of a majority share of the award-winning singer-songwriter's music. The aim is to develop new ways to bring Lauper's music to fans and younger audiences through new performances and live experiences.

Lauper said she agreed to the sale, for an undisclosed amount, when it became apparent the Swedish company wasn't just in it for the money. "Most suits, when you tell them an idea, their eyes glaze over, they just want your greatest hits," Lauper told The Associated Press.

— *The Associated Press*



Oprah Winfrey

Winslet's 'Regime' is not a dictatorship — behind the scenes, at least

By **HILARY FOX**
The Associated Press

Kate Winslet is running things — on and off the set of her new TV show, “The Regime.”

In the HBO show premiering Sunday, she plays Elena Vernham — also known as The Chancellor, the ruler of a fictional country in Europe, possibly near Poland. Winslet, who is also an executive producer on the show, says she’s never been offered a character like this “in her life.”

“I’ve never read a script like this before. I’ve never laughed so much at the material that was in front of me, as we did every single day, and I really just felt this was an exciting, challenging, terrifying opportunity for me to step totally out of my comfort zone,” she says.

As the show’s worshipped leader, she came face to face with many huge artworks of herself.

“Initially I thought to myself, oh God, that’s so brilliant. I’ve got to have one. And then I got so sick of looking at them that towards the end I just wanted to burn them all,” Winslet laughs.

Sometimes, the production team would neglect to warn her of a large, sequined image of her face on set.

“Funnily enough I don’t like looking at me. It’s not a comfortable place to be. So yes, there was a, there was a lot of being confronted with that, this heightened version of myself,” she says. “I just had to kind of roll with it.”

That’s one of the many major differences between the star and the dictator — who loves to be loved by her people, addressing them regularly and also, occasionally, serenading



Kate Winslet in a scene from “The Regime.”

Photo by ASSOCIATED PRESS

them with a song (“Santa Baby”).

Among her loyal subjects: Guillaume Gallienne, as her husband Nicholas; Andrea Riseborough, who runs the palace, and Danny Webb as one of her many ministers, subservient to her bizarre pronouncements. Martha Plimpton plays a U.S. senator and Hugh Grant is Elena’s political rival.

Things in the country are running smoothly — well, as smoothly as they can while Elena deals with her latest hypochondria, paranoia

and abandonment issues. Then she hires a soldier, played by Matthias Schoenaerts, in her fight against tiny deadly spores — and begins a relationship with repercussions that shake the regime, and the country, to its core, moving her battles to a much larger scale.

The dark comedy, from “Succession” writer Will Tracy, is billed as a twisted love story about two people who should never have fallen in love, which is “exactly why everybody

should watch it,” says Schoenaerts.

“The world is full of people that should have never met,” he says.

Luckily, off screen, the results were less damaging with lots of laughter on set, Schoenaerts recalls: “It gives us some relief because, obviously, sometimes we really have to go (to dark) places.”

And it was much less of a dictatorship than on screen.

“She leads by example,” Schoenaerts says of Winslet. “She’s al-

ways on time, always prepared, always kind, generous, open and extremely sharp. And she’s a lot of fun to work with.”

“The Regime” directors Stephen Frears and Jessica Hobbs both agree that a Winslet set is more like a welcoming theater company.

“It did feel like that,” says Winslet, who has appeared in amateur theatrical productions.

Gallienne remembers that Winslet would take time out to talk to any new cast members so that they felt comfortable and part of the team.

“She’s very direct, very honest, but very simple and very kind,” he says. “As she says, you know, learn your lines, focus and deliver.”

Winslet says that she takes being number one on the call sheet very seriously and tries to lead by example, to “lift the energy every day and just deliver it and show up and, and really be there for everybody.”

“As I’m getting older I feel responsibility and gratitude, you know, both simultaneously,” Winslet explains. “It’s a really privileged position to be in. And I really respect it.”

The self-centered chancellor is a far cry from any real-life figure, if you were wondering, with Winslet describing her character’s theatrics as “so enormous and delicious.”

“And her hysteria at times, and how volatile she is, how vulnerable she is. I mean, I just couldn’t compare her to anyone,” she says.

“I couldn’t say there were things that I actually liked about her,” adds Winslet, “but there were things that really just made me laugh.”

Georgia is spending more than \$1B subsidizing moviemaking. Lawmakers want some limits

By **JEFF AMY**
The Associated Press

Georgia House members are moving to tighten Georgia’s lucrative film tax credit, limiting the value of credits moviemakers can cash in by selling them to others and requiring them to spend more in the state.

The House voted 131-34 on Thursday to approve House Bill 1180, sending it to the Senate for more debate.

Thanks in large part to tax breaks, productions including “The Hunger Games,” the Marvel movies, the Fast & Furious installment “Furious 7” and many others shot in Georgia have made the Peach State a hub for movies and television shows that might otherwise have been shot in Hollywood.

The program has supported thousands of Georgia jobs and the creation of several thriving studios. But it’s hugely expensive — the state is projected to give out \$1.35 billion in credits this year alone. Supporters of the measure say they want to preserve Georgia’s film industry, but protect the state against a limitless liability.

“We feel like today we have a bill in front of you that is going to make sure the taxpayers of Georgia get the best bang for their buck while ensuring that film continues to thrive in the state of Georgia,” said the bill’s sponsor, Republican Kasey Carpenter of Dalton.

Opponents warn that the cap on credit transfers could cause companies to leave Georgia, in the same way that companies came to Georgia from other states with caps.

“If it’s not broke, don’t try to fix it,” said Rep. Long Tran, a Dunwoody Democrat who has produced short films. “We’re not just competing with other states, we’re competing globally, and this industry is rapidly changing.”

Georgia grants state income tax credits for up to 30% of the cost of a television or film production in the state, once a company spends at least \$500,000. But most production companies don’t have enough income tax liability to use all the credits and they can’t be redeemed for cash. Production companies can sell the credits to other people who owe taxes in Georgia, usually at a slight discount.

But lawmakers have grown concerned that billions of dollars in tax credits are outstanding, fearing they

could all be cashed in at once. In 2022, the state auditor estimated \$1.4 billion in such taxes were outstanding.

The measure says that unlimited credits can still be given out to production companies, and they can still cash in any amount to cover their own taxes. But it would say that only amount of credits equal to 2.5% of the state budget could be transferred in any year. That’s about \$900 million this year.

“As the industry has flourished, so have the associated costs to our state revenues,” said Rep. Clint Crowe, a Republican from Jackson. “It is imperative that we implement measures to safeguard our fiscal stability while preserving the attractiveness of our incentive program.”

The film tax credit has spurred a

big increase in movies and TV shows made in Georgia, but state-sponsored evaluations show the credit’s cost outweighs its economic benefit. A study last year by Georgia State University suggested the state saw a return of less than 20 cents on the dollar.

Credits start at 20% of production spending, but currently rise to 30% if a movie or television show displays Georgia’s peach logo. The bill would require companies to do more to earn the 30% credit rate.

Productions would have to meet four of nine requirements, such as hiring a crew that is at least half Georgia residents, having half of all vendors be Georgia-based companies, spending at least \$30 million in the state, or spending at least half the days shooting in counties where few movies have been filmed.

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Large Bone in Pollack  5.99 lb	Turkey Wings  2.18 lb	Papaya  1.79 lb	Culantro Bunch  1.49 ea	Russet Potatoes  3.99 ea	Pumpkin/Calabaza  1.58 lb	Green or Ripe Plantains  1.39 ea

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Folklife Festival

Ten Sleepless Knights presents the annual Folklife Festival from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at the Whim Museum.

Enjoy activities and demonstrations highlighting Virgin Islands culture, including live music, cooking demonstrations, games and more. Local food and drink will be available for purchase.

Estate Sale

Castle St. Croix will be holding an estate sale from 2 to 6 p.m. today, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday at Tamarind Reef Resort.

The sale will feature antiques, rare finds, cars, furniture, art, paintings, home furnishings and much more.

Dr. Seuss Day

Pediatric Care Center presents Dr. Seuss Day from 4 to 5 p.m. today.

The event, for ages 5 to 10, will include activities such as storytelling, refreshments and good-

ie bags. Parents must accompany children. Space is limited. Direct message on Facebook to register or call **340-719-0681**.

Plant Sale

St. George Village Botanical Garden will hold its monthly plant sale from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday at the nursery.

Moonlight movies

Christiansted National Historic Site presents Moonlight Movies, with a screening of "Zootopia," at 6:30 tonight.

Bring your lawn chairs or blankets and enjoy.

Dazzled Live Music

Dazzled will be hosting live music Friday with Thee Troublemakers from 7 to 9 p.m. Friday in the open air courtyard. Bar opens at 5 p.m.

Leatherback Movie Night

Leatherback Brewing Company will be screening "Mean Girls" (Musical) at 6:45 p.m. Saturday. Craft beer and cocktails along with the regular menu will be available. Get a table outside or bring your own chairs and blankets.

St. Thomas

Hull Bay Mangrove Workshop

VI EPSCoR will be hosting a Hull Bay Mangrove and Coral Restoration Workshop from 2 to 5 p.m. Saturday at The Shack at Hull Bay.

In the interactive workshop participants will learn about current restoration activities in the bay, provide feedback and create a shared vision for Hull Bay restoration going forward.

Community service hours available. Participants who are present through the end of the workshop will be eligible for raffled Moe's gift cards.

Night at the Museum

The St. Thomas Historical Trust will be hosting Night at the Museum from 6 to 10 p.m. tonight at the Trust Museum on Raadets Gade.

There will be a live mystery auction at 7 p.m., a unique photo op, and throw back music.

Proceeds from the purchase of a downtown daiquiri from Taphus will support Trust pro-

grams for the community.

Taino Exhibit

Fort Christian will be showing a new exhibit, "Taino Bohio" starting today.

Step into a world of ancient traditions, vibrant artistry, and profound wisdom as the enduring legacy of the Taino culture is celebrated. There will be artifacts, interactive displays, and narratives on display.

Breathwork

Ambient Yoga will be hosting a Breathwork workshop from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Saturday. Register online at ambientvi.com.

Community Connectivity

Community Connectivity: Cultivating A Love For Literacy One Book at a Time will be held from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday at Tutu Park Mall.

The event is sponsored by VIYA, the Virgin Islands Department of Education, By Invite Only Children Entertainment Services, and DPNR's Division of Libraries, Archives, and Museums.

There will be music, entertainment, treats, giveaways, and special appearances by The Cat

In The Hat, and his friends.

St. John

Vinyasa flow

Love City Yoga will host a Vinyasa flow with Jean from 9 to 10 a.m. Sunday at Concordia Eco Resort. \$20 entry fee, mats and props are provided.

Live Music

The Funky Lampshades will be performing at The Beach Bar from 7:30 to 10:30 p.m. tonight. The band, based out of Gulf Shores, Alabama channels the spirit of classic R&B, Rock, Blues and Soul.

Film Screening

The St. John Film Society presents a screening of "Stewards of the Land" at 6 p.m. Sunday at Bajo el Sol Gallery.

Filmmakers Juanma Teitelbaum and Mariolga Reyes Cruz will be present for a Q & A following the film.

The feature-length documentary follows three Puerto Rican ecological farmers as they confront the challenges of cultivating food sovereignty.

'The Completely Made-Up Adventures of Dick Turpin' stands and delivers

By **MARK KENNEDY**
The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Noel Fielding trades pastry for pistols in the new mouthful of a TV series "The Completely Made-Up Adventures of Dick Turpin," a swashbuckling romp that's miles from the genteel tent of "The Great British Bake Off."

The English writer, comedian and TV host is a highway robber in 1735 in the zany Apple TV+ series, playing a gentle soul in the harsh world of forest-based stick-ups, witches and curses. It starts airing Friday.

"I just forgot that I'd missed that kind of comedy," says Fielding. "I love comedy and I love weird comedy, and I'm sort of interested

in these magical, fantastical realms, really."

In this madcap world, Dick Turpin is a terrible fit as a robber. He has a fondness for knitting, for starters, and prefers peppermint tea over ale. After a robbery, he asks his victims for feedback to improve the experience. "I'm new school. There's going to be less violence on my watch. More charm. Maybe even some panache," he vows.

Fielding, a writer and producer as well as star, says the humor he drew on includes "The Princess Bride," "Blackadder," "Time Bandits," "Monty Python and the Holy Grail" and "Blazing Saddles."

The series is loosely — very loosely — based on a real robber

named Dick Turpin, an English outlaw not unlike Jesse James or Billy the Kid. He was popularized by 1980s pop star Adam Ant, who donned a frock coat and tricorn hat and had a hit with Turpin's famous slogan, "Stand and Deliver."

Fielding has his own model for Turpin — Paul Newman's Butch Cassidy. "He's quite an interesting character because he's not very good at shooting, he's not very good at fighting, but he has lots of ideas and he's quite charming. That's kind of all he's got, which is brilliant."

This Turpin is a butcher's son who becomes vegan and sort of falls into robbing stagecoaches. "I just feel like I'm destined to do something — something big,

something creative," he says in the pilot. At one point, he announces: "I haven't been this excited since I discovered my own cheekbones."

The first episode has Turpin join a motley gang of robbers and attempt to lead them while avoiding the local evil guy, played by Hugh Bonneville, known from "Downton Abbey."

Turpin is a little eccentric, very modern and free-spirited. He actually doesn't really like violence, which creates quite a lot of tension between him and his gang and the other highway gangs, who find him absolutely ludicrous.

"We wanted to have this sort of modern character in this quite hard world with these sort of scary characters and people are

getting killed around him and shot," says Fielding. "He, somehow, in a childlike, weird way, manages to avoid danger and get them out of trouble every week."

In the second episode, the gang tries to boost its rating with rivals by robbing a cursed coach. In the third, they visit London to fence some stolen gold and get in some sticky situations, including an underground fight club. The fourth deals with a witch, giving them a chance to satirize conspiracy theorists.

Kenton Allen, an executive producer of "The Completely Made-Up Adventures of Dick Turpin," says the series is more filmic than other recent comedies — big and silly and physical.

'Percy Jackson' and coming-of-age tales get their moment

By **CHRISTI CARRAS**
Los Angeles Times

LOS ANGELES — While co-creating the live-action TV adaptation of the magical children's book series "Percy Jackson and the Olympians" for Disney+, Jon Steinberg looked to several classic films starring plucky young heroes for inspiration.

"There were a lot," Steinberg said, rattling off titles including 1986's "Flight of the Navigator," 1985's "The Goonies" and 1982's "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial."

"That was a genre that I felt like I was frequently, constantly exposed to as a kid. ... It's not talking down to kids in any way. It's just talking to everybody. And that was sort of the unmeetable ambition that we set out for the show."

When asked about live-action TV series that informed his approach to "Percy Jackson," however, Steinberg drew a blank.

"I don't know that I'd ever quite seen anything like this" on TV, he said.

"Percy Jackson and the Olympians" is among a growing number of epic, coming-of-age stories that are finally getting the live-action TV treatment in the streaming era. For decades, the tween demographic — too old for "Sesame Street" and "Bluey" (rated TV-Y) but not quite old enough for "Stranger Things" and the original "Gossip Girl" (rated TV-14) — has turned to books, animated series and their movie adaptations for larger-than-life storytelling designed specifically for them.

TV was where preteens got their live-action fix of lighthearted, multi-camera sitcoms such as "iCarly" and "Zoey 101" on Nickelodeon or "Lizzie McGuire" and "That's So Raven" on Disney Channel. Live-action adaptations of world-building, tween-facing intellectual property such as "Percy Jackson," "Harry Potter" and "Avatar: The Last Airbender" were mostly reserved for the big screen.

That's starting to change.

All three of those properties, which had previously been adapted into live-action feature films — to mixed results — are now getting a second life on the small



Walker Scobell as Percy in Disney's "Percy Jackson and the Olympians."

Photo by DISNEY

screen more than a decade later.

Executives and creatives offered some insight as to what has triggered this resurgence.

For starters, the visual technology needed to convincingly translate these grandiose sagas to live action has "become so much more advanced and so much less expensive" in recent years, said Jabbar Raisani, an executive producer and director on Netflix's "Avatar: The Last Airbender." He also credits fantasy sensation "Game of Thrones" with awakening studios to TV's full potential as a storytelling medium.

As TV has evolved, audiences' viewing habits and tastes have become more voracious and sophisticated. And children are no exception, added Ayo Davis, president of branded television at Disney.

"These streaming platforms are giving everyone the ability to be more expansive and ambitious in the way that these stories are being told," Davis said.

"Pulling from these epic tales that are filled with these big heroic adventures is something that can touch [kids] in a meaningful way. And having the ability to do it

right on a platform that can reach a global audience simultaneously is really key."

Based on Rick Riordan's 2005 novel "The Lightning Thief" inspired by Greek mythology, the first season of "Percy Jackson and the Olympians" (TV-PG) follows the 12-year-old demigod son of Poseidon on a dangerous quest to return Zeus' stolen lightning bolt and restore peace to Mount Olympus.

Following its premiere on Dec. 19, the pilot episode amassed 26.2 million views in its first three weeks on Disney+ and Hulu, according to the company. The entire debut season has racked up more than 110 million hours streamed, reflecting a demand among young audiences for big-budget, live-action TV adaptations. (Reports have speculated that "Percy Jackson" cost between \$12 million and \$15 million per episode. Disney declined to comment on its budgets.)

It appears that companies such as Disney, Netflix and Warner Bros. Discovery — which recently reaffirmed that it is moving forward with a live-action "Harry Potter" series set to debut on Max

in 2026 — are willing to spend big bucks on immersive kids programming despite Wall Street pressure to cut costs in other areas.

That's because when they work, they have crossover appeal for parents and nostalgic adults eager to reconnect with their childhood heroes.

Research firm Parrot Analytics found that since 2020, the demand for young-adult shows has consistently surpassed supply, suggesting that such a content space is "ripe for further investment," according to Parrot strategist Brandon Katz.

During its monthlong run, the freshman season of "Percy Jackson" was roughly 19 times more in demand than any other show that aired in that window, landing it in the top 2.7% of series in terms of overall engagement, the research firm found. Disney in February announced it would stream a second season.

"It is arguably Disney+'s biggest hit — and perhaps their most important hit — outside of the Star Wars, Marvel universes," Katz said. "The fact that they were able to get a live-action series that

wasn't in the Star Wars and Marvel universes to reach such heights bodes well for them moving forward."

The new "Avatar: The Last Airbender" (TV-PG) has shown early promise as well. The latest live-action take on the acclaimed animated series — created by Michael Dante DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko for Nickelodeon in the early 2000s — was 11.7 times more in demand than the average TV show in the month leading up to its debut, Parrot Analytics said.

Since it arrived Feb. 22 on Netflix, the show — which centers on a powerful 12-year-old who must master the elements of fire, water, earth and air in order to save the world — has racked up more than 21.2 million views and claimed the No. 1 spot on Netflix's Global Top 10 English TV list, the streamer reported.

Despite their substantial built-in fan bases, costly live-action reimaginings of "Avatar: The Last Airbender" and "Percy Jackson" were still a bit of a gamble for the studios — if the previous film attempts are any indication.

M. Night Shyamalan's "The Last Airbender" (2010) was poorly received by fans and critics. And though Chris Columbus' "Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief" (also 2010) got a sequel and didn't provoke the same level of vitriol, it came nowhere close to reaching the status of Columbus' first "Harry Potter" film.

Adapting the stories into a different live-action medium gave the "Percy Jackson" and "Avatar: The Last Airbender" showrunners a chance to make different choices than the filmmakers did. This time around, for instance, the child actors who play the main trio in "Percy Jackson" actually match the ages of the kids in the books — unlike the movie, which aged the characters up a few years.

Steinberg said that while it's easy to understand the instinct to avoid certain production complications that come with casting younger actors, "everything changes the moment you're in a teen story instead of a preteen, adolescent story."



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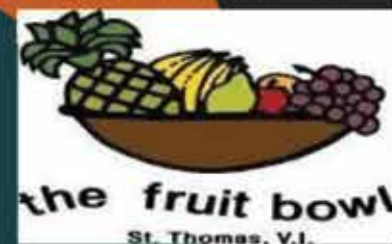
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'Today' co-anchor Savannah Guthrie puts her faith on the line in new book

By **STEPHEN BATTAGLIO**
Los Angeles Times

Every TV news anchor needs a high level of authority and confidence to succeed, making expressions of self-doubt a rarity. But Savannah Guthrie, co-anchor of NBC's "Today" since 2012, has never been shy about asking for help.



Savannah Guthrie

Guthrie, 52, has long relied

on prayer to navigate challenges or setbacks in her life, such as the death of her father when she was a teenager and a brief failed marriage in her mid-30s. She admits she turned to faith during her career ascent to the anchor desk at "Today," which was fraught due to longtime viewers' anger over the treatment of her predecessor Ann Curry. And she still looks for spiritual guidance to get her through tough assignments.

Years of Bible study and growing up in a household where Guthrie said God was considered a member of the family taught her how to rely on her faith. Her new book, "Mostly What God Does" from W Publishing, is a users' guide for those curious about how faith can be integrated into their everyday lives.

Guthrie recently shared her thoughts about the book — already a No. 1 bestseller on Amazon — in a recent conversation from her office at Rockefeller Center in New York.

Question: Why write about God and why now?

Answer: I've never been interested in writing a memoir or telling old news capers. I have a full-time job. I have two little kids. But when I was approached and given the opportunity to write about faith, I couldn't say no. It's certainly the core of who I

am, but also one of the subjects I find most intellectually stimulating and challenging. Any conversation I have, it usually gets there because it's just so much of who I am and how I see the world.

Q: Just to be clear to the reader, the book is about faith, not religion.

A: I would say that's right. I come from a certain background. I grew up in a Baptist church, and it is very much from a Christian perspective. But I'm not a theologian. I'm not a biblical scholar. I'm just a regular person, a person of faith. And so it's really how to have a relationship with God in the real world, with real questions, and how to connect with God when you sometimes don't even feel that you can, or that it is even available to you.

Q: You reveal a lot of experiences from your life in this book, not all of them happy.

A: You can't talk about faith in a vacuum. It's not some antiseptic, esoteric concept that happens at a distance. It happens in real life. And so the things I was wanting to express and convey about what I believed about God and why. Many times I would illustrate them through stories and circumstances that happen in my own life. But I felt it was important to tell a real story. And I think that we find our faith in times of trial, disappointment and setback.

Q: It seems like it's part of the job of a morning show host to share a lot about themselves, certainly more than any other type of news program. You're a pretty private person, so has it been a challenge for you?

A: It felt very strange when I first started at "Today" because it is so personal. You do talk about your life and sometimes show pictures of your kids or your husband might come on Valentine's Day with a bouquet of roses. (Guthrie is married to communications consultant Michael

Feldman and the couple has two young children). And I came from Washington where I was a White House correspondent. The last thing you should do would be talking about yourself so that was definitely an adjustment.

But I think for all of us it's really trying to find that fine line. Nobody wants to see you sit on the air and just be yammering about yourself all day long. It's a balance of letting people see the essence of who you are because they're getting their morning news from you and that's a very intimate relationship, just being in their homes at that hour of the day. So I think that they want to feel that they know the person who is sharing information with them. But I've always tried really hard to stay out of the way and not insert myself too much.

Q: You write about how praying a psalm got you through a blinding, tension-induced migraine headache on your first day as co-host of "Today" in 2012, which came after a very rocky period for the program. Do you always have something like that at the ready when heading into a presidential town hall or other high pressure moments?

A: Every single day, but yes those high pressure moments and interviewing any president would certainly count — I rely on my faith completely. I don't know what the exterior looks like, but inside I'm always full of anxiety and worries and I'm stressed out when I have a big interview. And so my faith is what calms me and grounds me. And it's what keeps everything in perspective. It doesn't mean God is going to give me a great interview or something. It helps me remember that I'm not alone and it gives me a certain peace to know that there's something greater at work here that has nothing to do with this interview.

'The American Daughters' are Black women, fighting to end slavery in the South

By **CLAUDE PECK**
Star Tribune

In "The Prophets," a trailblazing debut novel from 2021, Robert Jones Jr. wrote about two enslaved young men who became lovers in 1830s Mississippi. Jones brought intense depth of feeling and insight to his characters, his women in particular.

In "The American Daughters" the central characters are enslaved women (this time in 1860s New Orleans), and Maurice Carlos Ruffin likewise displays great sensitivity toward his heroines.

While Jones favored flights of imaginative fancy and the interjection of ancient stories, Ruffin mostly sticks to a compelling story.

The novel's triumph is protagonist Ady. Born into slavery, she's about 7 when she and her mother, Sanite, are sold off from a plantation to work in the townhouse of wealthy New Orleans businessman John du Marche, who abuses them verbally, sexually and physically.

Ady's mom, who was not born into slavery, has other ideas. Sanite sees to it that Ady learns to count and read, promising her that "one day you'll be free, and you can't be forgetting who you really is." She imprints the feeling of freedom on Ady by bringing her on walks through the colorful city to buy provisions for the house.

Amid the melting-pot hurly-burly, Ady sees that not all Black people are enslaved: "The only thing that dazzled the innermost reaches of Ady's ... heart more than watching the Free Negroes act audaciously Free were the ships at port."

A harrowing escape into the Louisiana wilderness ends badly for mother and daughter. When Sanite dies of yellow fever, Ady, still a teenager, is returned to New Orleans and her master.

Sneaking off for long walks, she encounters a Black-run inn and its magnetic proprietor, a well-to-do, free Black woman named Lenore.

In keenly observed scenes,



Ruffin shows how Ady's life as a slave has left her stunted, blinkered, half-dead. Things as ordinary as a compliment or a gift are foreign to Ady. Ditto something as seemingly simple as friendship. When Lenore gazes at Ady, the girl has "the intense sensation that she was being seen, perhaps for the first time in her life."

Love, war and politics widen Ady's young life. Risking death, she seeks to help new friends — collectively known as the Daughters — who work as spies to undermine slave owners and Confederates and assist abolitionists and the Union Army.

As cooks and housekeepers, these women often had unique access to influential whites. They were helped by the widespread belief that no Black woman had the smarts to engage in such covert operations. This story line, rife with tantalizing and dramatic potential, occupies too few pages of "American Daughters."

When Lenore is set to marry a man favored by her father, Ady rebukes her harshly, but their closeness is rebuilt as the novel closes to its happy ending.

In several short chapters and a lengthy epilogue, Ruffin time-travels his narrative, touching down in the 1950s, in 2028 and in 2172 to show how the story of Ady and the Daughters fades in and out of view in different eras and by different authors. These addenda seem disposable to me, as long as we get Ady's old story, which is so vividly told in the here and now.



Adam Sandler stars as a Czech cosmonaut in "Spaceman."

Photo by NETFLIX

'Spaceman': Adam Sandler stars in so-so Netflix film for grown-ups about inner journey

By **MARK MESZOROS**
The News-Herald, Ohio

You may not know it from the title or the vaguely cartoonish logo bearing that title, but "Spaceman" is not just another Adam Sandler-Netflix movie.

Unlike the comedic live-action and animated romps the actor and producer has churned out as part of the multiple-times-extended movie-making deal between his Happy Madison Productions and the streaming giant, this is a drama with Sandler front and center trying to make one giant leap for mankind and boldly going where no man has gone before.

But while "Spaceman" sees Sandler's character travel deep into the solar system on a solo mission, this story is primarily one of an introspective journey, as the protagonist worries the marriage he left on Earth is failing and works through choices he's made with the help of an unusual new friend.

It's always interesting to see Sandler take on the occasional drama, the "Saturday Night Live" alum giving strong performances in, for example, the well-received "Punch-Drunk Love" (2002) and "Uncut

Gems" (2019). Sorry to say he's not as good here, the actor never seeming to find a groove with the character of lonely Czech cosmonaut Jakub Prochazka.

Still, it is a little surprising — and very disappointing — that "Spaceman" is rarely more than borderline-engaging given it's directed by Johan Renck. Best known for helming episodes of television shows, including a handful of "Breaking Bad" installments, he most notably directed every chapter of the acclaimed 2019 limited series "Chernobyl."

"Spaceman" is not on that level.

After a brief sequence in which we watch Jakub walk through a small river while wearing his spacesuit, we are formally introduced to him as he is nearing Jupiter. Near the giant planet resides what's been dubbed the Chopra Cloud, a visually striking phenomenon in space that poses a threat to Earth.

"I wish you could see it the way I do," he says during a broadcast back home before expressing excitement about soon venturing inside it and learning more about the myste-

rious particles that comprise it. "We still don't know what they are or where they come from, but as I enter the Chopra Cloud, I might just unravel some mysteries of the universe."

During this chance for folks to interact with him, a young girl asks Jakub if he's lonely, noting that he's been referred to as "the loneliest man in the world." He assures her that he is not that, that he talks every day with his wife, Lenka (Carey Mulligan), who is carrying their child.

In truth, not only is Jakub lonely, but he's also not sleeping well, thanks at least in part to a malfunctioning toilet making constant noise. One night, he dreams of a small alien entity literally getting under his skin and crawling around under his face.

Soon, though, he encounters a much larger creature from a far-away place, a spider-like being he will come to name Hanus.

Initially, Hanus terrifies Jakub, who flees to the craft's airlock, suits up and exposes the ship to a blast of anti-contaminant chemicals in an attempt to hurt the nightmarish visitor. However, Hanus, speaking calmly and gently (Paul Dano of

"The Batman" provides the mellow voice work), quickly convinces the fellow explorer he means him no harm.

Although he believes he may have lost his mind, Jakub is happy to have someone to talk to, especially since he suddenly isn't hearing from Lenka, which concerns him.

His worries are not off-base, as his wife has recorded a message in which she informs him she's leaving him — a message the woman in charge of the mission, Isabella Rossellini's Commissioner Tuma, is refusing to send through to Jakub.

Hanus not only can communicate with Jakub in his own language, the creature saying he has studied humanity and refers to Jakub only as "Skinny Human," he seemingly has the power to help Jakub replay moments from his life, many of them painful.

However well-intended, this all is a bit ... well, something. It feels a little precious at times, downright trite at others.

Scenes on the ground featuring Lenka, who goes to visit her mother, Zdena (Lena Olin), are strong enough that "Spaceman" may have benefited from more of them — especially given the

acting talent of Mulligan ("Maestro," "Promising Young Woman").

The screenplay for "Spaceman" is written by Colby Day, who adapted it from Jaroslav Kalfar's 2017 novel, "Spaceman of Bohemia." Regardless of whether this is intentional, the story keeps you guessing as to whether Hanus is real or something Jakub has unwittingly constructed — distractingly so, as that really isn't the point of the film.

It's also a little distracting that both Sandler and Mulligan sound as they typically do, Renck noting in the film's production notes that he doesn't "do accents." (You may recall that in "Chernobyl," a lot of Russian characters sounded VERY British.)

Ultimately, thick accents wouldn't elevate "Spaceman" to the point of being easy to recommend — especially with an ending that may require more than one viewing to understand. (Thank the cosmos for the rewind function!)

As it is, the film's appeal lies mainly in the fact that it is not the typical Adam Sandler-Netflix movie, and that takes this journey only so far.

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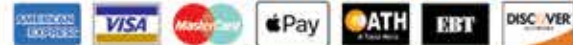
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