

Early cure or money grab?

A panel's plan to give Alzheimer's diagnosis to people with no memory problems raises concerns.

BY MELODY PETERSEN

In a darkened Amsterdam conference hall this summer, a panel of industry and academic scientists took the stage to announce a plan to radically expand the definition of Alzheimer's disease to include millions of people with no memory complaints.

Those with normal cognition who test positive for elevated levels of certain proteins that have been tied to Alzheimer's — but not proven to cause the disease — would be diagnosed as having Alzheimer's Stage 1, the panel members explained.

Even before the presentation ended, attendees in the packed hall were lining up behind microphones to ask questions, according to video of the event.

"I'm troubled by this," Dr. Andrea Bozoki, a University of North Carolina neurologist, told the panel. "You are taking a bunch of people who may never develop dementia or even cognitive impairment and you're calling them Stage 1. That doesn't seem to fit."

Under the proposal, tens of millions of Americans with normal cognition [See Alzheimer's, A16]

Eleven jostling to take on Gascón

D.A. has low approval marks, but large field may make it hard for rival to gain traction.

BY JAMES QUEALLY AND SONJA SHARP

The candidates vying to become L.A. County's next district attorney could barely fit on stage together for a debate.

Scrunched into a dozen studio chairs that left political foes and ideological opposites inches apart at the Waldorf Astoria Beverly Hills, the largest field of contenders ever to run for the office spent close to an hour slogging through opening statements. The candidates — mostly longtime judges and prosecutors — challenging Dist. Atty. George Gascón cried out for microphone time, which they mainly used to deliver messages as similar as their resumes.

Former federal prosecutor Jeff Chmerinsky said his "No. 1 priority is public safety." Deputy Dist. Atty. Jonathan Hatami is running to "make sure your children are safe." L.A. County Superior Court Judge Debra Archuleta asked whether [See D.A. race, A9]



Photographs by BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

A CONSTRUCTION WORKER walks along cracked pavement in the 4300 block of Dauntless Drive in Rancho Palos Verdes.

Shifting, slipping and sliding

Winter rains have fueled 'unprecedented' ground acceleration in Rancho Palos Verdes, where a slow-moving landslide has lurked for decades

By Grace Toohey

Since 1982, Sallie Reeves and her husband have lived atop a serene Rancho Palos Verdes canyon, overlooking the sparkling Pacific Ocean and Santa Catalina Island, with little reason to worry about the slow-moving landslide complex beneath their feet.

"We've been here 41 years, never had a problem," said Reeves, 80.

In just the last month, however, their Portuguese Bend home has started shifting under stress from intensifying land movement: Cracks have snaked up their walls, cupboards can no longer close, doorways have split at the seams and brick pavers are separating.

"We had no damage until one month ago," Reeves said. "Now we're making repairs."

It's far from the worst damage in the neighborhood, yet it's a clear sign of the landslides' escalation — fueled by back-to-back winters of heavy rains that experts say



A MAILBOX in the Seaview neighborhood is askew after land movement exacerbated by recent storms damaged homes.

NEW STORM: More rain is expected this week. Understand the ramifications for property taxes and water damage. CALIFORNIA, B3

have not only accelerated the shifting, but also brought damage to more areas.

"What's happening is unprecedented," Mike Phipps, Rancho Palos Verdes' contracted geologist, said this month after reviewing more than 16 years of data. "We haven't seen this kind of movement in the upper areas of the landslide in the whole history of monitoring this landslide."

The Portuguese Bend complex hasn't been plagued by the sudden and violent shifts commonly associated with the word "landslide." Instead, the ground has moved for years at a glacial pace, making it one of the most studied landslides in the nation. But the recent scale and rate of its movement have officials and residents on edge.

In the gated Portuguese Bend community where Reeves lives, just north of Palos Verdes Drive [See Sliding, A8]

They earn nearly \$200,000, but paying for kids seems out of reach

Cost and lack of freedom are driving more couples to shun parenthood

BY MARISA GERBER



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

BECCY QUINN and Xavier Coelho-Kostolny of Burbank decided last year to join the growing cohort of Americans who describe themselves as child-free by choice.

During their daily walk a few years ago, a Burbank couple brainstormed baby names, settling on one option for a boy and another for a girl.

But the names never got used.

After several conversations and scrutiny of their life goals and monthly budget, Beccy Quinn and Xavier Coelho-Kostolny decided last year to join the growing cohort of Americans who describe themselves as child-free by choice.

Their discussions hinged on two questions: Will we be able to invest as much time in the relationships we already value? And if we have a child, can we still live com- [See Child-free, A10]

Navalny's body not yet released

Opposition figure's mother searches for his remains, with little clarity from Russian officials. WORLD, A3

Moonves settles L.A. ethics case

Ex-CBS chief agrees to pay an \$11,250 fine over his interference with a police investigation. CALIFORNIA, B1

Solving problem parking areas

A look at some fixes proposed for the "nightmare" of finding a spot in L.A.'s most notorious lots. BUSINESS, A11

Weather: Mostly cloudy. L.A. Basin: 64/55. B10

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THE WORLD

Navalny's mother searches for his body

Russian officials say the Putin foe died of 'sudden death syndrome.' His team demands his remains.

BY EMMA BURROWS
AND KATIE MARIE DAVIES

For the mother of Alexei Navalny, the Russian opposition leader who died at age 47 in an Arctic penal colony, the journey to recover her son's body Saturday was an odyssey with no clear destination.

In the end, she didn't get what she came for.

Lyudmila Navalnaya, 69, received an official note Saturday stating that the politician had died in prison at 2:17 p.m. local time a day earlier, Kira Yarmysh, Navalny's spokesperson said Saturday.

Together with members of Navalny's legal team, Lyudmila traveled to the town of Kharp in the Yamalo-Nenets region, some 1,200 miles northeast of Moscow.

It was there that Russia's Federal Penitentiary Service said Friday that Navalny felt unwell after a walk and fell unconscious. When Lyudmila arrived less than 24 hours later, officials said that her son had died from "sudden death syndrome," said Ivan Zhdanov, the director of Navalny's Anti-Corruption Foundation. He did not elaborate.

Navalny's death removed the Russian opposition's most well-known and inspiring politician less than a month before an election that will give President Vladimir Putin another six years in power.

Prison employees told Navalny's mother Saturday that they did not have her son's body. They said it had been taken to the nearby city of Salekhard, a little over an hour's drive away, as part of



A VEHICLE carrying Lyudmila Navalnaya, mother of Alexei Navalny, arrives Saturday at a remote prison colony where the Russian opposition leader died. Prison workers told her they did not have his body.

an inquiry into his death.

When Lyudmila arrived in the town with one of Navalny's lawyers, however, they found that the morgue was closed, Navalny's team wrote on their Telegram channel. When the lawyer called the morgue, they were told that the politician's body was not there either.

This time, Lyudmila headed directly to Salekhard's Investigative Committee office. A small group of journalists watched as Lyudmila walked toward the office, dressed in a thick black coat as temperatures hovered close to minus-13 degrees Fahrenheit. Occasionally, she took the arm of one of those walking next to her as the group made their way along paths edged with

thick piles of snow.

Here, she was told that the cause of her son's death had, in fact, not yet been established, said Yarmysh said. Officials told Lyudmila that her son's relatives would not receive his body until additional examinations had been completed.

Initially, it seemed as if Lyudmila might head to another morgue. Instead, she returned to her hotel in the town of Labytnangi, another 30-minute drive.

Navalny's team members, meanwhile, said they were still no closer to finding out where the dissident's body was being held.

"It's obvious that they are lying and doing everything they can to avoid handing over the body," Yarmysh

wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter, after Lyudmila's visit to the Investigative Committee office. The spokesperson also said that Navalny's team demanded "that Alexei Navalny's body be handed over to his family immediately."

Meanwhile, arrests continued Saturday as Russians came to lay flowers in memory of Navalny at memorials to the victims of Soviet-era purges.

OVD-Info, a group that monitors political repression in Russia, said Saturday that more than 273 people had been detained at memorial events since Navalny's death.

Memorial items laid Friday were removed overnight, but people continued

trickling in with flowers Saturday.

In Moscow, a large group of people chanted "shame," as police dragged a screaming woman from the crowd, video shared on social media showed. More than 10 people were detained at a memorial in St. Petersburg, including a priest who came to conduct a service for Navalny there. In other cities across the country, police cordoned off some of the memorials and officers were taking pictures of those who came and writing down their personal data in a clear intimidation attempt.

"After the murder of Alexei Navalny, it's absurd to perceive Putin as the supposedly legitimate head of the Russian state," Ukrainian

President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said at the Munich Security Conference in Germany on Saturday. "He is a thug who maintains power through corruption and violence."

British Foreign Secretary David Cameron said Saturday that Britain "will be taking action" against the Russians responsible for Navalny's death.

Speaking to broadcasters in Munich, Cameron said, "There should be consequences" for "appalling human rights outrages like this." He said Britain would "look at whether there are individual people that are responsible and whether there are individual measures and actions we can take." Cameron did not say whether the response would consist of financial sanctions or other measures.

President Biden said Friday that Washington doesn't know exactly what happened, "but there is no doubt that the death of Navalny was a consequence of something Putin and his thugs did."

The Kremlin bristled Friday at the outpouring of anger from world leaders, with Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, calling the statements — issued before medics have released the cause of Navalny's death — "unacceptable" and "outrageous."

Navalny had been jailed since January 2021, when he returned to Moscow after recuperating in Germany from nerve agent poisoning he blamed on the Kremlin. He was later convicted three times, saying each case was politically motivated, and received a sentence of 19 years for extremism.

After the last verdict, Navalny said he understood he was "serving a life sentence, which is measured by the length of my life or the length of life of this regime."

Burrows and Davies write for the Associated Press.

Russia says it has conquered strategic city in east Ukraine

BY ILLIA NOVIKOV
AND BARRY HATTON

KYIV, Ukraine — Russian forces have taken complete control of the Ukrainian city of Avdiivka, Russia's Defense Ministry said Saturday.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu told the Kremlin that the country's forces were working to clear remaining Ukrainian fighters from the Avdiivka Coke and Chemical Plant, officials said in a statement. Videos on social media Saturday appeared to show soldiers raising the Russian flag over one of the plant's buildings.

The announcement came the same day that Ukraine's military chief said he was withdrawing troops from the city in the eastern part of the country, where outnumbered defenders battled a Russian assault for four months.

The timing is critical as Russia is looking for a morale boost ahead of the Feb. 24 second anniversary of its full-scale invasion of Ukraine, as well as the March presidential election.

In a statement on Facebook, Ukrainian commander Col. Gen. Oleksandr Syrskiy said he had made the decision to avoid encirclement and "preserve the lives and health of servicemen."

The commander in chief added that troops were moving to "more favorable lines."

"Our soldiers performed their military duty with dignity, did everything possible to destroy the best Russian military units, inflicted significant losses on the enemy in terms of manpower and equipment."

"We are taking measures to stabilize the situation and maintain our positions," the statement said.

The withdrawal came a day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Friday made another trip to western Europe, hoping to press his country's allies to

continue to provide military support.

Avdiivka was Syrskiy's first major test since being appointed Ukraine's army chief this month.

In his previous position as commander of Ukraine's ground forces, he faced criticism for holding on to the city of Bakhmut for nine months, a siege that became the war's longest and bloodiest battle and cost Ukraine dearly but served to sap Russia's forces.

In recent days, reports emerged that Ukrainian troops in Avdiivka faced a deteriorating situation.

Rodion Kudriashov, deputy commander of the 3rd Assault Brigade, said Friday that Ukrainian troops were still holding out against the onslaught of about 15,000 Russian soldiers, but he expected the situation to "soon become critical."

"The enemy is trying to penetrate our defense and, in some places, to bypass our positions," he told the Associated Press.

The 3rd Brigade said on its social media account Friday that its soldiers were at the huge Avdiivka Coke Plant. Russian warplanes had been dropping about 60 bombs a day, relentlessly shelling the area and launching assaults with armor and infantry, the brigade said.

A video showed dense black smoke over the factory, said to be caused by burning fuel oil reservoirs. The post said: "Poisonous smog spreads all over the plant."

Russian media reported that the Kremlin's forces were making extensive use of plane-launched glide bombs, which fly at a shallower angle, to batter Ukrainian positions.

White House national security spokesman John F. Kirby said Thursday that Russian forces were beginning to overwhelm Ukrainian defenses in the eastern city. He said Avdiivka was at risk of falling to Russia, a development he blamed "in

very large part" on the fact that Ukrainian forces are running out of artillery ammunition.

The United States is Ukraine's biggest single supporter, but some \$60 billion earmarked for Kyiv is being held up by political disagreements among American lawmakers.

Heavily fortified with a web of tunnels and concrete fortifications, Avdiivka lies in the northern suburbs of Donetsk, a city in a region of the same name that Russian forces partially occupy. Capturing Avdiivka could be a timely boost for Moscow and serve as a possible springboard for Russia to drive deeper into the region.

Fewer than 1,000 people remain in the city, according to the Donetsk regional governor, Vadym Filashkin. Avdiivka's prewar population was about 31,000.

Aerial video of the city obtained in December by the Associated Press showed an apocalyptic scene and hinted at Russia's staggering losses, with the bodies of about 150 soldiers — some in Russian uniforms — scattered along tree lines where they had sought cover.

However, the Institute for the Study of War, a Washington think tank, said Thursday that taking Avdiivka would be mainly a symbolic win for the Kremlin and would not bring significant change to the front line.

"The potential Russian capture of Avdiivka would not be operationally significant and would likely only offer the Kremlin immediate informational and political victories," the institute said in an assessment.

"Russian forces would be highly unlikely to make rapid operationally significant advances from Avdiivka if they captured the settlement, and the potential Russian capture of Avdiivka at most would set conditions for further limited tactical gains," it added.

Novikov and Hatton write for the Associated Press.

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THE NATION

Will Trump have to pay hefty legal debts?

He could be on the hook for more than half a billion dollars. Here's how he may handle the judgments.

BY JAKE OFFENHARTZ

NEW YORK — Donald Trump's legal debts could exceed half a billion dollars.

A New York judge ordered Trump and his companies Friday to pay \$355 million in fines, plus interest, after ruling that he had manipulated his net worth in financial statements.

The stiff penalty comes just weeks after Trump was ordered to pay \$83.3 million to the writer E. Jean Carroll for damaging her reputation after she accused him of sexual assault. A separate jury last year awarded Carroll \$5 million from Trump for sexual abuse and defamation.

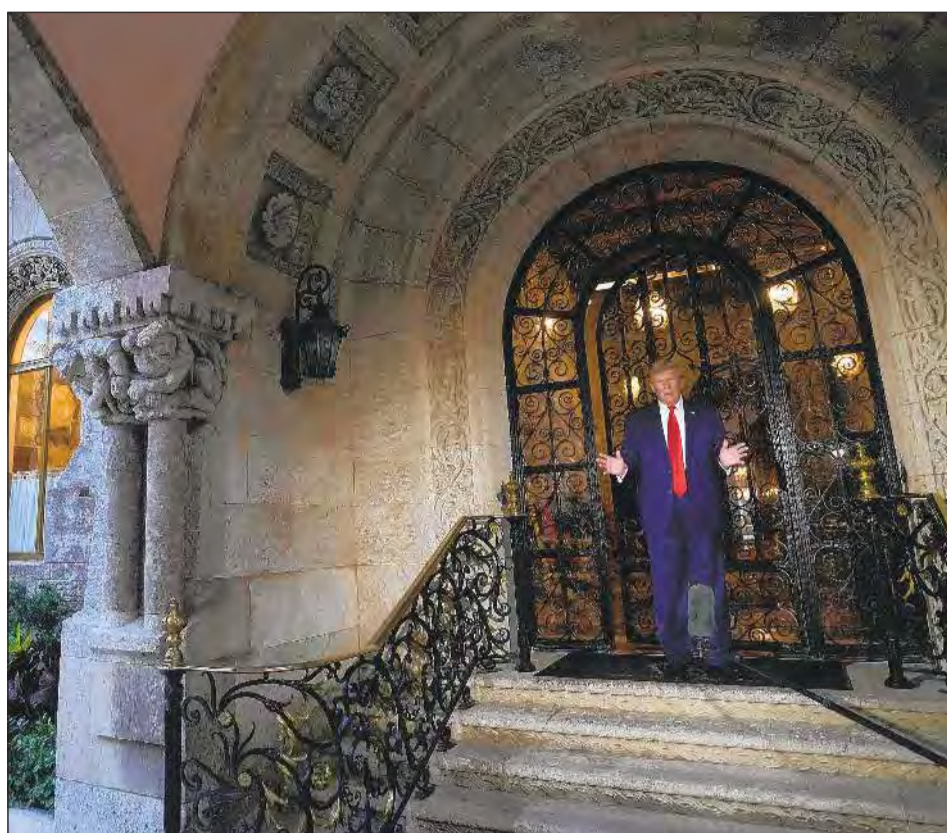
Add interest payments, and the judgments could deal a staggering blow to the personal fortune that remains core to Trump's political appeal. He has adamantly denied wrongdoing and pledged to appeal, a process that could take months or even years.

In the meantime, here's what we know about what Trump owes, whether he'll have to pay up, and what comes next.

How much does Trump owe?

The verdict in the civil fraud trial requires Trump to pay interest on some of the deal profits he has been ordered to give up. New York Atty. Gen. Letitia James, who brought the case, said the interest payments totaled \$99 million and would "continue to increase every single day until it is paid."

Between Friday's ruling and the two judgments in Carroll's case, Trump would



REBECCA BLACKWELL Associated Press
FORMER President Trump, shown Friday at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida, could try to dip into PAC money to defray the cost of the judgments against him.

be on the hook for about \$542 million in legal judgments.

Trump owes an additional \$110,000 for refusing to comply with a subpoena in the civil fraud case and \$15,000 for repeatedly disparaging the judge's law clerk, in violation of a gag order.

In Friday's ruling, the judge also ordered Trump's two eldest sons to pay \$4 million apiece.

Trump's court-ordered debts don't end there.

Last month, he was ordered to pay nearly \$400,000 in legal fees to the New York Times after unsuccessfully suing the newspaper. Additionally, he is appealing a judgment of \$938,000 against him and his attorney for filing what a judge described as a "frivolous" lawsuit against Hillary Clinton.

Can he get any of the judgments reduced?

It's not uncommon for judgments, particularly big ones, to be reduced on appeal.

The appeal in Trump's civil fraud case will go before an intermediate-level court first. If it returns an unfavorable ruling, Trump could try to get the case taken up by New York's top appellate court, though legal experts say that is unlikely.

How soon does Trump have to pay?

Trump has already deposited \$5 million owed to Carroll for the first defamation case into a court-controlled account, along with \$500,000 in interest required by New York law. Carroll will not have access to the funds until the appeals process plays out.

He may soon be forced to

do the same for the \$83.3-million judgment in the second Carroll verdict.

Alternatively, Trump could secure a bond and pay a portion up front — though that option would come with interest and fees and would probably require some form of collateral. Trump would have to find a financial institution willing to front him the money.

In the civil fraud case, it will be up to the courts to decide how much Trump must put up as he mounts his appeal. He may be required to pay the full sum immediately after the appellate court rules, which could come as soon as this summer, according to University of Michigan law professor Will Thomas.

"New York's judicial system has shown a willingness to move quickly on some of these Trump

issues," Thomas said. "When we hear from the first appellate court, that's a point where money is almost certainly going to change hands."

Can Trump afford to pay what's required?

Trump has claimed to be worth more than \$10 billion. Most estimates, including an assessment by the New York attorney general, put the figure closer to \$2 billion.

In his 2021 statement of financial condition, Trump said he had nearly \$300 million in "cash and cash equivalents."

He has since made a number of sales, including his New York golf course and his Washington, D.C., hotel, and may also get a windfall when his social media company, Truth Social, goes public.

But even with those income streams, it's unclear whether Trump and his family members have enough cash on hand to pay all they owe.

Could he pay with PAC or campaign funds?

Federal election law prohibits the use of campaign funds for personal use. But the rules are far murkier when it comes to tapping political action committees for a candidate's expenses.

Over the last two years, Trump's Save America PAC, his presidential campaign and his other fundraising organizations have devoted \$76.7 million to legal fees. Campaign finance experts expect Trump will try to spend PAC money to defray the cost of his judgments in some way.

"The likelihood of the Federal Election Commission in its current configuration pursuing these violations is not terribly great," said Daniel Weiner, director of the Brennan Center's Elections and Government Program.

Can he or his businesses declare bankruptcy?

Under the judge's ruling Friday, Trump would be liable to pay even if his company the Trump Organization declares bankruptcy.

If Trump were to personally declare bankruptcy, enforcement of the judgment against him would be paused. But political commentators say such a drastic step is unlikely. Despite the fact that several of his companies have gone bankrupt, Trump has repeatedly bragged about the fact that he has never declared personal bankruptcy.

What if Trump simply refuses to pay?

Legally, Trump would face the same consequences as any American who refuses to pay a legal judgment, including the possibility of having his assets seized and his wages garnished.

"The president is not a king, and the president's assets are not sacrosanct just because he happened to be the president," Weiner said.

On Friday, the judge overseeing the civil fraud case appointed an additional monitor to oversee the Trump Organization's finances, finding that company officials could not be trusted to follow the law. In the event that Trump refuses to hand over payments, the courts would have additional discretion to go after him and his businesses.

"They have a huge amount of power, particularly for someone like Trump, who has physical assets inside the state," Thomas said. "The court might say, 'We're going to freeze your bank account.' Or even worse, they could say, 'We're seizing Trump Tower, and we're putting it up for sale.'"

Offenhardt writes for the Associated Press.




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Speaker tested amid push for Ukraine aid

Johnson faces pressure from his right flank in deciding what happens next with the bipartisan package.

By LISA MASCARO

WASHINGTON — When Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky spoke with congressional leaders late last year in Washington, he told them privately what is now public: With U.S. weapons, Ukraine could win the war against Russia, but without them, Russian President Vladimir Putin would be victorious.

In a subsequent meeting with new House Speaker Mike Johnson, a looming deadline for the supplies came into focus.

Now, with U.S. aid for Ukraine teetering in Congress, it's up to Johnson to decide what happens next.

The Louisiana Republican's leadership will determine whether the House will agree to approve more aid for Ukraine or allow the U.S. commitment to wither — the end of the line for the embattled young democracy in Kyiv.

President Biden, in a call Saturday with Zelensky after Ukraine announced that it was withdrawing troops from the eastern city of Avdiivka, stressed the need for urgent congressional action to resupply Ukrainian forces, according to a White House summary of the conversation. Biden also reaffirmed the "strong bipartisan support" in the U.S. government and among Americans for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the White House said.

Zelensky said at a news conference with Vice President Kamala Harris in Germany that Ukraine was counting on a "positive decision" from Congress for the "vital" aid from its "strategic partner." Earlier, at a security conference in Munich, he



J. SCOTT APPLEWHITE Associated Press

HOUSE SPEAKER Mike Johnson says he won't be "rushed" into approving aid for Ukraine, despite support from most Democrats and about half of Republicans.

warned of an "artificial deficit" of arms for his country.

The political and policy decisions ahead in Congress are gravely uncertain.

Johnson is insisting he won't be "rushed" into approving the \$95.3-billion foreign aid package from the Senate, despite overwhelming support from most Democrats and almost half of Republicans. But he has yet to chart a path forward in his chamber.

While many in Congress view Putin as a global threat, particularly after Russia intervened in the 2016 election in favor of Donald Trump, Johnson's colleagues on the far right are increasingly ambivalent about Putin's aggression and authoritarian leadership, as seen in right-wing media figure Tucker Carlson's admiring videos from Moscow after his recent interview with the Russian leader.

Even the sudden death of

Alexei Navalny, the most famous political prisoner in Russia and Putin's biggest rival, did not appear to move the House speaker Friday to commit to support for Ukraine.

"As Congress debates the best path forward to support Ukraine, the United States, and our partners, must be using every means available to cut off Putin's ability to fund his unprovoked war in Ukraine and aggression against the Baltic states," Johnson (R-La.) said in a statement.

Just months on the job, the speaker is prone to dithering on big questions of the day as he tries to unite his deeply fractured but paper-thin House GOP majority, which is filled with up-and-coming figures challenging his leadership and, at times, threatening his ouster.

In one of his first interviews since taking the gavel

in October, Johnson told Fox News' Sean Hannity that Congress was "not going to abandon" Ukraine.

But in the months since, Johnson's bottom-up leadership style, in which he tries to hear out all comers, has created a leadership vacuum on Ukraine aid that others are increasingly willing and able to fill.

Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), a Trump ally who opposes more aid to Ukraine, said he hopes to lead a new generation of Republican lawmakers eager to turn away from traditional GOP interventionism around the world.

Gaetz said he believes additional U.S. military aid for Ukraine risks escalating the conflict in ways potentially harmful to Americans.

"And I think that is a lot more significant to my constituents than which dude gets to run Crimea," Gaetz said, referring to the region

Russia annexed in 2014 from Ukraine, which the U.S. and most other nations consider illegal.

If the \$95-billion aid package was put to a vote, Johnson would find overwhelming support in the House from a coalition of Democrats and Republicans. Anchoring the package is \$61 billion for Ukraine, mainly in the form of military equipment. It also would send foreign assistance and humanitarian aid to Israel, Gaza and allies in the Indo-Pacific region, including Taiwan.

"There is only Plan A, which is to ensure that Ukraine receives what it needs," Harris said alongside Zelensky in Munich. She added that "we must be unwavering, and we cannot play political games."

Biden and the Democratic congressional leaders are imploring the speaker to cast off his right wing and join forces with them to send a sweeping bipartisan message of U.S. leadership in supporting Ukraine and confirming the U.S. commitment to its allies around the world, especially as Trump criticizes the NATO alliance.

"House Republicans can either choose America's national security interests or choose Vladimir Putin and Russia — that is not a difficult choice," House Democratic leader Hakeem Jeffries of New York said after speaking with Johnson midweek. "The national security bill should be put on the floor for an up-or-down vote, and it will pass with overwhelming support from Democrats and Republicans."

But for Johnson, eyeing his own political future, the choices are different.

If he reaches across the aisle to Democrats for a partnership, he is likely to face immediate calls for his ouster. That's what happened when the far right booted his predecessor, former GOP Rep. Kevin McCarthy of Bakersfield, after he joined forces with Democrats to pass legislation last fall to keep the fed-

eral government from shutting down.

Congress is away for a recess, but various coalitions of lawmakers have stepped into the void trying to engineer solutions to help Johnson broker the divide.

One idea, from centrist Republican and Democratic lawmakers, would be to scale back the package to \$66 billion, primarily military aid, with nearly \$48 billion for Ukraine but without the economic or humanitarian aid of the Senate-passed bill. It also would tack on strict immigration controls on the U.S.-Mexico border, similar to some that Republicans had pushed for but ultimately rejected, in the Senate compromise.

Another idea is to seize some of the \$300 billion in Russian assets that are parked in U.S. banks, something the Biden administration has considered and Johnson appeared to reference in his statement Friday as he searches for ways to avoid using taxpayer money to pay for aid to Ukraine.

One long-shot proposal would be to use a procedural tool, known as a discharge petition, to force the House to vote on the Senate package. But that would require a level of support that appears out of reach on both sides of the aisle.

Rep. Chrissy Houlahan (D-Pa.), an Air Force veteran who recently traveled to the Baltic region, where National Guard troops from her state partnered with Lithuanian allies, said "it boggles my mind" that colleagues don't understand the Russia threat.

When Johnson said the House will "work its will" rather than take up the Senate package, Houlahan said the House's "will" is to vote for it.

"He knows better than this — that there are more than 300 of us who are willing to vote for this package," she said. "He is the speaker of the House. He is not the speaker of the Republicans."

Mascaro writes for the Associated Press.

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Kansas City, site of parade shooting, home to lax gun laws

Both states that share the Chiefs' hometown have GOP legislatures that have rolled back firearm restrictions.

BY SUMMER BALLENTINE AND DAVID A. LIEB

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. — The shooting that wounded more than 20 people and killed one during the Kansas City Chiefs' Super Bowl victory parade occurred in a state with few gun regulations and historical tension over how major cities handle crime.

Wednesday's shooting — which Kansas City police the next day said appeared to stem from a dispute among several people — occurred despite the presence of more than 800 police officers from various agencies.

Notably, dozens of policymakers from Missouri and neighboring Kansas were caught in the chaos as throngs of fans scattered at the sound of gunshots. Lawmakers and elected officials who witnessed the havoc firsthand included Republican Missouri Gov. Mike Parson and Democratic Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly, whose security detail heard the shots after she'd gotten into her car to leave, a spokesperson said.

Democratic Missouri state Rep. Maggie Nurrenbern of Kansas City said she was inside Union Station, near the rally site, when the shooting began. She said she and her sister ran and used their bodies to hide and shield fleeing children.

"I'm hurt. I'm angry," Nurrenbern wrote in a post on the social media platform X. "And I'm more resolved than ever to make sure kids can grow up in a Missouri free from gun violence."

But what, if any, action Missouri's Republican-led Legislature will take in response to the shooting is unclear.

"Policing a free nation is difficult," GOP state Rep. Lane Roberts said Thursday. "So when we try to do things that augment the efforts of our police agencies without treading on the rights of other people, it can be a real difficult balance."

Here's a look at Missouri's gun policies and how elected officials want to address crime.

A pro-gun state

Missouri has some of the most lenient gun laws among states as a result of a series of measures passed by the Republican-led Legislature over the last few decades.

Before the GOP won full control of the Legislature in the 2002 elections, concealed weapons were outlawed, and handguns could be purchased only after a background check and permit from local sheriffs. Republican lawmakers repealed those restrictions within their first decade of power, and gun shops saw rising sales.

Missouri has no age restrictions on gun use and possession, although federal law largely prohibits minors from carrying handguns.

Missouri voters in 2014 approved a constitutional amendment placed on the ballot by lawmakers that made the right to bear arms "unalienable" and subjected any restrictions "to strict scrutiny."

Two years later, the Republican supermajority in Missouri's Legislature overrode a veto of then-Gov. Jay Nixon, a Democrat, to allow most adults to carry concealed guns without needing a permit.

The legislation also created a "stand-your-ground" right, expanding the legal use of guns in self-defense.

A 2021 Missouri law pressed gun rights even further, prohibiting local police from enforcing federal gun restrictions.

That measure got struck down by a federal judge last year and remains on hold while under appeal.

What are lawmakers doing?

Republican legislative leaders have expressed little interest in any laws that would restrict firearm use and possession in Missouri.

Roberts — a former police chief from southwestern Missouri — last year proposed limiting children from openly carrying guns in public without parental supervision, in an effort to combat rising crime in St. Louis. The bill failed by a 104-39 vote. Only one Republican voted in support of it.

Republican House

Speaker Dean Plocher abruptly left a news conference Thursday after being asked by reporters for details on the GOP strategy for addressing crime and being questioned about last year's vote on children carrying firearms.

A rare exception to Republicans' fierce resistance to gun regulations is an effort to crack down on celebratory gunfire, which has been an issue in Kansas City.

Missouri's Legislature last year passed a bill to make shooting a firearm within city limits a misdemeanor for the first offense, with exceptions.

The bill was named for 11-year-old Blair Shanahan Lane, who was dancing with a sparkler on July 4, 2011, out-



REED HOFFMANN Associated Press

POLICE escort the Chiefs' Noah Gray, left, after the shooting at the Super Bowl rally in Kansas City, Mo.

side her suburban Kansas City home and was struck in the neck by a stray bullet.

Blair's Law was part of a sweeping crime bill that was vetoed by Parson for unrelated reasons. The Missouri House gave approval to simi-

lar legislation just two days before the Chiefs' parade.

Other Republican-backed bills advancing in the House would exempt guns and ammunition from sales tax and would allow people with concealed gun permits to bring weapons onto public transportation.

House Majority Leader Jonathan Patterson said last week that "it's common sense to allow lawful concealed carrying permit holders to be able to protect themselves" on buses and trains.

A broader debate

A large portion of the Kansas City metropolitan area is in Kansas. A 43-year-old prominent DJ who was killed in the Wednesday shooting lived on the Kansas side.

The most visible and active gun safety movement in Kansas is in the Kansas City area. But Kansas law favors gun rights as much as Missouri's does, and Kansas added an amendment to fortify gun rights in its constitution four years before Missouri did — with 88% of the vote.

Now, Republican state Atty. Gen. Kris Kobach and a majority of the state's GOP lawmakers are pushing for another amendment to make those protections even stronger.

"Having armed citizens affords a greater degree of protection in any situation," Kobach told reporters Thursday. "We need good citizens to be armed, to help, because there just aren't enough law enforcement officers to protect everybody, everywhere and every time."

During a hearing last month before a House committee, critics predicted the change would prevent the state from prohibiting even convicted felons or domestic abusers from having guns.

"That's the really scary part of it," said Rep. Jo Ella Hoyer, a Kansas City-area Democrat who was at the parade with her 11-year-old son. "We could lose any current gun laws we have."

Guns and crime in Kansas City

The number of killings in Kansas City rose to a record level last year, 182. Kansas City police data show there were 12 more killings in 2023 than in 2022 and three more than the all-time high of 179 in 2020. The Police Department data do not include officer-involved killings.

Kansas City elected officials are limited in what they can do.

With a population of about 508,000, Kansas City is the only Missouri city without local control of its police force. It's believed to be the largest city in the U.S. in that situation, the mayor's office has said.

Leaders in the largely Democratic city don't hire the police chief or determine how the department spends tax dollars. A 1930s-era law gives that power to a five-member board appointed largely by the Missouri governor, who since 2017 has been a Republican.

Missouri law also prohibits cities from enacting more stringent regulations on guns than state law does, although Kansas City bans gunfire within the city.

In recent years, mayors of both Kansas City and St. Louis have fought for control of their cities' public safety policies with primarily Republican lawmakers who argue that high crime rates mean local leaders are failing. GOP lawmakers have also repeatedly rebuffed requests to allow urban areas to adopt stricter gun policies compared with the rest of the state.

Ballentine and Lieb write for the Associated Press. AP writer John Hanna in Topeka, Kansas, contributed to this report.

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Study says COVID is linked to chronic fatigue

Those who had the virus have higher risk of suffering ongoing exhaustion, CDC reports

BY RONG-GONG LIN II

People who have had COVID-19 have a significantly higher risk of suffering chronic fatigue than those who haven't had the disease, a new study shows.

"Our data indicate that COVID-19 is associated with a significant increase in new fatigue diagnoses," according to the study, published Wednesday by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the journal Emerging Infectious Diseases.

"Physicians should be aware that fatigue might occur or be newly recognized [more than a year] after acute COVID-19," the report said.

Specifically, the study looked at electronic health records of more than 4,500

patients in Washington state who had COVID-19 in 2020 and 2021 and compared them to patients who hadn't had COVID. The study found the risk for chronic fatigue in those who had COVID was about four times the risk compared with people who hadn't contracted COVID.

Scientists also looked at a more broad definition of fatigue, which includes chronic fatigue as well as diagnoses of weakness and malaise. The study found that the risk of fatigue among COVID-19 patients was 68% higher among people who'd had COVID than those who hadn't.

Among the 4,589 COVID-19 patients in the study, scientists identified 434 as "incident fatigue cases," in which the person was diagnosed with fatigue

after recovering from COVID-19. Of those, 81 were also identified as having chronic fatigue, which is a subset of general fatigue.

The risk of chronic fatigue after COVID-19 was more common among women, older people and those who had other medical conditions, the study said.

The report illustrates the continuing burden of long COVID well after the emergency phase of the pandemic ended. CDC survey data from last year said that up to 15% of U.S. adults had experienced long COVID and up to 6% were currently experiencing long COVID.

Among those who have suffered long COVID — regardless of whether the person was hospitalized — fatigue is often a symptom.

Researchers for this study decided to focus on fa-

tigue among COVID-19 patients because the symptom plays such a central role among those suffering from long COVID.

People who developed fatigue after COVID-19 had "far worse clinical outcomes," the report said. Among more than 400 patients who dealt with post-COVID fatigue, 25.6% were hospitalized at some point following an acute bout of COVID-19 during the study's time frame. By contrast, only 13.6% of more than 4,000 patients who didn't develop post-COVID fatigue were later hospitalized.

Patients who had post-COVID fatigue were also at a higher risk of dying than those who did not develop fatigue, the report said.

The report also cautioned that doctors be alert for COVID patients who

have a history of mood disorders; such patients "are also at increased risk for post-COVID-19 fatigue," it said.

Doctors say the risk of long COVID is further reason to take prudent steps to avoid a coronavirus infection, including avoiding sick people, taking a test to verify a COVID-19 diagnosis and staying home if you are ill but asymptomatic. Masking up in crowded indoor settings, staying up to date on vaccinations and taking antiviral drugs like Paxlovid when experiencing COVID-19 symptoms may also help reduce the risk of long COVID.

People can get infected with coronavirus multiple times, the CDC noted, and "each time a person is infected or reinfected ... they have a risk of developing long COVID."



BRIAN VANDER BRUG Los Angeles Times

LAND MOVEMENT in parts of Rancho Palos Verdes has been a problem for decades and was exacerbated by recent heavy storms. Many of the area's hilly streets, like these in the Seaview community, are now lined with sandbags, dotted with orange cones or blocked by signs that warn of landslide damage. More rain is on the way.

'What's happening is unprecedented'

[Sliding, from A1]

South, many of the neighborhood's hilly streets are now lined with sandbags, dotted with orange cones or blocked by signs that warn of "landslide damage."

Where the road is not torn open by new cracks, there's often fresh pavement trying to Band-Aid the latest splits or plastic tarps covering nearby fissures.

"This just gets worse by the day," Reeves said on a recent walk through Cinnamon Lane, which she called a new ground zero for landslide movement.

Some areas in the landslide complex have struggled with slope movement for years, but now the issue has turned into a more widespread, and escalating, crisis.

Major landslide movement is now occurring across almost 700 acres, or slightly more than a square mile, Phipps estimated. That's a 75% increase over the area that had seen major movement over the last few decades. And the rate of movement in recent months is three or four times that of previous analyses, he said, with further acceleration expected.

"I'm worried about the immediate effects today on infrastructure — the roads, the utilities, anything that's buried," Phipps said at a City Council meeting this month. "I'm just worried that we're going to start losing roads ... people are going to start losing access to their private properties."

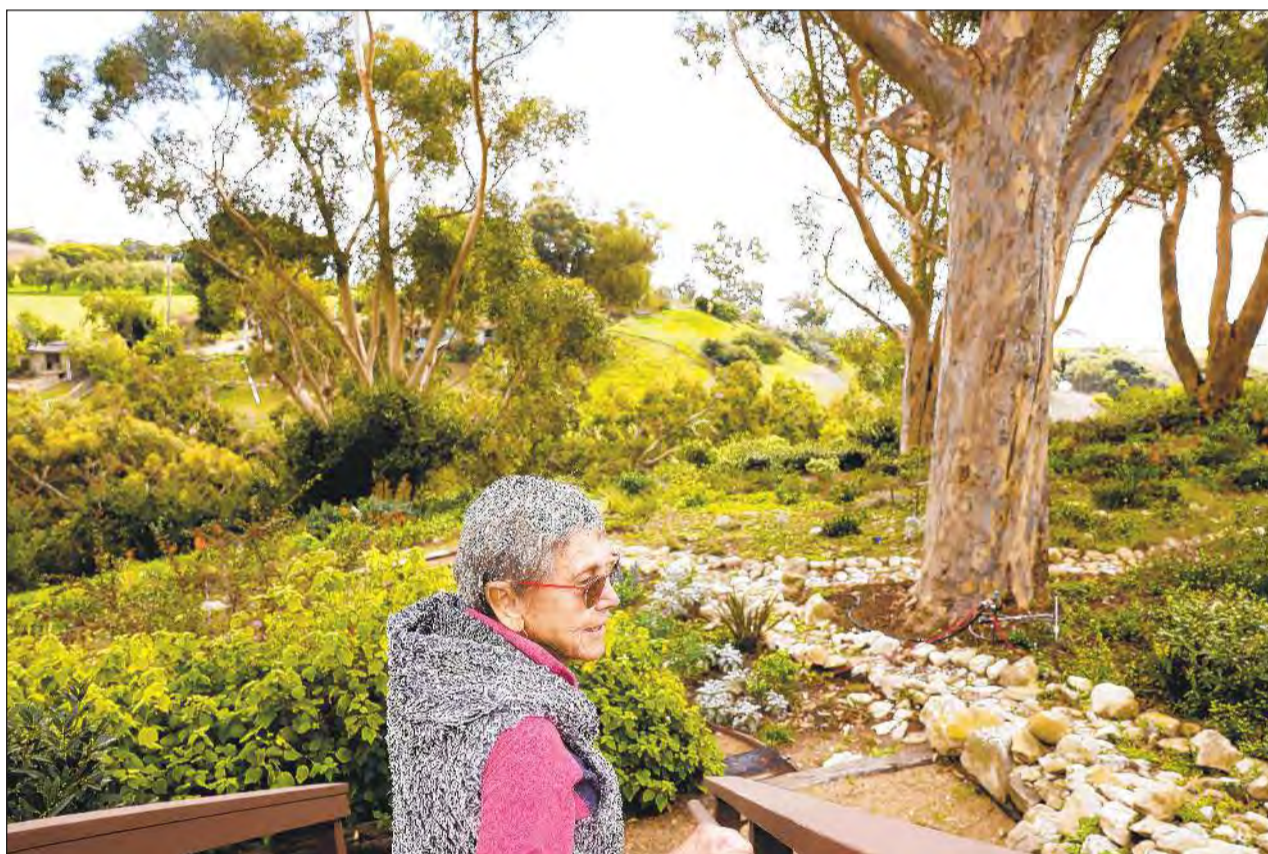
Officials know that water is fueling the increasing land movement — infiltrating layers of clay, softening it — but stopping moisture from entering the ground is extremely difficult during repeated, record-setting rainstorms. Residents are facing another wet winter storm this week, heightening concerns that new rainfall could exacerbate what's quickly becoming an emergency situation.

Often, landslides are triggered months after a rainy season. Increasingly, however, the rain's effects are almost immediate, Portuguese Bend residents said.

"It rains and our house is moving," said Caitlin McKay, whose home sits not far from where Reeves pointed out the landslide's ground zero. McKay and her husband were unaware of any major movement issues when they purchased their home just two years ago; now they're desperately trying to retrofit their walls, ceilings and foundation to ensure their young family's safety.

'It may not be enough'

In September, two new homes were red-tagged in the Seaview neighborhood

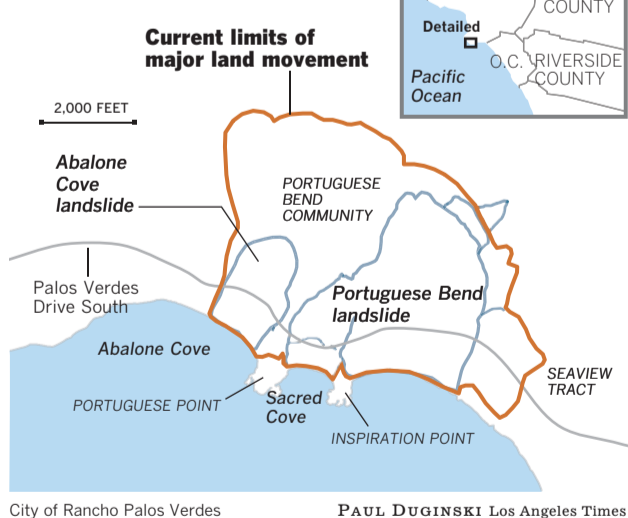


CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

SALLIE REEVES, 80, takes in the view from the deck of the Portuguese Bend home where she and her husband have lived for 41 years. "We had no damage until one month ago," she said. "Now we're making repairs."

Landslide risk in Rancho Palos Verdes is expanding

The area with major land movement now encompasses almost a square mile, growing by nearly 300 acres in recent months.



City of Rancho Palos Verdes

PAUL DUGINSKI Los Angeles Times

— just southeast of Portuguese Bend — amid growing land movement, prompting city leaders to declare a local emergency. Now officials are seeking an emergency declaration from the state, which they hope could bolster their fight.

There are approximately 400 homes in the area of the expanding landslides, with dozens already seeing damage, Phipps said. More than eight miles of trails have closed across Portuguese Bend Reserve, Filiorum Reserve, Abalone Cove Reserve and Forrestal Reserve, according to city park officials, because of toppled utility poles, massive fissures, fallen rocks and dangerous drop-offs.

The Wayfarers Chapel — designed by Frank Lloyd

Wright Jr. and recently named a national historic landmark — announced its indefinite closure this week due to "accelerated land movement in our local area."

The neighborhoods where Reeves and McKay live around the Portuguese Bend Riding Club have moved an average of 4 feet in the last 15 months, Phipps said.

Many of these areas had previously moved less than a foot, if at all, during similar stretches, the geologist reported.

The ancient complex includes four historically active landslides, dubbed the Portuguese Bend, Abalone Cove, Klondike Canyon and Beach Club landslides. The oldest and largest, Por-

tuguese Bend, was activated in 1956, starting the land's slow descent to the sea. After initial shifts ruined about 130 homes, officials have been able to stave off extreme damage with close monitoring, ongoing remediation and a growing inventory of dewatering wells, which pump out water from underground.

Possibly the only bright spot in this ongoing crisis, experts say, is that even with accelerating movement, the region is not expected to morph into a catastrophic landslide, as occurred last summer in nearby Rolling Hills Estates. In that surprising and disastrous event, which officials have said was probably caused by heavy winter rains, eight homes crashed down a canyon wall when the slope rapidly dropped 45 feet, destroying them and rendering several others unsafe to inhabit.

Still the Rancho Palos Verdes community is facing a laundry list of escalating issues. More land movement has meant more ruined roadways, water and gas leaks and property damage — all requiring frequent and intensive repairs, often with hefty price tags. That's become too much even for a wealthy community such as this one.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency recently awarded the city a \$23.3-million grant to fund a long-term remediation project aimed at slowing the landslide, but that work is not expected to start until 2025.

In the meantime, the city and local landslide abatement districts have put in six new dewatering wells, and

local utilities have increased monitoring and started moving some lines above ground.

"I think we're gonna see a tremendous benefit from all that," Phipps said. "But, you know, we're right in the middle of winter. We still got the six, seven weeks of what are usually the wettest months in Southern California. ... It may not be enough."

The City Council plans to meet next week to discuss ways to expedite projects in the works.

"Everybody is very concerned that, a) we have enough money to get through the year, and b) that we can somehow arrest the sliding," said Gordon Leon, chair of the Abalone Cove Landslide Abatement District, which operates 16 dewatering wells and will soon bring the six new ones online. The 16 currently pump out 130,000 gallons of water a day, he said.

But, operating on a yearly budget of about \$250,000, the district has already gone through its reserves covering maintenance costs and the price of new wells, Leon said.

"It's going to be tight getting from where we are today through the end of the year," he said. "And we're at a time when the landslide is moving at record speeds."

Residents stay hopeful

Yet residents across the neighborhoods most affected remain hopeful. Some are holding out for more federal disaster aid; others want to see drainage improved, the canyon lined more effectively or utility projects prioritized.

Many just hope for no more rain.

But despite a collaborative focus on the ongoing problem, most of those solutions are still far from becoming reality.

"I just don't know if a lot of these houses [have multiple] years to spare," McKay said. With every water main break — of which there have been many lately — water floods their streets and hillsides, adding to the saturated soils and landslides' fragile layers, which she believes has to be worsening the problem.

"Everything takes so long," said Julian McKay, Caitlin McKay's husband. "This should have been dealt with five to 10 years ago, not in the middle of the crisis."

And they are seeing the effects particularly clearly, the couple said.

"The movement on our property is insane," Julian McKay said.

Since purchasing their home in 2022, they've learned that it sits on a fissure, which has continued to open and move with each rainstorm.

Within a few months of their arrival, small problems became more drastic: Ceiling cracks grew to an inch wide, the garage started separating from the house, their patio was sinking and a portion of their backyard plunged "as if a wave was rolling through," Julian McKay said.

They are now doing intensive retrofitting work that has cost more than \$50,000, they estimate, and they're just at the beginning.

But with plans for a stabilized foundation and more pliable ceilings and walls, he and his wife are confident they will be able to keep themselves and their 6-month-old daughter safe for years to come. They have no plans to leave the area, despite its unstable ground and mounting repair fees.

"It's such a magical neighborhood," Julian McKay said. "When the movement slows, it's back to being amazing."

Reeves worries about home values dipping as the landslide crisis drags on, yet the neighborhood remains prime real estate.

In the last two years, several homes have sold across the Portuguese Bend community, according to Zillow data, including at least one just last month and one in late 2023 — even though the increasing landslide movement was well-documented.

"This is paradise. There is no place like Portuguese Bend," Reeves said, looking out on her lush garden that overlooks the ocean. "I'm leaving in a box, that's the only way I'm leaving here. And I'm not alone in how I feel about that."

Who can break from pack to test Gascón?

[D.A. race, from A1] voters were “safer now than they were three years ago.”

Between the packed stage and a feisty crowd that occasionally interrupted the discussion, the Feb. 8 event left little room for substantive policy discussion.

In some ways, the forum reflected the state of the race: crowded, chaotic and confusing for voters. Recent polls indicate many Angelenos are fed up with Gascón and anxious about crime, yet two-thirds of voters remain undecided in the March primary, according to a recent USC/Dornsife poll.

Though Gascón is likely to glide into the general election, observers believe he is vulnerable in November. But the tight pack has made it hard for a true threat to emerge, with no challengers rising above single digits in polls.

“I think a lot of the other candidates smell blood in the water, hence they are hopping in this thing just to see what would happen,” said political consultant Brian Van Riper, who is not involved in the race. “The interesting question is: How do they pop through?”

Nearly all of the challengers want to roll back some or all of Gascón’s restrictions on the use of the death penalty, sentencing enhancements and prosecuting juveniles as adults. The test is to find a way to stand out not from the district attorney but one another — without pulling too far right of an increasingly progressive L.A. electorate.

Standing head and shoulders above the pack in fundraising is Nathan Hochman, the onetime Republican candidate for state attorney general who is now running as an independent to “get politics out” of the D.A.’s office.

Hochman has raised well over \$1.5 million and bought television advertisements, which often prove key in communicating with L.A. County’s more than 5 million registered voters.

Hochman is a longtime federal prosecutor and defense attorney who once served as president of the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission, and his fundraising prowess could prove pivotal in a November matchup with Gascón, who pulled in \$12.4 million when he ousted Jackie Lacey in 2020.

Arguing that he’s been miscast as the conservative in the race, Hochman described his politics as “socially moderate” and his approach to criminal justice as “the hard middle.”

He said his approach requires figuring out “who the true threats are to public safety and have to go to jail, and quite honestly the ones that aren’t.” A first time, nonviolent offender, he said, “still has to be held accountable for their actions, but community service or diversion might be the play.”

Hochman wears his defense background as a mark of distinction in a race against many experienced prosecutors. He has called for expanded use of mental health and drug courts to push lower-level offenders into treatment, but has also made aggressive prosecution of fentanyl dealers a hallmark of his campaign message.

Hochman bristles at any suggestion that he’s too conservative for L.A.’s electorate. He says he’s never voted for Donald Trump, but he sometimes talks about crime in apocalyptic terms that echo right-wing criticisms of California, frequently comparing L.A. to “Gotham City.” He has accused Gascón of ushering in “the golden age of criminals.”

Gerard Marcil, a Republican mega-donor who pumped significant funds into campaigns to recall Gov. Gavin Newsom and Gascón, has given a quarter of a million dollars to a committee supporting Hochman. Hochman’s campaign has also paid more than \$100,000 to the Pluvius Group, a Republican firm that organized Trump fundraisers in 2020.

“My campaign employs a bipartisan mix of Democrat and Republican fundraisers, which reflects the independent approach that I’ll bring to the D.A.’s office. Criminals don’t ask for your party registration when they rob you,” said Hochman, who estimates half of his major donors are Democrats or independents.

Rival candidates have



JEFF CHEMERINSKY is viewed as the most progressive of Dist. Atty. George Gascón’s top challengers.

been quick to try to paint Hochman as incapable of beating Gascón one on one.

During a January debate, Deputy Dist. Atty. Eric Siddall referenced Hochman’s 2022 loss to Rob Bonta in the attorney general election. “There is no way in God’s green earth that he is going to beat George Gascón in a general election,” Siddall said.

In 2020, Gascón swept into office on a raft of endorsements from national Democrats after a summer of protests demanding criminal justice reform.

But his first term has been marked by legal battles with his own prosecutors, two failed recall bids and controversial decisions that have led opponents to blame him for acts of violence. Some of his reform policies were blocked by a judge early in his term.

Polls show voter anxieties about crime are surging, and several polls indicate more than 50% of voters have an unfavorable view of Gascón’s job performance.

Van Riper, the political consultant, said such a low rating can be a political “death sentence” in a competitive race. “People typically don’t change their minds about who they don’t like,” he said.

Gascón scoffed at the polling during a recent interview.

“During my campaign in 2020, I was polling around 27%. I got 54% of the vote,” he said. “The reality is the poll that counts is the one on election day.”

The field, the incumbent D.A. said, has failed to make any substantive “policy argument” to voters beyond a promise to erase his tenure.

Of the four members of Gascón’s office in the race, Hatami might have the best chance of unseating his boss. The USC poll placed Hatami in second in the primary, with support from 8% of voters compared with Gascón’s 15%. Hochman was third with 4%, and no other candidate garnered more than 2% support.

Hatami is one of only three candidates to raise over half a million dollars in the race and has been a thorn in Gascón’s side, frequently challenging the D.A. on TV and elsewhere in public. A longtime prosecutor of crimes against children, he is best known for winning convictions in the gruesome torture murders of Anthony Avalos and Gabriel Fernandez. He has built up a base of crime victims frustrated with what they perceive as leniency from Gascón.

“I think sometimes when you vote for a D.A. it’s not just policies, I think people want a leader,” he said. “I think people want someone who is going to fight for them.”

Promising to govern “with a heart,” Hatami has promised to be flexible on some public safety issues: He says most juveniles should not be tried as adults and rejects the idea of prosecuting in a way in which every defendant “is getting slammed with the most severe punishment.”

Hatami allied himself with conservative talk radio host Larry Elder and former Sheriff Alex Villanueva during the recall campaigns against Gascón, which could turn off some general election voters.

“I don’t run from them or hide from them,” Hatami said of those connections. “I’ve joined forces with a lot of people that I don’t politically agree with.”

At a recent debate, when asked to rate how safe he felt in L.A. County on a scale of 1 to 10, Hatami said “zero.”

In L.A. County, violent and property crime are up roughly 8% from 2019 to 2022,

according to California Department of Justice data. Criminologists say it is disingenuous to solely blame, or credit, crime trends on a district attorney’s policies. LAPD records show homicides and robberies trending down in recent years.

That’s the kind of nuance Chemerinsky hopes will carry him to the November ballot. The most progressive of Gascón’s top challengers — with a war chest second only to Hochman’s — the former federal prosecutor is hoping to scoop up Angelenos unhappy with the incumbent but squeamish about an overcorrection that would erase reforms they demanded four years ago.

“I believe strongly in criminal justice reform,” he said. “I think we need reform at each and every stage of the process.”

Chemerinsky says he would undo all of Gascón’s initial policies except for his ban on the use of the death penalty. Like Hatami, he says he believes “juveniles should be treated as juveniles” outside of extreme cases, but rejects Gascón’s initial blanket ban on seeking to try some teens as adults. (Gascón retreated from his absolutist policy on juveniles in 2022.)

But Chemerinsky is more measured on the use of sentencing enhancements in gang crimes. In an interview, he noted flaws in law enforcement databases tracking gang members, and said that the use of such enhancements should be carefully considered.

“I think [gang enhancements] have been abused in a couple of ways. ... Are we talking about actual gang-related conduct as opposed to a gang-related individual?” he asked.

Comments like that have opened Chemerinsky up to attack. Siddall labeled him “mini-Gascón,” and other critics have noted his father, legal scholar Erwin Chemerinsky, was on Gascón’s transition team in 2020. The elder Chemerinsky says he had no hand in drafting Gascón’s policies.

Also running as a moderate but struggling to match Chemerinsky in fundraising, Siddall has taken up the role of attack dog in the race, labeling Hochman as too right-leaning and Chemerinsky as a Gascón sequel.

Claiming to represent a “new generation of prosecutors,” Siddall rejects the death penalty and wants to refocus the office on prosecuting what he believes to be the true drivers of violent crime — gang leaders and enforcers, as well as those who organize “smash and grab” retail thefts.

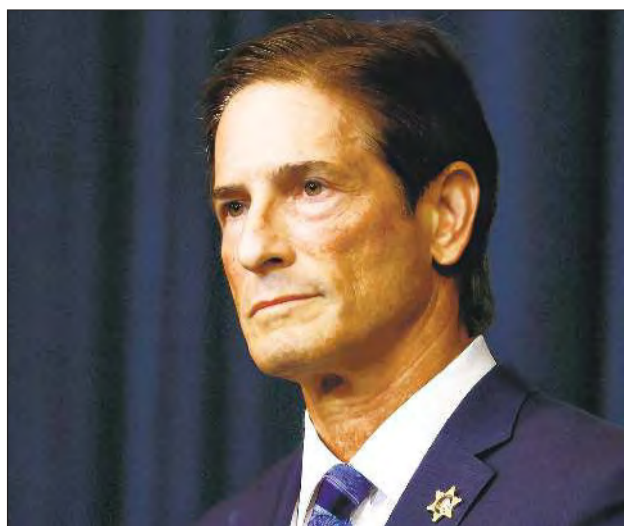
But he thinks others in the field are giving unrealistic assessments of crime in L.A.

“I think it is overblown to say that we live in Gotham,” he said. “The idea that we’re at a zero [safety level] is absurd and it doesn’t bear out in reality.”

With less than three weeks before the primary, the rest of the field is fighting for air and tends to echo its own.

Archuleta and Deputy Dist. Atty. Maria Ramirez have both struggled to raise money. While Ramirez has cast herself as a steady hand whose wealth of management experience can restore confidence in the office, Archuleta has leaned heavily into concerns about public safety and dismissed statistics that show crime is down.

Deputy Dist. Atty. John McKinney is the longtime major-crimes prosecutor who convicted Nipsey Hussle’s killer in 2022, but it’s unclear how his record of trial success helps him stand out in a field replete with court-



NATHAN HOCHMAN has raised well over \$1.5 million and bought TV ads to connect with L.A. voters.

room veterans.

Superior Court Judge Craig Mitchell, founder of the Skid Row Running Club, says he is uniquely qualified to help tackle L.A.’s spiraling homelessness crisis. Another

judge, David Milton, frequently champions the death penalty and has proudly invoked his Republican bona fides in a county where most registered voters are Democrats and inde-

pendents.

Dan Kapelovitz, a defense attorney running to Gascón’s left, refers to the rest of the field as “mass incarcerators,” but has spent more time on debate stages making jokes than offering policy solutions.

The last to enter the race was a cold case prosecutor named Lloyd “Bobcat” Masson, who says his focus on property crime and made-for-prime-time moniker will give him a boost with voters who find themselves dazed and confused by the long list of alternatives.

“Each candidate saw there was no one coalescing, and for different reasons they all thought they could do it better,” he said.

Masson sounds confident for a complete unknown in the race. But after 10 challengers threw their hat into the ring, he figured, why not him, too?

“If it’s a party, I’m coming,” he said.



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More couples choose to be child-free

[Child-free, from A1] fortably in the city we love and save enough for travel and retirement?

The answer to both questions was no.

Coelho-Kostolny, 36, designs 3-D models for video games, and Quinn, 35, works as an actor and writer. Although their combined income last year was nearly \$200,000, her salary fluctuates.

The couple expect to help care for Quinn's parents down the road, and they already feel behind on a retirement goal they've read online: Aim to save five times your annual salary by age 40.

"It's just impossible," Coelho-Kostolny said, exasperated. "I'm pretty sure I'm just gonna work until I die."

Quinn, who manages the couple's monthly budget, assured him that they're doing better than he thinks but agreed that having a child would make their financial situation extremely challenging. The cost of day care alone, she said, would eclipse her salary some years.

"I would have had to quit."

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Birthrates have been trending downward in the U.S. for decades, but they dropped even more precipitously during the pandemic, a time of profound uncertainty when parents juggled jobs with full-time caregiving and teaching roles. After a small rebound, they're down again.

More than a quarter million fewer babies were born in the U.S. in 2022 than in 2012, according to the most recent finalized data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A phenomenon across much of the world, the falling birth rate has sweeping implications on the global economy, prompting Taiwan to spend more than \$3 billion on child-rearing initiatives and leaders in several countries to create so-called baby bonuses.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom highlighted declining fertility rates as a structural risk in his 2022-23 budget, saying they could have "both significant societal and labor force repercussions for the coming years."

A recent Pew study of adults who said they were not likely to have children found that a majority gave a straightforward reason: They "just don't want to."

But among those who cited a specific factor, financial reasons was one of the most popular, along with age and medical reasons. Among parents younger than 40 who said they didn't plan to have more children, more than a quarter cited financial concerns.

And it is more expensive than ever to raise a child in the United States.



XAVIER COELHO-KOSTOLNY, 36, and Beccy Quinn, 35, decided to not have kids after careful consideration of life goals and budgets.



THE COUPLE, who married in 2014 and love to hike, cook and travel, play with their cat, Sofie.

'I wanted these things that often feel luxurious for women, like time, like rest, like money.'

— RACHEL CARGLE, 35, who decided to be child-free

It costs \$310,605, on average, from birth to 17, based on a Brookings Institution analysis that took U.S. Department of Agriculture data from a few years earlier and accounted for inflation for a middle-class family. (That figure doesn't include what parents spend on college and helping a child settle into adulthood.)

Birthrates tend to shift along class lines.

A recent CDC report found that Americans with lower levels of education — often a proxy for earning less — were more likely to have more children than those with higher levels of education. Wealthier Americans, the data show, were more likely to have their first child later in life.

For millennials such as Quinn and Coelho-Kostolny, a generation saddled with astronomical student debt, and Gen Z-ers, who entered adulthood to a sky-high housing market, finances seem to come up far more often and directly in conversations about whether to have children than they did among earlier generations, said Amy Blackstone, a sociology professor at the University of Maine who has studied the topic for more than a decade.

"I hear that louder and clearer now," said Blackstone, who wrote a book called "Childfree by Choice."

Although there have always been people who opted out of parenthood, Blackstone said, the child-free-by-choice movement (she and her husband are part of it), gained momentum in the 1970s — a confluence of second-wave feminism, the increased availability of birth control and a push by some environmentalists for so-called zero-population growth.

There was another surge of public interest during the Great Recession of 2007-09, she said, when birthrates dropped, as they often do during economic downturns. The rates took another hit during the COVID-19 pandemic, a time that revealed massive cracks in our social safety net, especially for parents, Blackstone said.

For Rachel Cargle, a writer and entrepreneur who lives in Ohio, getting an

up-close view of just how overextended most parents are was one factor in her decision not to have children.

While working as a live-in nanny in Washington, D.C., and New York in her 20s, she studied the families for whom she worked. They were fairly wealthy, she said, yet she could see the immense stress.

"They were on a hamster wheel," she said.

Although she envies the youthful energy that courses through the homes of her friends with children, Cargle, 35, said she has found deep peace in her decision to remain child-free. It has given her more time and ease to do things she loves, such as travel with her niece, swim laps and run a bookstore in her hometown of Akron.

She created the popular child-free-by-choice Instagram account "Rich Auntie Supreme" — part of a growing online community that stands as a counterweight of sorts to the wave of "traditional wife" influencers — tradwives for short — who flood TikTok with videos of fresh-from-scratch recipes, advice about submitting to your husband and footage of their children lined up by height.

"I wanted these things that often feel luxurious for women, like time, like rest, like money," Cargle said. "It's really about a celebration of a choice."

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Quinn and Coelho-Kostolny spent several years exploring that choice.

They had both assumed, earlier in life, that they would have children — not because the idea particularly excited them, but because society had all but meshed the identities of adulthood and parenthood.

Growing up in Michigan, Quinn and her friends played M.A.S.H., a pencil-and-paper game that claims to predict if you'll live in a mansion, apartment, shack or house, as well as what car you'll drive, who you'll marry and how many children you'll have.

"I was supposed to have 37 kids and live in a shack," she said, laughing.

Coelho-Kostolny grew up in Napa Valley surrounded by a gaggle of five siblings and several cousins. In his late teens, he helped care for his nieces and nephews when they were sick and loved teaching them things.

"Kids are cool," he said. "Weird little undeveloped humans that are like sponges."

But he never felt a strong emotional pull to have kids of his own.

When the couple, who met through a mutual friend in San Francisco, announced their engagement on Facebook in 2013, they got a message from Coelho-Kostolny's sister. It was a list of 35 questions couples should talk through before deciding whether to get married.

One was: Do you want to have children?

Neither felt strongly in favor, but they decided not

to rule anything out — they described themselves, at that time, "as fence sitters."

Soon after they got married in 2014, the couple relocated to Burbank for job opportunities. They got a cat, Sofie, and built a community among people who, like them, love to hike, cook and travel. Their close friends had a son and chose them as godparents.

They prioritized travel and adventure — swimming with dolphins in the Bahamas, skydiving at Lake Elsinore.

On their eighth anniversary, for which bronze is the traditional gift, they posed in front of the "Bronze Fonz," a statue depicting the "Happy Days" character in Milwaukee.

Their lives felt full, but they still hadn't made a final decision.

Through the years, Quinn had cycled through a series of emotions around the idea of parenthood, starting with apathy, then guilt.

Her mother had only once mentioned that she dreamed of grandchildren, but society had instilled in Quinn so much messaging about a woman's worth being tied to motherhood. Eventually, her emotions pivoted to research.

She discussed it with her therapist, read a book called "The Baby Decision" and had deep conversations with friends who had children. By then, she had all but made up her mind, but she worried about swaying her husband.

He was leaning that way too, especially when they considered finances.

Rent for their two-bedroom apartment was \$2,400 a month, and they still had so many things they wanted to do, such as tour the East Coast for a couple of months and attend Neotropolis, a festival in the Mojave Desert that they described as "Burning Man for really, really nerdy people."

They both hope to pursue further education, and Quinn still owes \$11,000 in loans from her time at the Academy of Art in San Francisco.

The couple know they probably will help care for Quinn's mother and stepfather and her father and stepmother — a factor that they've considered in planning their finances, since it would require them to relocate to a larger home.

Around the time they made their decision, Quinn lighted a candle and said a few words in her mind while thinking of the two names — the boy's for her father and stepfather, and the girl's for a name her mother had considered giving her. A small, silent moment for a different life.

Before long, around his 36th birthday, Coelho-Kostolny scheduled a vasectomy.

Since the procedure, Quinn has had a few fleeting moments of panic in which she wonders if they made the right decision. But most of the time she feels deep freedom.

"I would rather regret not having children," she said, "than regret having them."

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BUSINESS

L.A.'s worst parking lots? We figured out how to fix them

Know of a 'nightmare' location where everyone is 'vulturing' for a spot? Here are solutions for some of the most notorious.

By David Wharton

The parking lot is a mess, cars prowling for an empty space, shoppers weaving through the tangle with overloaded carts. "Nightmare" is the word Amber Mooers uses to describe the Sunday turmoil at her local Costco in Alhambra.

"There are people literally tailgating each other," Mooers says as she loads groceries into the back of a car. "Everyone is vulturing for a spot near the front."

If you live in or around Los Angeles, you probably have a parking lot like this in your life. Too many cars, not enough spaces, too much chaos. Maybe a Trader Joe's or an In-N-Out Burger that makes your pulse quicken as you pull into the driveway.

"It's pretty common," Gordon Meth says. "What happens is, they are often laid out by architects or site engineers who don't really know about traffic control."

Meth is a certified parking geek, a civil engineer with decades of experience in design consulting and expert testimony in civil trials. Most of us judge a lot by its spaces — *Too skinny! Too short!* — but he dives deeper.

Flow, friction, sight triangles.

As an associate at Pennsylvania-based Robson Forensic, Meth bemoans the lack of research on this arcane subject and muses about someday publishing his own guidelines. The Times recently met him at a Starbucks in Burbank where parking was hard to find.

With satellite photos strewn across the table and drone video playing over a laptop, we evaluated a sampling of L.A.'s worst parking lots: *What makes them so bad? And can they be improved?*

Trader Joe's in Pasadena

It's no secret this supermarket chain prefers small stores — square-footage-wise — requiring fewer parking spaces per zoning rules. But something else is at work here.

Though drivers often focus on space size, the interaction between pedestrians and drivers has a greater impact on parking, Meth says.

At the original Trader Joe's on Arroyo Parkway, the handicap parking is located too far from the entrance, there is an awkward diagonal crosswalk, and shoppers amble in all directions, often moving down the middle of the aisle for fear of someone backing out suddenly. This dynamic is called "shy distancing" and can hamper traffic flow.

The solution? Research shows that 30% to 40% of people comply with high-visibility markings, which makes a difference, Meth says. The store could move those handicap spots closer to the entrance, funnel foot traffic into a better-designed crosswalk and even put another walkway around the perimeter.

"To fix a parking lot, it doesn't take a lot," Meth says. "It's striping and signs, and maybe you lose a couple slots."

Food 4 Less in Westlake

The problem here is "frontage."

Cars, foot traffic and *rateros* — pirate taxis waiting for customers — converge around the main entrance to this supermarket in one of L.A.'s most densely populated neighborhoods.

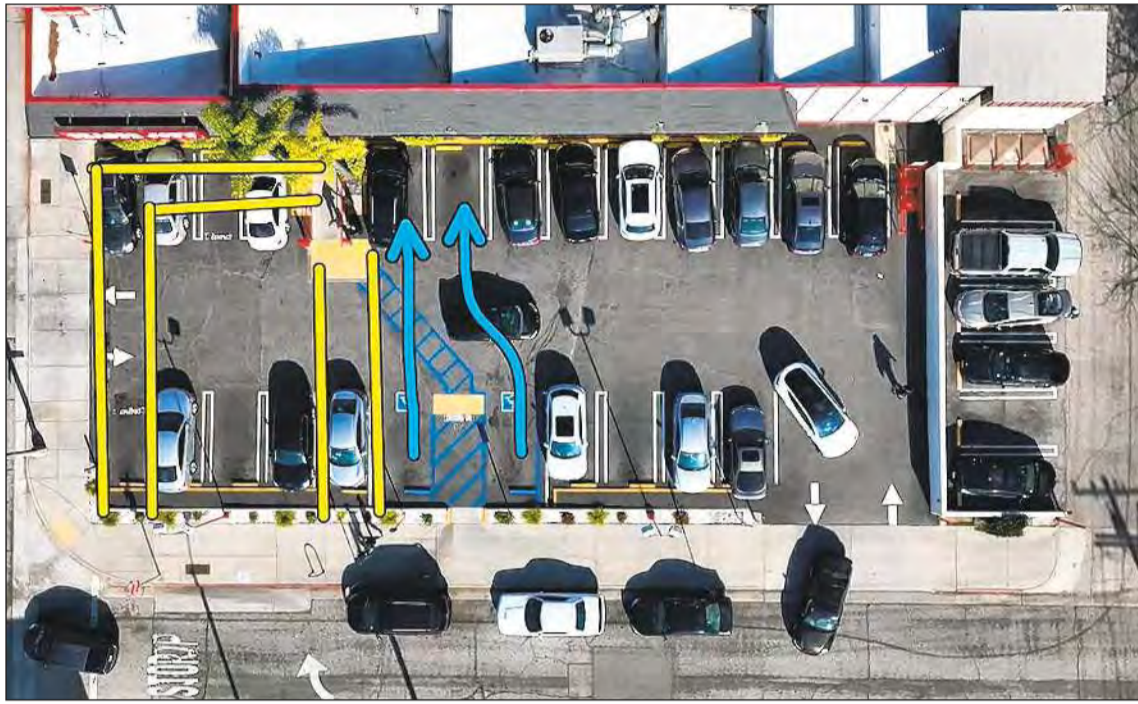
"People shop here because they can afford it," says Set Soto, who has come for beer. "That brings the multitudes."

Congestion in front of a supermarket can reverberate throughout a lot, even a big one such as this. Meth says it is worth removing a dozen or so parking spaces to add stop signs and islands — those small, curbed planters — at the end of each aisle. Better visibility equals smoother flow.

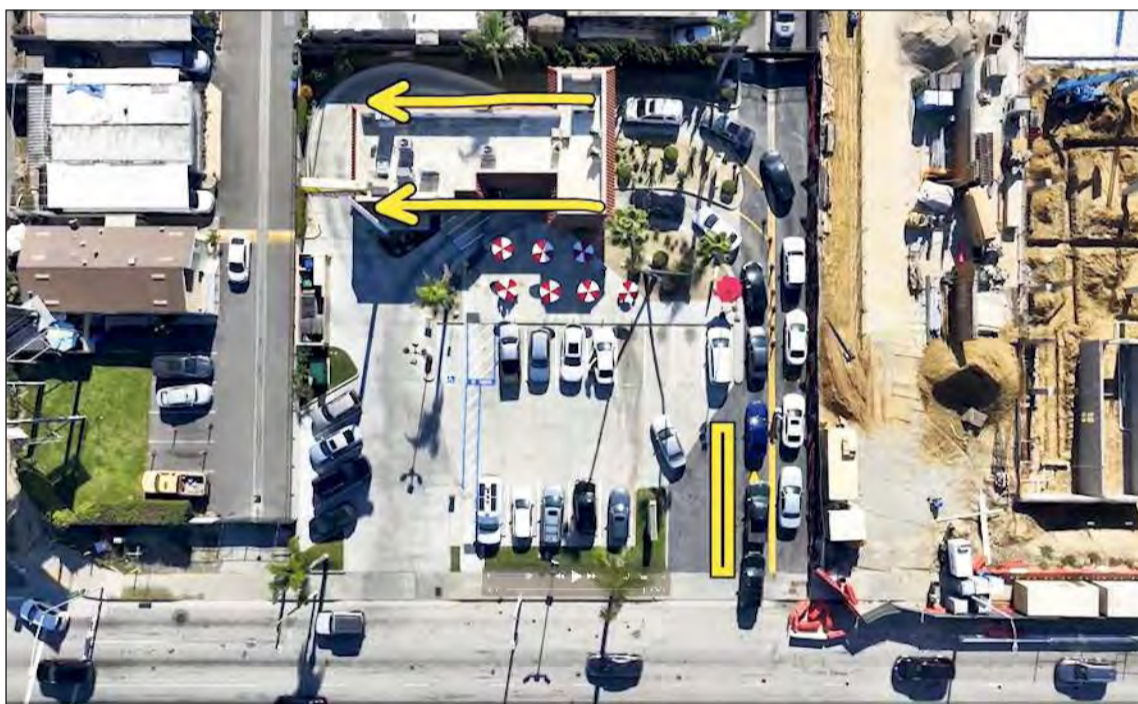
The islands, in particular, "open up sight triangles so that people aren't coming in blind," he says. "That keeps friction off the [frontage]."

In-N-Out Burger in West Carson

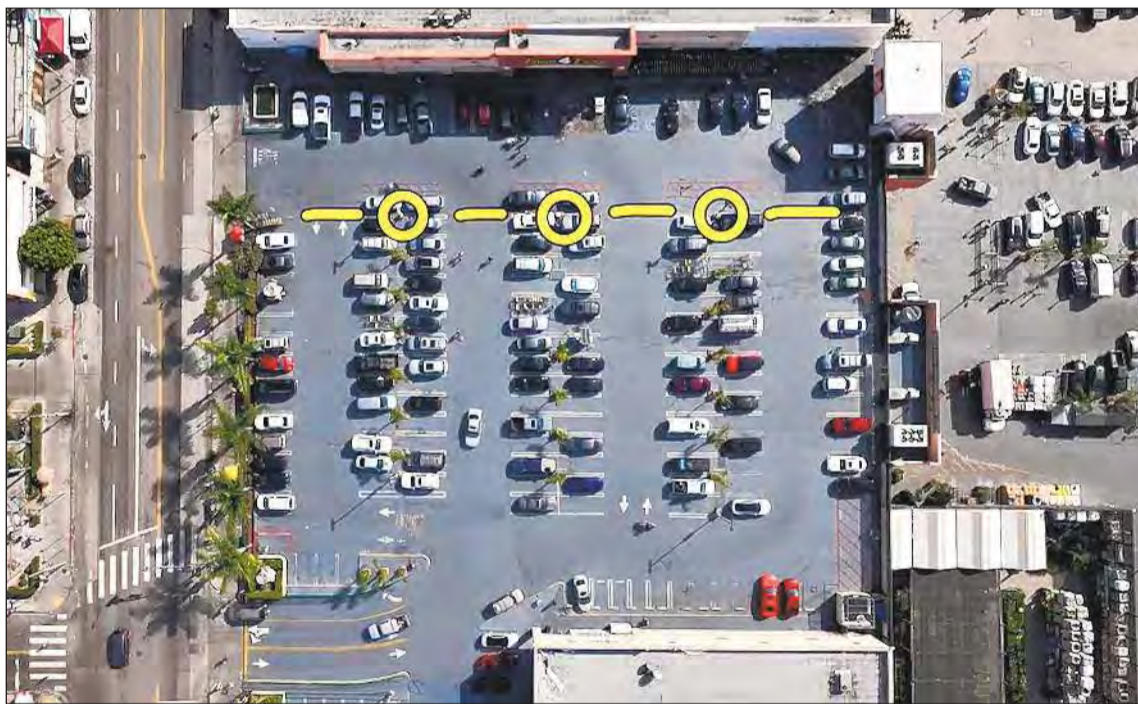
Lunchtime brings the usual rush, a line of cars stretching out the driveway and into the



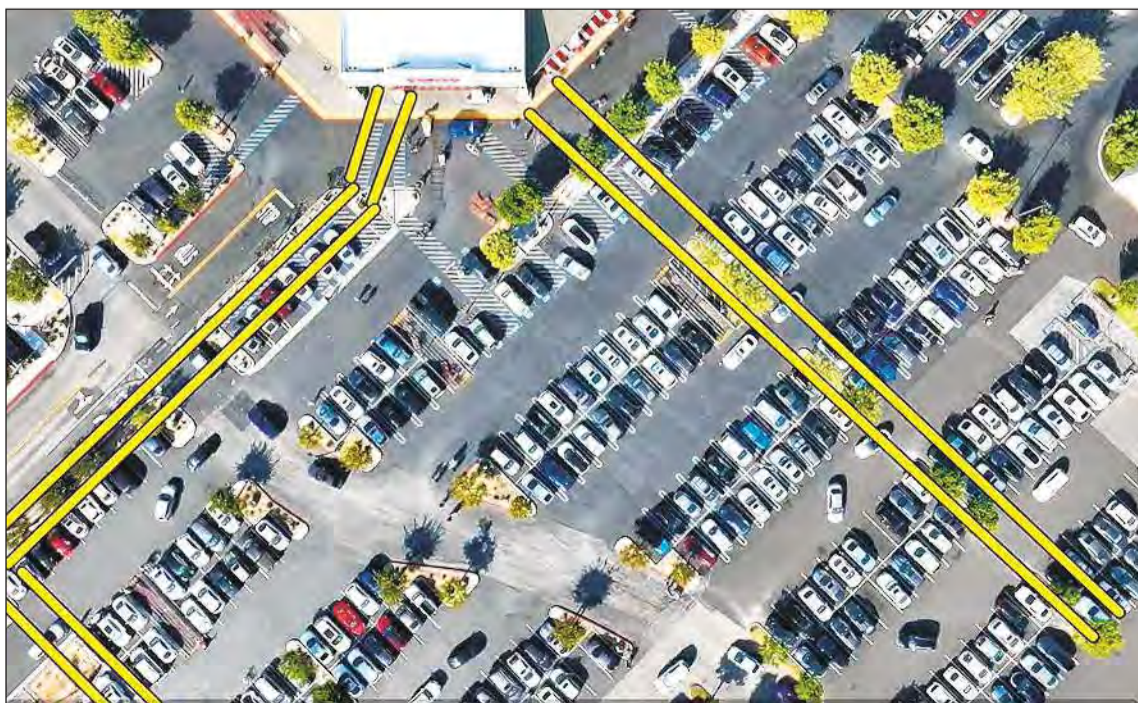
AT TRADER JOE'S in Pasadena, the handicap spaces are too far from the entrance, there is an awkward crosswalk, and shoppers amble in all directions, creating driver-pedestrian hazards.



THE CHALLENGE at In-N-Out Burger in West Carson is the drive-through line impeding parking access for walk-in customers. The line of cars hampers entrance to an adjoining lot of 18 spaces.



THE PROBLEM at Food 4 Less in Westlake is "frontage." Cars, foot traffic and *rateros* converge around the entrance. Removing spaces to add stop signs and islands would help, an expert says.



AT COSTCO in Alhambra, crosswalks lead from the front door to the first rows of parking, but customers must fend for themselves after that. The walkways should extend farther.

street. This isn't uncommon for In-N-Outs that combine drive-through with conventional service.

"The confluence of the two is an issue," Meth says. "They are totally different animals."

The challenge is having enough "stacking" capacity — space to keep the drive-through line away from everything else. At this location, waiting cars hamper entrance to an adjoining lot of 18 spaces.

Though costly, a remodel that shifts the drive-up windows to the far corner of the building — farthest from the driveway — would increase the stacking space, Meth says. He also suggests adding a divider between drive-through and parking.

"You want something to make them separate," he says. "If you don't have that space, you're going to have overflow."

Riviera Village in Redondo Beach

This oddly shaped lot harks back to a time when more people drove compact cars. Slots designed for 15-foot-long Honda Civics must now accommodate Ford F-150 pickups with crew cabs that stretch past 20 feet.

Asked about shoppers in oversized vehicles, Meth hesitates to offer a solution.

"Why should we make it easier for them?" he asks. "I personally don't like rewarding bad behavior."

Another problem: Public streets border the triangular lot on all three sides, and drivers must exit into traffic, then reenter at the next driveway. Meth says: "You're forcing people onto the road just to circulate, and that's bad."

Since city planners probably won't close the adjacent streets, the only option is to rip out enough spaces for circulation inside the property line.

Whole Foods in Woodland Hills

"Self-preservation" is the word Meth uses.

Cars enter the lot behind the Whole Foods from two directions, converging at a blind corner where the view is blocked by the supermarket. Constant foot traffic makes things even more treacherous.

Drivers often start and stop, inching their way up, straining to see what's around the corner.

"It's not open and obvious, right?" Meth says. "People have to go slow in fear of somebody coming up."

A simple, cheap modification — stop signs for each direction — would make things smoother. Drivers could pull right up, pause, and take their turns without worry.

Costco in Alhambra

Analyzing this vast lot, Meth sees empty spots at the far edges. The challenge is getting shoppers from the store's entrance, through all that traffic, to these underutilized areas.

"Probably they don't feel safe pushing their shopping carts across the lot," Meth says.

Several crosswalks lead from the front door to the first rows of parking, but customers must fend for themselves after that. Walkways should extend farther.

"Basically, you're showing them the path," Meth says. "Take out a few parking spots and take them back to that area."

Every other parking lot in L.A.

None of this is rocket science.

Crosswalks and stop signs, circulation roads and well-placed islands — simple design and a little appreciation for human behavior can solve most parking problems. Given that zoning laws tend to address the number of spaces but little else, the onus is on stores and property owners.

The Times reached out to several companies mentioned in this story but received no response.

Meth would like to see industry standards revised to make parking safer and easier. Still, he concedes, some lots can't be fixed.

"The ones that are crowded and have almost no parking," he says. "In that case, there's not much you can do."

Photographs by BRIAN VAN DER BRUG Los Angeles Times

MONEY TALK

Should you bequeath property before you die?

It's tempting to give your kids real estate during your lifetime, but you'll saddle them with a big tax bill.

By Liz Weston

Dear Liz: My wife and I have purchased a few properties over the years and now would like to give these to our children. I've read that the best way to gift properties is to wait until we die, which sounds terrible. Is there any way to transfer or gift properties without paying a huge amount of taxes?

Answer: Yes, although you'd likely be shifting the tax bill to your kids.

You have to give away more than \$13 million in your lifetime to owe gift taxes.

But if you transfer the properties to your children during your lifetime, they also get your tax basis in the properties.

That means if they sell, they'll owe taxes on the appreciation that occurred since you bought the real estate.

By contrast, if you bequeath them at your death, the properties get an updated value for tax purposes, and the appreciation that occurred during your lifetime isn't taxed.

Gifts of the properties may still be the right choice, but consider talking to an estate planning attorney and a tax pro before proceeding.

Asset allocation requires pro advice

Dear Liz: I need guidance on asset allocation in retirement.

I will retire in June at age 65. I'm in good health, so I am planning for 30 more years of life. I have a robust government pension and a good chunk of retirement savings.

Targeting a 4% withdrawal rate from retirement savings, my post-retirement income will be about the same as my current income, less savings contributions.

The pension will make up about 75% of that income, and the savings, about 25%. I could live on the pension alone if it came down to it.

At age 70, I'll get a bump of about 15% of that total income when I start taking Social Security, after accounting for the windfall elimination provision.

My analysis is that I essentially have 75% of my retirement assets allocated to very safe investments; i.e., my pension and future Social Security. I think I should allocate my 401(k) and 457(b) more aggressively than the usual guidance calls for. I'm considering selecting a 2050 or 2055 target date fund.

Am I looking at this correctly?

Answer: You do need guidance, and it should come from a fee-only, fiduciary financial planner hired to provide you with individualized advice.

This is, after all, the first and probably only time

you'll retire, while a good advisor has guided many people through this process. The advisor will know the questions to ask and the traps to avoid far better than any novice could.

The advisor may concur that you can take more risk with your investments, given your substantial amount of guaranteed income.

A lot will depend on your risk tolerance, of course, but the planner will consider other factors, such as your family situation and your plans for covering long-term care costs.

For example, if you don't have long-term care insurance, you may want to

stockpile more cash or identify assets you could sell to pay for care. If you're married, and your pension would end or diminish at your death, you may want to take less risk with your investments so they can better support your survivor.

There's no substitute for having another set of expert eyes looking at your plan. Many retirement decisions are irreversible, and you'll want to get this right.

Social Security hit from capital gains

Dear Liz: Due to capital gains on the sale of a property, my monthly Social Security

check is affected by IRMAA, the income-related monthly adjustment amount for Medicare. Therefore, not only do I not receive the recent cost-of-living increase, but my benefit substantially decreased. After a year, will my monthly benefit go back to my most recent benefit or to the increased amount I would have received without the IRMAA deduction? If the former, it seems like I lose forever.

Answer: You don't lose forever.

You did receive the most recent inflation increase in your Social Security benefit, but it was more than offset

by the increase in your Medicare premiums. Medicare premiums are based on your income two years previously, so this year's IRMAA was based on your tax returns from 2022. If your income went back to normal last year, then the IRMAA surcharge you're experiencing should disappear next year.

Liz Weston, Certified Financial Planner, is a personal finance columnist for the Los Angeles Times and NerdWallet. Questions may be sent to her at 3940 Laurel Canyon, No. 238, Studio City, CA 91604, or by using the "Contact" form at asklizweston.com.

PERSONAL FINANCE

Speaking of money: Why you should care about your partner's credit score

Although not exactly a romantic topic, the numbers can be key to your future together.

By Lauren Schwahn

Discussing credit scores isn't anyone's idea of pillow talk.

But the conversation with your partner can provide clues about their history with money and what your financial future together could look like.

Why do credit scores matter, and are they enough to make or break a relationship? Here's what couples should know about scores and what else they should discuss when it comes to finances.

Credit scores do carry weight

Credit scores can determine whether you and your significant other get

approved for loans, what kind of interest rates you'll get and how much you'll have to put down for a utility deposit.

"Having good credit is definitely important for affordability for many different things, like when it comes to purchasing a car or applying for an apartment or a mortgage," said Shamica Joseph, formerly with GreenPath, a nonprofit credit counseling agency.

Spouses don't merge credit scores when they marry. But if you plan to combine or open credit accounts together, regardless of marital status, your partner's behavior on those accounts can shift your scores. The same goes if one of you becomes an authorized user or co-signer for the other. Low scores can prevent you and your partner from accessing certain products and services you desire, or can make them more expensive.

"Even if you weren't planning on merging finances, it's still a good idea to make sure that your credit score is where you want it to be for affordability purposes, for not just you but your partner," Joseph said.

Scores don't tell the whole story

Many factors affect credit scores; mainly, pay-

ment history and how much credit you take on. If your partner has a score of 700 — in the "good" range on the standard scale of 300 to 850 — they probably pay their bills on time and don't overspend. A 600 score, typically in the "bad" range, signals the opposite.

But don't rush to judgment. Although numbers are revealing, context matters. A low credit score could be the result of an unexpected medical bill, job loss or identity theft.

"While it doesn't change the fact that they still have to come back and repair the credit, the reasons might be a little less alarming or challenging for a partner to learn rather than, 'Yeah, I went ahead and spent willy-nilly. I took out extra credit cards. I defaulted,'" said Debra Kaplan, a Tucson licensed professional counselor and author of several books about money and intimacy.

A low score doesn't have to be a deal-breaker, even if it's due to irresponsibility.

"If your partner has previously declared bankruptcy, or if they have a less than optimal credit score, then a common myth around that is that they may not be a good fit for a relationship or marriage," Joseph said. "That's not necessarily true, because you will have the opportunity to work on improving

your finances together."

Ask your partner to explain what might be dragging their number down and what steps they'll take to address it.

Similarly, just because someone has a great score doesn't mean they have a handle on every aspect of their financial life. Maybe they aren't saving for retirement — or at all, for that matter. Some details, such as income and savings account balances, aren't reflected in credit scores. You'll learn much more by discussing your finances as a whole.

When and how to talk about money

"So, what's your credit score?" isn't a great opening line for a first date. But it's worth bringing up the topic as the relationship develops, ideally before making major decisions such as moving in together.

To create a respectful dialogue rather than an interrogation, start from a vulnerable place, Kaplan recommends: "I want to share a little bit about me, would you be willing to listen?" And "I have some questions that, if you're willing, I would love to ask of you to share," she said.

Remember, the conversation should cover more than credit scores.

"It's a good idea to discuss things like savings. Do you have a savings plan or do you want to start a savings plan together for future goals?" Joseph said. She also suggests talking about spending habits, budgeting, income, debt and potential or previous bankruptcies.

If your partner shuts down the conversation, that could be cause for concern.

"The issue doesn't get any easier to discuss. In fact, it becomes more complicated. And it could be indicative of avoidance of dealing with tough situations," Kaplan said. "That's not a great way to start a trusting, healthy, committed, intimate relationship."

Schwahn writes for personal finance website NerdWallet. This article was distributed by the Associated Press.

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OPINION

EDITORIALS

Double-dipping candidates are bad for voters and democracy



RICH PEDRONCELLI Associated Press

ASSEMBLYMAN Vince Fong is running for reelection and for Congress.

A STUTE VOTERS in the San Fernando Valley may notice that Carmenlina Minasova is on their March 5 primary ballot twice. The respiratory care practitioner is running for Los Angeles City Council against incumbent Imelda Padilla, and for an open seat in the California Assembly representing District 43.

How is this legal? Because of a loophole in state law, one that Assemblyman Vince Fong (R-Bakersfield) exposed last year when he fought the secretary of state for the right to run simultaneously for reelection and for the congressional seat recently vacated by former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

Fong and Minasova aren't the only candidates double dipping this election season.

Whittier City Councilmember Jessica Martinez is a candidate for Assembly District 56 in the March primary and also running for reelection to the City Council in the April 9 Whittier municipal election. And there could be more. In the San Joaquin Valley, several candidates for office — including two running against Fong in the 20th Congressional District — told a local news outlet that they are also considering running as write-ins for Fong's Assembly seat on the March 5 ballot.

Even if candidates are running on different ballots, it's a problem when the terms they seek overlap. If a candidate were to win both contests, he or she would have to choose one to accept, forcing another election to fill the other seat.

According to local election officials, double-dipping candidates aren't breaking any laws. Los Angeles, for example, bars people from running for more than one city position at the same time, but says nothing about running for city and state office at once, a spokesperson for the L.A. County registrar-recorder said.

Secretary of State Shirley Weber, however, disagrees. In refusing to let Fong run for the congressional seat, she cited the state Elections Code, which says a person may not run "for more than one office at the same election." Fong sued, and was backed by Sacramento County Superior Court Judge Shelleyanne W.L. Chang, who said that language no longer applies since Cali-

fornia changed the state's primary system, eliminating party nominations in favor of the top-two system in which the two leading vote-getters regardless of party compete in the November runoff.

Weber's office is appealing the ruling, in which Chang noted that "it somewhat defies common sense to find the law permits a candidate to run for two offices during the same election."

It does defy common sense. Allowing people to run for multiple offices at once can confuse voters and undermine confidence in the electoral system. If a candidate wins in more than one race, the district would go without representation until a special election is held to fill the unoccupied seat. And special elections are expensive for taxpayers and tend to have very low voter turnout, which is not ideal for a healthy democracy.

This isn't the first time someone has run for more than one seat at the same time, but it's rare and generally used by fringe candidates who are unlikely to win any race. It's become an issue now because Fong stands a good chance of winning both elections. He is running unopposed for reelection to the Assembly and is considered a front-runner for the congressional seat.

No matter what happens with Fong's race or lawsuit, state lawmakers should clarify the law so state and local candidates are explicitly prohibited from running for multiple offices at once.

Two bills seek to fix this confusion for future elections. Assemblymember Gail Pellerin (D-Santa Cruz), a former county elections official, introduced Assembly Bill 1784, which would prohibit a person from filing nomination papers for more than one office at the same election. Assembly Bill 1795 by Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo (D-Los Angeles) is similar, though it would allow a candidate to withdraw from one race to run for another office if the filing period for that office is extended because an incumbent doesn't run for reelection.

This should be an easy one for legislators and Gov. Gavin Newsom. Allowing candidates to game the system for their benefit is unfair to voters and bad for democracy.

L.A. Unified's new policy unfairly targets charter schools

The school board placed unreasonable limits on their ability to rent space on campuses.

NOTE TO THE Los Angeles Unified school board: Kids in local charter schools are your kids, too.

They are, for the most part, students who would have been attending traditional L.A. public schools but whose parents chose to enroll them in one of the nearly 250 publicly funded but mostly privately managed schools.

In an era of falling enrollment, the district is in a tough position when it loses students to charter schools. Each student brings in considerable state funding, which pays for instruction and a vast array of social and administrative services. So the district's concerns that fewer students will lead to budget cuts are understandable.

But those concerns must come second to what's best for the public school students of L.A., whether they attend a charter or traditional district school.

On Tuesday, the school board narrowly voted to adopt a new policy restricting where charter schools can share campuses with traditional schools. The change goes too far toward protecting the district's interests while putting too low a priority on what works best for all students. The policy is too vague to know exactly what the ramifications are, but one estimate by an L.A. Unified staffer said some 350 of the district's 850 schools would be off-limits to charter schools. Surely that's unnecessary when only 50 campuses are shared with charter schools right now; most of the district's charter schools have their own, independent campuses.

The new policy may well violate the state Education Code that says that public school facilities should be shared fairly among public school students and that charter schools are entitled to rent parts of district schools.

Of course, traditional schools should not have to squeeze themselves into a corner of campus to accommodate a charter school. But this policy isn't about protecting necessary space; it's about squashing charter schools. Sharing of campuses would be discouraged at schools with special programs for Black students and those with low achievement levels. Only in the case of community schools, which do re-

quire more facilities because they provide an array of services to students and the neighborhood, does the rule seem to have any connection to the actual space needs of a school. But there are charter schools that also are community schools; will the district give them preference?

And, if any further indication is needed that the intent is to shrink the influence of charter schools, the policy discourages allowing a charter on a campus if it could interrupt traditional feeder-school patterns. For example, if an elementary school shares its campus with a charter middle school, parents might be inclined to enroll their kids in the charter middle school to keep them on the same campus rather than having them attend the local district-run middle school.

Parents choose schools based on their perception of where their children will receive the best education, and for too long they had no choice but to accept whatever school the district gave them, which was often subpar. They'll enroll their kids in the traditional middle school and high school if those offer a superior education, exciting programs and an inviting environment. That's the appropriate way for the district to keep its feeder-school system humming.

It's especially disturbing to hear board members Rocio Rivas and Scott Schmerelson implying that this is just the start of more policies to curb charter schools. Schmerelson won The Times' endorsement for a final term on the school board in part because he presented himself as a centrist who had supported various charter schools in the past. It is especially troubling to hear him say that he intends to continue this campaign against shared campuses.

Charter schools aren't the ultimate answer to low achievement, and they're suffering their own enrollment setbacks. Highly regarded charter operator Kipp SoCal Public Schools is closing three of its 23 schools in the area because they are underenrolled. But many charter schools have given a significant boost to students, especially those most in need of help, and they give families more educational choices.

There are shared campuses in L.A. Unified where traditional and charter schools get along well, exchange resources and learn from each other. Why doesn't the school district find out what makes them work and seek to emulate this at other campuses instead of setting schools against each other?

Public school students should not be caught in the middle of this turf war.

LETTERS



EVAN VUCCI Associated Press

PRESIDENT BIDEN, seen discussing Ukraine aid at the White House on Tuesday, has strenuously disputed claims that age is taking a toll on his abilities.

What age does not tell us

Re "One factor in Biden's low polling: The media," Opinion, Feb. 15

AS ONE WHO IS ABOUT a year older than former President Trump and two years younger than President Biden, I feel qualified to informally assess their respective degrees of cognitive decline.

Like them both, I occasionally misspeak some prominent person's name or forget an exact date. But I try to maintain my mental acuity, which leads me to read quality periodicals (such as The Times) and to converse with learned, levelheaded friends.

I strongly suspect that Biden is far more inclined than Trump to strive to maintain his mental faculties. With Trump infamously disinclined to read and given to befriending unhelpful demagogues, I have to doubt his presence of mind.

In contrast, I view Biden's studious, measured adherence to democratic norms as qualities to be preferred in a president. As is said, age is just a number.

FRANK HOCHFELD, Albany, Calif.

In 1974, then-Republican Sen. Barry Goldwater led a delegation to the Oval Office, which resulted in President Nixon's resignation, thereby expediting the nation's recovery from the Watergate scandal.

Similarly, a delegation consisting of Senate Majority Leader Charles E. Schumer (D-N.Y.), House

Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-N.Y.), former Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-San Francisco) and former President Obama should conduct a White House intervention.

The message: "Not just for the good of the party but for the survival of our democracy, you must step aside."

Biden has been a transitional leader who will likely be regarded favorably by historians in the future.

However, nominating a vibrant candidate who maximizes the likelihood of defeating Trump in November is the most important job right now.

DAVE SANDERSON
La Cañada Flintridge

Thanks to columnist Jackie Calmes for focusing on what is important in the election and not treating it like some sporting event, which is what we get from hyperventilating cable network news, social media and dubious pollsters.

The only poll that matters is the ballot box, and voters are looking not just at the candidates' ages, but seriously considering the people they appoint to work in Cabinet positions.

Perhaps the media should stop insulting our intelligence for once with polling and realize that we take a lot more into consideration when we exercise our freedom to vote.

MICHAEL J. HARLEY
Laguna Niguel

☺

Never have I agreed with anyone as much as I do with Calmes in her column on Biden's poll numbers.

Of course the media are responsible for the president's low approval ratings. Considering the reprehensible actions and words of the former president, Biden is a man of integrity and strength.

Shame on The Times too for keeping on with this prejudice. He and we deserve better.

SHELLEY KEITH
Sherman Oaks

A pricey world for Girl Scouts

Re "Stop pressuring Girl Scouts to be 'cookie bosses,'" Opinion, Feb. 12

As a parent and Girl Scout leader, I have watched the pressure on our children to sell cookies increasing every year. It's

not caused by the Scouts; it's just the world we live in.

When my daughter was in 1st grade (she's pushing 40 now), I drove her and her friends to our first-ever booth sale. I could hear them talking in the back seat: "What if we don't sell any cookies? What if the people are mean?"

Of course, the people were not mean, and they bought lots of cookies from us.

When my daughter graduated from the troop, I stayed on and still serve as an adult volunteer. Recently I watched a little girl who was afraid to face the people work up the courage to turn around and ask them to buy.

The world is a lot more expensive than it used to be. Parents can't be expected to fund all the activities the girls crave, so the Scouts work together toward their goal. No matter what, they know they earned the money themselves.

And those nervous little girls in my back seat all those years ago? On the way home, they talked about how much fun they had and what great sellers they were.

NANCY GARF MOSES
Irvine

☺

Karin Klein is correct when she writes that young girls shouldn't be lured with stuffed animals and bossy, pseudo-corporate titles into relentlessly selling cookies.

She's also right that most sales seem to be made by the kind of competitive parents who make cookie season a time to dread. I knew one woman who proclaimed on Facebook that anyone who didn't buy at least five boxes from her daughter should consider themselves shunned.

Of course, all of this can

teach girls something that everyone not living in a fantasy world must learn about life in the modern world. And that's the fact that everything costs money.

If you want camping adventures and chances to learn robotics, local Girl Scout councils need money (and lots of it) to pay for such activities.

Such a lesson may be hard to learn, especially if one has a parent intent on conquering Mount Cookie. But it's a valuable lesson still.

MARY STANIK
Tucson

☺

I agree with Klein. When I was a Girl Scout, I had to walk up and down the hills of my neighborhood selling boxes. If I sold 20, that was fine; my parents didn't pressure me.

Parents, step back and take a deep breath. Stop making cookie sales a competition between the adults. You're doing your children more harm than good.

Kids today are bombarded with pressure from every part of society. It's no wonder that so many suffer from anxiety and depression.

I suggest that the Girl Scouts organization and its well-meaning parents reexamine their priorities. This can't be what founder Juliette Gordon Low envisioned back in 1912.

TRACEY
POMERANCE-POIRIER
Chatsworth

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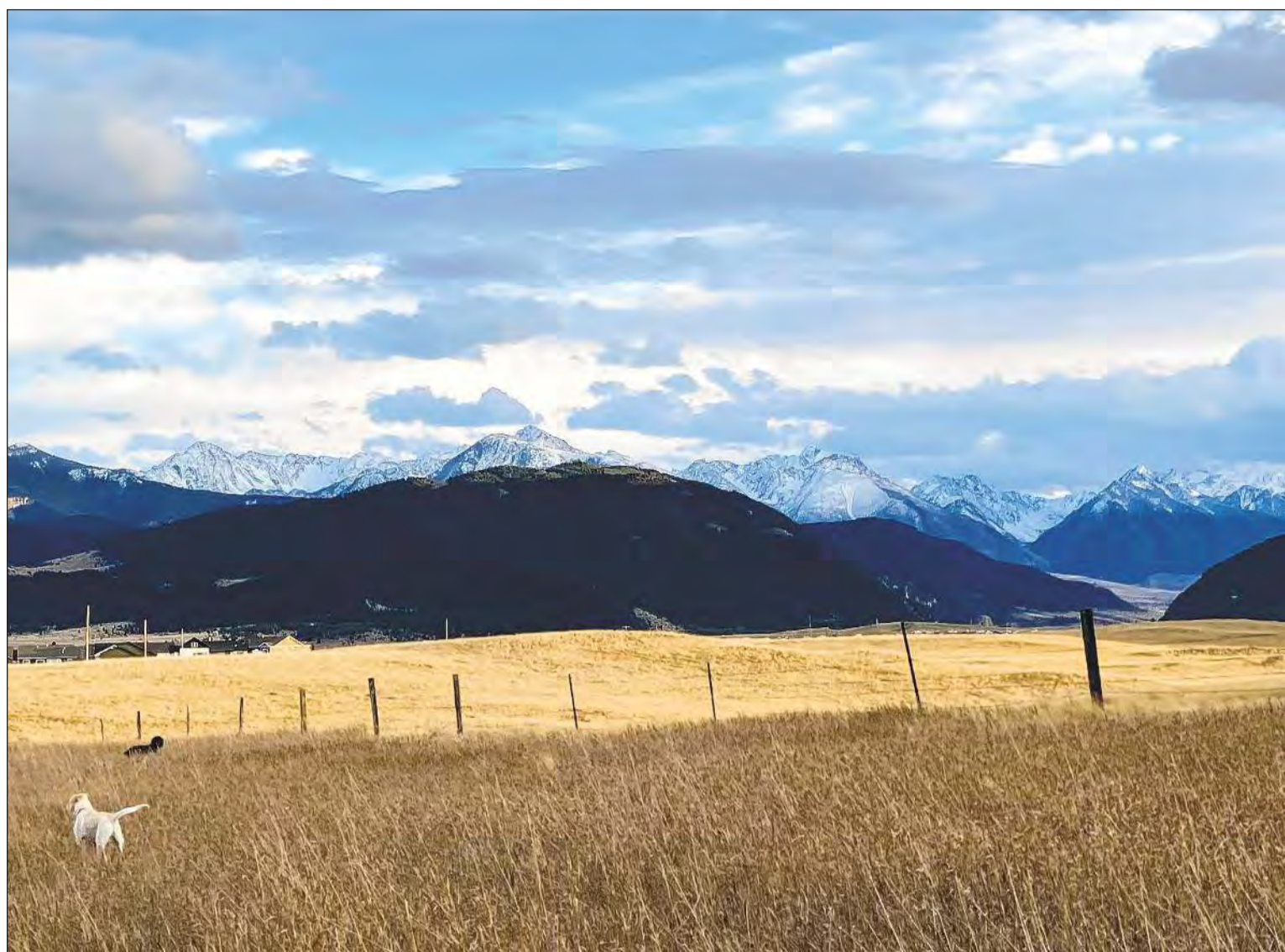


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OP-ED



JAMIE HARRISON

A VIEW of the Absaroka Range and Paradise Valley, on the outskirts of Livingston, Mont.

Will too many transplants change my Montana town?

I left New York City decades ago for Livingston, Mont. I hope it can retain some of its wayward spirit.

By Jamie Harrison

MY VERSION OF Livingston, Mont., where I have lived since 1987, began with a kind of impoverished, artistic chain migration: My father and his best friend were writers. The best friend moved here in the late '60s, and other friends — a painter, more writers — followed and stayed. As a teenager, I visited twice with my family and the area became a dream in the back of my head. At 27, when I decided to blow up my first career and leave New York City with a boyfriend, the painter offered us an old house for \$150 a month. Livingston sounded like just the place to start again.

The romance of running away dimmed somewhere on Highway 2 in northeastern Montana. My companion studied the horizon and said, "What are you doing to me?" It was early May, and nothing was green yet, but he cheered up when the mountains appeared. As we entered town through the battered east side, passing massive, forsaken train repair buildings — the railroad had pulled out

recently, obliterating hundreds of jobs in a town of 7,000 — I could have answered the question for us both: In this place you will be happy; in this place you will find it incredibly hard to make a living.

We stopped at Sax & Fryer, a newsstand and bookstore in business since 1882. The owner, John Fryer, who'd last seen me a decade earlier, gave me a kiss and handed me the key to the old house.

Livingston greened up. We blew through our tiny savings and stayed. The painter, who traded Fryer artwork for the use of offices above the store, offered me a job there. We were very lucky.

Livingston was beautiful; it was strange and cold and windy. The town is 60 miles north of Yellowstone Park, at the edge of the immense Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness, tucked into a curve in the longest undammed river in the U.S. In 1987, the city had one of the state's largest rodeos, a Superfund site where hazardous waste had been dumped and an end-of-the-world cult that — before the world failed to end — would build bomb shelters and bring in an armored

personnel carrier.

The people who thought of themselves as local were mostly amused by the first artsy emigres, but increasingly leery of dramatic Californians and strange religions. Their default attitude wasn't tolerance so much as a no-skin-off-my-nose belief that people would do what they wanted anyway. Nothing was stratified — you knew teachers, cooks, plumbers, ranch hands. Anyone who'd made it through the winter joined together in marveling at the summer influx. So many visitors failed to understand that anything could kill them — hot or cold water, reptiles and things with fur, the weather, gravity.

The West is dotted with towns that haven't quite survived. Here, the first invaders from the '60s and '70s became part of the fabric, lifelong friends with locals like John Fryer. They went from trading paintings to owning restaurants, and they wrote scripts that brought actors to town.

Livingston has increasingly sold its idiosyncrasies: the fly-fishing, the hiking, the wild-ass bars. We're close enough to an airport, a college, a ski hill. Thanks to people like John Fryer, who pushed to keep Livingston's old buildings standing, the town did not wither. Instead, we have too much of a good thing. People moved here, especially during COVID, or bought up houses to list on Airbnb. What is fantastically expensive to a local seems wonderfully cheap to someone from New York or California; it was ever thus.

Some newcomers open stores and earnestly try to understand

the town. They've replaced the funkiness but not the poverty, the drugs and alcoholism, a high suicide rate and a low minimum wage. Others complain about restaurant service without comprehending the inequality: their waiter can no longer afford to live here. A separate new sense of entitlement has less to do with wealth than the Christian right, with their own private Idaho spreading inexorably south and east from northwest Montana, where rejiggered library boards have scrubbed their shelves. We aren't part of the white kingdom yet, but they send their best — a neo-Nazi contingent threatened drag story hours here last spring — and they've reawakened the people in town who share their beliefs. As historian Betsy Gaines Quammen brilliantly explains in her book "True West," these biblical literalists believe in "the notion of Christian mastery over all living things." They want it all, and they feel they've been divinely ordained.

I think I'm local now. I've had two kids here and drunk surreptitious margaritas at endless soccer games, worked for pennies, kayaked and filled sandbags, cooked for dozens of wakes and weddings. I've entered at least half of Livingston's 20 bars, a smaller percentage of its churches. I used to like most people and feel nothing worse than indifference in return. Now I'm worried about neighbor-on-neighbor pitchforks.

John Fryer, universally beloved, died in December. His shop may close; it's hard to profit on magazines and art supplies today. The store has seen uglier times — sedition trials after World War I and countless anti-immigrant flashpoints. The Ku Klux Klan had offices across the alley; from the painter's rooms, you could have watched the grand dragon, a former mayor, dress up for a different kind of story hour. Over the decades, Fryer filled my novels with stories about roadhouses and brothels, Prohibition booze hidden in cemeteries, eternal land scams. He was the grandson of a Pony Express rider and an adopted member of the Crow tribe. He was a distillation of the West I moved to.

I wish I could remember more of his stories, and I wish Livingston could reclaim more of its wayward spirit, its humor and its humanity.

JAMIE HARRISON is the author of seven novels, including "The Center of Everything" and the forthcoming "The River View."

We know how voters feel about Biden and Trump. Experts have another take

By Justin Vaughn and Brandon Rottinghaus

PRESIDENTS DAY occurs at a crucial moment this year, with the presidency on the cusp of crisis as we inexorably shuffle toward a rematch between the incumbent and his predecessor. It's the sort of contest we haven't seen since the 19th century, and judging by public opinion of President Biden and former President Trump, most Americans would have preferred to keep it that way.

But the third installment of our Presidential Greatness Project, a poll of presidential experts released this weekend, shows that scholars don't share American voters' roughly equal distaste for both candidates.

Biden, in fact, makes his debut in our rankings at No. 14, putting him in the top third of American presidents. Trump, meanwhile, maintains the position he held six years ago: dead last, trailing such historically calamitous chief executives as James Buchanan and Andrew Johnson. In that and other respects, Trump's radical departure from political, institutional and legal norms has affected knowledgeable assessments not just of him but also of Biden and several other presidents.

The overall survey results re-

veal stability as well as change in the way scholars assess our nation's most important and controversial political office. Great presidents have traditionally been viewed as those who presided over moments of national transformation, led the country through major crises and expanded the institution of the presidency. Military victories, economic growth, assassinations and scandals also affect expert assessments of presidential performance.

The presidents at the top of our rankings, and others like ours, reflect this. Hallowed leaders such as Abraham Lincoln, Franklin Delano Roosevelt and George Washington consistently lead the list.

Our latest rankings also show that the experts' assessments are driven not only by traditional notions of greatness but also by the evolving values of our time.

One example is the continuing decline in esteem for two important presidents, Andrew Jackson and Woodrow Wilson. Their reputations have consistently suffered in recent years as modern politics lead scholars to assess their early 19th and 20th century presidencies ever more harshly, especially their unacceptable treatment of marginalized people.

More acutely, this survey has seen a pronounced partisan dynamic emerge, arguably in re-

sponse to the Trump presidency and the Trumpification of presidential politics.

Proponents of the Biden presidency have strong arguments in their arsenal, but his high placement within the top 15 suggests a powerful anti-Trump factor at work. So far, Biden's record does not include the military victories or institutional expansion that have typically driven higher rankings, and a family scandal such as the one involving his son Hunter normally diminishes a president's ranking.

Biden's most important achievements may be that he rescued the presidency from Trump, resumed a more traditional style of presidential leadership and is gearing up to keep the office out of his predecessor's hands this fall.

Trump's position at the bottom of our rankings, meanwhile, puts him behind not only Buchanan and Johnson but also such lowlights as Franklin Pierce, Warren Harding and William Henry Harrison, who died a mere 31 days after taking office.

Trump's impact goes well beyond his own ranking and Biden's. Every contemporary Democratic president has moved up in the ranks — Barack Obama (No. 7), Bill Clinton (No. 12) and even Jimmy Carter (No. 22).

Yes, these presidents had great

In contrast with public opinion, a survey of presidential scholars ranks the current president among the top third of those who have occupied the White House since Washington. His predecessor? Not so much.

accomplishments such as expanding healthcare access and working to end conflict in the Middle East, and they have two Nobel Prizes among them. But given their shortcomings and failures, their rise seems to be less about reassessments of their administrations than it is a bonus for being neither Trump nor a member of his party.

Indeed, every modern Republican president has dropped in the survey, including the transformational Ronald Reagan (No. 16) and George H.W. Bush (No. 19), who led the nation's last decisive military victory.

Academics do lean left, but that hasn't changed since our previous surveys. What these results suggest is not just an added emphasis on a president's political affiliation, but also the emergence of a president's fealty to political and institutional norms as a criterion for what makes a president "great" to the scholars who study them.

As for the Americans casting a ballot for the next president, they are in the historically rare position of knowing how both candidates have performed in the job. Whether they will consider each president's commitment to the norms of presidential leadership, and come to rate them as differently as our experts, remains to be seen.

JUSTIN VAUGHN is an associate professor of political science at Coastal Carolina University. BRANDON ROTTINGHAUS is a professor of political science at the University of Houston.

OP-ED



ISABEL SELIGER For The Times

What not to ask when someone dies by suicide

Questions like ‘Did you know?’ have little to do with the person who died or the ones grieving. They’re about the person asking.

By Sloane Crosley

No, I did not know. In late July of 2019, I had dinner in New York with one of my dearest friends. We split a mediocre dessert, he walked me home, we hugged. A few nights later, he took his own life.

In the wake of his death, people asked if I knew it was coming, if there were signs, if I could work the whole thing in reverse. Perhaps they’d grown accustomed to asking. Suicide has been on a steady rise in the U.S., particularly in adults. In 2022, nearly 50,000 Americans died by suicide. The surgeon general has dubbed mental health “the defining health crisis of our time.”

Because a crisis of this magnitude will not be solved overnight, the need for etiquette dealing with the involuntary collective known as “the loved ones” has become a strange bellwether of the problem. I still worry about offending people who have been traumatized by suicide, and I’m one of them. But if we are to give those asking questions the benefit of the doubt, surely we can extend that same benefit to those in the unfortunate position of replying. To that end, I suggest eliminating “did you know?”

as a reaction to suicide.

Many people who die by suicide suffer from demonstrable depression, ideations or past attempts — battles that rage externally as well as internally. But not all cases are like this. And regardless of any indications along the road, “did you know?” induces dread for those left behind, compounding grief with feelings of futility.

What, exactly, is being asked of us? (Was my friend someone who would casually suggest he’d rather “kill himself than walk through Times Square?” Absolutely. But to provide such an example would be like trying to help someone locate their car keys by whipping out a corkscrew and asking, “Will this do?”) To ask a grieving person whether they knew suicide was imminent also risks making the very people you’re trying to console feel accused, as if we ignored the briefing. As if we knew full well.

A few months ago, I spent an afternoon with a friend who had flown into town to visit her friend, who was dying of cancer. She asked if I had ever been around someone who had mere days to live. I said that no, I had not. But that’s not quite true. I have been. I just didn’t know it.

The crux of the issue is that “did you know?” and questions like it have little to do with the person who died or the person being asked and everything to do with the person doing the asking. Consciously or not, people want to reframe a terrible story for their own comfort. They want to scan their own relationships for abnormalities, to reassure themselves they aren’t missing something. They are saddled with the one emotion the bereaved person no longer experiences: fear. For us, the worst has already happened. For everyone else? The abyss of the unknown.

Albert Camus wrote, “there is only one really serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide.” But I do not have the answer to one of the world’s most notorious conundrums. I’m sure my friend didn’t either. Authority does not come free with proximity.

The reason I’m familiar with that quote is because I read Camus’ “The Myth of Sisyphus” while working on a book about loss and what happened to my friend. In doing so, I have been faced with a whole new line of questions about his death and yet again find myself coming up short. Do I feel catharsis? Surely I must, having written a book on this subject. *Must I?*

Recently, an early reader of the book stumped me when she asked: Did I consider not saying he died by suicide? I couldn’t help but smile, as my friend surely would have had he been there to hear it. What alternative means might this woman have preferred? A falling piano?

She pressed on until I realized what she was really asking. She felt there was a stigma about suicide and that made her uncomfortable. She felt that by announcing the way my friend had died, I was not protecting him. But I believe she was asking me to cover up something fundamental about my friend: his last act of free will.

So what is the alternative to personal curiosity? To the knee-jerk response? Try to remember that the bereaved — especially if they were taken by surprise — have to bear the burden of their own ignorance for the rest of their natural lives. Therefore, give the grieving person a reprieve from the interrogation, the lion’s share of which they will conduct themselves. Give them this for the same reason you would offer to do their dishes or run their errands: so they can get some rest.

Focus instead on what *you* did not know. There you will find the most generous condolences, the ones that can pierce through the veil of mourning. Say you wish you’d known the person who died. Say how extraordinary their lives must have been, how big their story. Say that we never really know what goes on behind the closed doors of someone’s mind but that it’s worth it to keep trying.

We miss the people we loved so much, and we have not stopped. I promise we’ll thank you.

SLOANE CROSBY is a novelist and essayist. Her forthcoming book, “Grief Is for People,” will be published Feb. 27.

Fani Willis’ bad judgment could change American history

ROBIN ABCARIAN

AT THIS POINT, it doesn’t really matter whether Fulton County Dist. Atty. Fani Willis benefited financially from her relationship with Nathan Wade, the outside prosecutor she hired to help oversee the election interference racketeering case against former President Trump and 18 others, several of whom have already pleaded guilty.

After watching her testify for nearly two hours on Thursday, I think she made a convincing case that she did not. If anything, she spent more money on him than he did on her.

But by engaging in a romantic relationship with Wade (and believing she was under no obligation to disclose it), she handed her opponents — on a golden platter — an opening to challenge her integrity, an excuse to charge her with a conflict of interest, a backdoor way to stymie the strong criminal case against Trump and his supporters that took her office many months years to construct.

It’s mind-boggling. And so, so disappointing. Two mature adults — officers of the court, experi-



enced attorneys — could not find it in themselves to put their romantic inclinations on hold while working on the most important case of their careers, and one of the most important criminal cases in American history? They should have known that any whiff of impropriety would be exploited to tank the case. You cannot be traipsing off together to places like Belize and Aruba and expect to keep it a secret. Good lord.

It’s impossible to predict whether Fulton County Superior Court Judge Scott McAfee will rule that Willis should be disqualified from the case, which would throw it into disarray and potentially kill it, but he absolutely did the right thing by allowing both sides to air the issue, on television, in real time.

The drama in his courtroom proved as riveting as any daytime soap opera.

Willis’ attorneys were in the midst of arguing there was no compelling need for her to testify when she surprised everyone by striding into the courtroom looking for her close-up. She wore a hot pink dress and, it would soon become clear, she had a temper to match.

“I have been very anxious to have this conversation today,” she said. “I ran to the courtroom. ... I

am not a hostile witness. I very much want to be here.”

Her testimony was captivating, if maddening. Oh, and she was plenty hostile, though not in the legal sense. When she wasn’t being combative, she was folksy, personal and even philosophical. We learned she prefers Grey Goose vodka to wine, spent “big” on Wade’s 50th birthday trip to Belize and once visited Tennessee with him, although “Tennessee is kinda hard to call a vacation.” Willis refused to give yes-or-no answers to simple questions, drawing at least two admonitions from the judge. She insisted that her answers needed to be long and in context because she was battling down so many lies.

She accused defense attorney Ashleigh Merchant, who is representing one of the defendants in the election interference case and first raised the conflict-of-interest question, of lying repeatedly about when she started her relationship with Wade, of wrongly accusing the pair of living together and of being treated to free trips.

Merchant has alleged that Willis hired Wade to help prosecute Trump because the prosecutors were romantically involved, and she has accused Willis of benefiting financially because Wade paid for various vacations while

they were lovers.

But both Wade and Willis testified that their romance began in early 2022, well after he was hired, and ended in the summer of 2023, just around the time that Trump was indicted in Georgia.

In order to be more exact about when they called it quits, Willis offered a lesson in gender differences worthy of the relationship classic “Men are From Mars, Women are From Venus.”

“He’s a man; he probably would say June or July,” she said. “I would say we had a tough conversation in August. Men end relationships at the end of physical intimacy; women end relationships when that tough conversation takes place.”

What, exactly, was that tough conversation about? No one asked, but Willis had every reason to explain it. They ended their relationship, she said, because she was too independent for him.

“We would have brutal arguments about the fact that I am your equal,” she said. “I don’t need anything from a man; a man is not a plan, a man is a companion. There was tension always in our relationship, which is why I would give him his money back. I don’t need anybody to foot my bills.”

Does that sound like someone looking for a free trip to Aruba? One time, she testified, Wade told her, “The only thing a woman can do for him is make him a sandwich.” Ugh.

Willis has no receipts to prove she repaid Wade, she said, because she always keeps plenty of cash on

hand, sometimes as much as \$15,000. Her father taught her that, she said. For instance, if you go on a date, you bring \$200 in cash in case things go sideways.

Friday in court, her father, John Floyd III, backed her up. “Your honor,” he said, “I’m not trying to be racist, OK? But it’s a Black thing, OK? I was trained, and most Black folks, they hide cash or they keep cash.”

One exchange between Willis and Trump attorney Steve Sadow sticks with me. It illuminated a kind of race or class gap. Sadow seemed steeped in privilege as he poked at the idea that she might keep plenty of cash on hand.

Floyd testified he taught his daughter to always keep enough cash at home to cover six months of expenses. And so, Willis said, she took \$4,000 with her on Wade’s birthday trip to Belize in March 2023. Of that, she reimbursed him \$2,500 for their hotel, flights and food.

“That \$4,000 is part of your — my words — cash hoard that you have collected over time?” asked Sadow.

“Cash *what?*” Willis said. “Hoard,” he said, but then he spelled it “h-o-r-d-e.”

“Oh, I thought you said something different, sir.”

Her well-deserved umbrage at that point cannot hide the fact that she screwed up here, or that the entire country may end up paying for her unforgivable mistake.

@robinkabcarian

Alzheimer's plan is raising concerns

[Alzheimer's, from A1] would test positive for abnormal levels of amyloid or tau, the two proteins the tests look for, and the majority of them may never be diagnosed with dementia, studies suggest. A 60-year-old man who tests positive, for example, is estimated to have a 23% risk of developing dementia in his lifetime.

Criticism of the plan has intensified since it was unveiled in July at the international conference attended by 11,000 doctors and scientists. But the panel, organized by the nonprofit Alzheimer's Assn., is continuing its push to extend the diagnosis to people who have no problem recalling events or what day it is — and convince skeptics that Alzheimer's symptoms aren't necessary to have the disease.

Panel members argue that the earlier patients get help, the more effective it might be. The availability of new drugs for patients with early Alzheimer's symptoms has spurred them into action now, they say.

The plan could be approved by the panel and published in a medical journal early this year, association officials said. Such a move is likely to be influential: A similar proposal in 2018 that was put forth to help guide research on experimental Alzheimer's medications was quickly adopted by the Food and Drug Administration and is frequently cited by doctors, scientists and health insurers.

Standing to benefit are the pharmaceutical and medical testing companies who employ seven members of the 20-person panel. At least seven more members of the panel are academics who receive money from those companies for consulting or research. Panelists reached by The Times said the funding did not influence their decisions.

Four other scientists who are outside advisors to the panel are executives from Eisai and Biogen, the makers of two new medicines for Alzheimer's patients, and Eli Lilly and Genentech, which are developing similar drugs.

The American Geriatrics Society called the panel members' financial ties to industry "wholly inappropriate." In an analysis of the proposal, the society warned that it could lead to overdiagnosis of Alzheimer's and subject people to treatments with "limited benefit and high potential for harm."

Others said the plan was premature at best.

"I think this is untested, uncharted territory," said Dr. Madhav Thambisetty, a senior researcher at the National Institute of Aging. "I'm not at that stage where I would be able to make a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease in somebody who's cognitively normal based on the presence of a single biomarker."

Under the proposal, people with no memory problems who test positive for abnormal levels of amyloid or tau proteins would be classified as Stage 1. They would move to Stage 2 if they begin to experience "neurobehavioral difficulties" such as depression, anxiety or apathy — symptoms often unrelated to Alzheimer's — even if the patient's cognition is unchanged.

Stage 3 would be for those with mild cognitive impairment, while Stages 4 through 6 would describe patients with mild, moderate or severe dementia.

The move to label more Americans as having Alzheimer's comes amid a decades-long decline in the risk of dementia. Researchers don't know why the risk is falling, but they say higher levels of education, a reduction in smoking and better treatment of high blood pressure could all be factors.

Dr. Peter Whitehouse, professor of neurology at Case Western Reserve University, is one of several doctors who have noted that the plan could benefit the Alzheimer's Assn. since the majority of its donations come from people who know one of the estimated 6.7 million Americans now living with the disease and want to help find a cure. If more Americans are diagnosed with the disease under the new definition, the ranks of possible donors would swell, he said.

"This raises the potential for more people to want to give money," Whitehouse added.

The panel said it was



HUY MACH University of Washington

NICOLAS Barthelemy performs a test for Alzheimer's in 2020 at a lab in St. Louis, in an image from video. People with normal cognition who test positive for elevated levels of certain proteins would be diagnosed as having Alzheimer's Stage 1 under a proposal.

'You no longer need to have cognitive impairment to have this disease. You just need the positive blood test.'

— DR. ERIC WIDERA, geriatrician at UC San Francisco

proposing the changes now because the FDA has approved two drugs — Eisai's Leqembi and Aduhelm from Biogen — for patients in the early stages of memory decline. While a study of Leqembi's effects on asymptomatic people has begun, there is currently no evidence that giving it to people without cognitive impairment can reduce the risk of dementia or delay the onset of Alzheimer's symptoms.

Another reason for the change, the panel said, was the availability of new blood tests that do an "excellent" job of detecting abnormal levels of amyloid and tau in the brain. The blood tests are easier and less invasive than the PET scans and spinal taps that traditionally have been used to measure levels of Alzheimer's-related proteins.

"The purpose of this initiative is to advance the science of early detection and treatment," said panel member Maria Carrillo, chief science officer of the Alzheimer's Assn. "In order to prevent dementia, we need to detect and treat the disease before symptoms appear."

Thambisetty and other doctors also note that the plan does not address the serious bioethical concerns that come with testing healthy people for signs of Alzheimer's.

People with no memory problems who learn they are positive for abnormal levels of amyloid or tau proteins can suffer from depression, anxiety and thoughts of suicide, studies have found.

A positive test can also lead to discrimination by employers and by companies offering life, disability and long-term care insurance. That risk is so real that people with no memory complaints who volunteer for an ongoing clinical trial that requires an amyloid test are advised to consider getting any insurance they've been contemplating before taking the test.

"This is an ethically gray area," Thambisetty said of testing cognitively normal people. "There are many questions that remain to be answered."

Added Dr. Eric Widera, a geriatrician at UC San Francisco: "If somebody tests positive for amyloid and they are an airplane pilot, do they have to disclose that to the airlines? They are not asking these questions."

Concerns like these led the panel members to revise the draft to say they were not yet advocating for "routine" testing of those without memory problems. And Dr. Clifford R. Jack Jr., a radiologist at the Mayo Clinic who leads the panel, told The Times the proposal was not an instruction manual to guide doctors in the evaluation, diagnosis and treatment of their patients.

"Should you diagnose Alzheimer's disease in asymptomatic persons? The answer is no," Jack said. The changes did not reassure skeptics.

Widera pointed out that under the revised plan, an unimpaired person who tests positive for an Alzheimer's biomarker would not be considered "at risk" for the disease because — in the panel's view — they already have it.

"They are redefining what it means to have Alzheimer's," he said. "You no longer need to have cognitive impairment to have this disease. You just need the positive blood test."

That could lead doctors to prescribe the new drugs to people without memory problems, Widera said.

Interest in testing for Alzheimer's-related proteins exploded after the FDA controversially approved Aduhelm and Leqembi,

which reduce amyloid levels in the brain.

The hypothesis is that finding amyloid early and removing it might avoid irreversible brain damage. But so far researchers have failed to demonstrate that a build-up of amyloid causes dementia — or that removing it alleviates symptoms.

The FDA went against the advice of its independent advisory committee and green-lighted Biogen's Aduhelm in 2021 even though there was a lack of evidence that it reduced cognitive decline. A congressional investigation later found that Biogen executives met with FDA officials — including Dr. Billy Dunn, head of the neuroscience office — dozens of times and inappropriately collaborated on a key regulatory document. Dunn did not respond to questions from The Times.

The FDA approved the second drug, Eisai's Leqembi, in July after a study showed it could slow the progression of Alzheimer's in people with mild cognitive impairment by less than half a point on an 18-point scale, a finding that some doctors doubt would be noticeable to patients or their families.

The agency requires both drugs to carry warnings that they can cause potentially fatal bleeding or swelling in the brain.

The Alzheimer's Assn. has been among the most vocal advocates for the two drugs, which each cost more than \$26,000 a year. The group deployed hundreds of volunteers to lobby Congress and get Medicare to pay for the treatments.

While prescriptions of Leqembi are now taking off, doctors have hesitated to prescribe Aduhelm. Last month, Biogen said it planned to stop selling Aduhelm and instead focus on promoting Leqembi through its partnership with Eisai.

The Alzheimer's Assn.'s plan to create a new class of symptom-free Alzheimer's patients began taking shape more than a decade ago and was included in proposals to update diagnostic criteria

for the disease in 2011 and 2018.

The association's website says the idea came from a meeting of its Research Roundtable, a group that companies pay thousands of dollars to join. The roundtable meets twice a year, often at the luxury Park Hyatt Hotel in Washington, D.C. Current members include Biogen, Eisai, Lilly, Genentech, Prothena and 15 other companies. Selected academics and drug regulators from around the world are also invited to attend.

In its 2023 fiscal year, the Alzheimer's Assn. received \$4.9 million from pharmaceutical, biotech, diagnostic and clinical research companies — more than in any of the previous five years. The association said those corporate donations amount to just 1.3% of its total cash donations of \$379 million that year.

Carrillo, the association's chief science officer, told The Times in a statement that "no contribution from any organization impacts the Alzheimer's Association decision-making, nor our positions."

"We make our decision based on science, and the needs of our constituents," she said. The association spent \$100 million on research in its 2023 fiscal year, including grants to some of the academic scientists on the panel or to the universities they work for. Many of those grants are aimed at creating new strategies for early diagnosis of people without memory complaints.

That message of early detection is echoed by pharmaceutical and testing companies. At a scientific conference in Boston in October, Dr. Mark Mintun, an Eli Lilly executive who is an advisor to the panel, said in a presentation that the company's experimental medicine donanemab helped younger people and those with lower levels of tau more than it helped older people and those with higher levels of the protein.

"This gives us great urgency in thinking about how to diagnose and prepare patients for treatment," Mintun told the audience, according to a report on the Alzforum news website.

Among the seven industry executives sitting on the Alzheimer's Assn. panel are former FDA official Dunn, who is now on the board of Prothena, a company developing anti-amyloid drugs; Dr. Eric Siemers, chief medical officer of Acumen Pharmaceuticals, which is also working on anti-amyloid drugs; and Dr. Philip Scheltens, who heads a venture capital fund that invests in dementia drugs.

They are joined by Dr. Reisa Sperling, a Harvard neurology professor who has received research grants from Eisai and Lilly and consulting fees from 18 other companies, according to the panel's disclosures.

Sperling has led studies investigating the value of treating people without memory problems. She said in 2013 that she could see a future where "we will treat

everybody preemptively, in the same way we vaccinate."

Other academic panel members include Charlotte Teunissen, a professor at Amsterdam University Medical Centers who conducts research for 25 companies, and Dr. Michael Raffi, a USC professor of clinical neurology, who disclosed work for 11 companies.

Both Teunissen and Raffi said their industry funding has no bearing on their judgment.

"I believe working with a diverse group of pharmaceutical and biotech companies, each with their own therapeutic approaches and strategies, can mitigate against a single company's influence," Raffi said.

Sperling agreed that corporate research funding did not affect her objectivity. "I want to figure out the truth," she said.

But others are not convinced.

"This panel is dominated by those with financial ties to companies that will directly benefit" from a more expansive view of Alzheimer's, said Widera of UCSF. "And there was no consideration about the potential downsides or risk to the number of people who are going to be now diagnosed" if its definition is adopted.

The proposal — initially dubbed "The National Institute of Aging-Alzheimer's Association Revised Criteria for Diagnosing and Staging Alzheimer's Disease" — has received international attention in part because it seemed to have the backing of one of the U.S. government's premier research centers.

The American Geriatrics Society and others said the proposal's name implied that the NIA, which is part of the National Institutes of Health, was a full partner in the effort.

But Dr. Eliezer Masliah, director of the institute's neuroscience division, said that while he and another NIA scientist attend panel meetings, they are not involved in its decisions. "We're listening and recording and just keeping track of the process," he said.

After The Times asked NIH officials about the NIA's involvement, they said the institute's name would be removed from the proposal's title.

Even before the plan has been finalized, one company told investors it was poised to benefit.

In a November call with Wall Street analysts, Masoud Toloue, the chief executive at Quanterix, pointed out that the company's blood test for tau — called p-Tau 217 — had been recommended by the panel for diagnosing the disease.

"We believe we're in a strong position to capitalize on these opportunities," Toloue said.



EVAN VUCCI Associated Press

THE PANEL backing the Stage 1 diagnosis argues that earlier treatment could be more effective and says the availability of new drugs spurred members to action.

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DANIA MAXWELL Los Angeles Times

FOR ALL its problems, California's allure, open-mindedness and entrepreneurial spirit still make it a destination. As this cyclist can attest at Venice Beach, sun, surf and sand remain calling cards.

Heaven or hellhole? Golden State persists

Poll indicated many Americans believe California is on the decline. Here's why it's still a shining beacon.

MARK Z. BARABAK and ANITA CHABRIA

California has been a beacon, a destination, a paradise and promised land ever since its headlong expansion in a rush of gold fever.

It's also been a perennial source of envy, mockery and contempt.

That naysaying has gained much greater currency in recent years as California's population has contracted for the first time in more than a century.

The "exodus" has become an industry, stoking real estate markets from Nevada to Tennessee, fanning the red-versus-blue political flames and launching a thousand what-went-wrong analyses.

The latest insult — or bracing reality check? — came last week in a Los Angeles Times poll that found 50% of adults nationwide believe California is in decline. (Bummer, man.)

Nearly half the Republicans surveyed said the state is "not really American." Whatever that means.

L.A. Times columnists Mark Z. Barabak (a proud California native) and Anita Chabria (a happy Ohio

transplant) discuss the poll, the hating by haters and the state of their troubled but still much-loved state.

Barabak: So first off, Anita, are you OK? You haven't choked to death on the noxious air pollution, or been run over by some smash-and-grab robber making a getaway through your pothole-filled neighborhood?

Chabria: To paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of our death are greatly exaggerated — again. The Golden State remains alive, kicking and, dare I say it, a thriving part of the United States.

But I am troubled that nearly 30% of respondents agreed with the statement that California is "not really American." Nearly half of Republicans thought that, which is less shocking. But inexplicably, 21% of Californians did too. That's more than just the Fox crowd regurgitating the right-wing narrative of California as the spawning ground of social evils.

People, we joined the union in 1850 — ahead of [See California, B7]

Ex-CBS chief to settle ethics case for \$11,250

Les Moonves admits inducing an LAPD official to violate laws for his own advantage.

BY MEG JAMES



EVAN AGOSTINI Invision/AP
LES MOONVES' career began to unravel in 2017.

Former CBS Chief Executive Leslie Moonves has agreed to pay an \$11,250 fine to settle a Los Angeles City Ethics Commission complaint that accused him of interfering with a police investigation and inducing a government official to violate laws.

The incident dates from November 2017 when former Los Angeles Police Cmdr. Cory Palka began working with Moonves and other CBS executives to allegedly bury an LAPD complaint made by a woman who had accused Moonves of sexual assault in the 1980s.

At the time, Moonves was known as the television industry's most powerful executive. He had presided over CBS for more than two decades, the architect of the network's dramatic turnaround.

Palka, who has since retired, was then head of the Los Angeles Police Department's Hollywood station. He'd known Moonves for nearly a decade because he had been part of Moonves' security detail for the Grammy Awards for several years.

Moonves' illustrious career soon collapsed amid a widening sex scandal that came to light as part of the #MeToo movement. Moonves, who stepped down from CBS in September 2018, has denied harassing or assaulting women.

His unraveling began Nov. 10, 2017, when a former colleague, Phyllis Golden-Gottlieb, was inspired to speak out about her allegations of past dealings with Moonves. She drove to the Hollywood station to file a report against Moonves. Later that night, Palka called CBS officials and alerted them to the existence of Golden-Gottlieb's report.

Over the next few weeks, Palka, Moonves and one of Moonves' underlings discussed strategies to thwart Golden-Gottlieb's report and worked to make sure it didn't gain traction within [See Moonves, B7]

GOLDEN STATE

Fountain of youth? Don't drown in all the hope and hype

Bypass the claims of the longevity industry and embrace healthful living instead.

STEVE LOPEZ

Given the long list of major catastrophes in the world — melting polar ice, raging wars, the disappearance of early-bird specials, etc. — I'm not sure why so many people want to live forever. But they do, and the multibillion-dollar longevity industry is booming.

Supplements, skin care products, cosmetic surgery, books, diets, podcasts,



workout routines — all of this is available to anyone who wants to halt or reverse the aging process, or at least try.

David Sinclair, a 54-year-old Harvard geneticist, told Fortune magazine he's getting back to his 20-year-old brain. He's on a plant-based diet with supplements designed to jumpstart his longevity genes. He's also managed to activate his bank account with a bestselling book called "Lifespan: Why We Age — And Why We Don't Have To."

Tech entrepreneur and anti-aging guru Bryan Johnson of Los Angeles takes it a step further. He's 46 in real time but is trying to get back to 18. He says death is optional, and it's presumably less likely if you sign up for his \$333-monthly [See Lopez, B4]

Investigation launched into truck explosion that injured firefighters

BY HANNAH FRY

Los Angeles fire officials have launched an investigation to determine how a semi-truck fire turned into a catastrophic explosion in Wilmington that injured nine firefighters, with one still hospitalized Friday.

The truck that exploded

Thursday was powered by two 100-gallon cylinders of compressed natural gas that were mounted on either side of the vehicle. Compressed natural gas vehicles present different safety issues than gas-powered cars, particularly for responding firefighters.

It is not clear whether firefighters on the scene

were aware before the explosion that the burning vehicle was powered by compressed natural gas. Natural gas vehicles frequently have a diamond-shaped decal to indicate the fuel system. It's unknown whether the truck had a sticker or if it was visible when crews arrived.

Nicholas Prange, a spokesperson for the fire de-

partment, said the type of vehicle was not detailed in notes provided to the responding engine. It wasn't until after the explosion that the notes were updated to reflect that it was a compressed natural gas truck.

"I'm not sure at what point that information became obvious to them," [See Explosion, B6]



IRFAN KHAN Los Angeles Times

FIRE INVESTIGATORS in Wilmington gather evidence Friday, the day after a semi-truck powered by two 100-gallon cylinders of compressed natural gas caught fire and exploded. Nine firefighters were injured.

Clock ticking to fix or empty juvenile halls

BY REBECCA ELLIS

Los Angeles County will once again have to figure out where to place over 300 young people in its custody — unless probation officials can pull off dramatic improvements at their long-troubled facilities in the next two months.

State regulators voted on Thursday to find the county's two youth detention facilities, Los Padrinos Juvenile Hall in Downey and Barry J. Nidorf Juvenile Hall in Sylmar, "unsuitable" after the county repeatedly failed to correct problems including paltry staffing and meager programming offerings.

It's the latest embarrassment for the county in its years-long back-and-forth

with California's Board of State and Community Corrections, which has the power to inspect and shut down dangerous facilities. The county's juvenile halls have been plagued by violence and staffing issues for decades.

The vote sets the clock: The county has two months to either fix all of the issues highlighted by regulators or get everyone out.

Los Padrinos is housing around 280 youths and Nidorf has about 50, according to the county's Probation Oversight Commission.

The state board's vote surprised many advocates for improving the juvenile justice system who had criticized the regulators as being too reluctant to crack down [See Juvenile halls, B4]



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Los Angeles Times
The state of what's next.

CITY & STATE

A silver lining to storm fallout: You may be eligible for a property tax cut

BY JON HEALEY

If the floods, slides and landscape mayhem triggered by the recent string of winter storms severely damaged your house in California, there's one bit of relief you can claim: a property tax cut.

Under state law, property owners whose homes suffer at least \$10,000 in lost market value can apply for a reassessment. They must file an application with their county assessor's office within 12 months of the incident unless their county offers a later deadline. Beyond damaged homes, the potential relief is available to owners of anything assessed for property tax purposes that was severely damaged, including business equipment and fixtures, orchards, olive groves, aircraft and boats, and certain manufactured homes. You can't get a tax break for ruined furniture or appliances at your home, though, because those aren't part of its assessed value.

If your application is granted, your property's assessed value will be reduced as of the date the damage occurred. If you had already paid property taxes for that time period, you can obtain a refund.

Otherwise, the reduction will apply in the future until you fix the damage, the property undergoes a change in ownership, or you transfer its taxable value to another property, according to the Los Angeles County assessor's office.

In a news release, the office said it is "working proactively to identify the properties affected and move the process forward."

"It's understandable that

those affected by these storms would not be thinking about their property taxes at this difficult time," L.A. County Assessor Jeff Prang said in a statement. He added that his office has a dedicated team available to guide property owners through the claim process.

The application forms for a disaster-related reassessment, which are available from your county assessor's website, typically require the owner to submit proof of the damage—for example, through repair bills or construction estimates—and sign the forms under penalty of perjury.

There is one other potential break to bear in mind, especially if your house is red-tagged. For older homes, the taxable property value can be significantly less than the market value, which means much lower property taxes. That's because Proposition 13 limits annual increases in a property's taxable value to 2%.

If your home was substantially damaged or destroyed in the recent storms, Proposition 19 from 2020 allows you to transfer the taxable value to a newly purchased or constructed house anywhere in the state within two years after you sell the damaged property. The relief applies only to houses that lost more than half their market or improvement value in a disaster for which the governor declared a state of emergency. Gov. Gavin Newsom declared emergencies in Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Ventura, Santa Barbara, San Diego and San Luis Obispo counties for this month's storms, and in San Diego and Ventura counties for the storms in December and January.

Your house has water damage from the deluge. Now what?

BY CONNOR SHEETS

For thousands across the Southland, recent storms brought unwanted water into their houses, condos and businesses through flooding, leaky roofs or other causes.

The task now for many property owners is to dry out interior spaces and prevent further damage from mold and mildew. Not just an unsightly and smelly nuisance, mold is a potential health hazard that can require costly additional repairs if not addressed properly. Once it does appear, it's imperative you take steps to address it before it spreads.

To get answers about what to do when you've got moisture in the walls, floors, ceilings or insulation of your home or business, The Times spoke to mold remediation professionals and other experts. Here's what they said:

■ Don't make it worse.

The first thing you should do is make sure you don't exacerbate the problem. If money's tight, it may be tempting to try to fix the problem yourself.

If you're lucky and mold hasn't started to grow, it may be OK to run some fans or pull up a damp patch of carpet. But if areas of moisture remain, mold will probably follow within a few days.

Once you start to see visible mold or smell its telltale dank odor, it may already be too late to take purely preventive measures. Even running fans could spread mold spores throughout your home, as could removing moldy materials.

■ Call a professional.

As soon as you can after a storm or a pipe break pours water into your home or business, you should contact someone who knows what they're doing.



RINGO CHIU For The Times

BLAIR Bowman, 65, assesses mud and water damage at a house in L.A.'s Baldwin Vista neighborhood.

One good option is to contact a full-service water damage recovery and mold remediation company. These firms are inundated with calls after inclement weather, so the sooner you call the better. They'll start out by talking you through what you're facing and will typically send someone to assess the damage.

You'll also need to consider whether—and when—to get in touch with your insurance company. This is a personal decision, but there are some important questions to consider before you make that call. What's your deductible and how much do you expect the repair bill to be? Do you have flood insurance and what does your policy cover? If you anticipate costly repairs, it might even be worth consulting with a property damage attorney to help you navigate the claims process.

Joel Moss, chief business development officer for Paul Davis Restoration in Santa Clarita, said he recommends a property owner's first call be to a company that can come to your home and determine what's needed.

"We can come out and assess what's going on and give them some professional

feedback," he said, "rather than calling their insurance company first and then finding out that it may not be a covered claim, or if the damage is so small that it's not going to be beneficial to run the deductible."

■ Limit water damage.

If it's soon enough after the storm and the water hasn't permeated too deeply, you might be looking at a minimally invasive mitigation process, according to Shay Benhamo, office manager at Green Planet Restoration in Chatsworth.

By removing moisture before mold can take hold, you can avoid the high costs and lengthy processes often associated with mold remediation. Sometimes just mitigating water can cost a few thousand dollars. But it's always less expensive and disruptive than waiting until there's mold.

"Sometimes you can just dry it out with machines," Benhamo said.

■ Deal with any mold.

Hundreds of varieties of mold can show up in indoor spaces, and their appearance can vary widely. Mold can be blue, green, white—essentially any color. If it's black, you should be particularly concerned, but that

isn't the only variety that can cause respiratory problems and other health issues.

Just because you can't see it doesn't mean there isn't mold. If you know you've had significant moisture inside your home or business for three or more days, or if you smell it in the air, you'll probably need to pursue mold remediation.

All moisture will first need to be mitigated, and any moldy materials removed. That can mean losing parts of your floor, walls and even furniture and other belongings.

Paul Davis Restoration's standards require that when mold is found in a floor, ceiling or wall, the moldy portion must be cut out and removed. Moss said, along with 2 extra feet in every direction past the part where mold can be seen.

After the materials are removed, the next step is rebuilding the affected portions of your home or business. Full-service water recovery and mold remediation providers can handle that work, or a capable contractor can be brought in.

■ Prevent a recurrence.

You've spent thousands on water mitigation, mold remediation and reconstruction. But what's stopping water from entering your home or business again the next time there's heavy rainfall or flooding?

It's essential you find an engineer who can work with you to ensure proper drainage if flooding or blocked outdoor drains were the issue. If a roof leak or other structural problem was the cause of your property's water damage, you'll need to work with a contractor who can reinforce your roof or other parts of your home or business to ensure they're able to keep water at bay next time there's a rain or flooding event.

After being soaked, Southern California braces for more rain

Storm brings concerns of flooding, landslides and mudflows in areas with saturated soils.

BY THOMAS CURWEN

As gray skies hung over most of Southern California on Saturday, the National Weather Service issued its predictions for the latest storm system that will affect the Central Coast and Southern California through Wednesday.

Light rain was expected to begin in Los Angeles County late Saturday, developing into moderate showers Sunday afternoon and evening and continuing with heavy showers through Wednesday. Orange County and the Inland Empire will start to feel the storm's effects on Monday.

Compared with the system that brought record rainfall to the Los Angeles region on Feb. 4, "we're looking at quite a bit less," meteorologist Dave Gomberg of the National Weather Service said. Yet, he added, "from Ventura County northward, those amounts could be fairly similar."

While meteorologists have been tracking this system for the last few days, they have been uncertain where the brunt of the storm will hit. The engine driving the system across the Central Pacific is the jet stream—high-altitude winds in excess of 200 mph—which is expected to slow as it approaches the coast.

We're on track for "2 to 5 inches widespread," Gomberg said, "with 4 to 8 inches in the mountains and foothills [and] with isolated totals up to 10 inches in the Santa Lucia and Santa Ynez ranges."

While rainfall amounts may be less than the previ-

ous storm, he added, the system will bring higher-intensity showers, falling at a rate of a half to 1 inch per hour.

The news is especially worrisome given the soaking that the Southland has received this month. With saturated soils, the prospect of flooding, landslides and mudflows increases.

"It will not take very much rain to cause significant problems in the next few days," Gomberg said, citing in particular the Santa Monica Mountains and Hollywood Hills.

Statewide, a flood watch alert has been issued for a broad swath of the coast from Big Sur to the Palos Verdes Peninsula and as far inland as the eastern San Gabriel Mountains.

High surf—with waves up to 20 feet—is also expected along the Central Coast, with an 8- to 15-foot swell south of Point Conception that will affect southwest-facing beaches on Tuesday.

Gomberg predicted a "stronger wind event" in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo counties, with gusts between 20 and 40 mph and "locally damaging winds" in L.A. County.

"And again it's not going to take too much wind with this event because of saturated soils... to see quite a few downed trees," Gomberg said.

The storm will initially bring 1 to 3 feet of snow at elevations above 7,500 feet. By Tuesday, as temperatures drop, so will snow levels, bringing 1 to 4 inches to 6,500 feet. A winter storm warning has been issued for the southern Sierra Nevada.

Once the system has passed, the state will have a few days to wring itself out before the possible arrival of another system next weekend, Gomberg said—this one coming out of the north and potentially colder.

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Don't be duped by the claims of immortality

[Lopez, from B1] line of supplemental products. Johnson downs 100 or so supplements daily and performs about two dozen exercises. He wears a T-shirt that says, "Don't Die," eats something he calls "nutty pudding" and sleeps with a penis monitor to count nighttime erections.

Such a routine would actually shorten my life, because after a week or so of that, I'd hurl myself in front of a bus.

Thankfully, not everyone is easily duped by claims of immortality.

Charles Brenner, an acclaimed authority on metabolism and disease, first contacted me a year ago to say, "I'm very bothered by bulls—claims in longevity science."

The City of Hope biochemist has used science to poke holes in one life-extension claim after another, including those of Sinclair and Johnson, and has become known as the longevity skeptic and the great debunker.

When we met for a cup of coffee one recent morning in Sierra Madre, he began the conversation with a reference to the Greek historian Herodotus, who wrote about dipping in magical waters that can keep you forever young. But there was no fountain of youth back then, Brenner noted, and the latest claims of its existence are sure to ultimately disappoint the long lines of lemmings.

"Partially, it's media, and a worship of youth as opposed to a respect for aging and wisdom," Brenner said. "We all want to retain our facilities and our ability to provide for others, so I think that's normal and healthy. But there's a lot of anxiety that is driving the obsession with anti-aging, and I do believe there have been some false promises and obfuscation from some figures at the interface of academia and investment."

That's not to say there are no pathways to healthier living, or that there is no promising research into detection, prevention and treatment of life-shortening diseases. Brenner discovered in his own research that a vitamin called nico-



ANTI-AGING GURU Bryan Johnson — who's 46 in real time but is trying to get back to 18 — leads a group on a hike at Temescal Canyon. He downs 100 or so supplements daily and performs about two dozen exercises.

tinamide riboside is useful "in promoting resiliency and repair in aging. "We're doing randomized clinical trials to test its efficacy in a variety of age-related conditions" including Parkinson's disease. "I don't think it's going to extend life span," he said, "but I do think ... it's something that can help people maintain their resiliency."

This brings up an important distinction — that medical breakthroughs and healthier lifestyles can help us lengthen our health span, if not our life span. We all have to eventually "leave the feast of life," as Brenner puts it, but there's hope that we can enjoy healthier and more active years while we're still standing.

Psychology professor Laura Carstensen, director of the Stanford Longevity Center, said she doesn't know of any evidence that we can live forever, or what

kind of nightmare that might be. "People are profiting mightily from what might be snake oil," she said. "But the scientific community doesn't know what the best measures are right now, and we don't want people to stop looking for them."

In Carstensen's view, we have an astronomically expensive disease-care system rather than a health-care system, and she wouldn't bet a nickel on an overhaul by the federal government. So she's holding out hope for legitimate private sector forays into early detection and intervention.

As an example, she points out that preventing diabetes is a lot less expensive than treating it.

"Geroscience is often misrepresented as helping people live forever. It's not. It's about health span, and

altering the processes that put us at risk for virtually all diseases," Carstensen said.

Just before I met with Brenner, a PR firm offered me an interview with Irina Conboy, a UC Berkeley professor who has co-founded a company called Generation Lab. I was initially skeptical because the pitch said Conboy was responsible for a number of "research breakthroughs ... on the discovery that aging is malleable and can be rapidly reversed, through rejuvenating blood circulation."

Another fountain of youth proposition?

But the same pitch said Generation Lab's process involves peer-reviewed science and employs a series of cheek swab tests "to measure clinically relevant biological 'alarm signals' that report biological age and risk of disease." Clients

would get an assessment of the condition of cardiac, respiratory, urinary and other body systems, and through a pairing with a physician, interventions could be prescribed to "address conditions that rob people of their quality of life and independence as they age — extending the human health span."

Conboy told Fortune she was trying to steer people away "from the dangers of pseudo longevity." She said that "aging is not something that is set in stone like a train going on a track," and that "the overarching goal is to delay or perhaps reverse or even prevent diseases."

Can Generation Lab deliver on its promises? That remains to be seen, but more than 1,000 people are already on a waiting list for the cheek swab intervention, which costs \$400. And that brings up a question of

medical ethics. We already have a crisis of inequity when it comes to access to diagnostics and quality healthcare. As the world's unprecedented age wave accelerates and the percentage of older people grows, are we establishing new barriers between those who can, and can't, afford the latest trials and interventions?

"We're trying to get this as accessible as possible" and to make Generation Lab cheaper after the March trials begin, said CEO Alina Rui Su, who told me one goal is to eventually bring down the price of admission.

I told Conboy the thought of swabbing my cheek and waiting for the results, which might be alarming, could keep me awake at night. And what's wrong with instead having good old-fashioned regular checkups with my doctor?

Those checkups won't necessarily identify early signs of trouble, she said, but the Generation Lab diagnostics might.

"Would you want to know that three years from now, or five years from now, you might develop a bad cancer, and knowing might allow you" to begin interventions? she asked.

Good question. I suppose I would, though I think I'll wait until the price goes down.

Getting more out of our limited time is a worthy endeavor, for sure. But at the risk of being a party pooper, let's not forget that we're all dying. Despite the claims of some, it's the natural order.

And there is an aspect of the longevity boom that frames aging, and elderhood, as a wretched disease, to be avoided at any cost. If that's your outlook, the stress alone might very well kill you, no matter how many pills you take.

My amateur geroscience prescription, free of charge, is that you avoid buying any snake oil, skip the penis monitors, eat right and sleep tight, get some exercise and do things that give you a sense of purpose and pleasure.

If that gets you through today, try it again tomorrow.

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60 days to fix juvenile hall problems

[Juvenile halls, from B1] on the county. And some county officials had hoped a vote would be postponed.

Instead, top county officials — who'd arrived in Sacramento to argue that the county's Probation Department had made great strides at the juvenile halls since the last inspection — were met with exasperation and disbelief.

"I'm literally at a loss for words," said state corrections board Chair Linda Penner, citing the "chasm" between the county's positive update and the grim picture painted by her staff.

"Let me help you out here, L.A.," she continued. "If I have to be the decider of fact between the two of you, I'm going to lean heavily towards what our agency comes in with."

All nine board members present voted to find the two county facilities unsuitable for housing young people. Two board members — Scott Budnick and Angeles Zaragoza — had recused themselves from the vote.

County officials indicated in a statement Thursday that they would spend the next two months focusing on bringing the facilities into compliance with state standards rather than evacuating them.

"Unfortunately, today's decision places the County in the position of continuing to conduct triage rather than to press forward with the reforms currently underway to achieve lasting change," the county said. "We intend to use the 60-day regulatory window to take all necessary steps to meet the state's requirements."

Nine months ago, state inspectors ordered all youth out of Central Juvenile Hall in Boyle Heights and most youths out of Nidorf after the county had repeatedly failed to bring the halls into compliance with a long list of state regulations. Youths at Nidorf who were accused of more serious crimes stayed put because the state did



THE STATE is again warning the county it could close its juvenile halls, finding both Los Padrinos in Downey, above, and the Nidorf hall in Sylmar "unsuitable."

not have jurisdiction over them at the time. The governor recently changed that policy in his budget.

The decision last year to vacate the two halls left the county scrambling to figure out where to put about 300 young people in its care. Officials decided to reopen Los Padrinos, a juvenile hall that had been closed in 2019 amid a dwindling population and mounting safety concerns.

Since Los Padrinos reopened, it has seen fights, overdoses and an escape attempt. In addition, the Probation Department recently placed eight officers on leave after they were accused of standing by as a group of youths at the facility beat up another teen.

The department's staffing crisis has also persisted at the new facility. Deputy Probation Chief Kimberly Epps said Thursday that out of 3,800 sworn personnel, more than 1,400 probation employees are on some form of protected leave — meaning they're either not working or on light duty.

She said hundreds of employees simply don't show up for work as scheduled, including two who skipped their shifts on Super Bowl Sunday.

Sheila Williams, a senior manager with the county's chief executive office, emphasized that the county has been cracking down on such no-shows, among its other efforts to improve. She said that since October 2022, more than 590 "notices of discipline" had been issued to those who skipped shifts.

County Supervisor Janice Hahn said in a statement after the meeting with state regulators that she felt the top brass at the probation agency was making "excuses" rather than "owning up to the unacceptable conditions."

"I am concerned about the future of the Probation Department and whether they are capable of the reform that we all know needs to happen," wrote Hahn, whose district includes Los Padrinos.

Supervisor Hilda Solis blamed the problems on longtime department leaders who she said "abused their authority, turned a blind eye, and ... created a culture that has enabled rank-and-file staff to operate with impunity."

Last year, the five county supervisors picked Guillermo Viera Rosa, a former member of the state correc-

tions board, to lead the Probation Department, partly in hopes that he could help bring the county back into the regulators' good graces.

Instead, he is squarely in their crosshairs. A plea he made to postpone the hearing was ignored, and his argument that the agency was struggling with conflicting mandates from the state Department of Justice and the board drew little support.

"If I were in his shoes, I would choose to comply with both, and I would figure it out," said board member Brian Richart, chief probation officer for El Dorado County.

Eduardo Mundo, chair of L.A. County's Probation Oversight Commission, said it wasn't clear where the youth might go if the county can't fix the problems in the two facilities in 60 days.

He emphasized he was not speaking on behalf of the commission.

"I do have mixed emotions. Where do we go from here? Everyone wants them to close down, but what's the alternative?" he said, noting that a long-term plan to stop confining youths in juvenile halls had yet to be implemented. "What do you do with these kids?"

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Wilmington semi-truck explosion investigated

[Explosion, from B1] Prange said. "No matter what we're going to — a car fire, structure fire — we're trained to observe, take in the big picture, and look for any clues as to what we're going into."

But certain details "might not be as obvious when there's flames all around," Prange said.

Fueling a vehicle with compressed natural gas presents unique safety issues because natural gas is stored at very high pressure — more than 3,000 pounds per square inch. The tanks are equipped with pressure relief devices that will open to let the gas vent safely when they reach a certain temperature, typically about 218 degrees.

Among other things, officials are trying to determine what caused the truck to catch fire. The driver, who was unhurt, told officials she noticed "abnormalities" in the two tanks that powered the vehicle, so she stepped outside and called 911.

Larry Stone, a former firefighter and safety director for waste companies who has trained fire departments on compressed natural gas vehicle safety, said it's likely that either "the pressure relief device failed to work or the firefighters were cooling the very device that would have prevented the explosion" during Thurs-

day's fire. The situation began with 10 firefighters responding to a report of a vehicle fire in the 1100 block of North Alameda Street shortly before 7 a.m. Thursday. The semi-truck, which did not have a trailer attached, was burning when they arrived. They applied water and had nearly extinguished the fire, according to the department, when the situation took a catastrophic turn.

Just six minutes after they stepped onto the scene, a compressed natural gas tank that helped power the truck exploded, according to the fire department.

The detonated cylinder was found hundreds of feet away. The other cylinder shot flames for hours, and crews deployed a firefighting robot to douse it, the department said.

Hexagon Agility, an Orange County-based company that manufactures natural gas fuel systems, wrote in a 2020 guide for first responders that crews should not apply water to the cylinders directly because doing so can prevent them from activating and result in an explosion.

The blast sent a plume of black smoke and flames 30 feet into the air, high enough to reach a transformer on a power line. The explosion threw some of the firefighters dozens of feet, knocking



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

AN AERIAL view of the remains of the semi-truck that exploded in Wilmington. One of the truck's compressed natural gas fuel tanks was thrown hundreds of feet.

them out temporarily.

The crew members with less severe injuries rushed to help those who were more badly hurt, fire officials said.

A 37-year-old firefighter who has been with the Los Angeles Fire Department for nine years is being treated at the Los Angeles General Medical Center in the burn center intensive care unit.

Further details about the condition of the severely injured firefighter were not provided; on Sunday, however, Fire Department spokesperson Capt. Erik Scott said he had been re-

moved from a ventilator.

None of the injured firefighters have been identified by the department. In general, the nine firefighters who were hospitalized suffered from injuries that included burns, blunt trauma, shrapnel-inflicted wounds and hearing issues, Scott said.

"These firefighters that were injured are the brave people that respond when there's an emergency, like when your vehicle is on fire," he said. "Unfortunately, there's inherent risks with our chosen profession that can have serious consequences."

All the injured firefighters remain off duty and "will receive ongoing treatment and support to begin this long healing process," Scott said.

Compressed natural gas vehicles have become more common in the last several decades, particularly in heavy-duty trucks and fleets — for example, trash trucks or public buses.

Experts say these vehicles are no more or less safe than gasoline-powered vehicles, but their fuel is less expensive than gas and they create fewer smog-related tailpipe emissions.

In 2015, the pressure

valves on a compressed natural gas recycling truck that had caught fire in Virginia opened, releasing natural gas that ignited and shot flames at a nearby home, setting it ablaze. Stone said it was normal for the valves to open in that situation, a reminder that fire crews should look out for things that could catch fire if the valves release gas.

There have been a few reported explosions of compressed natural gas vehicles, particularly involving trash trucks. In 2015, a trash truck in Indianapolis exploded, damaging businesses. A firefighter was hit in the head by debris, but was not seriously injured, the Indianapolis Star reported.

A year later, a compressed natural gas powered garbage truck exploded in New Jersey, blasting a hole in a nearby house.

In 2019, a car powered by compressed natural gas was traveling through a bazaar in Bangladesh when the cylinder stored in the back of the vehicle exploded, the New York Times reported.

"It's one of these things in the fire industry that happens on such a rare occasion that until it happens in your backyard it doesn't get attention," Stone said.

Times research librarian Scott Wilson contributed to this report.

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GENARO MOLINA Los Angeles Times

PART OF THE ART

As she waits for a friend on an overcast day in downtown L.A.'s Little Tokyo, Ashley Rodriguez, 20, is reflected in the mirrored panel of a public art piece by Nicole Maloney called "Out of Many, One." The Rubik's Cube-type work consists of 30 photographs.

California is still the Golden State

[California, from B1] Kansas, West Virginia and Nebraska to name a few. We've been American longer than many of the so-called heartland states. I've been puzzled for days over whether a third of America is terrible at geography, or history — or if they think it's some sort of dig at California.

What do you think, Mark? Are we in fact not American in some fundamental way I don't understand?

Barabak: I suppose it depends how you define American.

If you're talking about a certain kind of America — one that is overwhelmingly white and conservative in its social, political and cultural values — than, no, California fails to measure up to that, er, standard.

We've been a majority-minority state now for more than a generation. Politically, the state has leaned strongly Democratic for decades, after supporting Republicans for much of our history.

Culturally, we've always tended toward broadmindedness — or being overly permissive, in the eyes of critics. Fresh starts and reinvention have been a lure since the first gold seekers — the ones digging actual nuggets — flocked here from the more straitened and class-conscious East Coast.

As you suggest, it's not just Fox News. There are plenty of alienated Californians — the state has more than 5 million registered Republicans, which exceeds the population of many states — who feel overlooked in Sacramento and looked down upon by the supposed sophisticates in San Francisco and Los Angeles.

That probably accounts for the 21% that had you scratching your head.

But to be clear, a lot of folks interviewed in the poll are obviously viewing Cali-



JAY L. CLENDENIN Los Angeles Times

A RECENT POLL indicated that 50% of adults nationwide believe California is in decline. Above, anglers end their day as the sun sets at the Redondo Beach Pier.

fornia through a partisan lens. Or, perhaps it should be said, while wearing a thick set of blinders.

I mean, 3 in 10 Republicans said the state has a worse natural environment than other states. Really?

Go shout that from the top of Yosemite Falls. Or in Santa Barbara at sunset. Or on a sunny winter day in Joshua Tree National Park, as folks in the Midwest thaw their snow shovels so they can dig their cars out of the drifts.

That said, we've got plenty of problems, no?

Chabria: Every place does and, of course, we are no exception.

The survey highlighted one problem most of us agree on: The cost of living in California is too high. More than 80% of California residents felt that way, and it's no shock.

I'd venture to guess that has a lot to do with the price of housing. People can't afford rent, which leads to a whole host of other problems — including older people being forced into homelessness.

I genuinely believe that

California's future depends on finding a way to build massive amounts of new housing, not just a few units here and there. We need the mental health beds promised by Proposition 1 on the March ballot and to find ways to create more affordable homes for the broad swath of middle-class Californians.

And that's just for starters.

But the survey also pointed out that the majority of Californians, including myself, are happy living here.

So the Huntington Beach City Council can rant all they want, and the haters can hate. California will always stand for diversity, freedom and tolerance — all values that sadly seem to be growing scarcer east of the Sierra.

Where do you see the bright spots, Mark?

Barabak: Apart from its unsurpassed physical beauty, California is still a place that attracts innovators and entrepreneurs. It's still a harbor for the politically persecuted and those who feel unwanted or unwell-

come living elsewhere as their genuine selves.

Yes, our sales and income taxes are high compared to some other places. Housing, as you suggested, is obscenely expensive and we desperately need more of it.

But check out life in other cheaper, supposedly better places. Look into the cost of insurance in Florida. Get nickel and dimed every few miles on toll roads back East. Sweat your way through a summer in Texas and hope the power grid — and your air conditioning — doesn't go out.

Sure, our government regulates with a heavier hand than elsewhere, and it's not hard to find examples of excess. But isn't it nice, for instance, to breathe clean air and be spared the teary eyes and clenched chest that smog-suffocated folks in Southern California experienced not so many decades ago?

Speaking of seeing through the gloom, here's one heartening finding in that otherwise dismal poll: The attitude of young people.

Seven in 10 of those ages 18-34 see California as a trendsetter and, at 43% of respondents, were twice as likely as other Americans to say they would consider moving to the state. They believe California's future is bright. Me too.

I've moved around a lot, including the obligatory stint — for a political hack like me — in Washington, D.C. I thought I'd spent my career covering our nation's capital, but lasted just seven years.

Like Dorothy, who went all the way to Oz to know she really wanted to be in Kansas, California tugged at me the whole time I was away.

For all the state's difficulties — or challenges, if you prefer — I can't imagine ever living any place else.

California resides deep in my heart.

How about you?

Chabria: I love California.

As a mixed-race woman with mixed-race kids, I value its tolerance and diversity. I value its willingness to fight and lead at this critical time when democracy is fragile. I value that it's truly a live-and-let-live kind of place, even when people don't agree.

To me, the poll results say less about life in California than the sad effectiveness of right-wing political propaganda and the power of fearmongering over truth.

MAGA needs California to be a villain, to represent the supposed failures of the Democratic Party, especially around crime and immigration, and reality be damned.

If no one else wants them, we'll take the tired and poor, the huddled masses. California always has and always will embody the American dream, that each of us matters and each of us belongs.

That respect for equity and equality is what makes us the Golden State.

L.A. OKs funds to clean up graffitied skyscraper

BY SUMMER LIN
AND CAROLINE
PETROW-COHEN

The Los Angeles City Council voted Friday to allot nearly \$4 million to remove graffiti and secure an unfinished downtown Los Angeles skyscraper that has been heavily tagged in recent weeks.

Councilmember Kevin de León introduced a motion last week to allocate the funds to secure the property and restore the public right of way, which is obstructed by plastic barriers, scaffolding and debris.

"I'm not holding my breath waiting for the developer to clean up their property," De León said Wednesday. "The purpose of my motion is clear: to prepare our city to take decisive action if the Oceanwide Plaza developer ignores their responsibility and to put them on the hook for costs incurred by the city."

The motion will move \$1.1 million into a fund to fence and secure the ground floors of the building and place \$2.7 million into a fund for security services, fire safety upgrades and graffiti abatement.

The motion also calls on the city attorney and city administrative officer to report back to the council within 30 days with a legal strategy to recoup all of the city's related expenses from the property owners.

The Oceanwide Plaza project, across Figueroa Street from Crypto.com Arena, has become a site for graffiti tagging and even paragliding in recent weeks. Ahead of the Grammy Awards held at Crypto.com, dozens of floors of the skyscraper were tagged with colorful spray paint.

The owner, Oceanwide Holdings, is a publicly traded Beijing company that halted the project in 2019 when it ran out of money.

At least 18 people have been arrested on suspicion of trespassing at the site, according to the Los Angeles Police Department.

The City Council had adopted a motion earlier this month, also introduced by De León, that ordered the owners of the property to fence and clean up the area by Saturday or be charged for the city's costs of doing so.

The increase of activity at the site has also stretched resources at the LAPD, Chief Michel Moore said during Tuesday's Los Angeles Police Commission meeting.

Officers have spent "more than 3,000 hours" to secure the complex, Moore said.

"We have called in some officers on an overtime basis so that we can provide for these added patrols or station them at that site to deter vandals and others from gaining access to it while also ensuring that we meet the minimum deployment requirements for stations across the city," he said.

During a recent City Council meeting, Councilmember Imelda Padilla said she was surprised at how much attention the skyscraper was getting and attributed that to its large size.

Padilla said at least four "mini versions" of the unfinished skyscraper exist across Los Angeles. She was referring to abandoned buildings on Sepulveda Boulevard and Kester Avenue, as well as a Denny's restaurant at Vineland Avenue and Sunland Boulevard, according to a spokesperson for Padilla's office.

The fourth building, a Roscoe hardware store, is located at Sunland Boulevard and San Fernando Road, according to the spokesperson. Padilla is working on getting it demolished.

"It's upsetting that blight gets more attention when it affects wealthier parts of the city," Padilla said in a statement Thursday.

"Yet, working-class neighborhoods like the ones I represent struggle with this issue every day. Blight is unacceptable no matter the ZIP Code, and we deserve to have the same sense of urgency."

Moonves to pay \$11,250 fine in L.A. ethics case

[Moonves from B1] into the Police Department or the L.A. County district attorney's office, according to records in the case, which came to light in late 2022 as part of a report by New York Atty. Gen. Leticia James.

James had accused Moonves and CBS of misleading investors about the scope of the sexual harassment uncovered at CBS — information that was damaging to the company's stock.

The revelations sent shock waves throughout LAPD and sparked several

investigations into Moonves' and Palka's alleged activities.

LAPD Chief Michel Moore launched an investigation into the matter in November 2022. Last fall, the Police Department said it had completed its internal investigation but declined to detail its findings, citing state laws that provide confidentiality for former officers.

A representative of Moonves declined to comment Friday night. Moonves' attorneys could not be immediately reached for comment.

The former CBS chief was accused of three violations of the city's Government Ethics Ordinance, which governs the conduct of city employees and forbids them from misusing or disclosing confidential information acquired through their work.

Under terms of the proposed settlement, Moonves has acknowledged that he violated city laws by "aiding and abetting the disclosure and misuse of confidential information."

He also admitted to inducing "a city official to misuse his position to attempt

to create a private advantage for Moonves."

The Ethics Commission investigators cited Moonves' request of Palka, which was made through Moonves' former underling Ian Metrose, to "provide information about LAPD's investigation of the Gottlieb complaint, thereby aiding and abetting Palka in the disclosure of confidential information," according to the settlement. The three men met in person to discuss Golden-Gottlieb's confidential complaint and ways to blunt it.

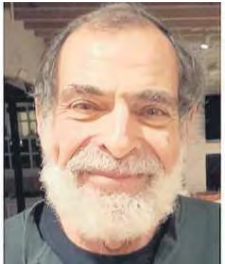
The ethics complaint also accused Moonves of vio-

lating the city ordinance by inducing Palka "to create for Moonves the private advantages of access to confidential information from an LAPD investigation."

Each count carried a maximum penalty of \$5,000, or \$15,000 for the three counts. As part of the settlement, Moonves agreed to provide a cashier's check for \$11,250 last week. The Ethics Commission is scheduled to hear the matter at its meeting this week.

Times staff writer Richard Winton contributed to this report.

Obituaries

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Robert M. Ashen

Robert Morton (Bob) Ashen was born in Chicago March 14, 1934, the son of Dorothy Gurevitz and Benjamin Ashen. He died at 89 on January 22, 2024 in Los Angeles, as the result of a stroke. He attended Chicago public schools and received an engineering degree from Purdue. After graduating from Harvard Law School in 1958 he practiced briefly in Chicago and moved to Los Angeles with his first wife, Rita Saunders, in 1961 to practice intellectual property law (at the time called patent law). Bob was a well-respected, principled, and thoughtful lawyer for more than five decades in Los Angeles. At the same time, he prioritized his family, friends, and living a full life. Until the very end of his life, he passionately tried to improve his duplicate bridge game (successfully) and his tennis game (not quite so successfully). Bob's deep social conscience led him to give back to the community in many ways—the one he most enjoyed was participating in college scholarship programs at Woodrow Wilson and Los Angeles High Schools. Of his travels, he most enjoyed living in other countries for months at a time. Fortunately, his second wife, Ann Garry, had academic appointments that made these long stays feasible. In addition to Ann, he is survived by three children—Jon Ashen, Ceth Ashendouek, and David Ashen-Garry—in whom he took great joy both as children and as adults. His daughters-in-law, Sue, Freida, and Elodie, and his five grandchildren brought further joy to his life: Jenna, Maya, and Joshua Ashendouek, Elizabeth Ashen, and Olivia Ashen-Garry. His memorial service took place in his garden on January 26, 2024.



Matilda Callahan Wright

March 4, 1932 -
January 16, 2024

A native of Los Angeles, Matilda passed away at the Ronald Reagan UCLA Medical Center, January 16, 2024 at the age of 91. Born Matilda Radalj, she graduated from Catholic Girls High School and UCLA. Later she would go on to Law School and spend over 30 years as a solo practitioner on the Westside. In 1952 she married David Mills Callahan and had two children, Kim Callahan Hedden and the late David Ivan Callahan. She was predeceased by her first and second husbands, the late John Frances Wright, with whom she will be interred. She is survived by her daughter Kim, three grandchildren: Colin Hedden, Lauren Callahan and Matthew Callahan, and three siblings: Angela Radalj, Jacqueline Harris and John Radalj, as well as many close friends. Following a viewing at 9:30 am (at the church), a Mass of Christian Burial will be held at St. Paul the Apostle, 10750 Ohio Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90024, at 10:00 am. This will be followed by burial services at Holy Cross Cemetery, 5835 West Slauson Avenue, Culver City, and a reception to follow.



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Thomas Francis Cull

March 22, 1933 -
January 16, 2024

Thomas Francis Cull, 90, of Westlake Village, CA passed away peacefully on January 16, 2024 after a brief illness. Tom was born on March 22, 1933 in New Haven, CT, one of four children, to Edmund and Margaret Cull. After graduating from Yale University in 1953, Tom embarked on a nearly 60-year career in the Information Technology industry. Tom held many leadership positions during his distinguished career at companies including Honeywell International, TRW Datacom, Interactive Corporation and Impaq Information Management.

Tom's commitment to his career was eclipsed by his passion for social justice issues, which were lived out in the many causes he supported. Tom's work to bring about a world healed, unified and transformed continued up to his death.

The only things more important than his career and the causes he supported were family, faith, and community. The patriarch of a large family on both coasts as well as the UK, Tom maintained his relevance to those of all ages, serving as a mentor, champion and sounding board to countless extended family and friends. Tom radiated positivity, seeing solutions where others couldn't see light. He truly was an inspiration to all who met him.

Tom was preceded in death by his immediate family and son Ned. He is survived by Jean Marie, his wife of 56 years, son Thomas (Julia Epstein), daughter Cathleen, and granddaughters Olivia and Anabel Cull.

A memorial service will be held at Saint Jude's Catholic Church, Saturday Feb. 24, 2024 at 10am.

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Eric G. Flamholtz, PhD

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Conchita J. Gasendo

May 1, 1929 -
February 8, 2024

Conchita J. Gasendo was born on May 1, 1929 in the Philippines. She graduated from St. Paul's School of Nursing and married a dashing and handsome chemical engineer, Leonardo Gasendo.

The family immigrated to Niagara Falls, Canada in 1966. In 1967, the family immigrated to Monterey Park, California, owing to the sponsorship of Fluor Corporation, Leo's employer. Leo and Conchita traveled extensively due to Leo's job as a petrochemical engineer. Eventually, they happily retired to Leisure Village, Camarillo. Leo passed away in 2017.

Conchita was the administrator of Alhambra Convalescent Home for approximately 35 years. She was a mentor to her staff, relatives and friends, was deeply religious, highly intelligent, and the life of many parties. She will be missed more than words can express. Conchita leaves behind her only child, Leah, married to Robert Nishida, and grandchild, Kevin Gasendo.

The funeral mass will take place on March 1, 2024 at Padre Serra Parish in Camarillo.

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Terrence Patrick Kinsella

June 29, 1928 -
February 10, 2024

Terry passed away February 10, 2024 after a long and productive life. He was born in Los Angeles, attended Loyola High School and received his bachelor's degree from UCLA. After graduation he spent a couple years on active duty as an Air Force intelligence officer. He eventually achieved the rank of lieutenant colonel in the Reserves.

Terry's working career was as a high school horticulture teacher. Most of that time was at Chatsworth High School, retiring in 1986. He also had a landscape maintenance business he ran for over 40 years.

Terry was predeceased by his wife, Patricia, to whom he was married for almost 60 years. He is survived by his children, Patrick and Marie (Zweig), his daughter-in-law, Carol, and five grandchildren—Megan, Casey, Sarah, Kelly and Kaitlin (Bradfield Biggers).



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Los Angeles Times



Mary Ellen Cassman

April 19, 1923 - January 19, 2024

Mary Ellen Cassman, née Mary Ellen Gill, passed away peacefully on Friday, January 19, 2024. She left us exactly as she wanted -- with family in her Westchester home, where she had lived for more than 65 years.

She grew up in Atlantic City, New Jersey, the second of two children born to H. Walter Gill and Mary (Leinbach) Gill. She adored her parents and older brother, Norman. In her youth, she developed life-long passions for riding ocean waves and writing. An excellent student, she graduated from Wellesley College near Boston, majoring in Philosophy. When the U.S. entered World War II during her sophomore year, Mary Ellen joined the Red Cross as a hospital volunteer. After college graduation in 1944, Mary Ellen took on various jobs, including a stint as an Executive Assistant at IBM in New York City. She also ventured out to Stanford University to work for a year as a Dormitory Resident Assistant and fell in love with California.

Mary Ellen and Alan Cassman were childhood friends. The story goes that Alan carried Mary Ellen's books home from school in third grade. A high school photograph shows the two of them holding hands when he was President, and she was Secretary of their senior class. But they did not become romantically involved until after Alan returned from the war. They married on October 15, 1948, and immediately drove across the country to California, landing in Los Angeles. Alan joined a downtown law firm. Mary Ellen took a job with the Girl Scouts of America. In April 1950, Mary Ellen gave birth to Ken, and she and Alan moved to Westchester to be nearer to the beach. In 1951, Alan opened his own law practice. Then came two more children -- Joan in 1952 and Ted in 1955.

During the 1950's and 60's, Mary Ellen was the primary home parent for her three children but made time for employment and a legacy of community service. She was a photographer for the local newspaper, the President of the Cowan Avenue P.T.A., a Girl Scout Leader, the Manager of Pat Russell's successful campaigns for the LA City Council, and a co-founder of the Westchester Family YMCA and the Airport Marina Counseling Service (AMCS). In the early 1970's, Mary Ellen obtained her teaching credential, and for a time worked as a substitute English teacher at Orville Wright Jr. High School. In 1974, at a critical time in AMCS's development, she agreed to become its first full-time Executive Director. Under Mary Ellen's leadership, 19 years, AMCS grew to become the valuable community resource it remains to this day. Over the last thirty years, Mary Ellen continued to serve as a member and at times the President of both the YMCA and AMCS Boards. Mary Ellen's commitment to her community and society at large was surpassed only by her devotion to Alan and her family.

Mary Ellen's and Alan's deep and abiding love was a romance for the ages. They shared an exceptional partnership and supported each other in all of their civic activities. They wrote poems to each other on special occasions and sang in harmony. Together, and by example, they inspired those around them to live life fully, to enjoy the blessings of each day, and to give back.

Mary Ellen is survived by her three children -- Ken, Joan, and Ted -- seven grandchildren, and six great-children. A Memorial Celebration Service will be held at the Westchester Family YMCA on Sunday, February 25, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family asks those who are inclined to please make a donation to the Westchester Family YMCA or the Airport Marina Counseling Service in Mary Ellen's honor. Links to these websites, and more information about Mary Ellen and the Memorial Service can be found at: maryellencassman.com.



Clare Kjolrud

October 1, 1942 -
January 19, 2024

Clare K. Kjolrud, 81, died Jan. 19, 2024, in Los Angeles. Enthusiastically busy all her life, Clare paid for college (Immaculate Heart, 1965) working as a long-distance phone operator and seamstress for classmates. Clare's great happiness was music! From age 13 (LP musical soundtracks) to the 45 years she sang in several choral groups "for fun" (choirs at Blessed Sacrament, St. Philip's, Our Lady of the Angels Cathedral) and was Choir Librarian for over 30 of those years. The choir (Frank Brownstead, Director) made 3 European concert tours, and met and sang for Pope John Paul II on the first tour. She retired after 26 years (1992) with LA County, where she licensed and supervised staff for foster family and day care homes. Her retirement was filled up managing 28 apts., catering, bookkeeping for the Archdiocese Office of Worship, growing gorgeous roses, alumnae activities, reading (the favorite), and remembering every holiday with cards and gifts to her 9 nieces/nephews, 3 godchildren, 26 grand nieces/nephews. Our happy and generous sister is survived by siblings Michael Kjolrud, Christine Anderson, Martha Kjolrud, Joseph Kjolrud. Her Memorial Mass on Feb. 24, 11:00 A.M. is to be at Blessed Sacrament Church, 6657 W. Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles.

He is survived by his first wife, Florida Randolph; children Angella Randolph Onovughe (Reke), and Anthony Randolph; longtime partner Yolanda Afner Troutman; stepsons Christopher & David Troutman; grandchildren Paige Randolph; Joshua (Maria), Justin, and Jordan Onovughe; Kiana, Brandon, & Brenton Curtis, Giovanna Johnson; Katherine Eason; great-grandchildren Alina & Ali Claiborne, and Ezequiel Onovughe.



James Michael McCaffery, M.D.

James Michael McCaffery, M.D., died February 15. He was 89 years old. We did not ask him what he would want in a written remembrance of him. What follows is a combination of things we think he would have included, plus our own thoughts. Jim was fortunate to have had a long, good life and was lucky to have been born in the United States with ample opportunity for him to use his gifts of intelligence, empathy, and organizational creativity.

He lived in many places but settled in Glendale, California with his family. He cared deeply for his wife Maryann and treated her with respect and admiration. They were always loving partners, especially after he retired, and they moved to Sante Fe, New Mexico, where they benefited from the wonderful environment of arts and culture. They hope they gave back sufficiently through their humble philanthropy and involvement. Jim was thankful for all the wonderful friends of his, friends who continued to care about him when he disappeared into advanced dementia. Jim was also father, grandfather, great-grandfather and loving member of the McCaffery/Miracle family. As a young physician, Jim served our country at great personal risk behind enemy combatant lines in classified roles. He then advanced ophthalmic medicine at the local and national level. As a civilian, he started community service by organizing and providing ophthalmic care routinely at a clinic in Mexico. We could include many other accomplishments. But, to comment on what is so important: all of us are better people because he was in our lives, and we loved him for that. There will be no service or memorial, as we celebrated him when he was alive. He is survived by family including his wife Maryann, daughters Kelly and Robin, granddaughters Katherine and Christine, their husbands, and two young great-grandchildren.



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Edward William Randolph

October 24, 1941 -
December 14, 2023

In Los Angeles, CA. Son of Willie Randolph and Mildred Medley Randolph. A native of New Orleans, LA.

He is survived by his first wife, Florida Randolph; children Angella Randolph Onovughe (Reke), and Anthony Randolph; longtime partner Yolanda Afner Troutman; stepsons Christopher & David Troutman; grandchildren Paige Randolph; Joshua (Maria), Justin, and Jordan Onovughe; Kiana, Brandon, & Brenton Curtis, Giovanna Johnson; Katherine Eason; great-grandchildren Alina & Ali Claiborne, and Ezequiel Onovughe.

He is also survived by sisters Diane Neopolion and Carole Harvey; aunt Joyce Heath, and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins from New Orleans.

He is preceded in death by his parents, siblings Douglas, Deborah, & Dennis Randolph, and son Douglas Paul Randolph.

Also mourning his passing are lifelong friends Saulet & Sue.

A carpenter by trade. He was a mathematical genius with a photographic memory. He loved good food and good times, and his Christmas Eve Gumbo parties will be well remembered by all attendees. He loved to be surrounded by his family and friends; the more the better. He loved to visit his native New Orleans to visit family and friends. He was a creative painter. Watching horse racing was his favorite pastime with his friends, and he loved watching his grandsons play soccer and football. He will be missed by all who knew and loved him.

Arrangements by Lighthouse Memorials & Receptions, Torrance, CA.



Marie Casey Collins

March 11, 1935 - February 4, 2024

Marie Casey Collins, a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, and friend, peacefully passed away at the age of 88 on February 4, 2024. She left this world surrounded by the love of her four sons, marking the end of a life well-lived and a legacy that will endure in the hearts of all who knew her.

Marie was born on March 11, 1935, in Los Angeles, to Marie and Robert Casey, and was raised in Hancock Park. She attended Wilton Place Elementary and Marlborough School – where she met many of her closest, life-long friends. She graduated Marlborough in 1952 and attended Bradford College in Massachusetts for two years then UC Berkeley for one year before withdrawing to care for her ailing mother.

In 1956, Marie married Rogg Collins and their marriage lasted 52 years until his passing in 2008. She would often say their greatest joy was raising their four boys. Marie's gracious and nurturing spirit extended beyond her immediate family, creating a welcoming home for friends, neighbors, and anyone fortunate enough to cross her path. 508 South Rimpau Boulevard was always a warm, neighborhood hub where many would come to play basketball, baseball, volleyball, hockey, paddle tennis and cards – or to enjoy one of Marie's delicious, home-cooked meals. If you lived in the neighborhood, you would also see her regularly on one of her daily, hour-long walks – usually at dusk.

Marie was a devoted wife, committed mother and loyal friend. Strong in her Christian faith, she led a Bible study for over 20-years while also serving as a Deacon at Hollywood Presbyterian Church. She found great joy in her Christian fellowship, mentoring others, and assisting those in need. She was also a long-time member of the Jr. League and a volunteer at the Good Samaritan Hospital. In her later years, Marie was a seasoned bridge player – loving the competition and, especially, the comradery. Her friendships always meant so much to her – many of which spanned decades. Phone calls, written letters, emails, etc. – Marie was always reaching out to friends, hoping to put a smile on their face or to make them laugh. She was a devoted grandmother and always remained very close to her four sons. Her generosity truly knew no bounds, and her selflessness left an indelible mark on everyone she met.

Marie is predeceased by her husband, Rogg, and her brother, Palmer Casey. Marie is survived by her 4 sons, Rogg (Brenda), Whitley (Tess), John, and Scott (Jessica), her sister-in-law, Ms. Whitley Collins, and 12 grandchildren. A celebration of Marie's life will be held on March 16, 2024. Details are forthcoming. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations to Stillpoint Family Resources, PO Box 5103, West Hills, CA 91308 in Marie's name, as a tribute to her lifelong commitment to helping others.

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Gayle Baughman McGrew

June 24, 1929 - February 2, 2024

Florence Gayle Baughman was born on the family farm near Bloomfield, Iowa to John Alvin Baughman and Frances Gertrude Widmer Baughman. Her early education was in a one-room schoolhouse, along with her three brothers, two older, one younger, who tried to keep her in line (but didn't always succeed). They shaped her childhood and later introduced the world outside Iowa to her. Gayle shared stories of driving the tractor around the farm in her sun top and no hat, to the great dismay of her mother. She loved horses and spent hours riding the acres in and around the family farm. Singing also brought her great joy and she would let herself into the church down the road where she could sing to her heart's content.

At university, she recalled struggles with chemistry but also further developing her love of music in the listening section of the library. Gayle graduated from Iowa State University, with two degrees: a BS in Home Economics and a BA in art. She taught classes in Ankeny and then after visiting California, made the big move to the west coast and to a community known for having so many transplants it has been dubbed "Iowa by the Sea." To continue her work in the classroom, she attended Long Beach State College (now, California State University, Long Beach) to obtain her Lifetime Teaching Credential.

Through mutual friends, she met the love of her life Charles Thompson McGrew when he offered her a seat at a friend's engagement party at the Huntington Hotel in Pasadena, California. On a sunny Valentine's Day 1959, at a picnic on the beach at Dana Point, Gayle and Charles were engaged. They returned to Iowa to be married at the Pulaski Mennonite Church in the sweltering August heat of 1959.

Gayle and Charles moved into their forever home, a humble two-bedroom in Westminster that Charles built with his father. It was so remote at the time, that Gayle's coworkers asked her where she would be able to do her grocery shopping. Gayle taught numerous subjects including Russian Literature, Western Civilizations, AP U.S. History and AP Art History at Artesia High School in Lakewood for 36 years. Her students loved her mentorship and personality that made learning fun.

Two daughters Melinda and Kim were taught by example how to navigate growing up and appreciate education, music, and the arts. Afterschool softball and soccer kept the household happy and busy. She volunteered to be an assistant coach for a season. For a few years, she enjoyed bicycling, clocking one thousand miles on her trusty Schwinn 10-speed. Summer vacations meant spending time at Sequoia National Park and occasionally, trips to the family farm. She was a voracious reader as evidenced by hundreds of books of all subjects.

After retiring, Gayle volunteered at the Bowers Museum and with Rolling Readers and joined her mother-in-law in PEO. She loved traveling to Denmark, England, Ireland and closer to home to Yosemite, Yellowstone, Grand Canyon and San Luis Obispo. Retirement also meant she could become a doting grandmother to Peter and Faith.

After her stroke in 2006, she became an expert at all therapies to recover her abilities. She always kept her sense of humor even when struggling. She learned to walk again and even picked up writing with her non-dominant hand. Gayle always kept a keen eye on Charles and would light up whenever she caught his eye. She was able to stay in her beloved home and be with her prince charming of nearly 65 years.

She will be greatly missed.

Gayle is survived by husband Charles, daughter Melinda (Jon) Veregge, daughter Kimberly (David) Van Horsen and grandchildren Peter and Faith Van Horsen.

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Los Angeles Times



Marvin David Rothman

Marvin "Marv" David Rothman, 81, of Westlake Village, California, died peacefully at home on January 29, 2024 after a short illness. He was surrounded by loved ones.

Marv was born in the Bronx, New York, on November 5, 1942, to Harry and Ruth Rothman. After losing his father as a boy, he and his mother relocated to Los Angeles. Although he spent the bulk of his adult life in California, he considered himself a New Yorker at heart.

In 1962, Marv joined the Marines, training at Camp Pendleton, then proudly served in the Reserves. Bootcamp was a formative experience for him and he often recalled his drill instructor yelling at him to "never give up".

In 1966, Marv graduated from San Fernando Valley State College (now CSUN), then wed his sweetheart, Susan "Susie" Gail Lorimore. He entered the brokerage business and spent decades as a Municipal Bond Trader. Marv followed the bond and equities market throughout his life. He was a World War II history buff, private pilot, and loved traveling domestically and abroad with Susie.

Marv is survived by Susie Rothman (his wife of 57 years), daughters Laura Rothman and Jeannie Koenigsberg, and grandsons, Logan and Quinn DeTemple and Jack Koenigsberg. Additionally, his son-in-law, John Koenigsberg, and brother-in-law, Alec Lorimore. He was preceded in death by his parents and brother, Jerry Rothman, and sister, Zena Zimmerman. A private memorial will be held on March 3, 2024 for family and close friends.

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Werner Heinrich Terjung

Beloved Husband, Father and Grampa, Werner passed away peacefully early Sunday morning, January 28th, dying at the age of 92 of natural causes, accelerated by dementia. Still dreaming of the future and planning how to change it, Werner's life-long love of science, books, movies, and gardening gave him endless information, allowing him to share knowledgeably at length with any audience he encountered.

Born February 27th, 1931 in Mulheim Germany, he immigrated to the United States and served during the Korean War. Marrying his wife Bettye, he drove west to California, in search of a warmer climate, ultimately settling in West Hills, with a vacation home in Hilo, Hawaii, after retiring in 1988. His love of climate led to a Ph.D in Geography at UCLA and an academic career that lasted more than two decades. During that time, he published 120 times in prestigious journals and enjoyed launching the academic career of many a grad student, one of whom writes:

"Werner was one of the first academic physical geographers in the United States to apply the systems approach to his teaching and research of physical geography and climatology. To embark on this journey of applying physical science and mathematics to his chosen field of study required several years of self-learning in calculus, physics, and FORTRAN computer programming that he was not trained in while acquiring his own graduate degrees. In 1975 Werner published a groundbreaking paper on the need for physical geographers to adopt the systems approach in the main research journal of U.S. academic geography, the Annals of the Association of American Geographers (now named the American Association of Geographers). Over the years, Werner and his Master's and doctoral students created numerical computer models of crop yield and crop water use, urban microclimatology, and crop photosynthesis. He thought of his graduate students as being members of the very beginning which was inspiring and led to great research productivity. Werner's involvement of his students in his published research and his graduate training/teaching led to many successful careers of his students in academia and research centers such as NCAR in Boulder, CO."

In 1994 Werner was awarded Honors by the Association of American Geographers (AAG) for his rigorous and penetrating research and lifelong dedication to international science.

He is survived by his two daughters Jane and Nancy, his granddaughter Becky, and his niece Brigitte.

Memorial services were held at 2pm on Friday, February 9th, 2024 at Oakland Memorial Park in Chatsworth, CA, 22601 Lassen St.

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Michele Lori Truskowski

January 6, 1954 - January 30, 2024

Michele Lori Truskowski, age 70, of Los Angeles, California, passed peacefully on January 30, 2024. Michele was born on January 6, 1954, to Donald and Anita Weissman in Norfolk, Virginia. She is survived by her father; her husband of 34 years Henry Truskowski; sons Aaron Van Wagner and wife Molly and Alex Van Wagner and wife Jenna; brother Greg Weissman and wife Jill. Surviving nieces and nephews include Sarah Sprague-Smith, Alec Weissman, Sydney Weissman, Nicole Holden and Cassandra Sexton. Surviving grandchildren include Lennon, Ever, Liam, Story, Wonder and Magnolia. She was preceded in death by her mother and sister Elizabeth Sprague.

Michele graduated from Arcadia High School, Arcadia, California, in 1972 and was a life-long resident of Los Angeles County. She worked in the title insurance and health benefits industries. Her passions, however, were her family and friends, gardening, her dogs and possibly every living creature she rescued and adopted. She was a talented artist, a wonderful cook and beautiful homemaker.

With an open heart and a warm and infectious smile, Michele let everyone in. She was your biggest fan and unflinchingly had your back whenever needed. She lit up the room wherever she went but would make you feel like you were the most important person in the world.

Services will be held at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday, February 24, 2024, at Forest Lawn Memorial Park, 1712 South Glendale Avenue, Glendale, California; (888)204-3131. A Celebration of Life will immediately follow the services. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to SPCALA.

Cemetery Lots/Crypts

Rose Hills Memorial Park 1 dbi plot, Garden of Eternity \$15,000. 626-355-4803



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Los Angeles Times

Richard Patrick Jones

August 20, 1928 - February 10, 2024

Richard Patrick Jones (Jonesy) of Los Angeles, CA passed away peacefully on February 10th, 2024. He was born on August 20, 1928, in Ballydesmond, Co. Cork, Ireland to Matthew and Mary (née Buckley) Jones.

Richard arrived to Los Angeles in 1957. He married, Annie Mary Keenan, in 1963, and they were blessed with four children. Richard and Annie were the owners of the Irish Import Shop from 1963-2002. The shop was located first on Melrose, then Beverly and finally on Vine Street. Richard was also a bus driver with RTD for 35 years.

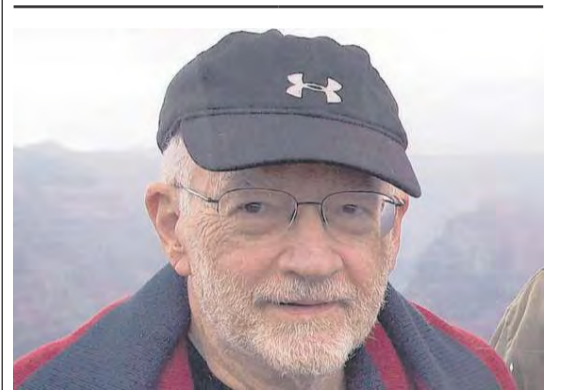
Richard is survived by his wife of sixty years, Annie Mary. He was predeceased by his son John Jones and his granddaughter Tess Kneafsey. He will be missed by his sons Matthew (Kathleen) Jones, Richard (Jennifer) Jones and his daughter Maura (Brian) Kneafsey. He was a beloved grandfather to Kara, Brendan, Emmet, Margaret, Marla, James and Ryan. Richard had a close connection to his many nieces and nephews, including Richard (Jeremy) and William Lonsdale.

Special thank you to his caregivers, Cora and Princess.

Richard will be remembered for his big laugh, generous spirit, and unwavering love for his family.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, March 2, at 2 PM at Christ the King Catholic Church, 624 N Rossmore Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90004.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the National Brain Tumor society in his memory. <https://braintumor.org/take-action/give/>



Granville Alexander (Zandy) Moore

October 8, 1937 - January 15, 2024

Dr. Granville Alexander Moore, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Southern California, died on January 15, 2024, of congestive heart failure.

"Zandy," as he was affectionately known, was born on October 8th, 1937, in Manila, Philippines, to Rear Admiral Granville Alexander Moore and Emily Woodward Moore, both of Lexington, Virginia. Admiral Moore commanded the USS Herndon in the invasion of Normandy and was awarded the Silver Star for his actions there.

Only weeks before Zandy's birth, his family lived in Shanghai, where his father was stationed on the gunboat USS Oahu. On August 20, 1937, the Japanese began bombing the city in a battle to take it from China, forcing all Americans and international residents to flee by boat. Zandy's mother ran, under bombardment, heavily pregnant and carrying four-year-old daughter Jane, to the Yangtze River dock. They safely evacuated to Manila, where her son was born some six weeks later.

After a few nomadic military years, Zandy and his mother and sister returned to Lexington in 1941, where he found a strong sense of home among aunts and cousins, in a setting his ancestors had occupied for over 200 years. His memories of living there until the end of the war fed a trove of stories in later life when it was time for a memoir, "Nurtured in Lexington." He remembered leaning against the wall of the house and watching soldiers passing through, returning from war, and wondering when he would see his father. The Lexington years also fostered his classic Southern humor, along with a genteel and all-embracing hospitality.

Admitted to Harvard at only 16, he obtained his doctorate in 1963 from Columbia University, and became a teacher, colleague, administrator, lifelong researcher, and friend and mentor to countless people who crossed his path. He was a strong interdisciplinary scholar and made significant contributions to anthropology in the areas of Panama, Guatemala, and in many areas of Latin American culture, including Mayan civilization and Latin American ritual and symbolism, law, and history. His interests were wide-ranging and included such subjects as Homeokinetics and Occupational Science.

After teaching at various colleges and universities, including Emory in Atlanta and the University of Florida in Gainesville, Zandy settled in Los Angeles. As Professor of Anthropology at the University of Southern California from 1978 to 2013, he served 13 years as Department Chair between 1980 and 2010. He consistently held membership on dozens of advisory committees in a wide sweep of matters ranging from cultural exchange with Mexico to reviewing students' living conditions. During his tenure at USC, he served in leadership positions including USC's Center for Visual Anthropology and as liaison with Adjunct Professor Jane Goodall.

He taught in numerous anthropological disciplines in both undergraduate and graduate settings, honor students classes, including theory and history, principles of human organization, cross-cultural perspective, family and culture, studies in developing societies, politics and social organization, and ethnographic film analysis, including the deep exploration of cultures through film. He also contributed to the newly-emerging body of work on ethnographic field methods and urban anthropology in film, and guided both his masters and doctoral students to publication in both film and print.

He authored nine books on anthropology and more than 100 scholarly articles, including book and film reviews and academic papers.

He is survived by his forever love and avid world-traveling partner, Levon Mardikeyan, who shared his life for 39 years. They married in 2017. And, by a succession of their beloved dogs; he is also survived by niece and nephews Alison, Alex, and Colin Roberts. He was preceded in death by his parents and by his sister, Jane Moore Roberts (Mrs. Albert Roberts III), and by his nephew, Albert Tate Roberts.

Services will be held at 11 a.m. on March 2nd, 2024 at St. John's Episcopal Cathedral, 514 West Adams Boulevard, Los Angeles, where Zandy was a longtime member of Canterbury USC. It will be streamed Pacific Time and recorded at <http://www.youtube.com/@StJohnsLA>

His ashes will be interred in Oak Grove Cemetery in Lexington, Virginia at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, memorials to Zandy can be made to a charity of your choice, or to St. John's Episcopal Cathedral.



Janet Ewart Eddy

July 4, 1931 - January 28, 2024

Janet Eddy spent a lifetime caring for and helping others in various capacities as a wife, mother, grandmother, volunteer, teacher, administrator and friend before passing away at home at 92 and going to be with the Lord and her beloved husband, Jim.

Those fortunate individuals whose lives she touched have been enhanced by her warmth and genuine spirit of kindness and love. She was an amazingly forgiving person. We will miss her enthusiasm, energy, friendly smile, helpful and positive nature, as well as her devotion to her family, church, education and supporting numerous activities and organizations.

Janet was born in Los Angeles, daughter of a USC professor, Dr. Park J. Ewart, and high school home economics teacher, Pan. She met the love of her life, Jim Eddy, at USC. They married in 1953, and she taught PE briefly before becoming a full-time mom of 4 children. Not just a regular Girl Scout Leader, she led backpacking trips in the Grand Canyon and the entire John Muir Trail and summited Mt. Whitney several times, sharing her love of the outdoors.

Dr. Eddy was a lifelong learner and educator who graduated 3 times from USC with a Bachelors degree in Education in 1954, a Masters degree in 1978 and a Ph.D. in Higher Learning in 1991. She went back to work at the National Charity League-USC School for 9 years becoming Principal, then at USC for 17 years retiring as Director, Disability Services. She was passionate about teaching and counseling students with disabilities. Many students credit her for unlocking their ability to succeed.

Janet and Jim had a great partnership, embarking on a multitude of adventures throughout their 73 years together, many with Los Angeles Yacht Club, Transpacific Yacht Club and Cruising Club of America friends. They spent summer weekends on their sailboat at Howland's Landing, Catalina Island, as it was her husband, Jim's happy place. They never missed an opportunity to gather with family and friends or dance together.

Janet was an ardent supporter of USC and served in many Trojan groups including as President of Trojan Guild, Trojan Junior Auxiliary and Half Century Trojans, receiving many outstanding service awards for her decades of service. Her license plate was "SC LEARN".

Janet was an active member and delighted in singing in the Choir at La Canada Presbyterian Church for many years, before joining St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach after moving to Orange County. At their retirement community, Regents Point, she continued to be involved on many committees and served as President of the Residents Association.

Janet is survived by her daughter Beryl Cianci (Jon), son James III (Lisa), son Park (Linda), son Andy (Myra), ten grandchildren, two great-grandchildren and one on the way.

Services will be held at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Newport Beach on Thursday, March 14 at 11:00 with a reception at the church following the service. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, La Canada Presbyterian Church Choir, or the USC Half Century Trojans Endowed Scholarship Fund (call 213-740-7500).

Los Angeles Times
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THE WEATHER

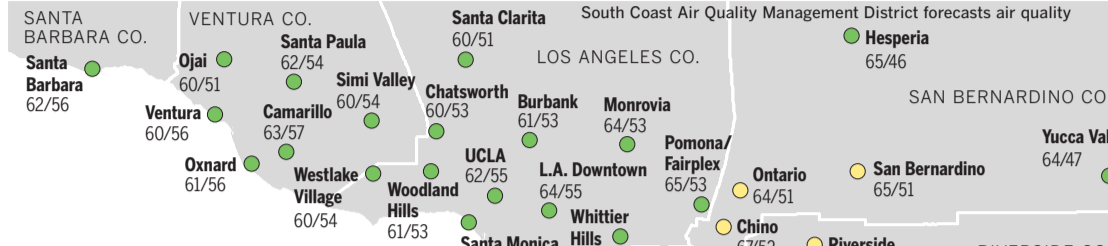
Today in Southern California

Heavy rain returns: An approaching storm center and cold front will cause mostly cloudy skies and cool temperatures today. Rain will move in from the north tonight and reach the metro area later on.

5-day forecasts

Table with 5 columns: L.A. Basin, Valleys, Beaches, Mountains, Deserts. Rows for Today, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday with temperature and weather forecasts.

Air quality



Surf and sea

POINT CONCEPTION TO MEXICO Inner waters: South to southwest wind 5-10 knots. Wind waves a foot or less, mixed swell west at 6 feet and south at 1 foot.

Table with 5 columns: County, Height, Period, Direction, Temp. Lists surf conditions for Santa Barbara, Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego.

Tides

Table with 5 columns: Time, Height, Direction, Temp. Lists tide times and heights for L.A. Outer Harbor.

UV index

Minutes to burn for sensitive people. Las Vegas, 45; Phoenix, 45; Los Angeles, 60; San Francisco, 60.

California cities

Table with 5 columns: City, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. Lists weather for various California cities.

Sun and moon

Today's rise/set. Los Angeles Co. 6:35a/5:39p; Orange Co. 6:34a/5:38p; Ventura Co. 6:40a/5:43p.

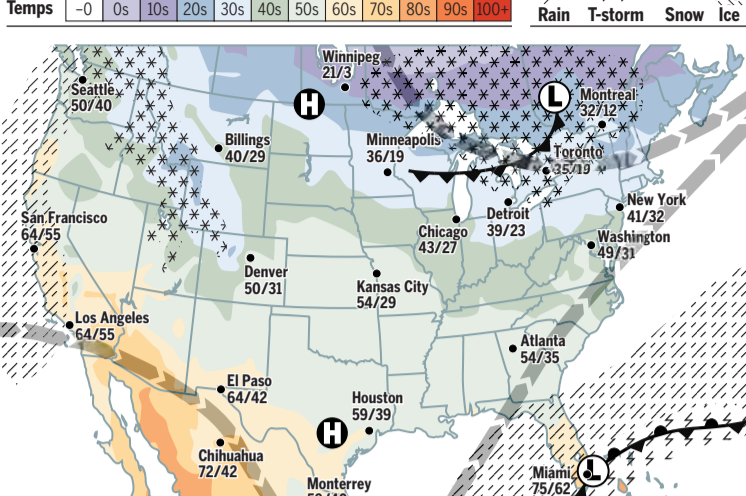
Almanac

Table with 5 columns: Temperature, Precipitation, Los Angeles, Fullerton, Ventura. Lists Saturday Downtown readings.

Table with 5 columns: City, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. Lists weather for various California cities.

Today in North America

Storm moves out of the Northeast: Low pressure will cause a soaking rain across the Florida Peninsula on Sunday while a weak storm will spread rain and snow from the Pacific Northwest into the central Rockies.



U.S. cities

SATURDAY'S EXTREMES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES. High 85 in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. Low -23 in Lake Yellowstone, Wyo.

Large table with 5 columns: City, Saturday, Sunday, Monday, Tuesday. Lists weather for a wide range of U.S. cities.

Grossman's daughter says Erickson 'frantic'

By RICHARD WINTON As deputies questioned Rebecca Grossman on the night of the crash that left two young brothers dead in Westlake Village, her then-lover was nearby, hiding behind a tree, Grossman's daughter testified Friday.

her she couldn't approach. It was then, as she turned away, she said, that she saw Erickson in some bushes behind a tree. Using a pointer, the 19-year-old showed the courtroom the area at 3701 Triunfo Canyon Road where she said she spotted him.

many 402 motions?" Rebecca Grossman asked a Times reporter who was in the audience. Prosecutors have repeatedly accused Grossman's lead attorney, Tony Buzbee, of trying to get in evidence barred before the trial began.

other witnesses, Yasamin Eftekhari and Jake Sands, also testified that Grossman hit a boy in the left lane. Cope said none of the statements changed his conclusion that the black car initially hit the two boys.

Porter defends focus on GOP underdog Early

By SEEMA MEHTA Rep. Katie Porter, who accused her main Democratic rival in the Senate race of cynicism for attempting to prop up a Republican in the contest, is now doing the same.

lars on television ads highlighting Garvey. "Two leading candidates for Senate. Two very different visions for California," a narrator intones in one of Schiff's campaign ads.

SPORTS

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2024 :: LATIMES.COM/SPORTS



CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

UCLA junior gymnast Emma Malabuyo is competing not only for the Bruins but also in overseas meets to qualify for the Olympics representing the Philippines.

A balancing act with a high (and desired) degree of difficulty

Emma Malabuyo is juggling classwork, competing on UCLA's gymnastics team and trying to qualify for Summer Olympics. And she likes it that way

By Thuc Nhi Nguyen

At 7:20 a.m. sharp, Emma Malabuyo steps out of the elevator across from Pauley Pavilion. A poster of her dressed in a sparkly blue leotard faces the front door of UCLA's Acosta Training Center. It represents only one of the junior's goals on this campus.

Malabuyo is a star contributor for the Bruins' gymnastics team, which is chasing its first appearance in the NCAA championship final since 2019. Toting a black backpack across campus, she is also a full-time student with aspirations of a career in sports broadcasting. A reminder of her latest dream is hanging around her neck — a gold necklace with a pendant of the Olympic rings.

While a goal as lofty as the Olympics often requires full dedication, Malabuyo is attempting an especially ambitious balancing act. She started her road to Paris in Cairo this weekend and will compete in the floor final Sunday in the first of three World Cup meets with hopes of earning an Olympic berth while representing the Philippines.

The busy schedule has been overwhelming at points. She was worried professors wouldn't accommodate her travel schedule that will take her to Egypt, Germany and Azerbaijan in the span of four weeks.

[See Malabuyo, D4]

BASEBALL

Rave reviews for Yamamoto

Dodgers' \$325-million pitcher wows his teammates when they face him in batting practice. **D3**

NBA

LeBron the star of All-Stars

His remarkable longevity, as he's set to play his 20th All-Star Game, makes him a model for players. **D7**

GOLF

Cantlay stumbles but still leads

He bogeys the 17th as his five-shot lead dwindles to two going into final round of Genesis at Riviera. **D8**



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PRO CALENDAR

	SUN 18	MON 19	TUE 20	WED 21	THU 22
LAKERS					at Golden State 7 TNT
CLIPPERS					at Oklahoma City 5 BSSC
KINGS	at Pittsburgh 3 BSW		COLUMBUS 7:30 BSW		NASHVILLE 7:30 ESPN+, Hulu
DUCKS		at Buffalo 9:30 a.m. BSSC		COLUMBUS 7 BSSC	

DODGERS: vs. Padres at Peoria, Ariz., Thursday, noon PST, ESPN*
ANGELS: vs. Dodgers at Tempe, Ariz., Saturday, noon PST, BSW*

Shade denotes home game. *-exhibition

TODAY ON THE AIR

TIME	EVENT	ON THE AIR
AUTO RACING		
Noon	NASCAR Cup, Daytona 500	TV: 11, FOXD
BASKETBALL		
5 p.m.	NBA All-Star Game	TV: TNT, TBS, truTV
BOWLING		
10 a.m.	PBA, Peter Weber Missouri Classic	TV: FS1
COLLEGE BASKETBALL		
9 a.m.	Women, Georgia Tech at North Carolina State	TV: 5
9 a.m.	Florida Atlantic at South Florida	TV: ESPN
9 a.m.	Wichita State at Charlotte	TV: ESPN2
9 a.m.	Loyola Chicago at Rhode Island	TV: CBSN
9 a.m.	Women, Pittsburgh at Clemson	TV: ACC
9 a.m.	Women, Michigan State at Michigan	TV: Big Ten
9 a.m.	Women, Florida at Kentucky	TV: SEC
10 a.m.	Purdue at Ohio State	TV: 2, Paramount+
10 a.m.	Women, Georgia at South Carolina	TV: 7
11 a.m.	Bradley at Northern Iowa	TV: ESPN2
11 a.m.	Tennessee Chattanooga at Furman	TV: CBSN
11 a.m.	Women, Virginia Tech at Louisville	TV: ESPN
11 a.m.	Women, Syracuse at Virginia	TV: ACC
11 a.m.	Women, Tennessee at Vanderbilt	TV: SEC
11 a.m.	Women, Columbia at Harvard	TV: ESPN
Noon	Women, USC at Oregon State	TV: Pac-12
Noon	Northwestern at Indiana	TV: FS1
1 p.m.	Memphis at Southern Methodist	TV: ESPN
1 p.m.	Women, Texas Tech at Baylor	TV: ESPN2
1 p.m.	Women, Florida State at Miami	TV: ACC
1 p.m.	Women, Missouri at Arkansas	TV: SEC
2 p.m.	Women, UCLA at Oregon	TV: Pac-12
2 p.m.	Seton Hall at St. John's	TV: FS1
3 p.m.	Rutgers at Minnesota	TV: Big Ten
3 p.m.	Women, North Carolina at Wake Forest	TV: ACC
4 p.m.	Utah at UCLA	TV: FS1 R: UCLA stream
COLLEGE SOFTBALL		
3 p.m.	Central Florida vs. UCLA	TV: ESPN
5 p.m.	Florida State vs. Tennessee	TV: ESPN
GOLF		
10 a.m.	PGA, Genesis Invitational, final round	TV: Golf
Noon	PGA, Genesis Invitational, final round	TV: 2, Paramount+
Noon	PGA Champions Tour, Chubb Classic, final round	TV: Golf
HOCKEY		
10 a.m.	PWHL, Minnesota at Montreal	TV: BSW
Noon	New York Rangers at New York Islanders	TV: 7
3 p.m.	Kings at Pittsburgh	TV: BSW R; iHeart
HORSE RACING		
Noon	America's Day at the Races	TV: FS2, BSW
SKIING		
9:30 a.m.	FIS, cross-country World Cup, men's and women's freestyle	TV: CNBC, Peacock
Noon	FIS, freestyle World Cup, dual moguls, finals	TV: 4
SOCCER		
7:15 a.m.	Spain, Granada vs. Almería	TV: ESPN+, ESPND
7:30 a.m.	FIFA Beach World Cup, Brazil vs. Portugal	TV: FS2, Universo
8 a.m.	France, Reims vs. Lens	TV: beIN
8:30 a.m.	England, Luton vs. Manchester United	TV: USA
8:30 a.m.	Germany, Bochum vs. Munich	TV: ESPN+
9 a.m.	Italy, Frosinone vs. Rome	TV: Paramount+
9 a.m.	FIFA Beach World Cup, Senegal vs. Colombia	TV: FS2, Universo
9:30 a.m.	Spain, Mallorca vs. Real Sociedad	TV: ESPN+, ESPND
10 a.m.	Portugal, Benfica vs. Vizela	TV: Gol
11:45 a.m.	France, Brest vs. Marseille	TV: beIN
11:45 a.m.	Italy, Monza vs. AC Milan	TV: Paramount+
Noon	Spain, Betis vs. Alavés	TV: ESPN+, ESPND
12:30 p.m.	Portugal, Braga vs. Farense	TV: Gol
2 p.m.	Mexico, Atlas vs. León	TV: TUDN
4 p.m.	Mexico, UNAM vs. Santos Laguna	TV: TUDN
3:30 a.m. (Mon.)	FIFA Beach World Cup, U.S. vs. Egypt	TV: FS2, Universo
5 a.m. (Mon.)	FIFA Beach World Cup, Argentina vs. Spain	TV: FS2, Universo
TENNIS		
7 a.m.	Center Court Live (Delray Beach, Buenos Aires, Rotterdam, Dubai)	TV: Tennis
11 p.m.	Center Court Live (Doha, Dubai)	TV: Tennis

LETTERS

A handoff to Foster might not be Jarmond's best call

DeShaun Foster was a good running backs coach, but he has no experience in play-calling and will give UCLA the least experienced head coach as the Bruins transition to the Big Ten. This sounds like just another money-saving move by both Martin Jarmond and Chancellor Gene Block.

CONNIE GIGUERE
Rolling Hills Estates

::

UCLA is in deep doo doo. And, it's not because DeShaun Foster is the new coach. It's because they're in the wrong league. The same could be said for Nebraska when it moved to the Big Ten. The once-mighty Cornhuskers are now a mediocre football team at best. Run for your coaching life DeShaun! The head coaching job at UCLA isn't worth it.

MARK WALKER
Yorba Linda

::

I received my doctorate from UCLA and am a long-standing Bruins fan; I will add that I love Deshaun Foster, truly one of the greatest Bruins to ever don the gold and blue. But I have a question for all of you: Is there another university in the country that would hire someone as their head coach, whose coaching career climaxed at being a running backs coach for nearly a decade? Maybe if the interim title was added, but offering that coach a five-year, \$20-million contract?

JAIME GOLDFARB
Seal Beach

::

Congratulations on your promotion, DeShaun Foster. Seeing and hearing of the players' enthusiastic support and love was refreshing and encouraging, as was your wholehearted embrace of the challenges that lie ahead.

They say that you are too young and inexperienced. A few years back they said the same thing about the youngest person ever to be hired as a head coach in the NFL, Sean McVay. His first hire was to bring in a proven old veteran, a respected guru, Wade Phillips, as his defensive coordinator to steady the ship while Sean got his sea legs. Perhaps you take a cue from McVay. You need an offensive coordinator and it just so happens that a few miles south, down the 5 freeway in San Diego, is a proven old veteran, a Super Bowl-winning offensive guru by the name of Mike Martz. I understand that he is bored.

CHARLES CRAWFORD
San Diego

::

Bill Plaschke mentioned



DeSHAUN FOSTER was promoted from running backs coach to head coach of UCLA, despite having no experience as a head coach or in calling plays. DAMIAN DOVARGANES Associated Press

Terry Donahue's hiring in 1976 with no previous head coaching experience. No room in his column to mention the four straight losses to USC and the heavy heat it brought. Patience was significantly running out. Wait! Eight straight against Troy! The bowl victory string! Winningest coach in conference history! Weather that storm, DeShaun. It's coming.

HENDRIK VAN LEUVEN
Wilmington, N.C.

::

Bill Plaschke and Ben Bolch don't report the news, they create the news. They disingenuously characterize Chip Kelly's resignation as an act of betrayal. They constantly mentioned "hot seat" in all articles for three years and thus sabotaged recruiting and retention of assistant coaches and caused hemorrhaging to the transfer portal. How can any coach be successful after such sabotage? Plaschke and Bolch obviously believe recruits and assistant coaches can't read. It is a wonder how Kelly managed to match USC's record last year without a Heisman winner.

WOODROW HARANO
Los Angeles

::

I can honestly say I have never once in my 67 years rooted for UCLA to win a football game. However, I have admired the fight in Chip Kelly's teams, they never stop pushing, the camaraderie and the class the team shows. The game changed to big money and all Chip wants to do is call plays and coach football.

Just because he won't be what you want is no reason to dislike the man.

FLORA PERRY
Los Angeles

At least he didn't call him a Giant

Dylan Hernández ends his column on Yoshinobu Yamamoto by saying "... the Dodgers are counting on him to be a Goliath."

Goliath was huge, clumsy, and slow of wit. Wish that Yamamoto will be like David, who was small, agile, a quick thinker ... and had a great throwing arm.

COLEMAN COLLA
Los Angeles

Taken for a ride

As one who utilizes the Metro E and A lines to Dodger Stadium, the gondola idea is ludicrous. Most of the time consumed is due to transfers at Union Metro stations. Better uses of buses would be more cost efficient. The cost of additional bus service would pale compared to a gondola.

DAVID PERELL
Los Angeles

Super season, S.F.

There are three things in life that you can count on: death, taxes and that sports will break your heart. Congratulations to the San Francisco 49ers on an incredible season!

STEPHEN A. SILVER
San Francisco

Swift action

Taylor Swift quickly donated \$100,000 to a victim of the tragic shooting at the Super Bowl victory parade in Kansas City. Yet all we've heard from the team owner or the players is "thoughts and prayers." They should

be establishing a fund to pay for the medical bills of each and every one of those who were wounded or injured. If they won't, then the NFL should. It's time to put up or shut up.

MEL FROHMAN
Los Angeles

Fore!

I love the PGA format where they reduce the field in an event so I need not worry about seeing so many players on the course. The grounds crew must love it, many fewer divots and pesky ball marks to fix on the greens. Then, they raise ticket prices so I don't have to worry about buying a Riviera hat or sweater to carry around. Finally throw in shankapotamus Tiger Woods as the elder statesman and we can all dream of "what could have been."

KEVIN PARK
Westlake Village

Taylor made golf

While scrolling in the Sports section on the morning after the Super Bowl, I saw the headline "Taylor wins on second playoff hole at Phoenix Open" and the first thing that popped into my mind was, "OMG, she plays golf, too?!"

HARRIET OTTAVIANO
Hillsboro, Ore.

::

The Los Angeles Times welcomes expressions of all views. Letters should be brief and become the property of The Times. They may be edited and republished in any format. Each must include a valid mailing address and telephone number. Pseudonyms will not be used. Email: sports@latimes.com

THE DAY IN SPORTS

Driesell, who led Maryland to prominence, dies at 92

WIRE REPORTS

Lefty Driesell, the Hall of Fame coach whose folksy drawl belied a fiery on-court demeanor that put Maryland on the college basketball map and enabled him to rebuild several struggling programs, died Saturday. He was 92.

Driesell won 786 games over parts of five decades and was the first to win more than 100 games at four NCAA Division I schools. He started at Davidson in 1960 before bringing Maryland into national prominence from 1969 to 1986, a stay that ended with the cocaine-induced death of All-American **Len Bias**.

Driesell then won five conference titles over nine seasons at James Madison and finished with a successful run at Georgia State from 1997 to 2003.

"His contributions to the game go way beyond wins and losses, and he won a lot," former Duke coach **Mike Krzyzewski** said after Driesell finally made the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2018. "It's an honor he's deserved for a

long time." Upon taking over in 1969, Driesell said he'd make Maryland the "UCLA of the East." The Terrapins failed to reach the Final Four in his 17 years, but won or shared five Atlantic Coast Conference titles and won the league tournament in 1984.

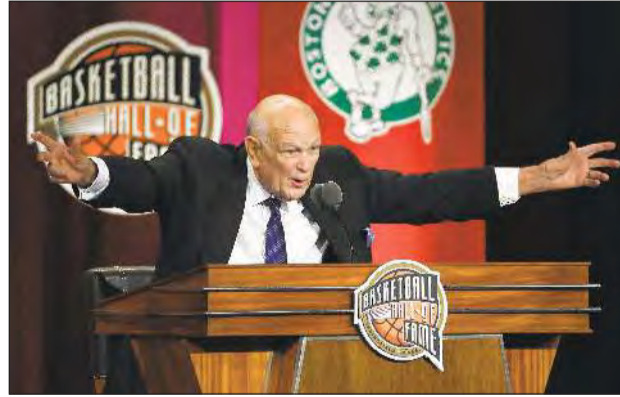
Looking back on his "UCLA of the East" boast, Driesell quipped: "I was kind of drunk or something when I said it. But we were pretty good and we wound up pretty good. We had a lot of great players."

Driesell launched the tradition known as Midnight Madness and helped topple racial barriers. He made **George Raveling** the first Black coach in the ACC by hiring him as an assistant.

ETC.

Record game for Duke's McCain

Jared McCain's eight threes were the most, and his 35 points tied for the most, by a Duke freshman as the No. 9 Blue Devils beat Florida State 76-67.



LEFTY DRIESELL was inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame in 2018. ELISE AMENDOLA Associated Press

McCain scored 25 points on nine-for-10 shooting in the first half, the former Corona Centennial standout making seven threes. It was his seventh game scoring 20 or more points. His shooting from deep eclipsed the mark of **JJ Reddick**, and his point total tied **Zion Williamson's**. Duke (20-5, 11-3 ACC) has 20 or more wins for a 27th consecutive season.

Donovan Clingan had 17 points and 10 rebounds as No. 1 Connecticut won its 14th consecutive game 81-53 over No. 4 Marquette. ... **L.J.**

second-half deficit to beat No. 11 South Carolina 64-63. ... **Antonio Reeves** scored 22 points and No. 22 Kentucky ended No. 13 Auburn's 16-game home winning streak, 70-59. ... **Terrence Shannon Jr.** scored 27 points as No. 14 Illinois earned its first win at Maryland since 2011, 85-80. ... Freshman **Jamyron Keller** scored 22 points in his first start to help Oklahoma State beat No. 19 Brigham Young 93-83. ... **Tony Perkins** scored 16 of his 18 points in the second half and overtime, and his layup with 13 seconds left gave Iowa an 88-86 win over No. 20 Wisconsin. ... **Barrington Hargress** had 18 points in UC Riverside's 67-61 victory over UC Davis. ... UC San Diego beat Cal State Fullerton 76-69.

Yvonne Ejim scored 13 of her season-high 28 points in the third quarter and No. 17 Gonzaga won its 20th game in a row and eighth straight West Coast Conference title with a 91-78 win over Pacific.

Steve Sarkisian's extension through 2030 will push his salary to \$10.3 million this year, making him one of the highest-paid coaches after

taking Texas to the Big 12 title and its first College Football Playoff.

No. 2-ranked **Carlos Alcaraz** was upset by **Nicolás Jarry** 7-6 (2), 6-3 in the Argentina Open semifinals. ... **Jannik Sinner** will face **Alex de Minaur** in the final of the ABN Amro Open. ... No. 1-ranked **Iga Swiatek** won the Qatar Open for a third straight year, beating No. 4 **Elena Rybakina** 7-6 (8), 6-2.

The Arizona Diamondbacks and outfielder **Randal Grichuk** agreed to a \$2-million, one-year contract.

American **Claire Curzan** and China's **Pan Zhanle** won their fourth gold medals at the world aquatics championships, Curzan in the 200-meter backstroke and Pan in the 4x100 mixed freestyle relay. Ukraine's **Vladyslav Bukhov** was the surprise of the night in the 50 freestyle when he edged last year's winner, **Cameron McEvoy** of Australia. American **Katie Ledecky's** streak of world titles in the 800 free ended when **Simona Quadarella** of Italy took the gold — though Ledecky wasn't at the meet.



ROBERT GAUTHIER Los Angeles Times

YOSHINOBU YAMAMOTO left many of his Dodgers teammates highly impressed after they were able to experience his pitching repertoire up close.

PHOENIX — Mookie Betts smiled and enthusiastically clapped his hands. Catcher Will Smith removed his mask and gave a nod of approval. Freddie Freeman raised his eyebrows and exhaled in amazement.

“That,” Freeman said, “was incredible.”

Each of the reactions were in response to Yoshinobu Yamamoto, the Dodgers’ new \$325 million Japanese star who threw his first live batting practice of the spring Saturday morning.

As advertised, the 25-year-old right-hander displayed pinpoint command, pounding batters with fastballs and breaking pitches to either side of the plate.

He flashed notable velocity, telling reporters his fastball was sitting around 96 mph in his 27-pitch session.

Most of all, in front of a crowded backfield at the team’s Camelback Ranch facility, Yamamoto showcased the tantalizing potential of his deceptive delivery, wide-ranging arsenal and steady execution.

“I’m glad he has Dodgers across his chest,” Freeman said. “Because that was very impressive.”

Since arriving at camp last week, Yamamoto has been making a strong first impression in his first Major League Baseball spring training.

Coaches have praised his early bullpen sessions and marveled at his behind-the-scenes routine — which on Saturday included a warm-up drill in which Yamamoto threw his personal javelin around on an open field outside the Dodgers’ clubhouse building.

Rave reviews after Dodgers players get a taste test of Yamamoto

The \$325-million right-hander showcases his numerous pitches and deceptive delivery against some of the team’s top hitters

By Jack Harris

“He’s very intelligent, very curious, and he’s going to be prepared and understand how to attack major league hitters,” manager Dave Roberts said. “I’m very confident that he can be a frontline starter.”

Teammates have echoed similar sentiments, noting myriad differences between Yamamoto — a three-time MVP in Japan’s Nippon Professional Baseball league — and most American pitches. “There’s just a lot of moving parts,” Freeman said. “A lot of guys are going to have trouble early on getting used to that.”

It starts with Yamamoto’s graceful footwork, which out of the wind-up includes a back-step with his left foot and a pirouette-like spin on the rubber with his other. The pitcher also has a “head turn,” as Freeman described it, and an unusually

long pause after coming set, each of which can impact a hitter’s rhythm and timing in the box.

Then, when Yamamoto does uncork a throw, the ball can dart in any number of directions.

Against Freeman, Yamamoto buried fastballs and cutters inside — “0-0 cutter to me, and he missed by an inch at 92 [mph],” Freeman said — before dropping splitters and curveballs the other way.

Betts struck out looking in his at-bat, after swinging through an up-and-in fastball the pitch before. Freeman also got rung up, making contact only on a couple of foul balls he shot the other way. Jason Heyward was only tracking pitches Saturday but saw an array of fastballs, splitters and cutters.

And when Max Muncy,

who hit a soft pop up in his at-bat, was asked which pitches Yamamoto threw to him, the veteran third baseman laughed.

“What didn’t he throw?” Muncy answered rhetorically. “He didn’t miss a beat. It was cool. Very impressive.”

Indeed, for the quality of Yamamoto’s pitches Saturday, Dodgers personnel were equally struck by his quiet composure.

Like the batting practice sessions of fellow Japanese star Shohei Ohtani this week, Yamamoto’s outing Saturday was the highlight of the day.

During his warmup in the bullpen, Yamamoto was surrounded by several executives (including president of baseball operations Andrew Friedman), an army of coaches and any teammates who weren’t busy elsewhere

around the complex.

When he took the mound, fans flocked behind the home plate screen while camera crews and reporters tracked his every throw.

“It’s practice and not in-game situations, but it’s still nice to be able to focus and execute,” Heyward said. “I feel like there’s a lot going on on the outside, with excitement, for good reasons, which is very cool to have. But for him to be able to do his thing and lock in and make really good pitches, I think it was nice.”

Yamamoto was also largely pleased with his pitching Saturday. He agreed that his fastball command was sharp. He said his cutter was surprisingly better than it had been in previous bullpens. He relished the opportunity to face established MLB stars such as Betts and Freeman too.

“It was good that I was able to pitch against top-level major league hitters,” Yamamoto said in Japanese. “It had been a while since facing hitters, so I was looking forward to it. I wanted to calm down and focus.”

There are still plenty of uncertainties surrounding Yamamoto’s transition to American baseball.

The Dodgers are planning to ease him into what will be a more frequent MLB pitching schedule (in Japan, Yamamoto pitched only once per week). He will have to learn a new set of opponents and adjust to MLB’s slicker balls (in Japan, NPB pitchers use balls made with a tacky cover). And his size remains a question, causing some baseball evaluators this winter to wonder about his long-term durability (the Dodgers even included clauses in his contract that would push back his potential opt-out years if he ever has Tommy John surgery).

But, months after signing him to the largest contract for a pitcher, none of those concerns were evident Saturday.

Instead, at the end of his session, a string of teammates approached him — almost akin to a post-victory handshake line — to offer compliments and congratulations.

Their exact message? “Nice pitching,” Yamamoto recounted in perfect English while flashing a sly grin.

Freeman went a step further.

“I went up to him and said, ‘Please say incredible in Japanese,’” he said. “Because that was incredible.”

Mayor wants gondola proposal to touch all the bases

Bass issues a list of 31 conditions for project that would ferry fans to Dodger Stadium.

By BILL SHAIKIN

In 2018, when former Dodgers owner Frank McCourt first pitched the concept of a gondola from Union Station to Dodger Stadium, then-mayor Eric Garcetti said he was “absolutely confident that this will happen.” Karen Bass replaced Garcetti as mayor 14 months ago, and she had said nothing about the gondola project.

Until Saturday, that is. The mayor and four allies on the Metro board issued a list of 31 conditions they want to impose in order to proceed with the project, including plan for a regional bus program that could compete with the gondola for riders and a restriction

on future development of the Dodger Stadium parking lots, which could drag the Dodgers themselves into the approval process.

Bass and her allies, including county supervisor Hilda Solis, account for five votes on the Metro board. They would need two of the other eight votes to impose the conditions, which are expected to be discussed at a board meeting Thursday.

Nathan Click, spokesman for Zero Emissions Transit (ZET), said gondola project officials “are reviewing” the list of conditions. ZET is the nonprofit established to oversee the project.

The list addresses several major issues raised by project opponents, including: the lack of guarantees that taxpayers would not be liable for what is proposed as a privately funded project; allegedly insufficient consideration of alternatives to improve access to Dodger Stadium; and concerns that a gondola to the Dodger Sta-



LA Aerial Rapid Transit

THE GONDOLA idea Frank McCourt pitched would ferry fans from Union Station to Dodger Stadium.

dium would lead inevitably to development of those lots, co-owned by McCourt.

Project proponents say bonds, sponsorships and naming rights could pay for the gondola, with costs estimated at up to \$500 million for construction and up to

\$10 million per year for operation.

Bass and her allies want ZET to set aside a pool of money to ensure “there are sufficient funds available to dismantle or operate the project” if necessary.

Bass also wants ZET to pay for whatever buses Met-

ro might need to run to Dodger Stadium during the 2028 Olympic Games if the gondola is not up and running at that time. The gondola is projected to open in time for the Games.

The conditions also include “the addition of multiple, regionwide park-and-ride locations consistent with the model provided by the Park & Ride Hollywood Bowl shuttle program.”

A program that takes riders directly to Dodger Stadium, without a stop at Union Station to catch the gondola, would be a competitor for the gondola. A program that takes riders to Union Station, alleviating the need to drive there and find parking before catching the gondola, might be an alternative.

While proponents have pitched the gondola as strictly a transit project and said any future development of the Dodger Stadium parking lots would require city approval, Bass wants a bind-

ing commitment that at least 25% of any development would be dedicated to affordable housing.

McCourt could not on his own agree to such a commitment. He and the Dodgers share ownership of the parking lots.

Team president Stan Kasten did not return a message asking whether anyone had discussed this proposed commitment with the Dodgers.

In a state starved for housing, California’s other major league teams have included homes within projects surrounding their ballparks. Although proposals in Anaheim and Oakland collapsed, ballparks in San Diego and San Francisco now include adjacent housing.

In San Francisco, the Giants agreed that their Mission Rock neighborhood would include about 1,200 residences, with 40% reserved for affordable housing.

Inside UCLA gymnast Emma Malabuyo's bi



KRAMER | 2019 FX, 2020 FX
 CAMPBELL | 2021 BB, 2023 V
 FLATLEY | 2022 BB
 N. CHILES | 2023 AA, V, UB, FX
 HARRIS | 2023 AA, FX
 MALABUYO | 2023 BB



[Malabuyo, from D1]

UCLA started its season with three consecutive road meets, fighting through the airport on a weekly basis between long training workouts. Some days she can barely lift her arm above her shoulder after undergoing surgery during the summer.

But through the aches and pains, late nights and early mornings, the 21-year-old never stops smiling.

"Since I'm focused on so many different things and I'm enjoying them, it's helping me have more energy and fire for this dream," Malabuyo said.

Energy is the key ingredient for this Olympic hopeful. The Times recently shadowed Malabuyo during a day in her busy life.

7:20 a.m.

Treatment at Acosta center

The sun is still low on a bright morning when Malabuyo scans her fingerprint to enter UCLA's primary athletic training facility. As she walks into the training room packed with massage tables, weights and treadmills, UCLA athletes from all sports are preparing for the day. She starts at a binder where she and her teammates log the amount of sleep they get each night. Only six hours. She was studying for a midterm.

Malabuyo sets up on a padded training table, waiting for gymnastics team trainer Tracy Sokoler to massage her shoulder and legs. Her shoulder is especially tight. It's been two days since she competed on bars, beam and floor at UCLA's dual meet against Washington on Jan. 27.

Malabuyo didn't used to have to do all this. When she started at UCLA, she could show up for practice 10 or 15 minutes early, warm up and get started. The one time she slept in recently, thinking she could get away without her 45-minute, prepractice massage and activation routine of squats, lunges and resistance band exercises, she couldn't take any landings on her ailing knee.

"My body feels just so much older," Malabuyo said.

"Since I'm focused on so many different things and I'm enjoying them, it's helping me have more energy and fire for this dream."

— EMMA MALABUYO



MALABUYO studies for a midterm in mass communication and sociology on campus. She said she gets more nervous for tests in classrooms than for any beam routine.

After more than a decade of training 36 hours a week with hopes of making the U.S. Olympic team, Malabuyo was happy to retire from elite gymnastics after being named an alternate for the Tokyo Games. The five-time U.S. national team member brushed off Filipino gymnastics officials when they first approached her about switching federations last year. She couldn't bear training at elite levels anymore, she thought.

"The expectations in America, you need to be up here no matter what," Malabuyo said, raising her hand to her eye level. "Your difficulty needs to be up here. You need to be like this. In the Philippines, we just appreciate you doing gymnastics for us."

With reassurance from the Filipino federation that she could perform her college-level routines, Malabuyo com-

peted at the Asian championships last summer after writing a letter to USA Gymnastics requesting an International Gymnastics Federation (FIG) nationality change. Representing her grandparents' home country, she won silver on floor, the highest placement ever for a Filipina gymnast at the Asian championships.

Suddenly she started dreaming of the Olympics again.

8 a.m.

Practice at Yates Gym

A group of gymnasts crowds around a whiteboard. Assistant coach Autumn Grable spells out the assignment. It's a light day.

Mondays in Yates Gym often are reserved for refining details with more drills than big skills. When Malabuyo jumps onto the beam for the warmup, even the simplest cartwheel is garnished with a perfect finishing pose.

Malabuyo balances her collegiate routines — which are geared toward impeccable form instead of maximum difficulty — and her elite skills by working on her upgraded elements every other day. When she competes in the World Cup events, hoping to earn Olympic qualification on beam or floor, her routines mostly will stay the same. She will add difficulty on beam by changing her dismount and tweaking some combinations. On floor, she will add a triple wolf turn and get more difficulty on her leap series while competing with her Paula Abdul routine from last season.

The routine changes weren't mandates from Filipino coaches. Instead, Malabuyo used her own understanding of the code of points to maximize her difficulty while constructing her routines. Instead of choreographers scripting every movement for her, Malabuyo sends different videos to national team coaches and judges for feedback. They trust her with her skills.

"I'm really enjoying this process and I'm taking ownership of my gymnastics," Malabuyo said. "I think that's a big piece that's very different than what

d to reach Olympics



Photographs by CHRISTINA HOUSE Los Angeles Times

EMMA MALABUYO, above center, with teammates Sydney Barros, left, and Nya Reed, right, is surrounded by reminders of the Bruins' tradition of excellence when she trains at UCLA, and wears a reminder of her own Olympic goals around her neck.

I did before. ... It's a partnership with my coaches and we're working together."

With Tokyo in mind, Malabuyo woke up at 5:50 a.m. three years ago. She got to the gym at 6:30 and practiced until noon. After going to the chiropractor and getting treatment or physical therapy, she returned at 4 for a second practice. Every day she completed, at minimum, six full beam routines without wobbles.

Looking back, she acknowledges she didn't enjoy it.

With the same lofty dream three years later, Malabuyo doesn't seem to carry the same weight. She manages her aching joints by completing two beam routines a day and working on mental visualization that has her feeling more confident in her gymnastics than ever. She gets to laugh with teammates during practices. She cheers them on during meets.

She enjoys this.

"Doing all those extra things really contributes to my overall happiness and joy," Malabuyo said. "And when I'm feeling happy, I can do anything."

At the end of the three-hour practice, Malabuyo grabs her phone out of the organizer hanging on the wall and takes her jewelry out of her locker. She fastens chunky gold hoop earrings and clips on her gold Olympic necklace.

12:21 p.m.

Study break outside Powell Library

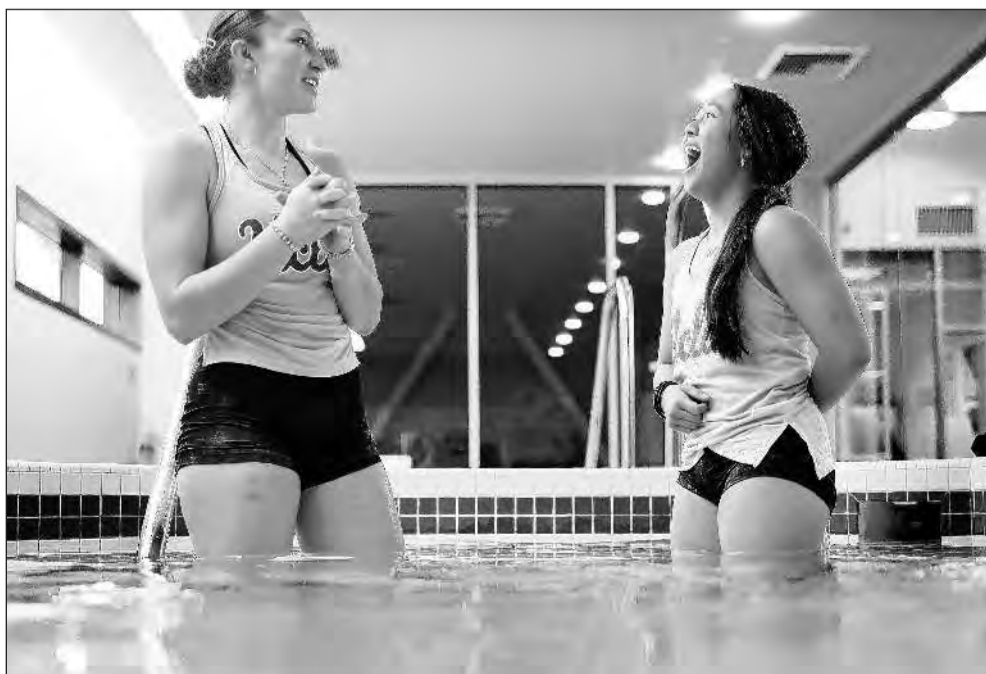
Malabuyo grabs her first meal of the day from inside the UCLA Athletics Hall of Fame, where there is a grab-and-go buffet for athletes. Sitting on a bench outside of Powell Library, she spreads a to-go container filled with steak, fish, asparagus, baked potato and pineapple across her lap. She eats only a few bites. She pulls a notebook out of her backpack and begins mumbling key words under her breath to prepare for her midterm in mass communication and sociology.

This quarter Malabuyo is taking three classes, including a musicology

course and a theater class, that all meet online. But exams are in person. Although she was a scholastic All-American last year, Malabuyo still gets more nervous for tests than any beam routine. She was home-schooled since she was 11 and is used to taking tests alone.

Chasing the Olympics as a gymnast is often an isolating, all-consuming endeavor in the United States. Malabuyo quit public school when her family moved from the Northern California city of Milpitas to Texas in 2013. Her club coach, Elisabeth Crandall-Howell, was taking a collegiate job at California and recommended Malabuyo join Texas Dreams, one of the country's premier elite gyms. Her parents and two siblings uprooted their lives for her to get a shot at the Olympics.

Before competing at the 2021 Olympic trials, she broke down in tears.



MALABUYO, right, and freshman Alex Irvine stand in an ice bath at UCLA's training center. "My body feels just so much older," the 21-year-old Malabuyo says.

'There's so many different things that I have instead of [being] focused on this one thing — one and only, it's the end-all, be-all. I'm not putting that pressure on myself.'

— EMMA MALABUYO

Malabuyo told her parents that it felt like the last 12 years of her life all came down to four minutes of competition.

She considered deferring school for a year to chase the Olympics again. Teammates Jordan Chiles and Ana Padurariu already did so. But Malabuyo knew she didn't want to go on the road solo again. Although there is more on her plate, she's happy to carry it all.

"What's helping me go towards this dream is that there's a lot of flexibility in different things and different aspects of my life that just fills up my cup," Malabuyo said. "There's so many different things that I have instead of [being] focused on this one thing — one and only, it's the end-all, be-all. I'm not putting that pressure on myself. It's more of, just go out to these competitions, do what you can, do the best that you can do and go out there with no regrets."

To qualify for the Olympics, Malabuyo will compete on beam and floor in World Cup events in Cairo (this weekend), Cottbus, Germany (next weekend) and Baku, Azerbaijan (March 7-10).

Gymnasts accumulate points throughout the World Cup Series by finishing in the top 16 on each apparatus. Malabuyo must finish the World Cup meets in the top two in the points standings — excluding gymnasts from countries that already qualified for the Games — on either apparatus to qualify for Paris.

Malabuyo occasionally allows herself to imagine what it would be like to compete in the Olympics. She pictures traveling to Paris and entering the Olympic arena. She's not the only one dreaming big.

While Malabuyo is reviewing her notes a final time before her exam, Alex Peros, a former UCLA water polo player, walks by. Peros sits next to Malabuyo and says she and her family already have tickets for the Paris Olympics.

Peros raises her eyebrows. Malabuyo smiles.

"Hopefully," she says.

But first, this Olympic hopeful has a midterm.

NHL ROUNDUP

Clarke's first goal lifts Kings to stunning win

Rookie jumps out of penalty box, scores on overtime breakaway to knock off Bruins.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Brant Clarke scored on a breakaway with 27 seconds left in overtime for his first career goal and the Kings rallied to beat the slumping Bruins 5-4 on Saturday at TD Garden in Boston.

Clarke had just been sprung from the penalty box for taking down David Pastrnak and was all alone when he skated in on Linus Ullmark and slipped the puck past the Boston goaltender after a series of stick fakes.

"My heart was racing for a while in the penalty box, and I think from when I touched it at the red line to when everyone was jumping on me, I don't even really remember that section but that was pretty wild," said Clarke, who was mobbed by teammates celebrating both his first goal in 17 NHL games and the comeback by the Kings.

David Rittich stopped four shots in overtime and the Kings successfully killed the hooking minor on Clarke before his winner.

"It just happens like that sometimes. When they come out of the box, the puck comes there at the right time, you still have to finish that. That to me is the most impressive part of that," Kings interim coach Jim Hiller said. "You're coming down, you're a young guy, you're on a breakaway in Boston Garden. You've got to finish it and he sure did that."

Anze Kopitar tipped in a goal with 1:35 remaining to tie it at 4-4 and force overtime.

Matt Roy, Vladislav Gavrikov and Alex Laferriere scored goals for the Kings, who improved to 3-1 since Hiller took over for the fired Todd McLellan.

Pierre-Luc Dubois had two assists for the Kings.

"Just up and down the



RICHARD T GAGNON Getty Images

ANZE KOPITAR, right, and teammates Quinton Byfield, left, and Kevin Fiala celebrate Kopitar's tying goal on a tip-in with 1:35 left in regulation. The Kings are 2-1 on their trip, which concludes today in Pittsburgh.



CLAUS ANDERSEN Getty Images

AUSTON MATTHEWS scores his third goal of the game for the Maple Leafs in an 8-1 win over the Ducks. Matthews has six hat tricks and 48 goals this season.

lineup, you've got to give credit to everyone," Hiller said.

James van Riemsdyk scored twice and added an assist for the Bruins, and Ullmark finished with 30 saves.

Boston was in good position to stop the skid when Pastrnak drew a penalty on Clarke with 2:36 left in overtime, but the Bruins couldn't capitalize during the four-on-three advantage that ate up much of the last few minutes of overtime.

Van Riemsdyk scored first-period goals on rebounds and Richard scored 13:04 in the second to put Boston up 3-1. The Kings pulled to within 3-2 when a wrist shot by Gavrikov deflected off Boston defenseman Kevin Shattenkirk.

Alex Laferriere, who played at Harvard, tied it with a goal 5:51 into the third.

at Toronto 9, Ducks 2: William Nylander and

Bobby McMann scored power-play goals during a four-goal first period, and Auston Matthews had his sixth hat trick of the season to power the Maple Leafs.

Frank Vatrano, the Ducks' lone representative at this month's All-Star Game, also had a power-play goal in the first after they were down 3-0. Ryan Strome scored the Ducks' other goal.

Mathews also had two assists and defenseman Timothy Liljegren had three assists. McMann had two goals, and Nylander, Mitch Marner, Max Domi and Matthew Knies had two assists each for Toronto.

Florida 9, at Tampa Bay 2: Matthew Tkachuk and Sam Bennett each had two goals and two assists as the Atlantic Division-leading Panthers won their franchise-record 11th consecutive road game.

KINGS 5, BOSTON 4

KINGS1 1 2 1 - 5
Boston2 1 1 0 - 4

FIRST PERIOD: 1. Bos., van Riemsdyk 10 (Shattenkirk, Frederic), 8:03. 2. KINGS, Roy 3 (Lewis, Englund), 11:02. 3. Bos., van Riemsdyk 11 (Pastrnak, McAvoy), 14:45 (pp). **Penalties**—Frederic, BOS (Fighting), 11:02; Englund, KINGS (Fighting), 11:02; Marchand, BOS (Interference), 12:23; Doughty, KINGS (Slashing), 14:38.
SECOND PERIOD: 4. Bos., Richard 1 (Lauko, Boqvist), 13:04. 5. KINGS, Gavrikov 4 (Dubois, Clarke), 16:38. **Penalties**—Clarke, KINGS (Delay of Game), 1:41; Doughty, KINGS (Boarding), 5:41.
THIRD PERIOD: 6. KINGS, Laferriere 7 (Dubois, Byfield), 5:51. 7. Bos., Frederic 15 (van Riemsdyk, Goeke), 7:12. 8. KINGS, Kopitar 17 (Doughty, Arvidsson), 18:25 (pp). **Penalties**—Dubois, KINGS (Roughing), 11:47; Carlo, BOS (Roughing), 11:47; Zacha, BOS (Holding), 16:25. **OVERTIME:** 9. KINGS, Clarke 1 (Danault), 4:33. **Penalties**—Clarke, KINGS (Hooking), 2:24.
SHOTS ON GOAL: KINGS 16-6-12-1-35. Bos. 8-9-10-4-31. Power-play Conversions—KINGS 1 of 2. Bos. 1 of 4.
GOALIES: KINGS, Rittich 8-2-3 (31 shots-27 saves). Bos., Ullmark 16-6-4 (35-30). Att.—17,850 (17,565). T-2-48. R—Mitch Dunning, Dan O'Rourke. L—Michel Cormier, Matt MacPherson.

TORONTO 9, DUCKS 2

DUCKS1 0 1 - 2
Toronto4 4 1 - 9

FIRST PERIOD: 1. Tor., Matthews 46 (Kies, Marner), 3:41. 2. McMann 6 (Robertson, Lajoie), 6:06 (pp). 3. Tor., McCabe 5 (Domi, Nylander), 10:33. 4. DUCKS, Vatrano 24 (Strome, Silverberg), 11:32 (pp). 5. Tor., Nylander 28 (Matthews, Liljegren), 17:37 (pp).
SECOND PERIOD: 6. Tor., Matthews 47 (Marner, Nylander), 0:50 (pp). 7. Tor., Bertuzzi 7 (Matthews, Liljegren), 2:51 (pp). 8. Tor., Matthews 48 (Kies, McCabe), 5:39. 9. Tor., McMann 7 (Liljegren, Domi), 17:58.
THIRD PERIOD: 10. DUCKS, Strome 9 (Lindstrom, Kilorn), 15:36. 11. Tor., Robertson 8 (McMann), 17:54. SHOTS ON GOAL: DUCKS 3-10-8-21. Tor. 18-9-4-31. Power-play Conversions—DUCKS 1 of 3. Tor. 4 of 5. GOALIES: DUCKS, Gibson 11-19-1 (13 shots-8 saves). DUCKS, Dostal 8-14-1 (18-14). Tor., Jones 10-7-1 (21-19). Att.—19,247 (18,819). T-2-23. R—Peter MacDougall, Graham Skiller. L—Kyle Flemington, Andrew Smith.

HIGH SCHOOL BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

Conner's clutch shots put LACES into Open final

He hits two key baskets in the final seconds to beat City foe Chatsworth.

BY ERIC SONDEHEIMER

Ryan Conner of Los Angeles CES is going to be hard-pressed to duplicate what he accomplished Saturday in the City Section Open Division semifinals against Chatsworth.

His team looked headed to defeat when trailing by three points with 18.6 seconds left.

Then wildness happened. Nasir Jones missed two free throws that could have clinched victory for Chatsworth.

LACES came down and tied the score with 3.8 seconds left on an NBA-length three by Conner. Chatsworth threw the ball out of bounds without anyone touching it, giving LACES the ball under its basket.

Conner got the inbound pass and made the baseline three for a 52-49 victory that sent the No. 8-seeded team into the Open Division final next Saturday at Pasadena City College.

"This will go down in the history books for me and LACES," the 6-foot-8 senior said after a teammate hopped on his back during the bedlam afterward.

"Even going to college, I think I'll never forget this moment."

Donovan Cornelius scored 16 points to lead LACES (19-10), which will play either Birmingham or King/Drew for the Open Division title.

Ian Hunter made four threes and had 14 points.

Alijah Arenas led Chatsworth (16-14) with 19 points, but he had none in the fourth quarter.

Tekeo Phillips made two three-pointers in the fourth quarter to rally the Chancellors.

Southern Section finalists

It was in early November when The Times' preseason basketball rankings came out with St. John Bosco ranked No. 1 and Harvard-Westlake No. 2.

Three months later, after ups and downs, twists and turns, the two teams met Friday in Studio City to decide a spot in the Southern Section Open Division championship game.

It was elite player vs. elite player, top coach vs. top coach, All-American vs. future All-American.

Except Harvard-Westlake (29-3) has been playing at a different level and showed it in a devastating performance during a 64-40 victory. St. John Bosco missed its first eight shots, fell behind 15-2 after one quarter, 29-9 at halftime and never caught up.

The Wolverines will play Eastvale Roosevelt in the championship game on Friday at California Baptist.

Several weeks ago Harvard-Westlake coach David Rebibo said, "Not all of our players are firing at the same time yet and that's OK. It will happen and when it does, we think we're going to be pretty dangerous."

It's pretty clear the Wolverines are beginning to peak. They held Sierra Canyon to a season-low 38 points Tuesday and were even better on defense Friday. They've become more dangerous because young players off the bench have started to contribute. Junior Isaiah Carroll made two three-pointers in the first half. Sophomore Amir Jones made a three.

Trent Perry, who received his McDonald's All-American jersey before the game, continued to rise up when needed. He was smiling while guarding St. John Bosco's outstanding sophomore Brandon McCoy, who had 14 points.

Perry and Nikolas Khamenia each finished

with 14 points. Khamenia, a 6-foot-8 junior, will be particularly important in the final weeks of the season. With his size, Harvard-Westlake needs him to contribute with points inside and rebounding, and he knows it.

As for Harvard-Westlake's defense holding Sierra Canyon to 38 points and St. John Bosco to 40 points this week, Khamenia said, "The coaches emphasized defense. We've been super locked in."

Neither Harvard-Westlake nor Roosevelt has won an Open Division section title.

In Division 1, Windward and Sherman Oaks Oaks Notre Dame, two teams that were disappointed they didn't get selected for the Open Division, will play next Saturday at the Toyota Center in Ontario for the title.

Windward received 20 points from Nasir Luna to defeat Damien 67-60. Top-seeded Notre Dame defeated Redondo Union 67-60 behind Mercy Miller's 23 points.

Water polo title for Orange Lutheran

BY ERIC SONDEHEIMER

Perfection is always the goal and Orange Lutheran's girls' water polo team achieved it.

The unbeaten Lancers won their 28th consecutive game Saturday in capturing the Southern Section Open Division championship with a 12-4 victory over Mater Dei.

The Monarchs might have given Orange Lutheran a scare after a 3-3 tie in the first quarter, but then the Lancers started executing the way an unbeaten team does and opened an 8-3 half-time lead.

The Lancers' coach, Brenda Villa, is a four-time Olympian and leading



NICK KOZA For The Times

RYAN CONNER made a three-pointer to tie the score and then hit another — all in the final 3.8 seconds — to give LACES the win over Chatsworth in a semifinal.



COURTESY OF ORANGE LUTHERAN

MEMBERS of the Orange Lutheran girls' water polo team show off CIF championship patches and plaque.

scorer in Olympic water polo history. The Lancers beat Mater Dei to win the Trinity League title for the second straight year.

Numerous players have stepped forward to contribute, making the Lancers the rarest of teams. USC commit Sofia Umeda has been a standout, along with junior Jailynn Robinson and Brown commit Samantha Kim.

Robinson scored five goals Saturday. Goalkeeper Kyla Pranajaya contributed seven saves.

There will be a girls' water polo regional tournament, so the Lancers will still have challengers trying to end their unbeaten season.

LeBron's longevity sets a standard

Young players take note and hope work ethic, modern medicine push them beyond

BY DAN WOIKE

INDIANAPOLIS — Friday morning before gray skies opened up and pounded downtown Indianapolis with wet snow, NBA commissioner Adam Silver stood on stage with the NBA's next big star, Victor Wembanyama.

The two went through a rehearsed skit as the league unveiled NB-AI, an artificial intelligence application that could turn an NBA game into a Marvel movie with voice command.

It was the clip from the NBA's annual tech summit that went viral, the kind of innovation from the future that is good for clicks even if it lacks any real practical use.

Later in the tech summit, in the last session of the day, a panel of players and medical professionals discussed the relationship between technology and preventative medical care.

In some ways, it's the story of the weekend.

Sunday, LeBron James will play in his 20th All-Star Game, an NBA record. In the week leading up to the game, rumors about his potential free agency in the summer sparked tons of conversations, not only because James is the NBA's most recognizable star. It also mattered because he's still one of the league's best players.

James, Stephen Curry and Kevin Durant all will play on the West team, with a combined 44 All-Star appearances, avatars for the medical advancements that are sure to extend player primes for the generation who played Friday in the Rising Stars tournament.

"Basketball is all about what you can give to the game. And then once you're done, it's time to hang up the shoes," Miami Heat rookie Jaime Jaquez Jr. said. "I don't know when that's going to be for me, but you see Steph, LeBron, KD, those guys have so much more to show to the game and they show it every single night. They're all at the top of their games, even at this late stage in their careers. It's incredible and inspiring to see."

In his 20th All-Star weekend, James stands alone. Seven of the Rising Stars participants were born after James' NBA debut, including Utah Jazz rookie Keyonte George.

"It's crazy. There's a stat when we played him the first time that he was older than our coach," George said Friday morning with a laugh. "... All the young guys coming into the league know who Bron is. To me, he's the best that ever touched the basketball."

George said a long career is his primary objective as a pro.

"The main goal coming into the league is, 'How can I stay in it for as long as possible?' Being a good teammate, with your play. The name of the game is longevity," he said. "... I think the shot-making ability — not going to the rim all the time, get to their spots, pick them, play with a good pace — I think that helps with longevity and your body. And then it comes down to skill."

Multiple players mentioned clips they've seen on social media of James working in the offseason have stuck with them as they became professionals, with the possibility of multiple-decade careers.

"There are always clips, little tweets out there, about how much money he spends on it, how much time he spends on his body," Dallas Mavericks center Dereck Lively II said. "You've got to think about that



LEBRON JAMES will play in his NBA-record 20th All-Star Game on Sunday. James says, "When it comes to acknowledgment ... it's the fans that have been down with me for the last two decades plus."

2024 NBA ALL-STAR GAME ROSTERS

AT INDIANAPOLIS, TONIGHT, 5 PST. TV: TNT

WESTERN CONFERENCE

STARTERS >>>

P	Player	Team
G	Luka Doncic	Mavericks
G	Shai Gilgeous-Alexander	Thunder
C	Nikola Jokic	Nuggets
F	Kevin Durant	Suns
F	LeBron James	LAKERS

RESERVES >>>

P	Player	Team
G	Devin Booker	Suns
G	Stephen Curry	Warriors
F/C	Anthony Davis	LAKERS
G	Anthony Edwards	Timberwolves
F	Paul George	CLIPPERS
F	Kawhi Leonard	CLIPPERS
F/C	Karl-Anthony Towns	Timberwolves

*-Injured. #-injury replacement. **-will start

EASTERN CONFERENCE

STARTERS >>>

P	Player	Team
G	Damian Lillard	Bucks
G	Tyrese Haliburton	Pacers
C	Joel Embiid*	76ers
F	Giannis Antetokounmpo	Bucks
F	Jayson Tatum	Celtics

RESERVES >>>

P	Player	Team
F/C	Bam Adebayo**	Heat
F	Paolo Banchero	Magic
F	Scottie Barnes#	Raptors
G	Jaylen Brown	Celtics
G	Jalen Brunson	Knicks
G	Tyrese Maxey	76ers
G	Donovan Mitchell	Cavaliers
F	Julius Randle*	Knicks
G	Trae Young#	Hawks

and be focused. I'm 20 years old. And he's in his 20th All-Star Game. Playing basketball for pretty much the entire time I've been alive. And just seeing how he's been able to be this consistent through his career, you've got to be able to learn from it and take things from it."

In the build to Sunday's All-Star Game, James has been understated about the record.

"I don't take it for granted, being an All-Star," he said Tuesday in his final game before the All-Star

break. "And the fact that I still get to represent this franchise. Well, one, my family, which is most important. My family name on the back of the jersey, that's very important to me.

"And then when it comes to acknowledgment and accolades and things of that nature, it's the fans that have been down with me for the last two decades plus. Anytime I'm able to have an accomplishment it means a lot to them as well. I try to do it for them because they've been along for this journey for so long, so

it's pretty cool I'm still able to do it and do it at this level."

If there's an end, it's not in plain sight.

"I think with LeBron, I think that's him. I think he has a different mind-set to the game that we play," Charlotte Hornets rookie Brandon Miller said. "... I say keep going if you can keep going. I look at it as a great thing, just to see him in his 20th All-Star year and still be able to perform and be the best."

James often has spoken about how he began the process of getting ready for his career at a young age, prioritizing stretching. Wembanyama, the center of attention Friday, has taken the same approach, adding things such as a prioritized sleep schedule to his wellness routine.

Equaling James' production isn't a lock for the NBA's young stars. It is, at best, a severe improbability. But matching his durability and longevity? With the technology and data available to NBA players and their personal and team medical professionals, there's a shot.

"How everything's getting better in terms of knowledge, the body, treatment, stuff like this, I think we're going to see more and more of those," Wembanyama said of long careers.

"Taking care of my body has long been one of my most important thoughts even for long term. But only the future will tell how the health is going to be. For sure, I'm trying to have no regrets about how I treat my body."

NBA NOTES

Davis pledges to play in Paris

STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

INDIANAPOLIS — Lakers forward **Anthony Davis** made it clear Saturday at the All-Star Game media day that if his country asks, he will play for the U.S. at the Olympics this summer.

Phoenix's **Kevin Durant** — seeking a fourth gold medal — has made it clear he will play, as has Miami's **Bam Adebayo**. **LeBron James** indicated he wants to play, and Golden State's **Stephen Curry** might finally decide to go to his first Olympics.

"Am I going to go? I'll make a cameo," Davis said when asked about the Olympics. "Nah, I told the USA committee, whoever called me, that if they ask me to go, I'll go. It'll be a great opportunity for me."

Clippers star **Kawhi Leonard** was a bit coy: "We'll see what happens, if I'm able to get a spot or not."

James wasn't at the practice and media session. He will hold a pregame news conference Sunday and then play in the game.

Saturday night

Milwaukee's **Damian Lillard** defended his title in the three-point contest, while Curry topped New York Liberty star **Sabrina Ionescu**, 29-26, in the first NBA vs. WNBA three-point shootout. Lillard is the eighth player to win at least two contests and the first since **Jason Kapon** in 2007 and 2008 to do it in consecutive years. ... **Tyrese Haliburton** made a tiebreaking, half-court shot to give Team Pacers the win in the skills challenge.

Silver speaks

Commissioner **Adam Silver** believes the new rules that mandate players must generally play at least 65 games to be eligible for post-season awards have had their intended effect. "The number of games that players have participated in is up this season," he said. "And interestingly enough, injuries are actually down."

There already has been some impact. Philadelphia center **Joel Embiid** won't win a second consecutive most valuable player award, and his two-year reign as the scoring champion also will end because he won't play enough games to qualify.

Staff writer Dan Woike contributed to this report.

For full coverage of Saturday night's NBA All-Star festivities, go to latimes.com/sports.

Bruins left stunned after buzzer-beater

ASSOCIATED PRESS

CORVALLIS, Ore. — Talia von Oelhoffen made a three-pointer from the top of the key at the buzzer to lift No. 11 Oregon State to a 79-77 victory over No. 9 UCLA on Friday night.

After an official's review, the basket counted and the Beavers (21-3, 10-3 Pac-12) had their sixth straight win.

On the game's last possession, von Oelhoffen said UCLA focused its defense on Timea Gardiner, who had made three of four three-pointers.

"I had a feeling that they were going to help on that and that I was going to be open on the pop," von Oelhoffen said. "I was just ready for it. I had just had that layup so I had a little bit of confidence and shot it well in that second half."

Von Oelhoffen scored 18 of her 22 points in the second half, including all four three-pointers. She also made a driving layup with two seconds left to put the Beavers ahead 76-75.

Oregon State rallied from seven points down in the final three minutes. Von Oelhoffen finished with 22 points on six-for-12 shooting

from the field and six for six at the foul line, and Gardiner had a career-high 21 points.

Lauren Betts scored a career-high 24 points on 11-for-15 shooting to lead UCLA (19-5, 8-5).

The Bruins appeared to have won the game when Betts connected on a 15-foot jumper with 11 seconds left for a 77-76 lead. Betts received the ball just left of the free throw line and drilled an uncontested jumper.

But Oregon State had one final opportunity and converted. The near sold-out crowd at Gill Coliseum erupted into a frenzy when von Oelhoffen hit the long jumper.

"We overcorrected and that's how Talia got that open three with one second left," UCLA coach Cori Close said. "We have to get that stop with one second left and we were not able to do it."

Angela Dugalic made a three with 6.6 seconds remaining to give the Bruins a 75-74 advantage. The lead changed hands three more times in the final seconds.

"Obviously, it's a tough loss and the fact that we had a seven-point lead with three minutes left and couldn't hold onto it," said UCLA



TALIA von OELHOFFEN scored 18 of her 22 points in the second half, including a three-pointer to win it.

guard Kiki Rice, who had 11 points and five assists.

Oregon State played most of the game without leading scorer Raegan Beers. She was hit with an elbow to the nose by Rice, who was called for an intentional foul early in the second quarter. Beers left for the locker room after spending several minutes on the floor and did not return.

Without the inside presence of Beers, Oregon State was forced to the perimeter and finished 11 for 19 on three-pointers.

FRIDAY'S LATE BOX

No. 11 OREGON ST. 79, No. 9 UCLA 77

UCLA (19-5) — Dugalic 4-10 0-0 10, Betts 11-15 2-4 24, Jones 3-8 2-9, Osborne 3-12 6-13, Rice 4-9 2-11, Iwuala 1-3 0-0 2, Jaquez 1-2 2-2 4, Sonntag 1-1 1-2 4, Brown 0-0 0-0 0, Totals 28-60 15-18 77

OREGON ST. (21-3) — Beers 0-0 2-2 2, Rees 0-2 1-2 1, Hunter 3-9 1-2 8, Marotte 2-3 0-0 5, von Oelhoffen 6-12 6-6 22, Gardiner 5-8 8-21, Hansford 3-3 0-0 8, Paurouva 4-7 4-6 12, Shuler 0-0 0-0 0, Totals 23-44 22-26 79

UCLA 11 23 24 19 - 77
OREGON ST. 12 20 26 21 - 79

3-Point Goals — UCLA 6-23 (Dugalic 5, Jones 1-5, Osborne 1-7, Rice 1-4, Jaquez 0-1, Sonntag 1-1); Oregon St. 11-19 (Rees 0-1, Hunter 1-2, Marotte 1-2, von Oelhoffen 4-7, Gardiner 3-4, Hansford 2-2, Paurouva 0-1). Assists — UCLA 15 (Rice 5), Oregon St. 11 (Gardiner 2, Hunter 2, Paurouva 2, von Oelhoffen 2). Fouled Out — None. Rebounds — UCLA 29 (Betts 7), Oregon St. 24 (Paurouva 5, von Oelhoffen 5). Total Fouls — UCLA 22, Oregon St. 14. Technical Fouls — None. A — 8,525.

Bloodied, Watkins still makes a mark

ASSOCIATED PRESS

EUGENE, Ore. — Freshman sensation JuJu Watkins scored 33 points and No. 10 USC defeated Oregon 88-51 on Friday night for its fifth consecutive victory.

Watkins was 12 for 25 from the field, including three for eight on three-pointers, despite leaving the game for a while in the third quarter because of a bloody nose. She also made six of seven free throws and grabbed eight rebounds for the Trojans (19-4, 9-4 Pac-12).

It was the 10th time Watkins has scored 30 or more points, tying Trojans great Cheryl Miller for the most in one season at USC.

"I can't say enough about our young superstar," coach Lindsay Gottlieb said. "She keeps getting better, she's coachable and she learns

from the film."

McKenzie Forbes added 12 points for USC. Kaitlyn Davis had 10 points and 11 rebounds.

Chance Gray scored 12 to lead the Ducks (11-15, 2-11), who have lost eight straight games — seven against ranked teams. Grace vanSlooten added 11 points, four rebounds and four assists. Phillipina Kyei pulled down 18 rebounds to go with 10 points.

After giving up the first basket of the game, USC responded with 19 points in a row.

"I am super impressed with the way we came out," Gottlieb said.

FRIDAY'S LATE BOX

No. 10 USC 88, OREGON 51

USC (19-4) — Davis 4-4 2-4 10, Marshall 2-4 0-2 4, Forbes 5-13 0-0 12, Padilla 3-9 0-1 8, Watkins 12-25 6-7 33, Akunwafo 3-3 0-0 6, Bigby 1-2 0-0 3, Darius 2-5 0-0 5, Makolo 1-2 0-0 2, Samuels 0-2 0-0 0, Williams 1-2 2-2 5, Totals 34-71 10-16 88

OREGON (11-15) — Basham 3-5 0-0 6, VanSlooten 5-16 1-4 11, Kyei 4-13 2-4 10, Chamberlin 2-4 0-0 5, Gray 5-16 2-12, Rarnbus 2-4 1-2 5, Hamel 0-1 0-0 0, Wagner 0-1 0-0 0, Kennedy 2-6 6-12 51, Priscilla Williams 0-2 0-0 0, Totals 22-66 6-12 51

USC 29 28 13 18 - 88
OREGON 7 14 21 9 - 51

3-Point Goals — USC 10-31 (Forbes 2-5, Padilla 2-8, Watkins 3-8, Bigby 1-2, Darius 1-4, Samuels 0-2, Williams 1-2); Oregon 1-10 (Chamberlin 1-2, Gray 0-5, Wagner 0-1, Williams 0-2). Assists — USC 20 (Davis 5), Oregon 10 (VanSlooten 4). Fouled Out — None. Rebounds — USC 45 (Marshall 12), Oregon 40 (Kyei 18). Total Fouls — USC 12, Oregon 16. Technical Fouls — None. A — 7,145.

The USC-Colorado men's basketball game Saturday night ended after this edition's deadline. For that story and more coverage, go to latimes.com/sports.



RYAN SUN Associated Press

PATRICK CANTLAY, right, is congratulated by Luke List on 18. Cantlay will play with good friend Xander Schauffele on Sunday.

Cantlay stumbles but still in charge

The former UCLA star bogeys at 17 but still has a two-stroke lead at Riviera.

BY DOUG FERGUSON

Patrick Cantlay moved one round closer to winning before home fans at Riviera on his favorite course. He just moved the wrong way at the end Saturday in the Genesis Invitational.

Cantlay got up-and-down from short of the 18th green to save par for a one-under-par 70, giving him a two-shot lead over good friend Xander Schauffele and Will Zalatoris.

Cantlay, a UCLA alum who grew up 30 miles down the coast at Virginia Country Club in Long Beach, was leading by four shots for much of the back nine, reaching 15 under with a bold approach to a back left pin on the 13th.

But he made a soft bogey on the par-five 17th as Schauffele (65) and Zalatoris (65) finished strong, and now the final round is a lot tighter than it was.

The Servite High graduate was at 14-under 199 and will play in the final group with Schauffele, his closest friend on the PGA Tour.

They take vacations together with their wives and often stay in

the same house on the road. They have been partners 11 times in the Ryder Cup and Presidents Cup matches, 12 rounds at the Zurich Classic of New Orleans — they won the team event in 2022 — along with about 100 practice rounds together.

At stake is a \$4 million payoff to the winner of the signature event, a boost in first-place money as a player-hosted tournament.

The host is Tiger Woods, who might not be around to present the trophy.

Woods confirmed on X he had influenza, the cause of him withdrawing Friday.

“When we play on Mondays and Tuesdays we’re trying to beat each other,” Schauffele said. “I think the only time we’re really rooting hard for each other is when we’re playing team events. I’m rooting for myself harder than anyone else and same goes for him. But of course I’d like to see him do well, but when we’re in the final group together it’s pretty obvious what we’re trying to do.”

Cantlay finally missed a putt inside 10 feet, this one for par on the third hole, but was otherwise solid on an overcast afternoon at Riviera. He saved a tough par on the 10th when his chip rolled off the green and added birdies at the 11th and 13th.

“I played solid golf today,” Cantlay said. “I didn’t make any long

Genesis Invitational
THIRD-ROUND LEADERS
Riviera Country Club,
Pacific Palisades
Par 71 | 7,322 yards

	1st	2nd	3rd	
Patrick Cantlay	64	65	70	-14
Xander Schauffele	70	66	65	-12
Will Zalatoris	66	70	65	-12
Luke List	65	69	68	-11
Harry English	69	69	65	-10
Jason Day	65	69	69	-10
J.T. Poston	68	71	66	-8
Hideki Matsuyama	69	68	68	-8
Corey Connors	70	65	70	-8

putts or anything. Didn’t really give myself too many chances, but all in all a solid day and in good position for tomorrow.”

But he lost a little of this cushion, particularly on the par-five 17th, the second-easiest hole at Riviera that yielded only two bogeys among the 51 players who reached the weekend.

Cantlay found a fairway bunker to the right off the tee, blasted out to wedge range and his shot to a front pin came off the green. He chipped weakly to 15 feet and missed the par putt.

Schauffele opened with a 15-

foot eagle putt on the par-five first and was relatively quiet until taking care of the par fives on the back and adding birdies at the short par-four 10th and a tee shot to 7 feet on the par-three 16th.

Zalatoris, who sat out most of last year recovering from back surgery, already has one highlight this week with his hole-in-one Friday on the 14th that resulted in a car for him and his caddie. He zoomed into contention with five birdies over his 10 holes for a 65.

Luke List (68) was three shots behind, and Harris English (65) and Jason Day (69) were another shot back going into the final round.

No one else was closer than five.

Cantlay is trying to join Max Homa (2021) and John Merrick (2013) as players from the greater Los Angeles area trying to win what amounts to a hometown event. Cantlay won the Zozo Championship at Sherwood in Thousand Oaks, about 35 miles to the north, when the tournament was moved to California during the pandemic.

But Riviera is special.

“Being from Southern California, it’s one of the tournaments on the list that I’d like to win the most,” Cantlay said.

Ferguson writes for the Associated Press.

DAYTONA 500

AT DAYTONA BEACH, FLA. | TODAY, NOON PST | TV: CHANNEL 11

Larson looks to weather rivals, soggy track

Rain is in forecast today as former Cup champion tries to win first Daytona 500.

BY JOHN CHERWA

DAYTONA BEACH, Fla. — Trying to figure out who is going to win this year’s Daytona 500 is the second-most asked question behind a bigger more prescient one: When will the Daytona 500 be run?

There seems to be little chance the biggest race in NASCAR will start at its scheduled flag drop of 12:11 p.m. PST Sunday because of a persistent and sometimes heavy rain that started Saturday and caused postponement of the Xfinity race until Monday morning.

The chance for rain is even greater Sunday, leaving officials the option of trying to wait out the weather until Sunday night or postponing the race until Monday, something that has been done twice before.

Daytona International Speedway is a 2.5-mile superspeedway, meaning the tires that stock cars use do not have tread because it would slow the cars down and cause the tires to overheat. Driving cars with no tread on a wet surface isn’t going to happen. Adding to the complications is that once the racing surface is wet it takes a minimum of 90 minutes to dry.

NASCAR drivers are used to waiting out rain delays, even in the biggest race of the year.

Kyle Larson, the 2021 Cup champion, is among those who have never won the Daytona 500. He is hoping to become the fourth Californian to win the sport’s signature race, following in the tires of Jeff Gordon (1997, 1999, 2005), Jimmie Johnson (2006, 2013) and Kevin Harvick (2007). Larson will start 17th in the ninth row. Joey Logano and Michael McDowell will start in the first row.

“We sit there with a lot of rain delays at Daytona,” Larson said. “I



JOHN RAOUX Associated Press

KYLE LARSON will try to become the fourth Californian to win the Daytona 500, but he might have to wait until Monday to do it.

[spend my time] thinking about what we’ve done at Daytona. I know we’ve gotten Chipotle before. We used to have an Xbox [in the trailer], used to play that some. I’m pretty sure I’ve watched Disney movies [with the kids] during a rain delay.”

Larson, 31, was close to winning his second championship last year but finished second. He won four races and led 1,127 laps throughout the season, the most of any driver in the series.

“We came up one spot short of winning the championship,” Larson said. “It’s such a long season, it’s tough. We started out the year really strong, running in the front a lot, but other teams progressively got better.”

“You just have to hope you develop in the right direction throughout the year but I’m confident in Hendrick Motorsports. We’ve got the best team that can do it. I just try to keep executing and finish all the races.”

The native of Elk Grove and disappointed San Francisco 49ers fan is definitely focused on finishing races, especially May 26 when he plans to race in the Indianapolis 500 and Coca-Cola 600 on the same

car is really stuck to the race track. The moment your car gets loose [in Indy cars] there is going to be a crash. In a stock car, you can usually save it if you have a moment. The race procedures are different, the pit stops are different. It’s nothing really to compare. There will definitely be a lot to learn.”

But when the sun comes up under a gray, cloudy and likely wet sky Sunday, Larson will be thinking only about winning his first Daytona 500.

“I think looking at the results on paper, we suck,” Larson said. “I really feel like we are a small decision away from making the right move and putting myself in the right spot at the very end.

“I feel like I do a good job getting us to that point, where so many times on the final restart we’re lined up on the first or second row, then a finish 28th, DNF [did not finish], crashed or end up in the care center. Every circumstance is different, right? I feel we are not far off from being really successful here. We just have to keep getting after it.”

Larson is one of four active Cup champions who have never won the Daytona 500. Larson is 0 for 10 in the event that immodestly calls itself the “Great American Race.” There is also Martin Truex Jr. (0-19), Kyle Busch (0-18) and Brad Keselowski (0-44).

“I used to think this race was more luck than skill,” Larson said. “As I’ve gotten older and really studied more, the same guys are always up front. A lot of the same guys win this race. They’re not luckier than anybody. They’re just really talented when it comes to this style. They’ve got a good sense of how things work, where to be at the right time.”

“For sure it takes some luck, as it does every race. I don’t really know what it says about anyone.”

As Larson hopes to see the checkered flag first at Daytona, the luck that NASCAR seeks is with the weather. And there isn’t anything else it has less control over.

MLS refs renounce labor deal, set to be locked out

League might open regular season with replacement officials if no deal reached.

BY KEVIN BAXTER

Major League Soccer might open its regular season Wednesday using replacement officials after members of the Professional Soccer Referees Assn. (PSRA) overwhelmingly rejected a labor deal with the organization that provides officials to leagues in the U.S. and Canada.

More than 95% of the union members who voted Saturday opposed both the proposed collective bargaining agreement and a no-strike/no-lockout proposal. In response the Professional Referees Organization (PRO) announced it would lock out the officials beginning at 12:01 Sunday morning. The MLS season kicks off Wednesday with Inter Miami and Lionel Messi hosting Real Salt Lake. The Galaxy and LAFc begin play at home next weekend.

The lockout would not affect the USL, NWSL and other leagues that employ PRO referees because those leagues have separate collective bargaining agreements.

“It’s extremely disappointing that the officials have voted against the tentative agreement on a new collective bargaining agreement,” Nelson Rodriguez, the MLS executive vice president of sporting product and competition, said in a statement. “PRO has informed us of its contingency plan for the upcoming MLS season, which includes utilizing experienced professional match referees supported by veteran VAR officials.”

MLS used replacement officials for the first two weeks of the 2014 season when a labor impasse led to a lockout. The latest four-year agreement between PRO and the union expired last fall.

PRO and the union representing its officials began negotiating a new collective bargaining agreement in October and reached a tentative agreement last weekend. According to PRO, the five-year deal called for a 25% overall increase in salaries, game fees and benefits over last year, the largest jump in the organization’s history. It also would have made PRO members among the highest-paid soccer officials in the world, according to MLS.

Peter Manikowski, the union’s president and lead negotiator, said the officials felt the agreement didn’t go far enough.

“Feedback from our members indicates the failed ratification was driven by issues with the compensation and benefits PRO was offering, as well as a lack of improvements to travel, scheduling and other quality-of-life issues,” Manikowski, who officiated three MLS Cup finals as an assistant referee, said in a statement.

“The skyrocketing growth of MLS has significantly increased demands on officials mentally and physically. Our members are asking not only for fair compensation at a time when the league is experiencing record growth, but also for the ability to take care of themselves on the road and at home to continue officiating at the highest level that this sport demands.”

But while PRO and MLS seem resigned to begin the season with replacement officials, the union said it was “committed to promptly returning to the negotiating table ... to reach an agreement.”

U.S. officials recently have proved to be among the best in the world. Center referee Tori Penso led a four-person U.S. officiating crew in last year’s Women’s World Cup final in Australia. Assistant referee Kathryn Nesbitt, one of two Americans to work the last men’s World Cup final in Qatar, was part of Penso’s team, becoming the first U.S. official to have two FIFA medals from a World Cup final.

The lockout also comes at a delicate time for MLS, which has seen its global profile rise following Messi’s decision to join the league last summer. Apple, which is entering the second season of a record 10-year, \$2.5-billion broadcast deal with MLS, saw subscriptions to its MLS Season Pass streaming service more than double after Messi’s arrival, according to Sports Business Journal.

With more of the world watching MLS than ever before, a noticeable drop in the level of officiating could seriously hurt the league’s reputation.

“Replacement officials generally do not have the current experience and level of fitness required to do our jobs,” Manikowski said. “The sport and everyone involved — players, coaches and fans — deserve referees who are the best in North America.”

Los Angeles Times

CALENDAR

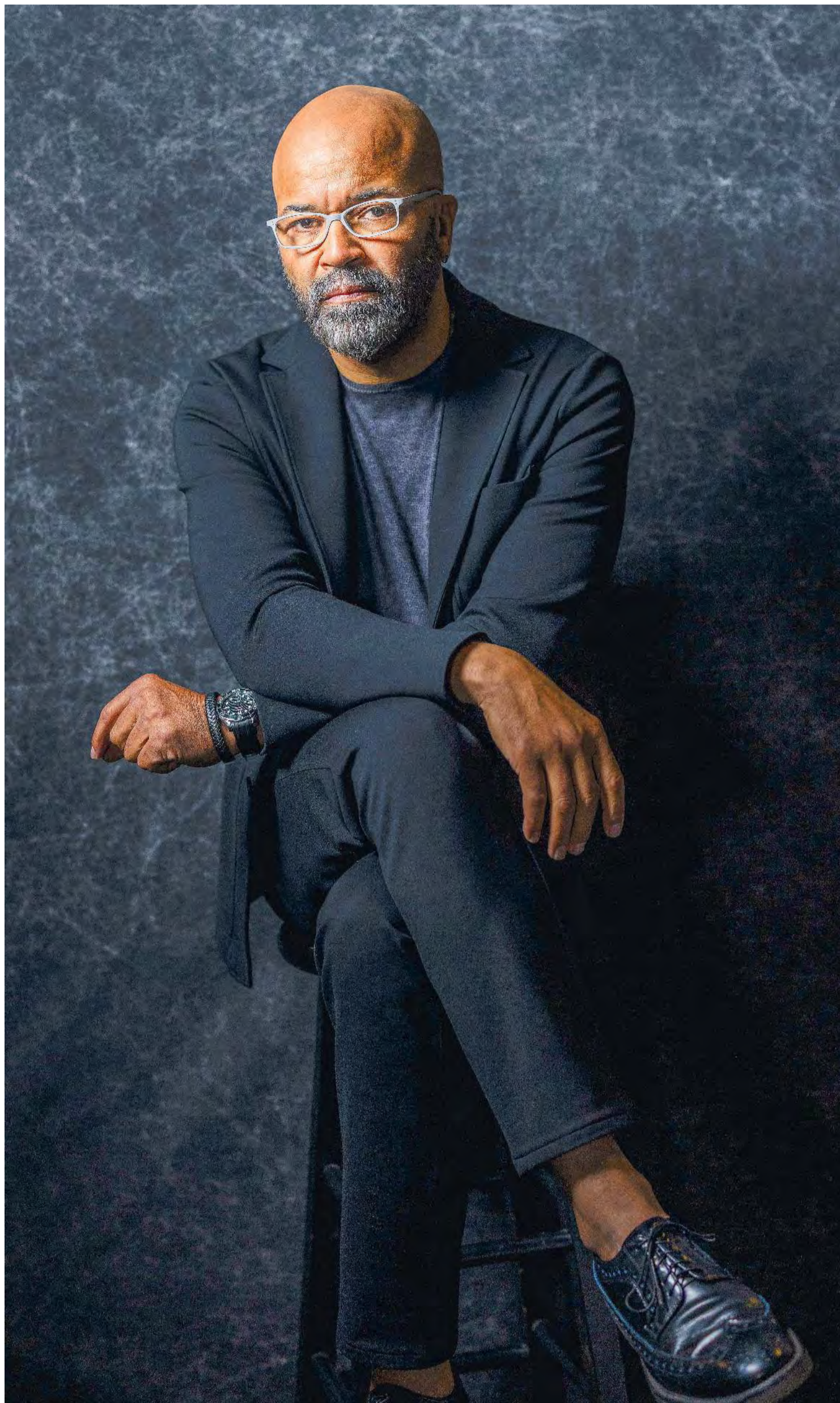
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PAUL ROGERS For The Times



JASON ARMOND Los Angeles Times

Jeffrey Wright on the truths within 'Fiction'

THE OSCAR NOMINEE ALSO TALKS THEATER, COMEDY AND THAT UNPRINTABLE ORIGINAL TITLE

BY YVONNE VILLARREAL

IN "AMERICAN FICTION," Jeffrey Wright plays author Theonious Ellison, a.k.a. Monk, for whom neither work nor personal life is going well. His mother's health has taken a turn, and he must take on the role of caregiver at a time when his books aren't doing well — and the one he's currently pitching isn't selling. † As a joke, Monk declares: "I'm just going to write the sort of book that I hate" — meaning that he'll play on every trope of Black people that he knows a white audience will eat up. † Of course the book sells — and for far more money than his other works have brought in. Under the guidance of director Cord Jefferson, what unfolds onscreen is a satire in which Wright, known for his work in "Angels in America" and "Westworld," tackles race and representation with humor. † The following Q&A has been edited for length. The full conversation can be heard in The Times' Envelope video podcast, available on podcast platforms, on YouTube and at [latimes.com/envelope](https://www.latimes.com/envelope).

"American Fiction" had its premiere at the Toronto Film Festival, where it won the People's Choice award. The film got five Independent Spirit Award nominations, which is not a small feat. You were named to the American Film Institute's top 10 list. I imagine none of that was on your mind when you were making the movie. What were your expectations at the time?

Certainly none of that was on my mind. If any strangeness drifts into my head I try to delete it, to focus on the work at hand. When we were working on the film, we were enjoying the work. We were enjoying working together, and it seemed that we might be doing something good. We certainly thought it felt right.

For me, the first gauge is the response of the crew. Crew is, in some ways, the first audience. There was just a gathering momentum as we worked. You could feel people just taking a little extra pride in their

work. I mean, crews are the hardest-working people across any industry, and they work, often, thanklessly. And at the same time, they sense when something is going well and you can feel that energy grow as you go on, and you can sense that quiet when the camera's rolling. There was also just a sense of joy that overtook the process. We only shot for 25 or 26 days. It was quick. It was efficient. We had a sense that we were making a story that maybe people wanted to hear.

Cord Jefferson, the writer and director of the film, wrote Monk with you in mind. Is it a strange feeling to have someone say they've written something for you?

If it's not a very interesting or good piece, it could be strange. That wasn't the case here. He wrote a letter saying that he had my voice in his head early on reading the novel, and then when adapting it. And he also said, "And I have no Plan B."

"THERE was also just a sense of joy that overtook the process," says "American Fiction" star Jeffrey Wright. "We had a sense that we were making a story that maybe people wanted to hear."

|||||

No pressure.

That was pretty compelling. And then I read it, and from the first scene I was drawn in. I loved that conversation around race in the context of race [and] language. And it's a conversation that I think we've been having in our culture recently. It's a conversation I've had with myself and with others. And it was smartly done. I think one of the problems that we face today is that there's so much conversation around race. Race is always informing us. It has from the beginnings of our country, but we kind of lack fluency. So it becomes an obstacle to real progress, and this ["American Fiction"] was sharply drawn.

Other elements of Monk's journey were really striking to me because I had experienced them myself. My mom passed about a year before I got that script. I had the good fortune of being raised by two women, my mother and my aunt, her eldest sister, who is 94. She came to live with me after my mom passed. I became caretaker to these two women who had been caretaker to me. And so that point in Monk's life really kind of echoed my own. I felt a close emotional tie to it and an understanding of the sacrifices that asks of a person, whether it be personal, creative, professional, whatever. That had a universal quality.

Cord has mentioned that the original title for the film was going to be "F—". Did you get it when it had that title?

I did.

What was it like to see that, and did it give you pause, or were you like, "Oh, this is interesting."

It made sense. Once you read the script, you understand why. And you know, I was hoping we could get away with it. But Cord tells a funny story that there is someone on the marketing side of things who said, "Google the movie and see what comes up, your movie will never be found on the interwebs." So I think he put that idea, rightly, out of his head.

Cord obviously has worked in TV for a long time, and before that he was a journalist, but this was his first time directing a feature film. What was it like to watch him find his way over the course of making this film?

It was wonderful. Cord obviously had to learn where the levers are and the buttons that make a film set work. But he's a fine communicator, smart guy. He was able to galvanize all of us. Directing at the end of the day is about communicating through the camera aperture onto the screen. But it's also about communicating on set, not just to the actors, but to everyone involved.

We recognized, too, that it was his first swing at directing. And what he did, to his credit, was to acknowledge what he did not know, which is super important. He came without ego and understanding that the nature of this work is collaborative. I think we protected one another.

What was the conversation like when you were having to embody the alter ego of your character, of leaning into that stereotype? What were the conversations like between you and Cord about going there, and how did that feel for you?

There wasn't a lot of conversation necessary. John Ortiz, who plays Arthur, Monk's literary agent, is an actor that I've never worked with before, but I've known for over 20 years from New York. In fact, we've done plays at the same time at the Public Theater where we shared a green room space even though we were on separate stages. I've known and admired John for some time, and so I couldn't wait to work with him. We rehearsed a bit on the set. We bounced some ideas around, the three of us, and then we turned the cameras on. Again, the tone was so clear, and Cord would come in and make adjustments here and there. But the larger questions had been answered by the script. And I just had a ball playing with Ortiz. I had a sense of how he would go about working, my expectations were matched and exceeded. We just went after it and had good fun together.

At my screening, one scene that got a lively reaction: Monk is speaking with Issa Rae's character, who has

[See Wright, E4]

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On the stories that need telling

[Wright, from E2] written this novel that Monk dismisses as work that plays on Black stereotypes. They're debating about who gets to define Blackness and the limited perspective that is allowed for what Black life looks like. What's your point of view of their argument? If Jeffrey Wright were in the room, what would he say?

That scene is a thesis argument for the film. What I love about it is that Issa brings such credibility to that character and to the argument simply by who she is. It's just fantastic casting. At the end, what I appreciate is the ambiguity. "Who is exactly on the right side? Is there a right side? And is there maybe a synthesis of those two competing arguments that actually approaches something more insightful?" I don't philosophically align entirely with Monk. I feel exact alignment with him in terms of this personal journey relative to personal responsibility, responsibility to family. I feel aligned with him in terms of experiencing the pressures from the outside that misperceive his interior life and what he considers to be his own authentic self. I get that. But he's flawed like anyone else, so I don't necessarily feel that he is the arbiter of truth in this story, and neither, necessarily, is she. So I may be somewhere in the evolved, synthesized middle of all of it. I love that conversation because it asks us to ask more constructive and better questions.

The criticisms that Monk has are criticisms that exist across the political spectrum, in terms of examining why we are so bad at understanding race and problem-solving around race, whether it be in media, whether it be through policy. At the same time, I'm sensitive, in a way that perhaps he is not, that there is a need for the inclusion of more stories that reflect the complexity and the heterogeneity of "Black life in America." And that the narrowing of that perception of what it means to be Black is one that exists in many pockets of our society.

I walk through the airport every day and I sense it. I walk through my neighborhood, which is a pretty left-leaning neighborhood — I sense it from certain people. If I go down South to see my family down there and walk in certain towns, I get it everywhere. So I'm not necessarily implying that there is a direct middle there. Maybe there are other perspectives that need to be included too.

Something I heard coming out of my screening was, "Wow, Jeffrey is really funny." You're mostly known for your dramatic roles. Your comedic abilities really shine in this film, even in the somber moments. What did you enjoy about leaning into the comedic sensibility of this film?

I love doing comedy. I mean, "Angels in America" is comedic through and through. And like this film, you have to have that levity in order to take in the more bitter medicine. I think this film is funny. I don't think it's a comedy. It's satirical. In some ways the satire is tragedy in disguise. It kind of matches my sensibilities in some way. Probably closer in some ways to my own sense of humor.

This year, you also starred in Netflix's civil rights film "Rustin," in which you play Adam Clayton Powell Jr., a pastor and the first African American to represent New York in Congress. How is preparing for a character like Monk different from how you prepare for playing a real-life figure

like Powell?

I was aware of him all my life because he was such a charismatic and dynamic figure in American politics and particularly within the Black community. I'm here in Washington, D.C., now, which is where I grew up. Everybody's political here, politics is just in the blood. He was a hero. He was beloved because he was an influential man. He was politically effective. But he was also a showman. He was like part political shaman, part political showman. You feel this extra sense of responsibility to do justice to that person's memory.

As I said, my mom passed a few years ago. I was doing some stuff at her house with the help of a cousin. He had pulled all of my mom's stuff from the basement and put it in the living room. I was trying to figure out how to do the film "Rustin." [Director] George C. Wolfe, we worked together so many times before and I love him to death, but I was doing "Westworld." I had gone off to do "Asteroid City." I walked into my mom's house, seeing all this stuff in the living room. The first thing that caught my eye was Adam Clayton Powell's face staring at me from the cover of an album, a collection of his speeches, called "Keep the Faith, Baby." I called George. I said, "George, you're never going to believe what happened. I just walked in my mom's house and Adam Clayton Powell is staring at me." He said, "Yeah, Jeffrey, that's your mother telling you to do my movie." So I said, "OK, I guess I'm in." You know, things come to you in different ways.

George directed "Angels in America." He directed you in other Broadway productions such as "Topdog/Underdog" and "A Free Man of Color." Can you talk about maintaining that working relationship across decades?

The reason that we worked so much together after the first experience we had with "Angels in America" on Broadway, which began, you

know, it was a tough one. That was a big operation, a big story — my first kind of production on that scale. It was also a role that wasn't the easiest for me to find or to reveal. It was a kind of vulnerability, a sexuality about it, that took work. I was a jock growing up. I spent more time in locker rooms than I did in green rooms or dressing rooms. And so I wasn't necessarily the most evolved person in the room with regard [to] sexuality. I was kind of conscious of the fluidity of sexuality; still, to play that character and reveal that side of myself wasn't necessarily the easiest thing. George and I created an incredible amount of trust with one another born out of that process. Over time, that trust has only grown. He's godfather to my kids. He's got an encyclopedic knowledge of American history through a Black lens. He is also, as a director, so demanding, but in the best way and so supportive in terms of detail and insight that he gives you. He's top shelf.

You've collaborated with Wes Anderson on "The French Dispatch," "Asteroid City." What is your best Wes Anderson story?

Wes is very similar to George.

Really?

In terms of his attention to detail. And he is an absolute dogged taskmaster. He wants your everything. But he's also so gentle and generous in pulling it out of you. And the two of them are very similar in that way. Wes said he had seen most of my work in the theater. I was like, "Really? You saw 'Free Man of Color'?" Wow." And so when he came to me with the script for "French Dispatch," he said, "I've seen everything you've done in the theater. I think I wrote this for you because I don't think there's anyone else who can play this role." I don't know if that's necessarily true, but it was certainly flattering. And our working relationship began there. I get him, I get his language, I get his tone. I love playing his language. Wes doesn't

"I LOVED that conversation around race in the context of race [and] language," Wright says of "American Fiction." He stars as Thelonious "Monk" Ellison, above left, alongside Sterling K. Brown as his brother, and with Erika Alexander, below, as his neighbor and love interest.

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place a comma by accident. There's so much information to get from the way he crafts a sentence. And I love that stuff.

Wes can be somewhat reserved, somewhat cautious, slightly socially hesitant at times. He gets on set — he's still sensitive, but there's a clarity and a purpose about him. There's a transformation between the two that is just so remarkable. He takes on this kind of general-like quality in his own way that's just so wonderful. And he becomes fully alive. It's so cool. But then we go back to dinner and it's fine. And we eat together and we have some nice wine. And he's his other self and he's comfortable in that space too. It's so interesting, this transformation that overcomes him when he is doing the thing that he loves and wants to do. I absolutely adore working with him.

Have you been itching to get back onstage?

I don't really have time to go, "Wow, I'd really like to be doing this now." I've been working on projects that I've been into and working with collaborators that I really appreciate. That said, I'd like to get back to the stage at some point. I want to get myself back to fighting condition because it demands more in some ways of the body. And I want to get myself back to a place where I can get back in the ring. Also, my kids are now away in school, and so I have a greater flexibility to invest the time that it takes to do a show, particularly if it's on Broadway. I did "Angels in America" for a year and a half, and it's tougher to do that when you have kids.

Is there anything you can tell us about "The Batman Part II"? Are you close? Have you got a script?

There's pretty much nothing that I can tell. No, I have not got a script. I think Matt [Reeves] is still busy chiseling away. I'm excited to read what's there when the time comes. It'll be fun to get back to Gotham, but that's down the road.

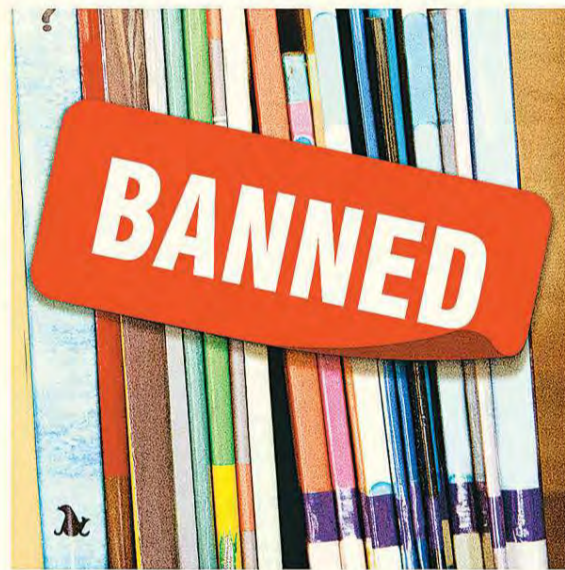


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“THE WIZ’S”

Kyle Ramar Freeman, left, Nichelle Lewis, Phillip Johnson Richardson and Avery Wilson.

IS ‘THE WIZ’ ON THE ROAD TO RESHAPING BROADWAY?

MUSICALS USUALLY PREMIERE IN NEW YORK BEFORE LAUNCHING A NATIONAL TOUR. THIS REVIVAL IS DOING THE OPPOSITE, AND THE STRATEGY IS PAYING OFF.

BY ASHLEY LEE

THE WIZ” WRAPS its 13-city tour with three weeks of performances at the Hollywood Pantages Theatre that began last week. The visually magnificent, dance-driven, Black musical translation of L. Frank Baum’s “The Wizard of Oz” will then play a limited run on Broadway and, later, kick off a second national tour. † Rarely does a musical “ease on down the road” to Broadway in the way this “Wiz” plans to. Productions usually premiere there after no more than a few developmental runs off-Broadway or at regional theaters outside New York, and subsequently launch a tour only after opening, or even completing, a Broadway run. By comparison, it’s as if this revival of the Tony-winning funk and soul show is going to Broadway after more than a dozen out-of-town tryouts.

“It’s different, but not unprecedented,” “Wiz” producer Mike Isaacson tells The Times. “Broadway and the road have gone through different eras and phases, and it will continue to morph, but we may be beginning a chapter of something new. Because this works artistically, it works economically, and so far, it’s been very exciting to do it this way.” One reason for employing this underutilized strategy is the precarious nature of opening any Broadway musical — an especially unpredictable endeavor as the industry, in New York and across America, continues to recover from COVID pandemic shutdowns. But unlike the majority of Broadway venues, most touring houses, while also offering

single-ticket sales, operate on a subscription model. “Titles that are loved by so many people across America are almost like their own brands, and that’s really powerful for subscription audiences,” says Rachel Sussman, a producer and a co-founder of the Business of Broadway, an educational initiative that democratizes Broadway business knowledge. “‘The Wiz’ is really the first pre-Broadway tour of our post-pandemic times, and the fact that it has broken open the Broadway development model is really interesting. I feel hopeful that more shows will innovate and take this same risk.” And not only a risk for those putting on the show, either: Booking the pre-Broadway tour of “The Wiz” was “a huge leap of

faith from presenters around the country to sign on without a lot of information,” says Isaacson. “And because so many of the cities we went to are on the subscription model, we’ve been fairly well sold.” “We’re very happy that we’ll have a home in New York, but not everybody can get on a plane to see a show,” adds director Schele Williams, who grew up watching theater in her hometown of Dayton, Ohio. “As we think about expanding our audiences and creating more access, it’s great for some people to get the first bite and not just the crumbs. And it’s really sweet for people in Des Moines to be like, ‘I saw it first.’” Another reason: This staging of “The Wiz,” also the first Broadway production of the beloved Charlie Smalls musical in 40 years, comes with updates to William F. Brown’s book by comedian and late-night host Amber Ruffin. For example, this version clarifies why Dorothy (Nichelle Lewis) had to move in with her aunt in Kansas, and fills Munchkinland with a traditional New Orleans-style jazz funeral. “It was important that we were going to Black communities around this country — Baltimore, Cleveland, Atlanta — and feeling the impact of those changes in an organic way,” says Williams. “For so many of us, this is more than just a commercial endeavor because we have such a deep personal connection to the show, and there’s so much about it that is so deeply rooted in Black culture. It’s been incredible to crystallize certain

moments and see things that really matter to us being acknowledged by the audiences that we were building it for.” But “The Wiz’s” road to Broadway has not been an easy one, as the usual challenges of mounting a new show are complicated by the realities of travel. Take, for instance, the fantastical set by Oscar-winning production designer Hannah Beachler. “You don’t know what it looks like yet, but you know you only have a certain number of trucks to transport the show, and you have to make it work inside 13 different houses, all with different parameters,” explains Williams. “Creatively, you’re working outside in, but you’re also making something that has to feel like a Broadway show from day one. We ended up with something modular that could morph to each theater’s needs; if a piece won’t fit in one city, we have an alternate version that will.” The set isn’t the only thing that’s changed from city to city — and that’s a good thing. “Broadway is usually the place where shows get frozen and locked when they open, and we’ve seen many shows close after being open just two months there. Some shows, you wish they had another week or two to refine it,” says choreographer JaQuel Knight. “Whereas touring first has allowed us the luxury to sit with it, think about it, talk about it — how does it feel? Where do the issues live? Are we having troubles here? — and make changes. We’re able to really create the best version of this revival be-

fore we’re faced with the pressure of, ‘Oh my God, we’re on Broadway, I can’t change anything anymore.’” Since the tour began last September in Baltimore, where “The Wiz” first debuted 50 years ago, Knight has been steadily adjusting the show’s “Emerald City Ballet,” and says a “face-lift” version of the showstopping sequence will be performed at the Pantages (running through March 3) and at Broadway’s Marquis Theatre (starting March 29). The creative team has used a combination of individual and group Zoom meetings, strategically scheduled rehearsals and, in Knight’s case, recorded tutorials of new choreography to efficiently incorporate changes to the show while abiding by union regulations, accommodating local and national press requests and allowing adequate time for the cast to rest. “Yes, we’re building this new show, but they’re also performing five-show weekends and traveling every week,” says Williams. “My notes are not more important than the health and welfare of the company. Sometimes it’s better for them to have four more hours of care than to put in this change immediately.” While each venue change means working with different local crew and dressing room setups, it has also brought a better sense of the characters the actors are developing. “Since Baltimore, I’ve gotten to try different things, and I’ve figured out the musical ideas and emotional beats and even my pacing,” says Deborah Cox, who plays Glinda, the Good Witch of the South. “The things that anchor the character and keep it consistent, that feel sustainable for me to do eight shows a week — those are the things that you often find along the way, when you’re doing it night after night.” That couldn’t be truer for Wayne Brady, who participated in the tour’s early workshops and, after wrapping production on CBS’ “Let’s Make a Deal” and an upcoming Hulu docuseries, joined the roadshow in its California stops as the titular Wizard of Oz. “He was jumping on a moving train,” says Williams, who rehearsed with Brady virtually and in person and tweaked his two songs’ arrangements to feel “like a custom-made suit.” So far, Brady considers the pre-Broadway tour experience “a gift,” as he discovered his take on the iconic character only after he began performances. “I decided that the meat in my Wiz is the showmanship and command of the stage of James Brown, but with the theatrical quirkiness and a little bit of the darkness of Gene Wilder’s Willy Wonka,” he explains. “It’s a combination that I can really call my own, and it came to me sometime after my first show in San Diego, and I think it’s simply because I had time to think about things. I’m really leaning into it.” “Who knows,” he adds with a laugh. “By the time that anyone reading this may come to watch the show in L.A. or New York, maybe it’ll change.”

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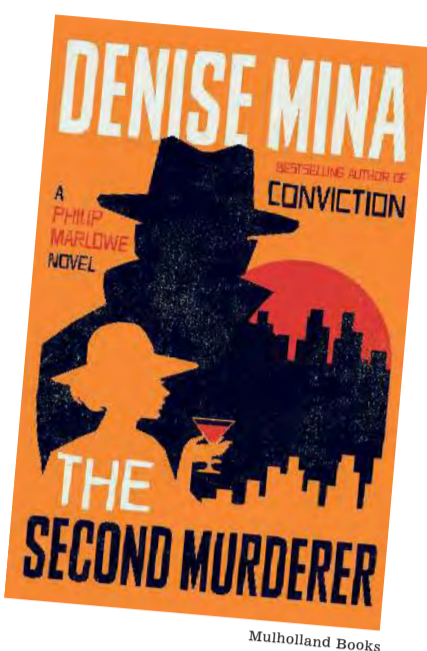
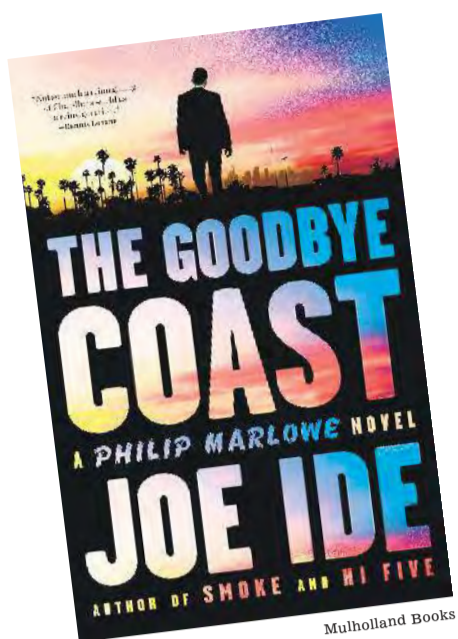
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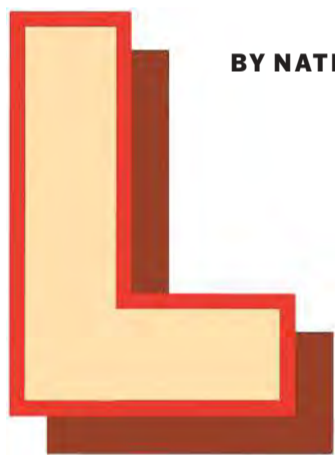
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RAYMOND CHANDLER'S ESTATE RAMPS UP ITS PLANS FOR DETECTIVE, WITH NEW NOVELS AND MORE. MARLOWE PERFUME, ANYONE?

BY NATE ROGERS



LIKE A PRIVATE EYE sizing up the details of a dicey new case, Joe Ide took the call from the Raymond Chandler Estate with a healthy amount of hesitation. "I was thrilled at first, as any crime writer would be," Ide said. "And then I got frightened." ¶ Ide, the author of the neo-noir series "IQ," was being asked to write an original novel using Chandler's iconic detective, Philip Marlowe. But unlike Chandler's Marlowe, who for many defined the hard-boiled mystery genre in classics including 1939's "The Big Sleep" and 1953's "The Long Goodbye," Ide's Marlowe was to exist in the present day. ¶ "What is a contemporary Marlowe?" Ide recalled wondering, speaking over video call from his home in Santa Monica. "I couldn't just take Humphrey Bogart and put him in a Tesla." ¶ In "The Goodbye Coast," which came out in 2022, Ide eventually opted for a more modest 2008 Mustang GT as the vehicle of choice for his Marlowe, who prefers to wear a suit, sure, but also knows how to use GPS; who drinks and smokes, yes, but a lot less than in "The High Window." It's a literary thought experiment committed to paper; in addition to the time warp, it's also written in the third person, unlike Chandler's standard first person. For those with a strong attachment to the original Marlowe, the result is almost psychedelic.

If Ide's treatment isn't up your alley, there are plenty of other Marlowes to choose from. The Chandler Estate first licensed a new Marlowe novel in 1989 by hiring Robert B. Parker to complete "Poodle Springs" — unfinished at the time of Chandler's death, in 1959, at age 70. Parker wrote one additional Marlowe book in 1991, but the revival series went quiet until 2014, when the Booker Prize-winning novelist John Banville published "The Black-Eyed Blonde" under the pen name Benjamin Black.

Since then, with a new caretaker in charge of the estate, there's been a steady clip of "Philip Marlowe Novels": "Only to Sleep" in 2018 by Lawrence Osborne, and "The Goodbye Coast" in 2022 and "The Second Murderer" last year by Denise Mina. These releases are something of a warning shot for a new, more aggressive phase of Chandler commodification that may soon make the posthumous sequels (hardly a rarity among literary estates) seem quaint. If zombie Marlowe novels make you queasy, you might not be ready for the extended Chandler universe that's on the table. But for the latest iteration of L.A.'s most enduring literary brand, the sky's the limit.

Chandler created a world of characters rich enough for other writers to harvest for generations to come, but he never had children of his own. The work of managing his estate instead ended up in the hands of Helga Greene, a publishing figure from a powerful family. (Author Graham Greene was her brother-in-law from her first marriage, to Hugh Greene, the one-time director-general of the BBC.) Helga came into the picture after Chandler's wife, Cissy, died in 1954 and Chandler had fallen into a dark final chapter, struggling with loneliness and alcoholism, at one point attempting suicide.

NEW literary cases, top, and a new film, "Marlowe," with Liam Neeson, below right, tempt. But can anything top the first major Marlowe movie? "The Big Sleep" starred Humphrey Bogart, below center, as the noir hero.



Several women, Helga among them, moved through Chandler's life during these years, when he passed around engagements and will codicils like party favors. After his death, there was a brief legal dispute over the estate between Helga and Jean Fracasse, Chandler's secretary, but Helga, whom Chandler had proposed to just before his death, prevailed. She eventually passed the estate on to her son, publishing magnate Graham C. Greene, who worked with literary agent Ed Victor. After Graham C. Greene and Victor died, in 2016 and 2017, respectively, the role of estate director was passed to Alexander Greene, Graham's son, who wasted no time commissioning new novels and pursuing other media, from graphic novels to television.

"There's a risk with any estate for books to become lost in time," Alexander Greene said on a video call from Switzerland.

Raised between London and Tuscany, Greene, 45, is a somewhat unlikely steward of a hard-boiled California world. Bespectacled, soft-spoken and a little mischievously quizzical — just as likely to ask you a question in response to your own — he could very well be a mysterious figure in a Chandler book. His family owns a literal castle in Tuscany, and he noted that Helga, who died in 1985, once lived in a brutalist home that was "quite Bond villain-like in some ways." "I think my role," he said, "and that of my father and my grandmother before me, was to try to make sure that Chandler's works are valued in the right way."

IN SOME SENSE, the estate has never topped the first major Chandler film project. Only a few years after "The Big Sleep" was written, Howard Hawks directed a version of it — released in 1946 — starring Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall, with William Faulkner serving as one of the screenwriters. Since then, there have been a variety of film, television and radio Marlowe programs, with just as much a variety of success. There are beloved creations, like Robert Altman's 1973 film version of "The Long Goodbye" with Elliott Gould, and forgotten ones, like Bob Rafelson's 1998 television film version of "Poodle Springs" with James Caan.

"One never quite knows what the outcome is going to be," Greene said of outside collaborations. "Particularly when what you're doing is investing effort and time with highly creative people. And sometimes they have hits and sometimes they have misses, and you just hope that



you get more of the hits than the misses. It's super difficult."

That challenge was apparent with the most recent movie project, "Marlowe," the first Chandler feature film to come out in more than 40 years. Directed by Neil Jordan, starring Liam Neeson and based on Banville's "The Black-Eyed Blonde," "Marlowe" was beaten to a pulp by critics almost as badly as Neeson is in the picture. Greene sees it as a demonstration of how "complicated it is to make a really great noir film in the contemporary setting."

"I think it was a great team, and I really enjoyed the film, actually," he said. "But commercially, it has not been a huge success."

Mina is a little more candid about the criticisms of her Marlowe novel, "The Second Murderer" — the first in the series written by a woman — over video call from her home in



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Bettmann Archive

Glasgow. “It pissed quite a lot of people off, you know,” she said.

Mina is spunky and wisecracking — “I’m kind of like a McDonald’s franchise in Arkansas,” she said of her arrangement with the Chandler Estate — and she seems to take some pride in pissing people off. Before “The Second Murderer,” she had tackled other beloved franchises, writing graphic novel stories for both “Hellblazer” and “The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo.”

Although some critics are apt to complain that any new Marlowe books are objectionable, Mina also faced detractors specifically against the idea of a non-Angeleno in the driver’s seat. “L.A. is to Chandler what blood is to our bodies,” said Judith Freeman, a novelist who wrote a biography of Chandler, 2008’s “The Long Embrace.” “[The city is] inseparable from the action

and the characters so deeply embedded in his fiction.”

Mina readily admitted that she “really shouldn’t have written” her Marlowe book, “because I’m Scottish and just a fan.” But her story is set in an L.A. that doesn’t exist anymore (if it ever existed). “I was doing so much research, and thought, actually, ‘It’s probably great being this far away,’” she said, noting that a planned research trip was ultimately scrapped due to the pandemic. “Because [Chandler’s] L.A. is the *idea* of L.A. rather than actual L.A.”

“The Second Murderer” centers on another archetypal Chandler scenario: a dying oil tycoon hires Marlowe to find his missing daughter. But Mina adds an adventurous touch, choosing to explore the figure of Anne Riordan, a former police chief’s daughter who stands out as

not just another femme fatale or “blonde to make a bishop kick a hole in a stained glass window,” as Chandler describes a character in “Farewell, My Lovely.”

Mina also wrote a tongue-in-cheek subplot involving the inner workings of an artistic estate — her way of nodding at the ambitious one of which she became a hired hand. “I’m so interested in the notion of intellectual property and the idea of an estate being a thing that can be *owned* and nurtured,” she said with a smirk.

WHEN IT COMES to the broader work of owning and nurturing the Chandler Estate, Greene doesn’t feel that his day-to-day is all that different from his grandmother’s and father’s: License out projects, tinker with book covers, etc. But there are some distinctions. “Obviously,” he said, bringing one of these up, “there’s an enormous amount of sensitivity surrounding — I think rightly so — racist, misogynist and antisemitic characters in works of that period,” he said.

The debate over what to do with vile language and attitudes in old classics is as polarizing as any culture-war issue — especially in light of the recent decision to bowdlerize Roald Dahl.

Greene, anyway, believes that Chandler comes out decently well, in the sense that the antagonists in his books are usually the least tolerant individuals in the stories. Nonetheless, a clear objective with hiring writers like Mina and Ide is to allow them to write versions of Marlowe more palatable to certain modern readers. In “The Goodbye Coast,” for instance, Marlowe is worldly and has an affinity for foreign cuisine; in “The Second Murderer,” he deftly follows his case into the underground gay scene of 1940s Los Angeles.

“Do you know what I was amazed

LOVE Marlowe? Thank Raymond Chandler, above in 1954, the man behind the private eye and his memorable cases. Chandler’s view on crime fiction? “There are no vital and significant forms of art,” he wrote in a 1944 essay, “The Simple Art of Murder,” “there is only art, and precious little of that.”



about is how many subcultures and worlds in L.A. that [Chandler] *didn’t* represent,” said Mina. “And there was so much happening in L.A. at that time, structurally, civically — things that I think would actually have really interested him.”

But the most difficult trick of bringing Marlowe to the present day has nothing to do with the present; it lies instead in matching Chandler’s masterful balance of pulp readability and literary sensibility. (Chandler, after all, was a semi-private poet his entire life; a poem from around 1955 was recently published in the Strand Magazine.) His witty similes and graceful prose have arguably done more to open minds to the potential intellectual value of crime fiction than any other writing.

The ultimate question, perhaps, is what *Chandler* would have thought of authors cosplaying as him. In several decades of work as a novelist, he produced only seven Marlowe books in large part because of his dedication to details of the craft. But at the same time, no one knew better than Chandler, who began writing crime fiction to pay the bills, that the genre exists to be a blast to read, above all other considerations.

“I’m trying to take [Chandler’s] books and move them,” Ide said of his mentality of the project. “And it’s a commercial enterprise. I had to keep that in mind.”

One answer to the riddle might be found in Chandler’s 1944 essay on crime fiction, “The Simple Art of Murder.” “There are no vital and significant forms of art,” he wrote, “there is only art, and precious little of that.” Read anything you come across with an open mind, he seemed to be saying, and follow the trail of worthwhile material for yourself.

Kim Cooper, a Chandler historian whose L.A. group, Esotouric, offers a guided tour focused on the author, has been following the estate’s trail for decades and is one of its more vocal critics.

In 2014, the estate blocked Cooper’s attempt to develop a show out of a lost comic opera by Chandler, which Cooper had discovered. Staying on the Greenes’ toes, she co-wrote a review of “The Second Murderer” last year that cited issues with geography and other local trivia. “It is plain that nobody who knows anything about the city read this novel before publication,” the review sighed.

But Cooper, despite all her apprehensions, doesn’t take broad issue with the idea of hiring outside writers, or of any other reasonable new project. Her main concern is that the original material might get lost in the fray — that *Chandler’s* Marlowe becomes just Marlowe. “I would really like to see there be a renewed interest in what Chandler actually produced,” she said, “because I feel like Chandler’s work needs to stand separate from whatever new interpretations are happening. I’d like to see some energy into that.”

HOW THE ORIGINAL Marlowe novels are handled is a matter to be watched closely, given that Chandler’s writing will begin to enter the public domain as the copyright expires in the coming years. (U.S. copyright for works before 1978 is generally protected for 95 years; “The Big Sleep,” for instance, will be up in 2034.) The ticking timeline could offer some window into the decision to accelerate production of legacy Marlowe content. But Greene insisted that the calendar isn’t dictating his approach to the estate. “In the U.S.,” he wrote in an email, “we have good protections in trademarks for Philip Marlowe and we will continue to generate interesting new projects going forward.”

Each new book is a potential new movie, he pointed out, adding that a television project with Bad Robot Productions is in the works, as well as a graphic novel by Arvind Ethan David. And besides, there are other potential destinations for the IP, he adds: escape rooms, video games, perfume.

Just what would a Marlowe scent smell like? “Something with a little bit of gun smoke, a bit of leather,” he said with a laugh. “A bit of fedora hat, a bit of beaver skin. Perhaps a little bit of whiskey.”

Greene mentioned that at one point, he had been shown a document drawn up by Walt Disney as a guide for what the broader Disney empire would look like, and that he thought of this document often. He’s not trying to make a Chandlerland theme park, but the question remained: “What do I do to fit all those pieces in?”

In Disney’s illustration, from 1967, there are dozens of arrows swirling around the page, pointing to various categories like TV, music and merchandise; everything feeds back to the studio at the center. “It’s about delving into the different parts of the world in different ways and filling them out as much as possible,” Greene said. “*Without* creating a cinematic universe. Because that would be just awful.”



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DELIVERING THE ‘HITS’ AND THEN SOME ON HOLLYWOOD

FILM AND TV VETERAN EDWARD ZWICK EXPLAINS WHY HE LET LOOSE IN MEMOIR

BY CHRIS VOGNAR



IN HIS NEW Hollywood memoir “Hits, Flops, and Other Illusions,” film and TV veteran Edward Zwick shares a detailed account of his years-long ordeal trying to bring “Shakespeare in Love” to the screen. The Bard himself might appreciate the ups and downs and obstacles, from the day he says Julia Roberts ghosted the production that Zwick was set to direct in London, to the bullying and badgering inflicted by Harvey Weinstein, whom Zwick had to sue to get his producer’s credit. As Zwick writes, he fantasized about pushing Weinstein off the stage at the 1999 Oscars, when Weinstein hogged the microphone during the best picture victory speech. † Zwick also offers this pungent Weinstein comparison: “In France there are pigs who root around in the muck and mire for treasured truffles. They have a remarkable nose for what is valuable, but at the end of the day they’re still pigs.” For a book that doesn’t exist for the purpose of serving up zingers or exacting vengeance, “Hits” manages to deliver a tasty supply of both.

“I did sue him and recover my credit, so I did punch him in the nose metaphorically,” Zwick says in a recent video interview from his Los Angeles home. “But I never got that actual moment of tossing him off the stage, which, as we’ve seen from other more recent evidence, probably wouldn’t have been a good idea.”

A combination instruction manual, reminiscence and festival of name-dropping, Zwick’s memoir captures much of what it means to be a Hollywood storyteller — the interminable delays between inception and production (on those occasions when production even happens); the egos stroked and dreams dashed; and the exhilaration that accompanies the miracle of a project that somehow, through a combination of persistence and good luck, reaches its fruition and lives up to its potential.

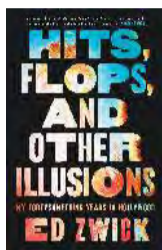
There’s never really any mean-

ness here from Zwick, the man behind movies like “Glory” and “Legends of the Fall” and TV shows like “Thirtysomething” (with his longtime creative partner Marshall Herskovitz) and “My So-Called Life” (with Winnie Holzman). Zwick, a youthful 71, comes across as a grizzled veteran still eager to learn and, mostly, to impart some of the wisdom he has gleaned from others over the years.

He is eager to see younger artists embrace the kind of personal filmmaking that inspired him as a youngster and continues to light his fire. “That does not mean autobiographical filmmaking,” he says. “It means investing in a story with something that you deeply believe in. That could be political and that could be cultural or that could be psychodynamic. That is what has always motivated me, even in the midst of big horse operas and historical epics. It’s about moral di-



DANIA MAXWELL Los Angeles Times



Gallery Books

‘I WAS going to be as authentic as I was able,” says filmmaker Zwick about sharing detailed behind-the-scenes accounts in a new book.



lemmas, or that recognition of what heroism is. There are themes that I think unite some of my work, at least, and that would be the take-away I’d hope for here.”

Lest you assume “Hits, Flops, and Other Illusions” is an exercise in pedagogy, be not afraid. Tea is spilled. Before Weinstein got his hooks into “Shakespeare in Love,” Roberts, then in her early 20s, was tabbed to play the starring role that eventually went to Gwyneth Paltrow. As Zwick writes, Roberts flew to London with him to help cast the male lead. She grew obsessed with Daniel Day-Lewis, even though Zwick explained Day-Lewis had already committed to star in “In the Name of the Father.”

Undaunted, Roberts disappeared one night and returned the next day with a big smile, proclaiming that Day-Lewis was in. Zwick then met with the actor, who explained that, no, he was still out. According to the director, Roberts proceeded to mope through the casting process, which included readings with the likes of Russell Crowe, Ralph Fiennes, Hugh Grant and Colin Firth. Roberts didn’t like any of them. Then, one morning, she checked out of her hotel and flew back to the States without telling Zwick, effectively shutting down the production to the tune of \$6 million in sunk costs. It would be years before the movie was resuscitated, with John Madden at the helm.

Then there was Zwick’s ordeal

with another rising star, Matthew Broderick. Zwick was happy to land Broderick, coming off the success of “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off,” to play the lead in the Civil War epic “Glory.” Broderick, too, put Zwick through the wringer, bringing his mother in to demand extensive changes in the screenplay and rake Zwick over the coals. At least Broderick ended up sticking around.

Zwick insists he harbors no ill will toward Roberts or Broderick, that he aims to accurately and honestly recount, not settle scores. “I determined at an early moment in the writing process that I was going to be as authentic as I was able,” he says. “It was about including both sides of what this experience not only was, but always is. Only if I could be true and authentic did it also establish my bona fides to tell other stories that are about wonderful people and deeply moving experiences. I didn’t want it to be just self-aggrandizing war stories, because that’s not the nature of the gig.”

“Hits, Flops, and Other Illusions” is ultimately a clear-eyed and intimate account of one man’s adventures in Hollywood, the good, the bad and the ugly, from the pits of development hell to a tempered Oscar night triumph that didn’t end with a tumble from the stage, at least not outside the author’s mind.

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Alternate history has moving might've-beens, bold what-ifs

BY MARY ANN GWINN

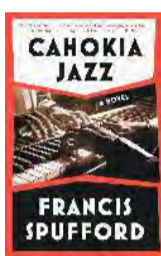
EVERYONE KNOWS by now that a virus can bring a nation to its knees — the tiny terrorists of smallpox, Spanish flu and COVID-19 have disrupted America's story in lethal and tragic ways. But what if one small glitch in a virus' makeup changed everything? What if the smallpox that raged through America's Native population had been replaced by a less lethal variant? What if Native Americans survived smallpox, fought white invaders to a standstill and created their own version of a modern society?

This is the premise of Francis Spufford's dazzling new novel, "Cahokia Jazz." Spufford, an award-winning British writer, tells an intricate, suspenseful and moving story that rises from the mists of America's prehistory and morphs into an alternate version of America's story. Part world building, part detective noir, part savage critique of our country's (real) history, Spufford builds his creation on the foundations of a real place that grew, thrived and then vanished.

You may not have heard of Cahokia unless you hail from the Midwest. An entire civilization that rose from the fecund bottomlands of the Mississippi east of St. Louis, Cahokia drew thousands of Native Americans — 20,000 or more at its peak in the year 1100 — to its fields, plazas and temples, where they worshiped their own gods and built monuments to their way of life. Then something — no one knows quite what — caused Cahokia's residents to disperse. For many years only a few anthropologists, wealthy collectors and the grave robbers who pillaged for them knew of its existence, and it might have disappeared altogether if not for an interstate highway project that provided the federal funds to fully explore it. Today its eerie, massive mounds have been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site.



ANTONIO OLMOS



FRANCIS SPUFFORD has written a sprawling novel with elements of history, detective fiction and social criticism.

These facts are the bones of Spufford's story. It's 1922, and the middle American kingdom of Cahokia is thriving. Ruled by a Native dynasty, it is a multicultural mix of *takoumas* (Native Americans), *taklousas* (Black people) and *takatas* (people of European heritage). It has its own faith, a mix of Catholicism and Native American spirituality. Its land and resources have made it wealthy, and its riches are held in common by its people and run by a sturdy bureaucracy. But Cahokia is surrounded by American robber barons eager to destroy its hierarchy and appropriate its treasures. Cahokia's would-be plunderers form an unholy alliance with the Ku Klux Klan, whose followers despise Cahokia's multicultural essence and are itching for riot and murder.

Their rage is waiting for one lit match, and it ignites when a white office clerk is slaughtered, his heart ripped from his chest and his body left atop one of the city's mammoth buildings. Clouds of white men bellowing "Papists!" and "Savages!" through the streets, and the burgeoning mob has its own

soundtrack: "The note of trouble in the air had definitely changed," Spufford writes. "It was louder and closer; it was no longer a single belligerent hum glinting with accents of brass; it had diversified into a rolling scrabble of anger, holiday high spirits and sports crowd roar." Rioters make for the *takouma* quarter, and the city seems destined to burn.

Cahokia needs a savior, and it comes in the guise of Joe Barrow, a half-*takouma*, half-*taklousa* cop assigned to investigate the murder. Barrow is an outsider, an orphan from one of the Native American orphanages out West. Primed from his institutionalized childhood to seek a protector, he does the bidding of Phineas Drummond, his white partner with "a face out of the funny pages" and a bad case of PTSD. As the two are drawn into a web of violence, corruption and double dealing, Joe moves from Phin's willing sidekick to the only man with the strength and will to save Cahokia. "I suspect you of being a man of virtue," one of Joe's manipulators tells him. For better or worse, Joe is exactly that.

Other authors have used alternate history and the detective story model to explore history's dark corners, notably China Miéville's "The City & the City" and Michael Chabon's "The Yiddish Policemen's Union." Spufford credits Miéville in the afterword, as well as Ursula K. Le Guin's "Left Hand of Darkness" ("Cahokia Jazz" is dedicated to Le Guin, and her anthropologist father is a character in the book.) "Cahokia Jazz" takes on a lot, and its ambitions are huge. Does it work? For this reader, it does.

Spufford has a sure grasp of the perverted politics and relentless grind of the wheels of capitalism, circa 1922. His dialogue snaps, and he can riff on just about anything, including Joe's avocation as a jazz pianist, with authority. There might be a little too much description, and long, learned, expository passages coming out of the mouths of police sergeants. But Spufford, whose acclaimed 2016 novel "Golden Hill" sent up 18th century Colonial America, keeps his engine running with action and intrigue, romance and suspense, and his sense of place is spellbinding. Here he captures the dank, raw power of the Mississippi: "From out of the cold brown levels of the water as it slid south ... creating and tilting, dimpling against the great caissons of the Bridge, a billion billion droplets had risen, breathed by the river into the air. Each one a messenger of the ceaselessly moving silt below ... digesting everything that ever fell into it on its path down the continent, from dead trees to dead people."

"Cahokia Jazz" is an audacious work of the imagination by an author powerfully steeped in myth-making, and I will bet my membership in the Cahokia Mounds Museum Society that some adventurous Hollywood filmmaker has already snapped it up. My only lingering question about "Cahokia Jazz" is a confounding one: the history of Cahokia is an utterly American story. Why did it take a Brit to write this book?

Gwin, a Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist who lives in Seattle, writes about books and authors.



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THE ROOTS OF A DEADLY BUSINESS

IN 'SMOKE AND ASHES,' AMITAV GHOSH COMPARES AMERICA'S MODERN OPIOID CRISIS AND THE WEST'S FLOODING OF CHINA WITH OPIUM IN THE 18TH CENTURY

BY ARUN A.K.

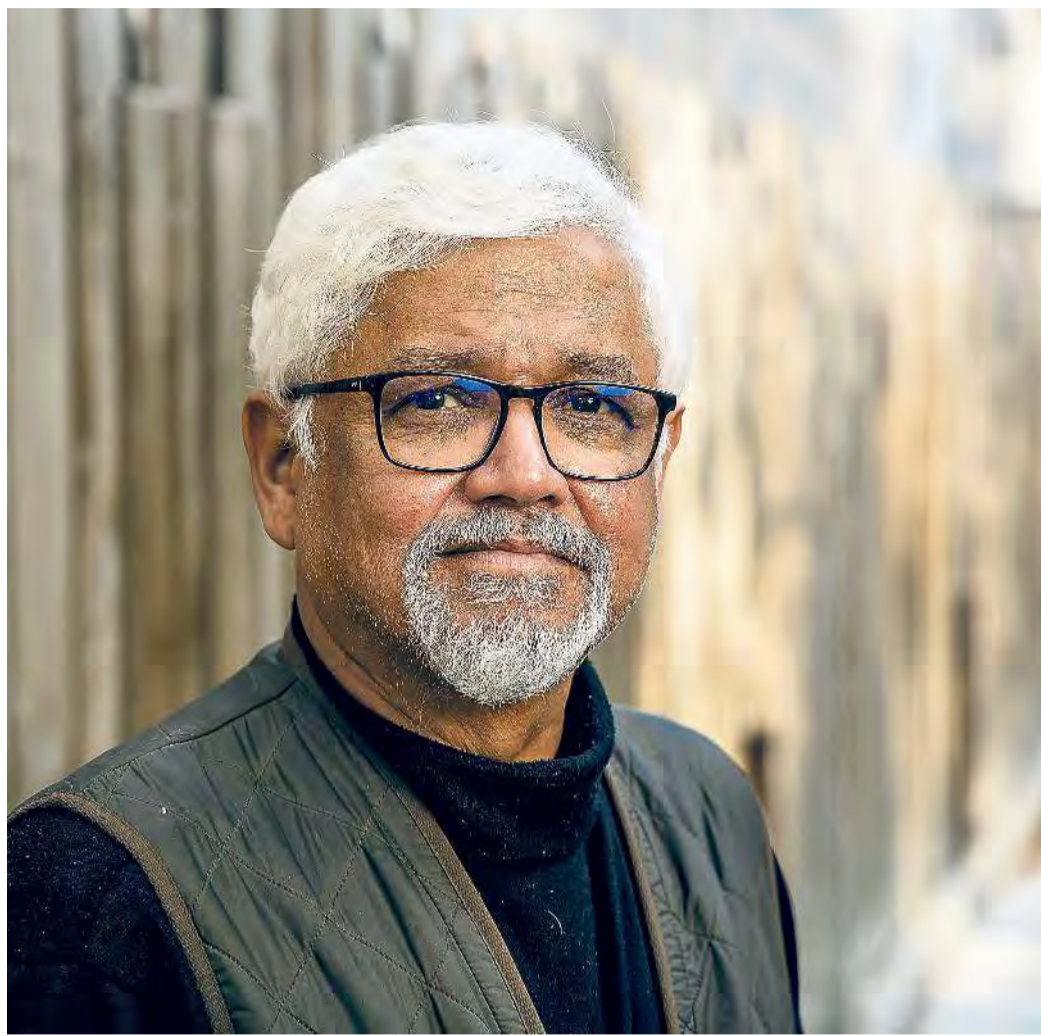
AFTER THE mid-18th century, when the British East India Co. was importing tea from China, few could have guessed that the industry would be revolutionized by a different plant: the opium poppy. Over the next century and beyond, Britain and other colonial powers, joined by American and Indian merchants, amassed unimaginable wealth by getting the Chinese addicted to opium. It was opium money from trade with China that primarily funded the expansion of so many Western corporations and institutions.

In his latest book, "Smoke and Ashes: Opium's Hidden Histories," Amitav Ghosh subverts Eurocentric history and digs open the recesses of racial capitalism, specifically Indian farmers coerced into growing poppy and the consequent pumping of opium into China. Ghosh exposes the hypocrisy of the Western world in perpetrating structural violence against Asians under the garb of free trade and progress and the uncanny similarities between the Machiavellian tactics of the opium business in China and of those who triggered the modern-day American opioid crisis. This conversation has been edited lightly.

China has long been perceived as an alien culture by the West. It has been demonized time and again, and after the COVID-19 outbreak, the animosity toward China has only worsened. But most Americans aren't aware of the legacy in America of merchants who made their fortune in Guangzhou (Canton). Could you throw more light on that?

It might come as a shock to most readers that the U.S. has been dependent on China right from the very start. In 1783, when America was born, it was unable to trade with any of its neighbors that were still part of the British Empire. So, the Americans realized that it was essential for them to trade with China. In fact, one of the grievances that led to the birth of the U.S. was that the Americans were initially prohibited from trading with China because the trade was in the hands of the British East India Co. There was a lot of resentment against the East India Co.'s monopoly over tea. So almost immediately after the birth of the republic, China became the primary trading partner for the U.S. But the problem that the U.S. had in relation to China was the same that the British had — that the world again has today in relation to China — that the whole world buys Chinese goods, but the world doesn't have any goods or enough goods to sell to China apart from resources because the Chinese make everything themselves. China was then, as it is now, the world's great manufacturing hub.

So many of the technologies that we know today were stolen from China by the West, such as porcelain, gunpowder, compasses and bank deposit insurance. When the Americans started trading with



MATHEU GENON

China in the late 18th century, they started with furs and later sandalwood, but soon they just couldn't find enough stuff to sell to China. So eventually they started doing what the British did: They started selling opium to China, sourced initially from Turkey and then later from India.

For many generations, young Americans, especially very privileged white men predominantly from Massachusetts and other parts of New England and New York, would travel to China, and they would come back within four or five years with these immense fortunes. China gave them the experience of doing global trade, understanding currencies and foreign exchange, etc. They also became aware of the new industries that were then arising in Europe because of the Industrial Revolution. So, they came back to the U.S. and became the founders of all these modern industries, most importantly, perhaps, the railroads.

You've drawn parallels between the Chinese opium crisis and the American opioid crisis. The British blamed the Chinese for being corrupt and mentally feeble. According to the British, they were simply meeting the Chinese demand for opium. Whereas we've seen in the American opioid crisis that it's not demand but supply that dictates the flow of opium, as is evident in the case of the five states that had additional regulations to curb the prescription of opioids. These states (California, Idaho, New York, Texas and Illinois) experienced low growth in overdose deaths. So, it's clear that it is supply and not demand that controls opium.

Initially, the British had trouble selling even 500 crates of opium to China, but once it caught on, it was like a forest fire, and by the end of the 19th century, the Chinese were consuming hundreds of thousands of crates of Indian opium. So, when the anti-opium movement tried to constrain the British Empire from selling opium, the British deflected the blame onto the Chinese demand for it. This is essentially what the Sackler family also said in America when they introduced OxyContin; addicts were blamed. The British "logic": There's a demand for it, and if we don't meet it, then someone else will.

The Sacklers were aided by a lot of historians and academicians who put forth revisionist arguments in favor of rehabilitating opioids. They even took the FDA into confidence, right?

That's right. It wasn't until the victims' families began to protest in a very big way that the narrative changed. Until then, the people who were defending opiates had control of the narrative for the longest time. I think it's also important to note that this kind of opioid crisis seems to go hand-in-hand with a certain kind of civilizational crisis. That was certainly the case with China when it started getting engulfed in the web of opium in the late 18th century. Suddenly, it found itself having to question its ideas of centrality in the world. It was facing, literally, an existential threat.

I think something very similar is happening in America today. There's really a profound sense of civilizational crisis. And for ordinary Americans, they are facing life conditions that are unimaginably difficult. In a way, the opioid crisis took



FSG

THE U.S. has been dependent on China "from the very start," says Ghosh, whose new book delves into this history.

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off because of all these other factors within society. Deindustrialization was happening, and old mining communities were disintegrating. Opium was sold to extremely vulnerable communities where there was a lot of pain and social difficulties. So, we really see a kind of playing out of what happened in China in the 19th century.

The anti-opium movement in the early 20th century rattled the British Empire, and eventually China succeeded in getting most of its population off opium. You've pointed out in your book that one of the problems with the American war on drugs was that it pinned the blame not only on the producers but also on the consumers, whereas the anti-opium drive only targeted the producers. The Chinese establishment ensured that they treated the addicts with sympathy.

This is the problem, really. The war on drugs was a state-led movement initiated by the U.S. armed forces and its security establishment. And there was a kind of double dealing involved because the Americans were using heroin, etc. in their conflicts in Southeast Asia, Latin America and so on. At the same time, they were also trying to suppress cocaine and other drugs, and they created an incredible mess. The first problem with the war on drugs is the idea of what exactly constitutes a drug. Many of the substances that they banned and considered drugs were, as we now know, in many ways beneficial to humanity.

Now they've changed strategies. More and more states are recognizing that many substances they call drugs are actually very beneficial, like psilocybin mushrooms, which can be used to treat depression. America now finds itself trying to control the circulation of heroin, fentanyl, etc. The problem is that again, it's a state-led initiative, and it's failing. Opioid-related deaths peaked during COVID-19, and it was thought that after the epidemic they would tail off. But no, it's only continued to grow. Especially because fentanyl is so cheap and easily available, more and more people are dying of substance abuse.

What happened in Asia in the late 19th century and early 20th century was a very remarkable thing. You saw the emergence of a popular grassroots movement that was opposed to the free circulation of opioids, and that was effective. Even though, in China, the addiction problem continued until the 1950s, when, finally, the Communist Party did crack down on it. I don't think any country will be able to reproduce that today.

One of the problems with addiction is that it happens indoors; the victims are out of sight. If you just look around America today, you wouldn't think there was a problem. Many people who traveled to China in the 19th century thought everything was fine, but it wasn't. In recent years, the U.S. Army has not been able to meet its recruitment goals. A recent survey found that not even 25% of young Americans are eligible to serve in the Army, partly because of obesity, mental health problems or drug use. Now that is a crisis.

A funny debut, but there's got to be more to 'Life'

BY STUART MILLER

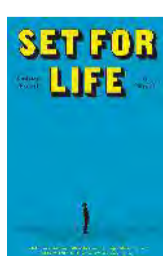
I'D BEN READING "Set for Life" for about half an hour when I realized it was approaching 11:30 p.m. I told myself I'd stop for the night in just a few pages. The next time I looked up from Andrew Ewell's debut novel it was an hour later ... and I still needed to find a good place to stop.

That's the good news about the book — it's well-crafted and often quite funny in a cringey way, easy to down in the gulps.

The downside is that at some point during the book you're bound to wish Ewell had tackled a topic more ambitious and original. For most of the way, "Set for Life" is yet another novel about a loser middle-class white guy who is closed off from his emotions and blind to his flaws, who drinks too much while



ANNA SHEARER



Simon & Schuster

MARRIAGE and friendships are put to the test in Ewell's novel.

|||||

constantly sabotaging himself before hitting bottom and gaining some clarity. Much of the book is set in an academic environment and the rest takes place in Brooklyn, neither of which are exactly unexplored territory. (One of the blurb quotes is from Richard Russo, who wrote his own campus novel,

"Straight Man," back in 1997.)

The nameless narrator is returning dejected and distraught from a wine-soaked summer in France where he was supposed to write the novel that would enable him to catch up a bit with his more successful wife, on whose coattails he has long been riding, and also ensure that he gets tenure at the small college where they both teach. Coming home with nothing to show, he stops off in Brooklyn to meet up with old pals John and Sophie — they've both abandoned their literary ambitions for real jobs and a lot of booze, cigarettes and unhappiness.

Our "hero" ends up getting drunk and sleeping with Sophie, betraying both his wife, Debra, and John, ostensibly his best friend; soon they're contemplating ways to break free and start a new life,

though it takes a hard shove from Debra to break the narrator's inertia ... which he does by responding with self-destructive self-pity. (Both couples are around 40 and childless, which is not unrealistic but feels more like a convenience for plotting than conscious decisions by the characters.)

The book is well-written and Ewell sets scenes that feel realistic with ease. There's a classroom scene where one aspiring novelist concocted a detailed story about a Civil War photographer that comes together surprisingly well except, "For reasons no one could understand Winston had named his hero Chad." And when the protagonist meets up with Sophie after three weeks apart, she is tense and makes it clear she doesn't want to discuss anything.

"We ambled in mutual silence for an hour or more, zigzagging languidly up and down the streets, letting the quiet grow between us like fog. Eventually we headed up Broadway and into the Strand for lack of anything else to do. We had browsed the stacks so many times together as friends, I hoped this might ease the tension, our falling back into a familiar pattern."

But as you breeze through the pages, you can't help feeling the kind of nagging thought that might plague this narrator, "Is this all there is?"

Ewell doesn't help himself with a couple of contrivances that are crucial to propelling the plot along. At one point he leaves his student Winston to teach his class so he can go to

New York to sleep with Sophie; not surprisingly, things go wildly awry.

But worse is the moment when he breaks into the English department offices to look for files that might help him right every way in which he believes he has been wronged. Afraid to turn on a light, he uses matches for illumination and accidentally starts a fire that torches his career and his life. This makes no sense, especially since his phone was in his pocket.

Maybe if the character was in his 80s he wouldn't think to or know how to use the phone's flashlight, but in this case Ewell has no excuse.

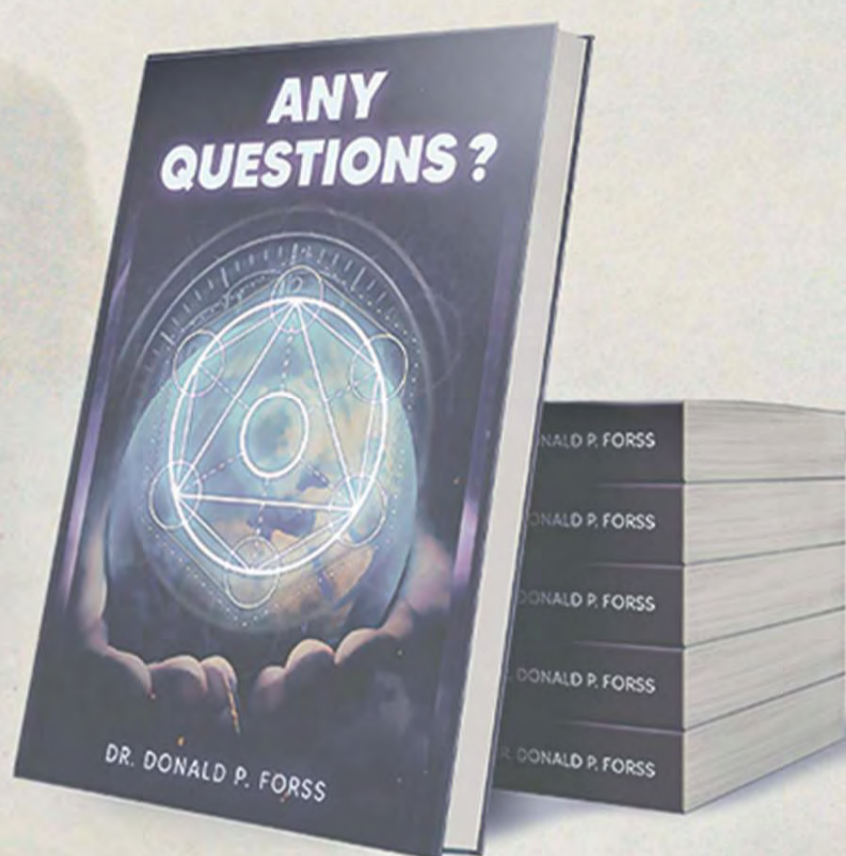
To be fair, Ewell does have something bigger on his mind, a meta plot twist that certainly could have injected a jolt of life into the book. While it's far from unique — everyone from Miguel Cervantes to James Joyce to Jorge Luis Borges to Kurt Vonnegut have played with metafiction — that doesn't negate its potential. (For a potent recent example, there's the Oscar-nominated film "American Fiction.")

And, if properly handled, this revelation could have gone a long way toward explaining away some of those flaws in the writing. But Ewell plays this card too late and does too little with it — it feels more like a trick he had up his sleeve than a genuine reflection on novels and writers. In other words, if the protagonist were still teaching creative writing, he'd step outside the novel and take his creator to task, sending him back for a rewrite that would have enabled the novel to fulfill its potential.



ANY QUESTIONS?

DR. DONALD P. FORSS



Dr. Forss effectively weaves scripture passages and verses throughout the narrative, creating a comprehensive and enlightening exploration of spiritual growth and divine connection.

—K.C. Finn, *Readers' Favorite*

Forss does an excellent job in what he specifically set out to do: offering readers a fresh perspective on the age-old message of redemption through Jesus Christ, taking them beyond religious conformity and morality, and emphasizing the transformation of the heart and mind as the essence of the gospel's message, allowing for true participation in divine nature and spiritual growth, with numerous scripture references throughout.

—Jamie Michele, *Readers' Favorite*

Any Questions? by Dr. Donald P. Forss invites readers on an enlightening journey, shedding light on how understanding and embracing God's nature can lead to spiritual growth and maturity.

—Ruffina Oserio, *Readers' Favorite*

I love the way Dr. Donald P. Forss opens each chapter with a specific scripture and then explains the meaning in a way that is understandable.

—Amy Raines, *Readers' Favorite*

Any Questions? is a great book for individuals who have questions about God, Jesus, or the Bible and want to learn more about the truth according to the scripture.

—Courtnee Turner Hoyle, *Readers' Favorite*

The apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Ephesians that it is by grace that we have been saved through faith and not by our good works, so we should not boast about them.

Any Questions? carries a message of redemption. This book was first made possible by the profound encounter of Dr. Donald P. Forss with God during his university days. That was his breakthrough. His deepened relationship with God convicted him to guide others to also experience Christ's unconditional and great love. Spending time with him is key to having an illuminated mind and transformed heart.

With this book, souls who are seeking to intimately know God will receive spiritual direction and inspiration as they receive enlightenment of God's demonstration of his great love for us—his death—that paved the way for our redemption.

Dr. Forss incorporated scriptures that he wanted to speak for themselves to develop readers' devotional lives. This way, believers can receive the answers to their questions firsthand and live confidently within the truth of his Word. All the passages he used are in the New King James Bible version.

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Fiction weeks on list

- 1. The Women** by Kristin Hannah (St. Martin's Press: \$30) An intimate portrait of coming of age in a dangerous time and an epic tale of a nation divided. **1**
- 2. The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store** by James McBride (Riverhead: \$28) The discovery of a skeleton in Pottstown, Pa., opens out to a story of integration and community. **27**
- 3. North Woods** by Daniel Mason (Random House: \$28) A sweeping historical tale focused on a single house in the New England woods. **14**
- 4. House of Flame and Shadow** by Sarah J. Maas (Bloomsbury Publishing: \$32) The third book in the action-packed Crescent City series. **2**
- 5. Martyr!** by Kaveh Akbar (Knopf: \$28) An orphaned son of Iranian immigrants embarks on a remarkable search for a family secret. **3**
- 6. The Fury** by Alex Michaelides (Celadon Books: \$29) A murder upends a reclusive ex-movie star's trip to a private Greek island. **4**
- 7. Demon Copperhead** by Barbara Kingsolver (Harper: \$32) The story of a boy born into poverty to a teenage single mother in Appalachia. **69**
- 8. Fourth Wing** by Rebecca Yarros (Entangled: Red Tower Books: \$30) A young woman reluctantly enters a brutal dragon-riding war college in this YA fantasy. **28**
- 9. Good Material** by Dolly Alderton (Knopf: \$28) A story of heartbreak and friendship and how to survive both. **2**
- 10. Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow** by Gabrielle Zevin (Knopf: \$28) Lifelong BFFs collaborate on a wildly successful video game. **84**

Nonfiction weeks on list

- 1. The Creative Act** by Rick Rubin (Penguin: \$32) The music producer's guidance on how to be a creative person. **56**
- 2. The Wager** by David Grann (Doubleday: \$30) The story of the shipwreck of an 18th century British warship and a mutiny among the survivors. **41**
- 3. Atomic Habits** by James Clear (Avery: \$27) The self-help expert's guide to building good habits and breaking bad ones via tiny changes in behavior. **89**
- 4. How to Know a Person** by David Brooks (Random House: \$30) The New York Times columnist explores the power of seeing and being seen. **16**
- 5. Elon Musk** by Walter Isaacson (Simon & Schuster: \$35) The life of the world's richest man. **18**
- 6. Oath and Honor** by Liz Cheney (Little, Brown: \$32) The former GOP representative recounts her fight to impeach and investigate Donald Trump. **10**
- 7. The Coming Wave** by Mustafa Suleyman (Crown: \$32) An AI founder sounds the alarm on advancing technologies. **2**
- 8. Everyone Who Is Gone Is Here** by Jonathan Blitzer (Penguin Press: \$32) A deeply reported history of the humanitarian crisis at the U.S.-Mexico border. **1**
- 9. Alphabetical Diaries** by Sheila Heti (Farrar, Straus & Giroux: \$27) A record of the author's thoughts across 10 years, rearranged into sentences from A to Z. **1**
- 10. Outlive** by Peter Attia, Bill Gifford (Harmony: \$32) A science-based self-help guide to living longer. **29**

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Elegy for a lost generation

LAIRD HUNT RESISTS SENTIMENTALITY IN TELLING TENDER STORIES OF A SMALL MIDWESTERN TOWN ON A SINGLE SUMMER DAY IN 1982. **BY KATE TUTTLE**

ALITTLE MORE than a century ago, Sherwood Anderson's "Winesburg, Ohio" introduced a new kind of American novel: one composed of short stories that share a setting and that elevate, one by one, individual residents for our examination. It's proven a durable and appealing structure, whether employed by fellow Midwesterner Ray Bradbury in "Dandelion Wine" or Mainer Elizabeth Strout in her "Olive Kitteridge" novels. There's an inherent, Where's Waldostyle thrill in spotting one story's main character as an incidental background player in another person's drama. And it's structurally both modernist (Gertrude Stein was an influence on Anderson) and democratic: Everyone matters, from the outcasts to the losers to those who seem simply too plain for literary attention.

But the form is not without risk. Thornton Wilder, whose "Our Town" is the most famous dramatic inheritor of Winesburg's legacy, cautioned in his stage directions that the play "should be performed without sentimentality or ponderousness — simply, dryly and sincerely." When "Dandelion Wine" came out, a critic charged Bradbury with that exact sin, panning him for "diving with arms spread into the glutinous pool of sentimentality."

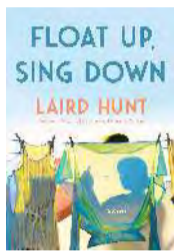
Laird Hunt's new book, "Float Up, Sing Down," resists that dive (although there is a pool present, unavoidable in mid-July in Indiana).

Following 2021's "Zorrie," a finalist for a National Book Award in fiction and a novel that itself borrowed characters from the author's earlier "Indiana, Indiana," the book is a Winesburg-style story cycle set in small-town Indiana during a single summer day in 1982. Zorrie Underwood makes a cameo or two, but unlike in the novel she anchored, these stories work like a core sampling of the entire community: a rural village surrounded by cornfields, where nearly everyone has memories of a farmhouse their grandparents inhabited — almost none of whom are still full-time farmers. Bright Creek is big enough for a high school, small enough that the school still sits at the center of the town's stories about itself.

And, like a lot of Midwestern small towns in the Reagan '80s, its glory days are behind it. We meet many of the old guard in the book's first story, in which retired teacher Candy Wilson prepares to host a monthly meeting of the Bright Creek Girls Gaming Club. Candy, Lois, Gladys, Myrtle and the



EVA SIKELIANOS HUNT



Bloomsbury

RURAL Indiana is the setting for Laird Hunt's latest book, a story cycle following one community.



others gamble, snack and gossip, and subsequent stories open up into the lives they've lived, their private dramas, the secrets they keep.

Candy misses her friend Irma Ray, the town's French teacher who'd lost her job for being "different." The club meeting coincides with the first anniversary of her funeral, and Candy visits Irma's grave, where the Latin phrase "Astra inclinat, sed non obligant" ("The stars incline us, they do not bind us") is chiseled into the stone.

Questions of fate and identity meander through these stories. Where we are born and into what kind of family matters — Hunt's characters are not self-created in the manner most modern Americans like to think we are. The ripple effects of an abusive father, an indulgent mother, early success that fizzles — all guide a life's path, sometimes quite literally, as when Gladys Bacon embarks on her occasional long, solitary walks through miles of cornfields. She only does it on days "when the sun angled long and blazed everything up in a glory of green and gold." If there's a more Midwestern way to manage existential pain, I haven't heard it.

The old men too have their say. Horace Allen, who served in France on D-Day and still pines for a European woman he met while recovering from war wounds, has retired from farming but still takes pleasure in his lawn care

that binds him to the land. ("The rake was like a metronome. The earth was like a clock.") Some time after returning from the war, Horace had made a pile of white rocks behind his barn, a kind of altar to things lost. "When his parents died, he had stopped going to church," Hunt writes. "He still sometimes picked up the Bible though. He was not against any of it. Sometimes he had gone out to the pile of white rocks and bowed his head."

And then there are Bright Creek's young people, working fast food and experimenting with sex and desperate to get out of there: We see two of them on the back of a motorcycle, "roaring up the road, burning up the map, being idiotic and beautiful and fifteen" toward the book's end. Why shouldn't they want to leave? After all, this is a place where a lesbian teacher is run out of town,

where artistic inclinations of any kind are most safely kept to oneself. And yet, as one of the teenagers feels while riding her Schwinn as fast as she can down a country road. "The world smelled like corn and chicory flower and drying dirt and woods."

When I moved to Boston from Kansas, nearly all my new friends referred to my having "escaped." As Hunt makes clear, there are plenty of good reasons one might want or need to escape from a small Midwestern town. But his tender attention to these lives reveals that what's there, good and bad, is as real as any of the stories painted on bigger canvases.

And somehow, without even the slightest sentimentality, the book provides an elegy for a lost generation, or maybe for all the elders still here, as overlooked as the Midwest itself. As Myrtle notices her own mouth hanging agape with age, she thinks that she "never minded that look. Both her grandparents had worn it plenty as they were rounding the final bend. Myrtle thought it made a person look astonished. Like they were thinking on some great wonder. Something marvelous. A memory they were the only ones in the whole big world to have."

Tuttle is a book critic whose work has appeared in the Boston Globe, the New York Times and the Washington Post.

SCREEN GAB

Her big 'Expats' journey

Sarayu Blue has been a familiar face on screens large and small for more than a decade now, including a pair of recent high-profile Netflix projects, "Never Have I Ever" and "To All the Boys I've Loved Before." But Lulu Wang's "Expats," which premiered Jan. 26 on Amazon Prime Video, allows her to sink her teeth into one of her most ambitious roles yet: Hillary Starr, an American expatriate in Hong Kong attempting to comfort her best friend, Margaret (Nicole Kidman), after the disappearance of her child, all while navigating the shoals of her own failing marriage. Blue joined Screen Gab recently to discuss her still-forming expatriate dreams, what she's watching and more.

— MATT BRENNAN

What have you watched recently that you are recommending to everyone you know? It's not recent but I'll never stop recommending "Everything Everywhere All at Once" [Prime Video]. I'm still not over it. But more recently, "Mr. & Mrs. Smith" [Prime Video] — Maya Erskine and Donald Glover are unstoppable geniuses.

What is your go-to "comfort watch," the movie or TV show you go back to again and again? "When Harry Met Sally"



JUPITER WONG Prime Video



Peacock

NICOLE Kidman, top left, Sarayu Blue in "Expats." Darryl McDaniels, center, Joseph Simmons, right, in "Kings From Queens."

[Tubi] or "Brown Sugar" [Starz].

"Expats" follows the intersecting lives of three American women living abroad in Hong Kong. If you could live anywhere outside of the U.S., where would it be and why? I don't have one place precisely — or I don't know what it is yet. But I've had fantasies for a while now of living somewhere small and warm, where good food and a strong sense of community are valued, where

there's a yard for all of the dogs I want to adopt, and I can watch the sun set.

Series writer-director Lulu Wang told The Times' Jireh Deng that her fears around this project shifted from properly representing her family, as in "The Farewell," to representing an entire city. Have you felt the same pressures around representation in your career? If so, how did you deal with it?

I'm not sure how to be human and not feel it all. I feel honored to be a part of South Asian representation. And naturally, when you're someone who cares, the fears come in too — fears of doing it wrong, or not honoring our community perfectly. I deal with it by talking to my inner circle, fellow friends/creatives who feel similarly, and I'm forever thankful for therapy.

TURN ON

This week, Screen Gab editor Matt Brennan and TV critic Robert Lloyd recommend an Oscar nominee now on VOD and a new doc about Run DMC.

AMERICAN FICTION

Multiple platforms When writer-director Cord Jefferson's first feature premiered at the Toronto International Film Festival in September, its Audience Award win — that longtime Oscar launchpad — seemed, from the uproar it caused in the theater, something like an inevitability. But I'd argue it's not the film's keen satire of American media (and liberal common sense) that secured "American Fiction," now on VOD, an impressive five Oscar nominations, including for picture, Jefferson (adapted screenplay), lead actor Jeffrey Wright and supporting actor Sterling K. Brown. Between the comic beats of author Thelonious "Monk" Ellison's odyssey from ivory tower snob to populist shill — for writing the very sort of "stereotypically Black" novel he usually loathes — Jefferson, working from the template of Percival Everett's novel "Erasure," finds a layered family dramedy, using grief, romance and sibling rivalry to ground its cultural absurdities in human truths. (Indeed, Tracee Ellis Ross' all-too-brief appearance as Monk's sister is one of my favorite performances of 2023.) The only false note in the entire film may be the notion that Brown would be anything but overrun if he stepped into a gay bar. As if. (M.B.)

KINGS FROM QUEENS: THE RUN DMC STORY Peacock Engrossing, affecting, thoughtful and often

charming, the three-part "Kings From Queens: The Run DMC Story" (Peacock) charts the history of the record-setting, barrier-breaking, minimalist hip-hop trio from the streets of Hollis to a stage at Yankee Stadium. Like most music documentaries nowadays, it includes its subjects as producers, which guarantees the participation of surviving members Joseph "Run" Simmons and Darryl "DMC" McDaniels (Jason "Jam Master Jay" Mizell having been killed in 2002). Also present are family members, colleagues and a stellar cast of musicians, influences and influenced alike, including Kurtis Blow, Chuck D., Ice-T, Ice Cube, LL Cool J, MC Lyte, Questlove and Salt of Salt-N-Pepa. Though spiritual and existential crises are duly recalled, this is not "Behind the Music" but a more valuable story of art and community, of self-definition and self-expression, of change and what remains. Styles come and go, but innovators who stay true to themselves may, after 40 years in show business, qualify as classic. (R.L.)

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FOR THE RECORD

Catherine Opie: In the Feb. 11 edition, a photo caption with an article on Catherine Opie misidentified the date of "Self-Portrait/Cutting contact sheet" as 2003. It is 1993/2024.

Los Angeles Times WEEKEND

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2024



THIS
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Monterey Park

You could plan an entire day of eating here — and you should. L6-7





A VANILLA REVIVAL AT ITS ANCESTRAL SOURCE

PAPANTLA, MEXICO, AIMS TO REVIVE SPICE THAT'S STRONGLY TIED TO LOCAL IDENTITY

BY LEILA MILLER
PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARCUS YAM

LONG GONE ARE THE DAYS when heaps of green vanilla pods were drawn into town by mules and laid out on woven mats to dry in the sun, perfuming the streets before being packed up and sold abroad. In this corner of eastern Mexico, known as “the city that perfumed the world,” the aromatic spice once dominated daily life and contributed to Mexico becoming the world’s leading supplier of vanilla more than a century ago. Markets have long since shifted and artificial vanilla is now the global norm. But in Papantla, a city in Veracruz state where the spice is still strongly tied to people’s identity, scientists, chefs and farmers are actively pushing to reassert its profile.

PAPANTLA, Mexico

Could a vanilla renaissance finally bloom in Mexico? In this city of 160,000, artisans make objects with vanilla’s shiny dark brown stems. Restaurants serve vanilla-infused dishes. And a prominent plaque by the town square tells the “Legend of Vanilla,” the tale of how vanilla originally grew from the blood of a beautiful Indigenous princess who was decapitated by priests for having a romantic affair. “If you have bad thoughts, they disappear, if you’re angry, it disappears, because the aroma has an effect of high relaxation,” said Lucio Olmos Morales, a local artisan who often works at a table on his porch weaving vanilla pods into crowns, rosary beads and flowers.

The indigenous Totonac discovered the vanilla vines that once grew wild in this rainy region, naming the orchids Xanat. They used it for fragrance — women perfumed their hair with the pods — but there’s no record of the Totonac using vanilla in cooking, according to Tim Ecott, author of the book “Vanilla: Travels in Search of the Ice Cream Orchid.” Later, the Aztecs are said to have used it to flavor a chocolate beverage, served in golden goblets to Emperor Moctezuma. The Spanish colonizers eventually took Mexico’s vanilla to Europe, where it was consumed by the aristocracy and fed a growing craving for hot chocolate. Vanilla was

naturally pollinated by bees in Mexico, and when Europeans attempted to grow the plant back home they rarely got it to produce pods.

But in the mid 19th century, a slave on the Indian Ocean island of Réunion discovered how to efficiently hand-pollinate vanilla. With French plantations there and elsewhere in the Indian Ocean adopting the technique, by the second half of the 19th century, Mexico lost its spot as the leading producer. Vanilla production in Papantla still boomed, however, in the late 1800s, fueled by the popularity of ice cream in the United States.

In the following decades, the growth of artificial vanilla and competition with Madagascar, the current market leader, contributed to the decline of Mexico’s vanilla production.

“The market turned to a massified cheap product and Mexico competed for a while but couldn’t really keep up with that,” said Emilio Kourí, a historian and director of the Katz Center for Mexican Studies at the University of Chicago. “People would say, ‘I don’t care, for my Twinkies I’ll just use artificial vanilla.’”

Cycles of boom and bust in the market today swing the cured spice from about \$300 to \$7 a pound, said Josephine Lochhead, the chief executive of the California-based Cook Flavoring Co., which buys most of its vanilla from Madagascar.

Mexico is the world’s third-largest natural vanilla producer, behind No. 2 Indonesia, according to 2022 data from the Food and Agriculture Organization. Most of the green vanilla Mexico produced in 2022 — 515 tons, according to the Mexican government — was sold locally.

Although California consumers could be interested in Mexican vanilla, the product is too expensive compared with the spice that comes from impoverished Madagascar, where farmers earn less than \$2 a day, Lochhead said. Craig Nielsen, co-owner of Nielsen-Massey Vanillas, based in Illinois, said that he sells Mexico’s vanilla to buyers who prefer its “spicy note,” which he compared to clove or nutmeg.

These days, those tied to Mexico’s natural vanilla industry are working to increase the spice’s local consumption and production, saying that Mexicans should be encouraged to help small-scale farmers and uphold their vanilla heritage.

José Merced Mejía Muñoz, an agriculture ministry official responsible for coordinating

with Mexico’s vanilla producers, said that the country hopes to reach 8,000 acres of vanilla in 2030 with more efficient production. In 2022, farmers — mostly in Veracruz state — grew about 800 acres.

One hurdle is that producing vanilla, an orchid that grows on a vine, requires intense labor.

ONLY HOURS TO POLLINATE BY HAND

A newly planted orchid can take three years to bear fruit, and when the flowers blossom in the spring, growers have only a few hours to pollinate each one by hand.

The fruit that ultimately emerges is a pod that looks like a long, thick string bean and contains black seeds. In Mexico, it’s picked around November while still green and fragrance-less, and then must be cured. Farmers lay the beans out on mats to dry in the sun for several months in order to transform the fruit into aroma-producing thin dark stems.

Most of Veracruz’s 3,200 vanilla growers, who usually plant it as a side hustle along with other crops such as citrus, sell the green pods to companies that turn the fruit into products such as cooking extract, liqueur and perfume, according to Crispín Pérez García, head of the state’s vanilla producers council.

Farmers have faced disastrous periods where hurricanes and storms have destroyed a season’s crop. They also face theft and low market prices caused by companies willing to buy vanilla that’s been picked before the fruit matures fully. The lower quality hurts Mexican vanilla’s reputation overseas, said Pérez.

Much of Mexico’s vanilla fails to meet the quality standards to be sold abroad because the fruit suffers from fungus, poor weather or early harvest to avoid theft, said Angélica Hernández Ávila, the Papantla-based director of a center that supports agricultural innovation at the National Polytechnic Institute.

But the biggest challenge is artificial vanilla. Gaya, the leading producer of vanilla in Veracruz, sells a 4-ounce bottle of real vanilla extract for about \$5 — several times the cost of artificial vanilla.

“In Mexico, people don’t consume natural vanilla, it’s that simple,” said its director, Norma Gaya.

Her family-run company, which grows vanilla beans and also buys the fruit from farmers across Mexico, works with university scientists to produce

healthier plants, improve cultivation techniques and offer classes to local growers. A lab on its property in Gutiérrez Zamora, a city near Papantla, contains jars of vanilla plants that have been cloned to match varieties that are disease-resistant and have attractive smells.

Gaya said that the government needs to better enforce the proper labeling of vanilla products, so that artificial vanilla is not passed off as natural. In the meantime, she and others have tried to ramp up interest in the orchid, holding a local vanilla festival and conferences to bring together vanilla experts. Hernández’s center offers growers lessons in customer service for English-speaking tourists who visit their plantations.

But even Gaya, which exports most of its vanilla to the United States, several years ago supplemented its natural vanilla products with an artificial vanilla line.

Some producers, such as Juan Salazar García, come from families that have grown vanilla for generations. Salazar runs Vainilla El Ojital, a company in Papantla with an acre of 30,000 vanilla plants.

Vanilla farmers have long grappled with theft. Sitting on a chair outside his house by the family’s vanilla orchards, Salazar’s father described how farmers in the 1940s made traps for thieves by placing stakes in a pit hidden with leaves. Salazar gradually made his way into the business, learning at age 10 how to pollinate flowers with a finger.

Every spring, Salazar and his employees have only a few hours a day to move as quickly as possible among the orchids to pollinate the flowers after they bloom. It takes about 10 seconds to pollinate each one, he said.

“Some days we do feel stressed,” he said. “But we don’t despair.”

Salazar has worked with a chemist to help sell natural vanilla liqueur, extract and perfume, as well as an artificial vanilla air freshener after requests from customers.

Clients ask him why his vanilla extract is expensive, pointing to cheaper products they find online that are falsely advertised as natural. But Salazar hesitates to expand his artificial line.

“As a producer, where would be the value in what I do?” he said. “I need to defend my work.”

The farming brings him an annual income of about \$47,000 a year, which he uses to maintain his plantation, and he hopes to grow the business with his three sons. He admits he barely consumed natural vanilla growing up — only in horchata water — but believes he can expand locals’ interest “at least a little bit.”

Chefs have tried to do that through vanilla-infused dishes. In the 1990s, Mexican chefs



BABY vanilla plants grown by in vitro fertilization, far left, at Gaya plantation. Lab tech Eduardo Tepoxteco displays a strain grown there.



VANILLA-flavored horchata at Nakú restaurant, far left, top; its owner, Lorenzo Callado, grows his own vanilla, far left, bottom; Juan Salazar Garcia works on his vanilla plantation in Papantla; above, Papantla once was known as the “city that perfumes the world”; various vanilla products.

began creating recipes with vanilla that went beyond its traditional use in desserts, said Ricardo Muñoz Zurita, a renowned chef in Mexico City. Vanilla, Muñoz said, goes well with subtle flavors and must be used carefully with strong spices such as chili that could overtake the vanilla. More than two dozen chefs contributed recipes to his 2008 cookbook, “La Vainilla Mexicana,” many combining the ingredient with seafood. Among the dishes: avocado soup with vanilla, apple salad with a vanilla vinaigrette, and duck with a chocolate and vanilla sauce.

“Of course we’d have vanilla ice cream and custard, but most of the plates were gourmet and all were made not just with the excuse of using vanilla but with vanilla as a protagonist,” he said. In Papantla, tourists who want to try vanilla dishes visit the restaurant Nakú, which translates to “heart” in the Totonac language. The open-air restaurant, which displays and sells vanilla products, spends about \$900 a month on four gallons of vanilla extract and about 125 vanilla pods. Patrons can order shrimp served with a creamy sauce made with vanilla ex-

tract, a chayote squash soup with vanilla seeds, a vanilla liqueur drink called Papenteco Kiss and plantains flambé with vanilla ice cream. “The identity of our town is vanilla, like tequila in Jalisco, like the tulips in the Netherlands,” said Nakú owner Lorenzo Collado. Papantla’s vanilla history also lives on through art. The local Ancestral Knowledge of Vanilla restaurant and museum displays a 2.4-foot vanilla-woven Virgin Mary made with 13 pounds of vanilla — which is paraded through the streets every December — and a photograph of a 7½-foot pyramid


made with 33,000 vanilla pods and weighing 264 pounds. In the summer last year, Lucio Olmos Morales, the artisan who weaves vanilla on his porch, received a special order. The local church, along with Totonac authorities, had selected Juanita Olarte, a 24-year-old preschool teacher, to be ceremoniously named a protector of Totonac culture at a Mass commemorating the 100th anniversary of the diocese. Olmos was commissioned to make a vanilla headdress to distinguish Olarte in her new role. He used 130 vanilla pods, high-quality stems carrying

enough oil so they could be bent into shapes without breaking. The headdress’ elements included a sun with a gem at its center to represent Christ, corn leaves and flowers. As it was placed on Olarte’s head in August at the front of the church, she smelled its strong sweet scent. The vanilla reminds Olarte of her grandfather, who taught her as a small child to pollinate the vanilla plants he grew. “It’s feeling closer to my loved ones,” she said of wearing the vanilla headdress. “I feel their embrace. Although they’re not with me, they feel present.”



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The vanilla queens of Mexico

'YOU STAY IN THE HISTORY OF PAPANTLA': CORPUS CHRISTI FESTIVAL CELEBRATES SPICE AND *REINAS*. BY LEILA MILLER

IN THIS MEXICAN CITY, some girls dream about a crown made of vanilla. Papantla adorns its Corpus Christi festival *reinas*, or queens, with the vanilla orchid's thick brown stems woven, twisted and bejeweled into aromatic crowns — a nod to the spice's place in the town's history. Centuries ago, the Totonac

people here used the orchid *Vanilla planifolia* as a perfume; then the conquering Aztecs started mixing it into a chocolate drink in the time of Emperor Moctezuma. After the Spanish invaded, Mexico's vanilla spread overseas and Papantla gained international fame. Mexico may no longer be the leader of the global vanilla trade — that's Madagascar — but in Papantla,

the spice still reigns. Many of the city's former *reinas* still prize their braided vanilla crowns decades later. The crown is a sweet memory infused with their youth, their city and their heritage. "You can have a crown with many things — diamonds, emeralds, pearls," said Marichu Mondragon, who won hers in 1981, "but a crown of vanilla only here."



Delia Nuñez, 94

Queen: 1949

Delia Nuñez was 19 and a schoolteacher when she competed for the vanilla crown. Her supporters for the Carnival of Papantla held a bullfight to help her win votes and to collect money for a new kindergarten where she would teach.

Years later, when she was raising her seven children, she would take her crown out of its storage place — a cookie tin in her closet — and hold it for them to smell.

Nuñez, energetic and upbeat while struggling with memory issues, still has the crown, now dried and damaged. At her daughter's home in Papantla, she put it on and smiled as she posed for a picture. She then sat down and looked through a photo album from when she was a teacher, before she won the money for the kindergarten the crown helped build.



Photographs by MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

Alma Rosa González Herrera, 85

Queen: 1958

Alma Rosa González Herrera was 18 in 1958, working as an accountant and living with her parents, when several ranchers came to their home one afternoon asking if she would run as their candidate for queen of the Corpus Christi festival.

González, who had already been a "student queen" at her high school the year before, was pleased but not overwhelmed. "Those things almost don't move me," she said. "I was contributing to my town."

But González, who married a rancher and today writes poems for a local newspaper, has saved the crown for more than half a century. A photograph displayed at her home in Papantla shows the teenager smiling, her hair covered in the confetti a crown tossed in the air when she arrived at a theater for her coronation.



Josefa Vargas Riaño, 71

Queen: 1972

The race for Josefa Vargas Riaño to become queen of the Corpus Christi festival was simple. Vargas, then 19, and two other candidates for what she called "the biggest party of the city" drew envelopes from a crystal bowl. Vargas was stunned when she saw that hers said "queen."

Photographs of her coronation hang on the wall at Frejío Casa Vintage, the hotel she owns in Papantla, which soon will have an exhibit about the history of the queens.

"This was a really nice part of my youth," said Vargas, who also works for Pemex.

On the 50th anniversary of Vargas' coronation, about two dozen former queens gathered to help celebrate.

"Many congratulations for all the honor you have given us during these last 50 years," the mayor said. "A queen or princess of Corpus Christi officially serves for only one year. Even after she gives up the crown, in reality, never, never, does she stop being a member of the royal court."



Marichu Mondragon, 59

Queen: 1981

Marichu Mondragon occasionally takes the jewels off her crown, bathes it in vanilla extract and leaves it in the sun for several days. The crown's vanilla braids absorb the extract, she explains, keeping it like new.

Mondragon wears the crown every year at a celebration held by Pemex, Mexico's state-owned oil company and her husband's employer. She also brings it out for any Papantla event she's invited to as a former queen.

"The smell of the vanilla when they put the crown on you, I don't know, it's something that stays with you," said Mondragon, who remembers being crowned by the first lady of Veracruz state.



Tania Zayas, 27

Queen: 2014

Tania Zayas didn't want to be queen.

But her high school pressed so hard for her to be its candidate in the Corpus Christi festival that the then-17-year-old gave in.

"I was embarrassed," said Zayas, who now teaches physical education at a Papantla elementary school.

She now doesn't shy away when people seek her out as a former queen. Her crown is woven in the shape of a pyramid representing the nearby El Tajín archaeological site. It also contains two orchids and three hearts, a symbol of the region.

"Once I did it and was on the other side, I said it's really an experience that all women should have," she said. "It's more lovely because you stay in the history of Papantla."



MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

Shrimp in Vanilla Sauce

40 minutes. Serves 1 to 2.

Vanilla is much more than a dessert ingredient in Papantla, a city in the Mexican state of Veracruz once famous for producing the spice. Local artisans braid vanilla's dark stems into figurines, and several restaurants offer a variety of vanilla-infused dishes. Irma Cortés Ramírez, a chef at Nakú, created Shrimp in Vanilla Sauce while experimenting in the Papantla restaurant's kitchen. As a child in Papantla, she watched as her grandparents added vanilla to atole and to a chayote squash soup. The spice, she said, gives her shrimp dish "a sweet touch, a touch of love."

- 2 cups Mexican crema
- 3 tablespoons mayonnaise
- ¼ cup evaporated milk
- 5 peppercorns
- ½ clove garlic
- ½ habanero chile
- 1 tablespoon unsalted butter
- ¼ red onion (about 2 ounces), diced
- 5 U-10 shrimp (about 7 ounces), peeled and deveined
- ¼ cup pulque, tequila or mezcal
- Seeds scraped from 1 vanilla pod
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon chicken bouillon seasoning (about 1 cube), preferably Knorr
- Pinch of salt

1 In a blender jar, combine the crema, mayonnaise, evaporated milk, peppercorns, garlic and habanero chile and blend until smooth, taking care not to overblend.

Set aside.

2 Melt the butter in a 12-inch skillet over medium heat. Add the onion and cook until it starts to soften, about two minutes. Add the shrimp and gently cook until just opaque on the bottom. Flip them using tongs and continue cooking until the other side just starts to turn opaque, about two minutes total. Add the mixture from the blender and then add the pulque (or tequila or mezcal, if using), vanilla seeds, vanilla extract, chicken bouillon flavoring and salt. Bring to a simmer and continue cooking until the sauce thickens enough to densely coat the back of a spoon, six to eight minutes.

3 Serve with steamed vegetables such as squash, carrots, broccoli and cauliflower and warm corn tortillas.

Note Use U-10 shrimp, which means they are colossal-size (10 shrimp in one pound).



NOODLES, whether shoyu ramen or tagliatelle alla Bolognese, are — if you eat them the proper way — roisterous with saucy slurping. One noodle dish that's currently trending, however, cranks the volume up to 11 during the pasta-producing process itself.

The name biang biang noodles, originating from Xi'an, China, refers to the sound of wet dough being slapped against a hard surface when the chef makes them. *Biang!* Can you hear it?

Xi'an-style restaurants have grown in popularity in the past few years across L.A., as well as in other parts of the country. Since many of the favorite dishes of Xi'an stem from its Muslim quarter, that influence shows up on menus as all manner of skewered meats and vegetables, lots of lamb dumplings, even Chinese haggis and, of course, biang biang noodles.

Known as one of the "10 strange wonders of Shaanxi," the northwestern province of China whose ancient capital is Xi'an, biang biang noodles can be as wide as a belt, which is why those serious strands also answer to the name of belt noodles. They're sometimes listed simply as "handmade noodles" on menus at Shaanxi restaurants. "We didn't think Americans knew what biang biang noodles are," says Steven Zhang of Noodle Art in Monterey Park.

Typically, the noodle's dimensions resemble pappardelle rather than something that keeps your pants up. Also, depending on the restaurant, the noodle in your bowl could be one continuous strand (more than a meter long sometimes), which makes for quite the noodle pull. According to chefs, the slamming of the strands — made with wheat flour, water and salt — optimizes the noodle's chew, that desired texture called "QQ." As soon as the ribbons are formed by freshly smacking the dough on the counter and stretching it by hand, they're given a quick dunk in boiling water.

Cooked and strained, the skeins go into a bowl where aromatic toppings of minced garlic, diced green onions and chile powder are placed on top, then a splash or two of searing hot oil sizzles the trinity into a slick sauce. Add-ons such as cumin lamb, tomato-egg (a scrambled egg with tomato), diced potato or braised pork are common. You can even enjoy rou jia mo, a.k.a. Chinese hamburger (although it's more like an arepa) as an appetizer.

Here are several of the most bangin' biang biang noodle spots in L.A.

NOODLE ART

Noodle Art in Monterey Park was established during the first year of the pandemic by a family from Xi'an, China. Manager and sometimes chef Steven Zhang considers himself an ambassador for his hometown's culinary scene. His family relocated to the U.S. after many decades of working in restaurants back in the Shaanxi capital. When Noodle Art first opened, its ambitious menu included many of Xi'an's most popular dishes. It has since been edited to more noodle-centric selections, with biang biang noodles at the forefront.

Be aware, however, that the extra wide noodle isn't listed as biang biang on the menu; instead they're called "handmade noodles." Noodle Art's most-ordered version of hand-pulled noodles is the three-toppings version that includes tomato-egg, diced potato and braised pork belly bits. "Biang biang noodles are becoming more famous, so we are expanding to outside of San Gabriel," says Zhang. Certainly since the early days of the pandemic, biang biang noodles have been in the spotlight with growing awareness of the style. Another Noodle Art is slated for a February opening at the Original Farmers Market on Fairfax.

● 117 N. Lincoln Ave., Monterey Park, (626) 999-3099, noodleartusa.com

BANG BANG NOODLES

Like many others, Robert Lee, chef-owner of Bang Bang Noodles, took a years-long career path through the ranks of the fine-dining system only to return home to rediscover his culinary roots, starting all over but with hard-earned technique under his belt. He ended up launching his biang biang noodle sidewalk pop-up in Highland Park in 2019 and now has a stall in Culver City's Citizen Public Market. "I came back from New York City with a few thousand dollars. Working at Aquavit gave me confidence. I felt like I was ready to do my own thing," Lee says.

He chose the Xi'an-style



EDDIE LIN For The Times

THE SOUND OF SOME NOODLES SLAPPING

SEVEN SPOTS TO ENJOY BIANG BIANG NOODLES, NAMED FOR THE NOISE DOUGH MAKES AS IT'S SLAPPED ON THE COUNTER

BY EDDIE LIN



noodles partly because "L.A. had a huge ramen drive," Lee says. "Biang biang could be the next big thing." Of all the biang biang noodle restaurants currently out there, Bang Bang is the only one that pulls back the curtain on the noodle making, confidently demonstrating the creation of the dish for each customer to see as their order is being made. "There is a process that looks like a show. When I was a street vendor, I'm pulling noodles in front of you and giving you service. In a lot of ways it feels like you're cooking with me. There's nothing to hide," Lee explains. The resulting noodles are a perfect union of firm and chewy. There are 12 spices incorporated into the cumin sauce. Indeed, Lee's detailed sauces raise Bang Bang's noodles above the rest. Moreover, his house-made pickles add an extra dimension that separates Bang Bang from the pack.

● 9355 Culver Blvd., Culver City, bangbangnoodlesla.com

XIAN BIANG BIANG NOODLE

Xian Biang Biang Noodle is in the San Gabriel retail complex that formerly housed Tasty Duck and is a key spot in Disney+'s "American Born Chinese" series. Husband-and-wife team Baoshan Gao (chef-owner) and Yen Shan (owner) operated a biang biang noodle stand in Xi'an for 20 years before venturing to the U.S. in 2019. When a storefront became available during the pandemic, the couple took the leap and opened Xian Biang Biang Noodle. Although biang biang noodle is the name on the marquee, the restaurant serves many of Xi'an's popular dishes, from Chinese "hamburger" to tripe noodle soup.

"Many non-Chinese customers come in seeking only biang biang noodles," Shan says. The most requested is topped with tomato-egg, chopped braised pork and zhajiang sauce. All the noodles are handmade in-house, with certain styles like the cold noodles requiring 20 hours to complete.

"Our biang biang noodle texture is comfortable when you eat it. Feels good," Shan says. And although it seems like many people are discovering the noodle for the first time, Shan explains, "Biang biang noodles originated 2,200 years ago," which is near the time when the legendary terracotta army, another Xi'an wonder, was created.

● 1039 E. Valley Blvd., Suite B102, San Gabriel, (626) 227-3629, xianbiangbiang.com/order



BANG BANG NOODLES

Bang Bang Noodles

CHONG QING SPECIAL NOODLES

Chef Zhang Zhen Hai grew up in Xi'an eating the biang biang noodles that his parents made for him. Once he was old enough, his parents taught him to hand-pull noodles of his own. Chef Hai has been making biang biang noodles for 21 years. Established in 2017, Chong Qing Special Noodles received critical praise quickly when The Times' then-food critic Jonathan Gold chronicled its delights a year later.

What makes Chong Qing unique as a biang biang noodle purveyor is its Sichuan-forward flavors, meaning more peppery heat than you'd ever get from a standard Xi'an bowl of biang

biang. Toppings include a combination of tomato and scrambled eggs, a fried soybean sauce (zhajiang), pickled chiles and chile sauce. The plentiful noodles are hearty with a satisfying chew. Zhajiang and the chile sauce merge wonderfully to impart a wide spectrum of flavors from umami and sweet to salty and spicy. Chong Qing Special Noodles' version of biang biang noodles brings a lot of Sichuan bang to your biang, so if you can't handle the burn, request a lesser spice level or none at all.

● 708 E. Las Tunas Drive, San Gabriel, (626) 374-1849, chongqingspecialnoodles.com

CHINA ISLAMIC

Known for its Americanized



WEN HUI NOODLE

EDDIE LIN For The Times

Chinese food made with adherence to Islamic dietary laws, China Islamic serves favorites like moo shu lamb. Six years ago, new ownership took over. Now there's a menu that includes classic dishes of Chinese Muslims, specifically of north-west Chinese cuisine found in Xibei, which is famous as the start of the Silk Road. One of those dishes is hand-pulled noodles (not listed as biang biang noodles on the menu). China Islamic's owner Umar Yang explains, "The technique we apply here is to make one strand from one dough. Other restaurants make more than one strand from two or more doughs."

According to Yang, biang biang noodles originated in the Qin Dynasty and began as a peasant food. Once the emperor ate and enjoyed it, the noodles became famous. "Biang biang" is not how we call these noodles. That's a name for tourists," Yang claims. You po mian, or oil poured noodles, is how many in China refer to this type of noodle, he adds. The feel of China Islamic's impressively lengthy single strand occupies the Goldilocks zone: not too chewy and not too soft. A simple sauce coats the noodle with spicy and sour flavors. It's recommended to add cumin lamb for a truly Chinese Islamic taste of biang biang noodles. Pair the bowl with a mandarin orange soda to give your meal extra dazzle.

● 7727 Garvey Ave., Rosemead, (626) 288-4246, chinaislamicus.com

WEN HUI NOODLE

As one of the newer Xi'an-style restaurants, Wen Hui Noodle in Monterey Park also presents some of Xi'an cuisine's greatest hits, such as pita bread soaked in lamb soup, "big plate" braised chicken with handmade noodles and, of course, biang biang noodles. However, as at some other places, the famous noodle goes by the description handmade noodle or you po noodle at Wen Hui. The owner's son said his family is from Xi'an, adding that the city's food is gaining popularity not only in the U.S. but in Russia too, with the long, wide noodle as the popular draw.

A special spinach biang biang noodle is an off-menu item that distinguishes Wen Hui from its rivals. Fresh spinach juice permeates the noodle dough, giving it an inviting green tint. The dough is slapped against a stainless steel counter, creating a loud "biang," and pulled into a generous serving of supremely fresh, chewy and verdant noodles. Bits of potato, tomato-egg, crunchy bean sprouts, cabbage, fermented black bean, carrots and pepper oil join forces to form a delicious vegetarian bowl of biang biang noodles. Leave out the eggs to make it vegan. Although unique here, spinach hand-pulled noodles are commonplace in Xi'an. Wen Hui's spinach biang biang is irresistibly slurpable with that special Chinese QQ chew, and visually, it's the best of the lot.

● 644 W. Garvey Ave., Monterey Park, (626) 656-6205

CHANGAN KITCHEN

Conveniently located within a newly remodeled 99 Ranch Market in Artesia, Changan Kitchen is the only place you'll find freshly hand-pulled biang biang noodles in a food court. The owner is originally from Xi'an, which is evident once you study the menu and spot specialty items like stir-fried lamb haggis and Chinese "burger" with stewed pork. However, Changan Kitchen hedges its bets by also including General Tso's chicken and teriyaki chicken rice. Still, everyone sitting at the tables in front of Changan Kitchen's service counter appeared to be slurping biang biang noodles.

The noodle is served coiled as one long strand. It is a wide noodle, maybe even the widest of any place serving biang biang. An employee explains, "Some customers prefer several shorter pieces of noodle and others like longer." So if you have a preference, let them know. Meat toppings like chicken or beef are optional. The basic biang biang is topped with garlic, spicy chile oil, bok choy and soy bean sprouts. Beneath the noodles are soy sauce, salt and pepper. Give it a swirl and slurp away. This simple style is really the way to go if you want to enjoy biang biang noodles without all the extra noise. Food court or not, Changan Kitchen's biang biang noodles are as worthy of a taste as the rest. Since you're there, maybe pick up a whole rock cod and a pack of century eggs at 99 Ranch.

● 1773 Pioneer Blvd., Suite C, Artesia, (562) 348-0005, changanfoodca.com

In Monterey Park, try to savor every moment

'AMERICA'S FIRST SUBURBAN CHINATOWN' FEATURES FOOD, SHOPPING, PARKS AND MORE

BY JENN HARRIS



IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR the best dumplings in Southern California, a broad bean paste the manager at your local Ralph's has never heard of or a place that serves a Hong Kong-style breakfast, Monterey Park is the place. Some refer to the nearly 8 square miles on the western edge of the San Gabriel Valley as America's first suburban Chinatown. Of the nearly 60,000 residents, more than 60% are Asian. On any given day, you'll find an intersection of generations, with groups of elderly citizens congregating for tai chi or badminton at the parks in the early mornings, then on to the local McDonald's for coffee and hash browns. Most of the younger residents spend evenings chatting and playing games in the many boba tea shops around town. The most vibrant nightlife in the area happens here, over plastic cups of milk tea speared with wide straws. The predominance of the Asian population can be credited to a real estate developer named Frederic Hsieh. In the 1970s, he drew large numbers of affluent Chinese immigrants by advertising the area as "the Chinese Beverly Hills" in various Hong Kong newspapers.

Between 1970 and 1987, Monterey Park's racial makeup changed from around 14% to 40% Asian. Now, 26% of residents are Latino and just 6% are white.

Another wave of immigrants from Hong Kong arrived after the British returned the region to the People's Republic of China in 1997.

Raymond Young, 55, says he watched as both the foreign-born and local Chinese residents created a stronghold in the community, with large shopping centers and entire city blocks along Atlantic Avenue and Garvey Boulevard catering exclusively to Asian businesses and clientele. The longtime resident, who was born, raised and currently lives in Monterey Park, is an administrator for Monterey Park Life, a community group on Facebook with nearly 10,000 members.

In 2013, the Monterey Park City Council shot down an ordinance that would have required some "modern Latin lettering" on storefront signs.

"It just spoke to a sign of the times," Young said. "There are more Chinese in this community and they want to shop and eat in these places, so let's go ahead and market to that audience."

Though somewhat diminished over the years, the Latino community in southern Monterey Park still exists. It's where the family-run La Colonial Tortilla Products Inc. opened in 1952 and continues to produce tortillas. The much-lauded Carnitas El Momo is a little more than a mile down the road. And torta wonderland Cook's Tortas sits on the southern stretch of Atlantic Boulevard just north of the 60 Freeway.

For Young, it's that fusion of communities that makes Monterey Park so special.

"I think as you go south, it's much more Latino but it still retains a little of the Japanese influence that was there when I was growing up in the '70s and '80s," he said. "We are a good starting point to other communities. You can live here, discover Boyle Heights, El Sereno and Pasadena. We provide good access to downtown. It's predominantly Chinese, but we provide a good midway point to other communities."

Most visitors treat Monterey Park as a dining destination, visiting the many Chinese restaurants, bakeries and grocery stores. It's possible to spend your day in just two shopping centers a short walk from each other, starting with dim sum for breakfast, a stop at an arcade, coffee and soufflé pancakes at a cafe followed by some shopping and afternoon boba.

You could plan an entire day of eating, and you should.

Have dim sum for breakfast at Atlantic Seafood & Dim Sum

Women pushing silver carts

This must be the place

Get to know Los Angeles through the places that bring it to life. From restaurants to shops to outdoor spaces, here's what to discover now. Read all the guides at latimes.com/the-place.

What's included in this guide

Anyone who's lived in a major metropolis can tell you that neighborhoods are a tricky thing. They're eternally malleable and evoke sociological questions around how we place our homes, our neighbors and our communities within a wider tapestry. In the name of neighborly generosity, we included gems that may linger outside of technical parameters. Instead of leaning into stark definitions, we hope to celebrate all of the places that make us love where we live.

weave through the tables, filling the dining room with the aroma of sweet baked char siu bao and roast duck. Atlantic Seafood & Dim Sum is one of the few remaining restaurants in the area that still uses the carts, where you can have the real dim sum experience of flagging down the har gao you want from across the room and order a steamer full of siu mai every time the cart passes. The siu mai, plump with steamed pork and nestled neatly into a crinkly wonton wrapper, are on every table. If the choices are overwhelming, the manager is happy to make suggestions or answer your questions about what's in the vegetable dumplings. The sticky rice wrapped in lotus leaf, spare ribs, siu mai and ham sui gok (fried, pork-filled mochi balls) are all must-orders. There may be a wait for a table if you arrive during peak breakfast hours, between 8 and 10:30 a.m., but things move quickly. ● 500 N. Atlantic Blvd., Suite 200, Monterey Park, (626) 872-0388, qmenu.us

Sip fresh fruit tea at Sunright Tea Studio

We've entered the age of boba, where tea shops might actually outnumber Starbucks storefronts across Los Angeles. There's a high density in Monterey Park, with many shopping centers offering more than one place to choose from. What sets Sunright Tea Studio apart are its fresh fruit teas. The shop adds fresh grapefruit juice to strong, fragrant jasmine tea, along with a few slices of fruit. You can adjust the ice and sugar



level, to keep things cooler in the summer and sweeter if the mood strikes. Some of the offerings are seasonal, including a refreshing watermelon cooler filled with blended chunks of watermelon, ice and tea during the summer. When mangoes or peaches are in season, the shop uses the purees to flavor the mango or peach teas. The grapefruit is a mainstay, but if the shop can't get fresh grapefruit, it disappears from the menu. Unlike some of the tea shops in the area, where friends linger over tall cups of boba milk tea, most of the business at this Sunright location is grab and go, with diners stopping in for refreshments on their way to run errands or hang out with friends elsewhere. ● 141 N. Atlantic Blvd., #107, Monterey Park, (626) 782-7341, snrtea.com

Get in line for Instagram-worthy soufflé pancakes at Gram Cafe & Pancakes

The first thing you need to do, before you pop your head into the dining room or check the menu on your phone, is add your name to the digital wait list on the iPad stationed in front of the door. Regardless of when you visit, there will be a wait. This is one of the most popular cafes in the Atlantic Times Square mall, and for good reason. Gram Cafe is a Japanese chain that started in Osaka

BETWEEN MEALS, you can test your skills on the claw machine at Neofuns Arcade, from top; take a hike on the Edison Trail; or shop for housewares and so much more at Daiso.

almost a decade ago. The restaurant specializes in wobbly, fluffy soufflé pancakes. As the servers whisk plates of the pancakes to each of the tables, diners ready their cellphones to capture the spectacle. The pancakes are meringue-like in texture with a vaguely sweet, eggy flavor. The Premium Crème Brûlée is a favorite, covered in a thick layer of custard cream and a crunchy, caramelized sugar top. The restaurant also serves Sight-glass Coffee, making it an excellent place to stop in for a latte or cappuccino, with or without a giant pancake. ● 500 N. Atlantic Blvd., Suite 179, Monterey Park, (626) 872-0447, gramcafeusa.com

Enjoy a picnic at Sequoia Park

Sequoia Park sits at the top of a hill in a residential area of the city. It's mostly quiet in the mornings, with locals who walk their dogs or small groups that host dance and tai chi classes



on the grass. There are two tennis courts, a basketball court, a softball field and plenty of room to run around. The picnic tables scattered throughout the park, including a coveted covered table, make it the ideal place for a quiet picnic. It's the perfect setting for a banh mi and egg tart lunch, with supplies sourced from just down the hill. Grab a couple of grilled pork or vegetarian sandwiches on light and airy baguettes from Mr. Baguette and a few warm egg tarts from Jim's Bakery. If you time your meal just right, you might be able to catch a game of softball. And there will be plenty of furry friends on leashes passing through the park. ● 750 Ridgecrest St., Monterey Park

Take a break between meals with a hike on the Edison Trail

This is the type of hike you can do if you're not in shape, if you're just starting to exercise or just need a midday break between meals. In fact, it's more accurate to call it a walk versus a hike, despite the few hills you'll need to climb. The trail starts at La Loma Park, where you cross Fulton Avenue and make your way up the first hill. On weekend mornings, most of the people on the path are taking a leisurely stroll with just a few runners in between. It's never



Photographs by JENNELLE FONG For The Times

crowded, and you'll have plenty of space between yourself and anyone else on the trail. The scenery is mostly the backyards of the nearby houses as you make your way down the dirt path. After about three-quarters of a mile you reach the end of the trail, a small park across from the California Edison station on Garfield Avenue, where the hike gets its name. There, you'll find restrooms, grills, benches, picnic tables and drinking fountains. It's a nice place to stop for a snack (maybe something foil-wrapped and crunchy or some fresh fruit from the nearby 99 Ranch Market) before turning around and making your way back to La Loma Park.

● 1950 Fulton Ave., Monterey Park

Distance: 1.5 miles
Difficulty: Easy

Win your dream plushie in the claw machines at the Neofuns Arcade

A row of pink, blue, green and purple machines beckons with windows full of plush toys at the center and along the walls of the arcade. On a busy Saturday, it's almost a 1-to-1 mix of kids and adults with their faces pressed up against the glass of the machines, their hands deftly working to maneuver the claws over rainbow balls, stuffed bears and ducks in bow ties. The arcade is open until 11 p.m.

on weekends, so expect the dueling air hockey players to jump in age as the night progresses. Pokémon fans will be especially pleased to find a smiling Pikachu featured as a prize in some of the machines. There's a decent selection of play-for-tickets games too, with Air Dino basketball and Skeeball, and plenty of plush toys, knickknacks and even a coffee-maker you can snag for a certain number of tickets. If you manage to collect more than 150,000 tickets, you can usually turn them in for a toy that's larger than your body.

● 500 N. Atlantic Blvd., #162, Monterey Park, (626) 215-7090, fun-hoops.com

Find comfort in congee and Hong Kong-style buns at Delicious Food Corner

There's an energy to this restaurant that never seems to diminish as the breakfast rush runs seamlessly into lunch. If the only open seating is the other half of a long table occupied by two women chatting excitedly over big bowls of congee, you'll be seated there alongside them. Delicious Food Corner has opened a handful of locations elsewhere in the San Gabriel Valley, but the Monterey Park restaurant is the original. It's the one that feels most like a diner. The kind of place everyone should be lucky enough to have in their neighborhood. It's

difficult to decide on a single direction, so it's best if you bring friends or family to share. And get there before 11:30 a.m. for the breakfast. There are steaming bowls of congee studded with fish paste alongside plates heaped with chewy rice rolls drenched in a mixture of sweet bean sauce and peanut sauce. The youtiao are extra crisp and the Hong Kong-style buns are always fresh and soft, with a crackly top and a pat of butter shoved into the middle. The tiles of Spam served alongside the eggs are griddled and golden. Cover the table in all of it, and make sure the ramekin of chile sauce in the middle is full enough for everyone.

● 2329 Garfield Ave., Monterey Park, (323) 726-0788, dfccafe.com

Find stuff you didn't know you need at Daiso

It's been billed as the Japanese version of the American dollar store, where unmarked items are \$1.75 and a handy conversion chart lists the prices for everything else. Think of Daiso as a household wonderland, where you can find stationery, socks, school supplies, dishware and any tools you may need to cook or clean in the kitchen or bathroom. There are toys, stickers and plush toys. If you look hard enough, you can usually find Winnie the Pooh and Mickey Mouse merchandise. There are

MONTEREY PARK

has something to suit every taste, including fluffy soufflé pancakes at Gram Cafe & Pancakes, left; right-out-of-the-oven pastries at Diamond Bakery; and colorful produce at the farmers market.

name-brand snacks such as Pocky. Then there are the items you didn't know you needed, like the erasers shaped like a plate of gyoza or zoo animals, the kitchen sponge shaped like a dolphin and a banana keeper. Visit with a group of friends and compare bags post-checkout.
● 500 N. Atlantic Blvd., #115, Monterey Park, (626) 782-7373, daisous.com

Fill a tray with warm buns and fresh pastries from Diamond Bakery

Make sure to get to Diamond early if you want to choose from the full array of individually wrapped buns that line the shelves of the bakery. Pork sung buns, red bean-stuffed buns, taro buns, curry buns and hot dog buns sit shiny and golden. The loaves of bread are ultra soft, available in half and full portions. In the mornings, locals stop in for morning pastries and maybe a beef curry pie or two from the hot display case near the register. The bakery takes special orders for cakes as well, with a selection of simply decorated confections behind the counter. There's never a shortage of desserts adorned with fresh fruit, in the form of a fresh fruit tart with strawberries, mango and grapes lacquered in sweet syrup or the mango mousse cake with an entire half of a mango scored and glistening on top of the cake. As the hours of the day tick by, the selection dwindles, but you can usually manage to find at least a few egg tarts at the end of the day.

● 744 Garvey Ave., Monterey Park, (626) 289-5172, diamondcakes.com

Choose your own torta adventure at Cook's Tortas

Men in work boots and sweat-stained T-shirts wait in line next to police officers, elderly couples dressed in their Sunday best and weary-eyed parents with multiple kids in tow. They're all there for the tortas, more than 20 in total, all displayed on a colorful menu on the back wall. The numbers seem random, with #316 denoting a Milanesa torta crammed with breaded steak, jalapeño, tomato and slathered with mayo, and the #26 referring to the California torta with avocado, grilled chicken and fried sage. If the guy behind the counter is feeling generous, you can build your own torta. And lettering at the top of the menu lets you know that you can have your torta lettuce-wrapped, if you wish. But the bread may be the most enjoyable part of your sandwich, baked on site with a crunchy, ciabatta-like crust and a soft interior. While you can have anything from portobello mushrooms to smoked salmon in your torta, the #25, also known as the Bacalao, is hard to beat. It's filled with a garlicky salted braised codfish, bell peppers, banana peppers, potatoes and olives. It tastes like an excellent fish stew clapped between two slices of really good bread. Whichever sandwich you choose, save room for a slice of great-grandmother's corn cake for dessert.
● 1944 S. Atlantic Blvd., Monterey Park, (323) 278-3536, cooks-tortas.com

Go on the ultimate dumpling crawl at Mandarin Deli, Mama Lu's and PP Pop

In Monterey Park, you could plan a weekly dumpling crawl for months and never repeat a dumpling. There are dozens of styles to choose from in the city, but the following is your blueprint for three must-visit restaurants for excellent dumplings. Start with a plate of boiled leek and three delights dumplings from Mandarin Deli (marked on this map). The thick skins are wonderfully chewy around a filling of shrimp, pork, chives and soft leeks. Next, head to Mama Lu's for a steamer basket full of xiao long bao. The dumplings will be full of hot soup, so be cautious when you take that first bite. Nibble a hole in the skin and slurp out the hot soup, then

dunk the dumpling in some of the provided vinegar and chile sauce and plop the now-cooled dumpling into your mouth. Follow these tips or don't. You may end up with a dumpling squirt of hot liquid across the table. Finish the crawl with a plate of pan-fried pork and leek dumplings at PP Pop, a restaurant also known for its excellent beef noodle soup. The dumplings are connected by a thin, crisp layer of dumpling lace created by a cornstarch slurry that's added to the pan while frying. Crack it apart and make sure to get a little bit of the crunchy lace in each bite.
● 728 S. Atlantic Blvd., Monterey Park, (626) 289-2891

Get fresh produce and fancy cotton candy at the Monterey Park farmers market

Open on Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m., the market is adjacent to the tennis courts at Barnes Park. A band serenades the market with oldies opposite the vendors, creating a lively atmosphere when the sun goes down. And the band provides entertainment for the diners seated at the picnic tables lined up near the market. There's a solid selection of produce, with vendors dedicated to leafy vegetables and fresh fruit, but what makes this market special is a food court area with various prepared foods. A man in a chef's hat sells cotton candy shaped like flowers or fluffy animals with big round ears. People stroll sipping cups of boba tea or Thai tea from one vendor while they peruse the pupusas and tamales from another. With plenty of room to roam in the park before or after the market, it's kid-friendly and a good option for dinner in the park.
● 350 S. McPherrin Ave., Monterey Park, (909) 818-7913, fmlce.com

Collect all the good snacks at 99 Ranch Market

The seafood counter on weekday mornings is a busy traffic jam of carts and shoppers, all vying for that evening's dinner. There are fresh crabs and lobsters in open tanks and a wide variety of whole fish on ice. It's a favorite place to pick up provisions for any recipe, but especially useful if you happen to be making food that stems from anywhere on the largest continent in the world. The snack aisles, frozen cases and produce sections are where the real gems are found. Pick up milk tea Kit Kat and salted egg potato chips, boba tea pops and frozen scallion pancakes or fresh durian and persimmons, depending on the season. Visit in the early afternoon for shorter lines at the checkout stands and fewer hands reaching for the same bunch of scallions.
● 771 W. Garvey Ave., Monterey Park, (626) 458-3399, 99ranch.com

Grill your own steaks at the Venice Room

This bar and restaurant is one of the only real nightlife spots in the city, with a full bar and hours that stretch into the next morning. The bartenders are knowledgeable enough to concoct any libation you may request and friendly enough to make the effort. What you're really here for, though, are drinks and steaks. The bar serves raw steaks you season and grill yourself in the dining room. There's an array of lemon pepper, Lawry's, onion salt and pretty much any other dry seasoning you can think of on a shelf next to some oil near the grill. Season your meat however you like, then use a pair of provided tongs to put your steak on the grill. Diners usually watch their steaks closely, so you won't need to worry about keeping track of yours when the grill starts to fill up later in the evening. There's usually an older regular camped out near the grill offering unsolicited tips, in case you need a little guidance as to which part of the grill is hottest and whether you should oil your steak before you season it. Opposite the grill is a salad station where you can dress your wooden bowl of chopped iceberg with the usual dressings. Meals come with foil-wrapped baked potatoes too, and ice cream for dessert. If you spring for the full dinner special, your server will bring an entire bottle of house wine to the table. There are worse ways to end the evening.
● 2428 S. Garfield Ave., Monterey Park, (323) 722-3075, thevenicerom.com



For California ice climbers, time's slippery

THE GOLDEN STATE HAS SEVERAL COOL PLAYGROUNDS — INCLUDING LEE VINING CANYON AND JUNE LAKE — BUT CLIMBING OPPORTUNITIES MAY SUDDENLY MELT AWAY, SO IT'S BEST TO GO WHILE YOU CAN

BY LILA SEIDMAN

THWACK! THWACK! Thud! *Oh, thank God, my whole body exclaimed. After a few swings, the razor-sharp pick I clutched lodged firmly into a cascading frozen waterfall. Shards of ice exploded from the point of contact onto my face. A taste of blood. At least the hold seemed solid. I raised one foot and kicked the tippy-toe spike of a traction device attached to my boot into the opalescent surface. Then I raised the other.* Like a cat walking on extended claws, I made my way up Chouinard Falls in Lee Vining Canyon, an ice-climbing mecca in the state. Swing, crash, thud. Two steps. Swing, crash, thud. Two steps. I wasn't fast. I definitely wasn't graceful. But I was ice climbing.

Ice climbing, as the name suggests, entails scaling frozen water. Even mountain goats can't scramble up vertical ice, so specialized equipment is needed. Like rock climbing, the sport entails a rope system — known as belaying — but differs in substantive ways.

Not only does ice-climbing gear resemble medieval torture devices, but the sport, for obvious reasons, must be done in the cold. Ice forms in the shade, adding to the chill factor. Particularly frigid climbs can bring on the “screaming barfies,” a cluster of symptoms that include severe hand pain and nausea. (My sun-soaked Angeleno blood curdles at the thought.) As climbers chop into the ice with their tools and crampons, frozen debris rains below.

While it is still relatively obscure, several mountain guides said ice climbing has received a nudge closer to the mainstream with the explosion of outdoor recreation in recent years. Roughly 2.5 million Americans climb ice or rock or pursue mountaineering, up nearly 18% from the mid-2000s, according to the Outdoor Industry Assn., a collective that includes business leaders, climate experts and policy makers.

“Before I tried it, I always had this idea that it was the craziest thing you could do,” said Michael O'Connor of Sierra Mountain Guides. “I was, like, does the ice just fall down and hit you? And, yeah, the

equipment seems cool, but it also seems horrifying.”

Yet O'Connor came away from his first tussle with ice, around 2010, wanting more.

Now, “By the time fall is hitting and I see the ice starting to form up and start to hear about people climbing on things, I'm like, ‘All right, I'm getting kind of psyched.’ And then once it's here in Sierra, I'm like, ‘Let's go.’ And it's so fun.”

Sunny California, ice climbing's unlikely birthplace

Conquerors of big mountains have long contended with ice. Once upon a time, alpinists laboriously hacked steps into it — literal stairways to heaven. That all changed in the mid-1960s to early 1970s. Renowned climber Yvon Chouinard — who set up a blacksmith shop in Ventura and later opened outdoor clothing brand Patagonia's first store nearby — developed a curved pick that could claw into steep ice and stay put. Early climbs using the innovative tool were made in California's Eastern Sierra Nevada.

“It's no stretch to call that the ice-climbing revolution,” said Doug Robinson, who frequently climbed with Chouinard in those days and helped usher in the sport's transformation.

Climbers began to haul themselves up frozen waterfalls and dangling icicles, carving out a discipline separate from mountaineering. Sunny California, far



from the epicenter of the sport today, can broadly be considered the cradle of its modern form.

The allure of ice climbing

Ice fanatics and detractors alike speak reverentially of its ephemeral quality. (The qualifier is so intertwined with the practice that a recent Instagram post I came across read, “This is a generic ice climbing post... ephemeral ephemeral ephemeral ephemeral...”) Unlike rock, ice is

constantly changing. It can form, melt and reform multiple times a season — and exactly how it manifests is different each time. Depending on the climber, this presents an interesting puzzle or infuriating challenge.

Adrian Ballinger, owner of Lake Tahoe-based guiding company Alpenglow Expeditions, highlighted the creative movement the malleable surface permits.

In rock climbing, “Whether you're outside or in the gym, there are a certain number of places where you can put your

hands and feet and that's it,” Ballinger said. “The beauty of ice is since you have these spikes on your feet and in your hands, you can make your handholds and footholds anywhere you choose.”

The same principle makes it accessible to a range of body types, he added. While one rock climb might be better or worse for a short person, ice allows people of all shapes to forge their own path.

Then there's just the badassery of pursuing an activity that epitomizes radical.





Where to climb

It may not come as a complete surprise that California is not the ultimate destination for ice. That said, it's home to several iconic ice playgrounds that are driving distance from the megalopolises of Los Angeles and San Francisco.

EASTERN SIERRA NEVADA

Lee Vining Canyon. Located near the small Eastern Sierra hamlet of Lee Vining, this area is arguably the best-known and most popular destination in the state. It lures climbers with its dependable ice that tends to linger during the winter. It also offers climbing routes suitable for beginners. Getting there isn't a walk in the park: The trek to get there, known as the approach, involves navigating talus fields and steep passages that may be blanketed in snow.

June Lake. This mountain community near Mammoth offers exponentially more accessible roadside ice. As the name suggests, ice seekers need only pull over along the June Lake Loop and walk a short distance to a crag with relatively low-angle ice ideal for learning on. Horsetail Falls is another popular spot that can be hiked to.

NORTHERN SIERRA NEVADA

Ballinger's guiding company typically brings clients to two zones in the Tahoe area:

Donner Summit. Considered a Lake Tahoe rock-climbing "jewel," the high pass located off I-80 draws ice climbers in colder months.

Coldstream Canyon. Situated outside Truckee, the climbing area is more than six miles from the parking area, according to a blogger's trip report.

Because of Tahoe's heavy snowfall, Ballinger said the climbs become shorter as powder builds up and covers the routes.

BEYOND CALIFORNIA

Dedicated climbers converge in areas better known for ice, such as Cody, Wyo.; Ouray, Colo.; Hyalite Canyon near Bozeman, Mont.; Valdez, Alaska; and Canmore in the Canadian Rockies.



Photographs by RICHARD BAE For The Times



Ready to climb? Here's how to get started

Despite its hardcore aura, ice climbing is more accessible than it seems. Interest, drive and hardiness can carry a novice a long way, according to alpine veterans.

"It's pretty intuitive," said Aaron Jones, 37, a mountain guide based in Bishop whom I met while he was climbing with his cousin in the small town of June Lake. "If you can swing a hammer, you can swing an ice tool."

It does, however, require a significant

amount of expensive gear and technical know-how to get off the ground. It's not something you can learn entirely through YouTube videos. Seasoned climbers recommend sampling the sport by tapping a reputable mountain guiding service or pairing up with an experienced friend with enough patience to show you the ropes.

Necessary gear includes mountaineering boots, crampons (devices with long spikes fitted onto stiff-soled boots to dig into ice and snow to prevent falls), two ice tools (the picks), harness,

helmet, ropes, ice screws (to protect the lead climber) and winter clothing.

Because the cost of these items can add up to hundreds, even thousands, of dollars, it's not advised to buy everything for your first go. It's best to see if you enjoy the sport and then try out different equipment before your wallet takes a hit.

Besides group and individual instruction, guiding services generally provide all the goodies you need to ascend ice. If you're connected to a rock-climbing or outdoorsy community, you may be able to borrow some gear. Some can be rented.

There are no requirements to book a beginner's outing with Alpenglow, "just that you're up for a day of adventure outside," said Ballinger, an internationally recognized skier and climber. Private outings hover around \$700 per person, he said. Alpenglow's group intro courses in mountaineering, avalanche rescue and more start around \$275.

The same goes for Sierra Mountain Guides, which offers a two-day introductory ice-climbing course. It costs \$515 per person on weekends and \$480 midweek. O'Connor said a full day of private guiding averages \$500 or more.

While you don't need to be an accomplished athlete, a basic level of fitness often is needed just to sojourn to the ice — particularly in parched California. Once you get there, you need enough energy to climb and then

make the same trek back in a state of enhanced fatigue.

"You have to have some resilience and robustness to just withstand those elements alone. And then if you add in climbing and carrying all of your equipment... it's definitely not for everyone," O'Connor said. "I'm not saying that everyone shouldn't try it, but not everyone's gonna like it."

As the rising sun spat fiery fuchsia across the sky, three companions and I caravanned to an unmarked trailhead near the eastern entrance to Yosemite National Park. Outfitted in rigid mountaineering boots, I hiked for 1½ hours over snow-covered boulders to reach the ice falls of Lee Vining Canyon.

Melinda Guerrero, 34, an experienced rock climber in my party who was trying ice for the first time, quickly calculated when we'd need to leave to avoid scrambling back after sunset. "I definitely don't want to do that in the dark," she asserted. My chafed heels whimpered in agreement.

When to climb

Ice-climbing season in sunny California tends to be short and, yes, ephemeral. It typically runs from December through March in the Eastern Sierra but is highly dependent on weather conditions.

Tahoe's season this year started in mid-November and is anticipated to last through February.

It's critical to gauge the condition of the ice

THE ICE FALLS of Lee Vining Canyon in Mammoth are among California's best sites for ice climbers, who come equipped with sturdy mountaineering boots, crampons, sharp picks and ropes to conquer constantly changing ice.

before getting on it. Sierra Mountain Guides posts handy ice reports.

When I visited the Eastern Sierra in mid-December, the temperatures were unusually warm. It made for more comfortable climbing (i.e., neither my fingers or toes screamed in pain) but less favorable ice conditions.

Clothing considerations

What distinguishes ice climbing from many other winter sports is that it involves relatively long periods of inactivity. While one person climbs, another waits below (or above) and belays them.

This trade-off of movement and pause makes a clothing layering system particularly important.

The person who isn't climbing generally throws on a heavy jacket and warm gloves. The outer jacket is shed while climbing and often gloves will be swapped for ones that allow for more dexterity.

If the walk to and from the ice wall is long or strenuous, it's important that you can strip off layers when you inevitably heat up.

Bringing "four pairs of gloves is not uncommon," O'Connor said.

A note on danger

Shards of ice whizzed past me on a deviously slick platform underneath frozen waterfalls that resembled lofty ice sculptures. One thumped my hand, as if to say, "Outta my way!"

"They didn't tell you about this part?" asked Jake Ballard, observing my consternation amid the onslaught. Ballard, 42, an experienced rock climber, recently started to tackle ice.

Actually, I had been told that one of the hazards of ice climbing is falling frozen debris. But I mistakenly assumed that ice would only plummet occasionally. (Later, I saw Ballard belaying a friend while he crouched behind a ridge to avoid the ice's flight path.)

No activity conducted in the mountains is 100% safe, ice climbing included. Risks can be managed, minimized, but not entirely avoided.

Mountain experts generally agree that ice climbing is more dangerous than outdoor rock climbing. Avalanches, sharp equipment, cold weather and unstable ice all threaten bodily harm.

"If you're in the wrong place at the wrong time, ice can fall and, if it hits you, there's big enough pieces that it will kill you," O'Connor said, adding that there are practices employed to position yourself to lower the likelihood of being hit.

There's also a major difference between the risks posed by what's known as leading and top roping a climb, both terms used in rock climbing. A person who leads a climb sets up the rope system that makes climbing safer for those who follow. They're less protected on the first ascent and can suffer a serious fall. The person who climbs after the system is set up will be on top rope, which means that their partner should be able to catch them with minimal consequence if they fall.

Jones, who owns Sierra Climbing School, said the changing nature of the medium makes screws inserted into the ice to limit the distance the lead climber can fall "inherently suspect."

"When you're top roping... it's just as safe as rock climbing as long as you're not like stabbing yourself with a pick," he said.

Climbing ice in a warming world

Climate change has made the evanescent sport more precarious. Increased heat doesn't just shrink the available ice but threatens to make what does freeze unreliable.

Ballinger said climate change has shortened the season as lingering higher temperatures often delay the start before returning early in the spring to lop it off.

A spike in temperatures during the season can weaken the bonds of the ice and make it unsafe to climb. Once upon a time, Ballinger said they could reliably "run ice" consistently on weekends once the season started. Now fluctuations on the thermometer make it touch and go.

"In California, it's always been ephemeral, but it's even more so now," he said.





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ANNA RESMINI For The Times

L.A. AFFAIRS

To feel something

ARTSY AND ATTRACTIVE, HE HELPED ME GET PAST A TRAGIC LOSS

BY JESSICA AMENTO



IN DECEMBER 2022, I was at Zara in the Glendale Galleria, helping my sister find a coat suitable for a funeral, when he first messaged.

“How are ya?”

It was a loaded question. My 27-year-old brother went to sleep the week before and never woke up, and our family didn’t know why. I was a wreck but I swiped through dating apps seeking a sense of normalcy. Among the suitors, one guy seemed special: artsy and attractive with empathetic eyes. So, I divulged.

“Admittedly not great. My brother died last week,” I responded.

“Well, I know we’re near strangers,” he wrote. “But if you want to talk to someone removed from it, I’m happy to.”

I was taken with his kind response to my overshare, and we established a long-distance

rapport (he had just moved from L.A. to New Orleans after a relationship ended).

Three months later, he came to town. I was at a house party in the Pacific Palisades when he texted.

My phone screen showed the time as 11:09 p.m.

“Is this a booty call?” I texted back.

“It is, yeah. Like, adjacent.”

I pondered the proposition. Still grieving, I was acutely aware of mortality and eager for anything to make me feel the opposite. I requested his location.

As I drove east on the 10 Freeway, more texts illuminated on my dash.

“I took a buncha ecstasy. Fair warning.”

Apparently, he was eager to feel something too.

He hopped in my car outside Prime Time Pub. His hair was pulled back and he smelled like

beer. We were matching in gray thermals and black pants. I was relieved to feel attracted to him.

“I’m enamored with your face,” he said.

Throughout the night, his brazen statements continued. “I love your big eyes,” he remarked. “How are you not married?”

I was cautious of his molly-colored claims. Even so, as he followed me into my apartment and leaned down to kiss me, I co-conspired, standing on my toes to meet him.

By morning, his tone was more practical. He shared his plans to sign a lease in New Orleans.

But before he left, he took me to dinner at Tsubaki in Echo Park. Later that night, back in my bed, he ran his fingers over the freckles between my ribs, and said they resembled the constellation Cassiopeia, channeling a scene out of “Serendipity.”

I had wanted to feel something

and I was starting to. Yet I was wary of feeling joy.

The next night, I was barhopping the Sunset block in Silver Lake, when I bumped into him having dinner. What were the chances? He kissed my forehead; I stepped on his foot.

Two days later, he ran into me at the reservoir. I slid my headphones around my neck, stunned.

The coincidences humbled me; suddenly, the clamp clenching my atrium loosened a notch. Nevertheless, he left for the Gulf Coast, and we carried on a touch-and-go dialogue, a “Serendipity” JPEG here, photos of his new apartment there.

Then, one night in April, I was having dinner at Greekman’s when he stumbled in. I couldn’t believe it. Here, we’d been planted in the same place unplanned a *third* time, and yet he hadn’t told me he was in town.

He sent olive oil ice cream to my table, an olive oil branch.

“You looked like you saw a ghost,” he’d later say, conveying that he hadn’t reached out because he needed to remain single.

I understood even if my ego didn’t, and defaulted back to dating apps. Then, something extraordinary happened.

The first two men I went out with had just vacationed in New Orleans. I wrote it off as a Baader-Meinhof frequency illusion, but the signs didn’t stop. One day it was a Louisiana license plate, the next an LSU sweatshirt at Starbucks or Linda Ronstadt’s “Blue Bayou” on the radio.

After a month, I couldn’t ignore the onslaught. I fired off a text.

“I was thinking of you earlier,” he replied.

That was all it took for me to suggest I visit. He obliged, and thus set in motion plans for our third date (if you counted the booty call, which I did).

I booked a plane ticket and checked the forecast: excessive heat warning. We barely left the hotel room. When we did, we traipsed through the French Quarter holding hands. We ate beignets on Bourbon Street and went night swimming.

“How did he die?” he asked as we simmered by the pool.

“Liver failure. Maybe from alcohol or genetics. We don’t really know. He was 27,” I shared, surprised by my vulnerability.

A few weeks after the trip, he invited me back for his photography show. I couldn’t attend, but to

show support, I bought a nude he took in the mirror, with proceeds going to Planned Parenthood.

The next time he flew to L.A., I was giddy to reunite, but the sentiment deflated when, in a postcoital moment, he put on his sneakers.

“You’re leaving?”

“We’ll both sleep better this way,” he said in a tone I didn’t recognize.

I didn’t sleep at all. The conversation carried over to morning, when by phone he confirmed my feelings had outpaced his.

“Are you OK?” he asked.

“Yes, I’m fine,” I lied.

But when we hung up, I sobbed. As tears fell from my chin, I wondered how long they had been needing to come out.

In the following days, I moved through the world in a state of compounded grief. Back at the reservoir, the path felt lackluster — a reminder that there was no divine order. I stopped seeing New Orleans signs.

But after the dust settled, in their place came winks from another 6-foot-plus figure from my past, another ghost: Turtles, Pokémon and license plates with my brother’s name, JJ.

I realized they had always been there; they were just too painful to pull into focus. It was easier to get caught up in a blossoming love story than to confront the unending horror of loss.

Weeks later, the full-frontal photo arrived via FedEx, and I asked my friends for their input. “Return to sender” and “Gift the world’s most elevated d— pic to the Louvre,” they suggested.

I weighed their opinions, until a fresh perspective crystallized. In life as in love, art and death, we get to choose what we see and how we interpret it.

So, I hung the photo on my wall.

Some days the image reminds me of getting my heart broken. On others, I recall my courage in being vulnerable — and how I started to open my heart back up.

> *The author is a screenwriter who lives in Silver Lake. She’s working on a novel.*

L.A. Affairs chronicles the search for romantic love in all its glorious expressions in the L.A. area, and we want to hear your true story. We pay \$400 for a published essay. Email LAAffairs@latimes.com. You can find past columns at latimes.com/laaffairs.

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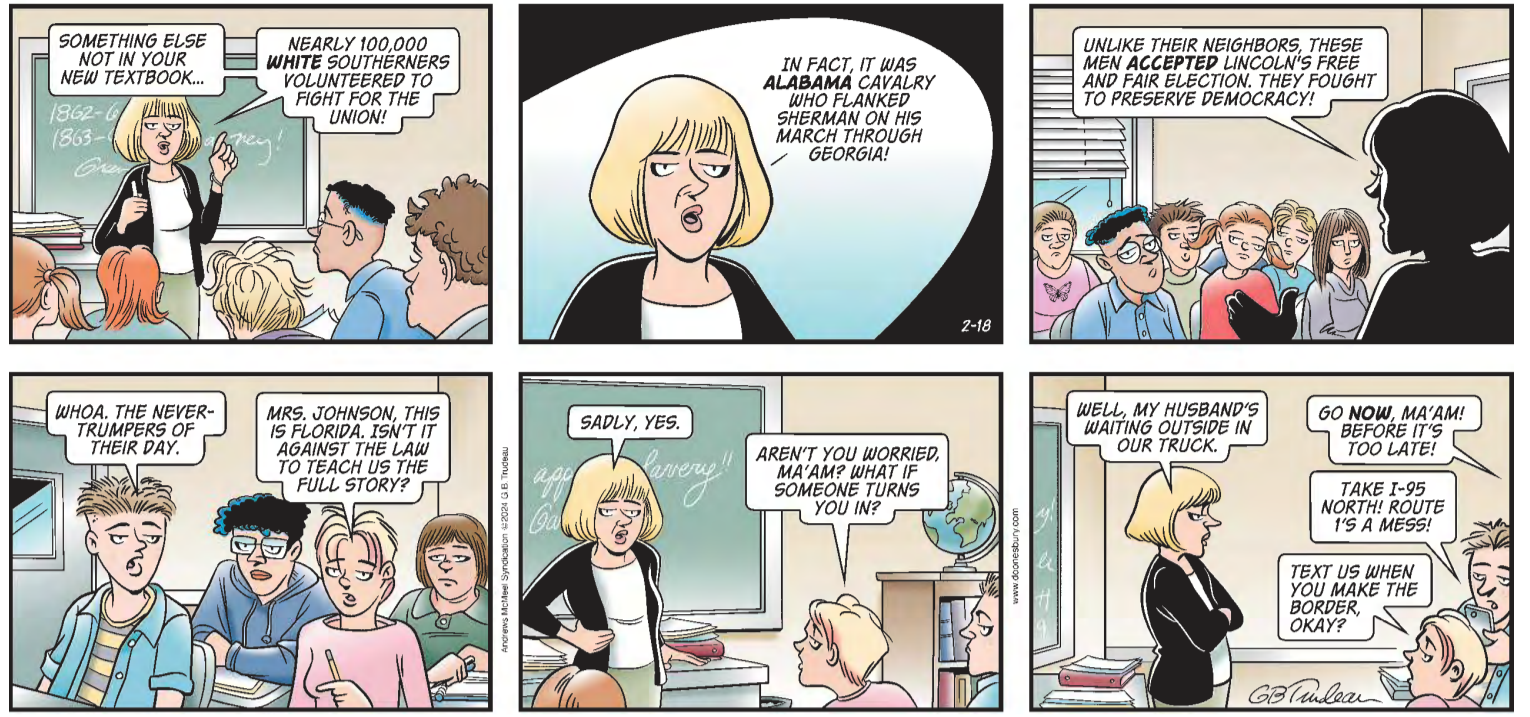
PICKLES

by Brian Crane



DOONESBURY

By Garry Trudeau



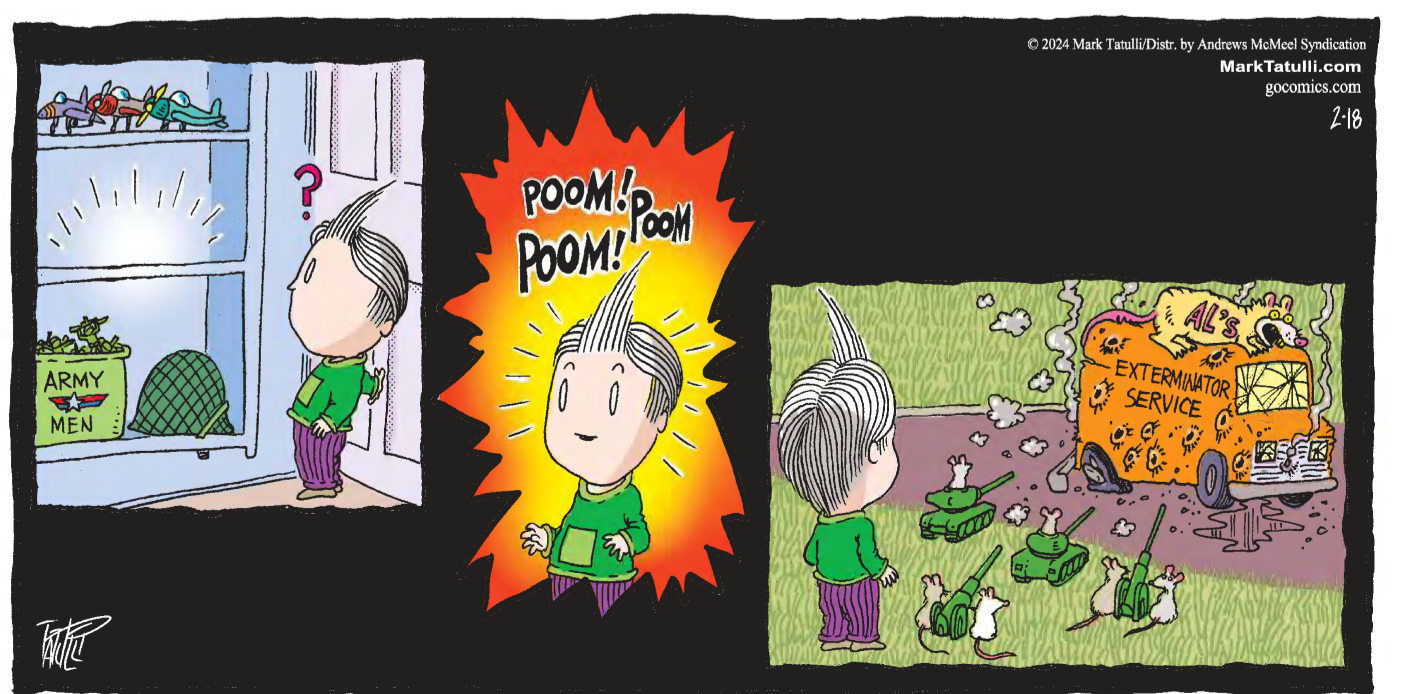
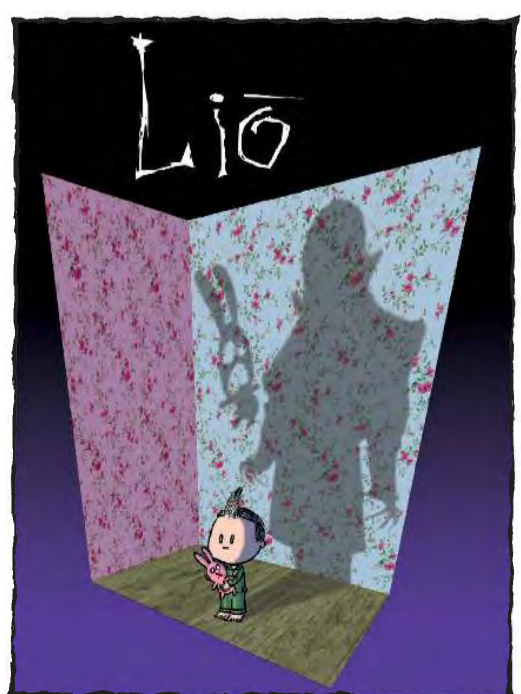
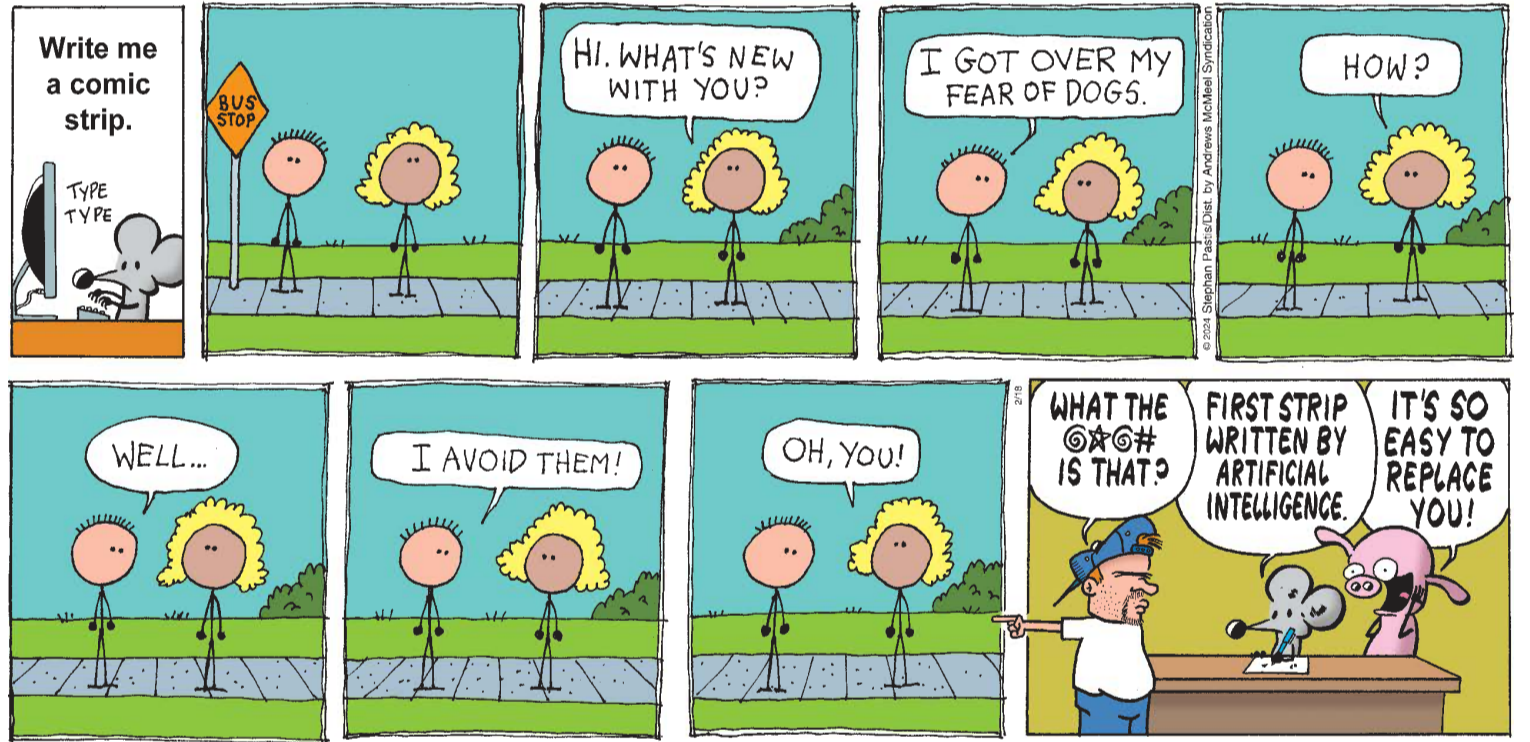
CRABGRASS

By Tauhid Bondia



PEARLS BEFORE SWINE

By Stephan Pastis



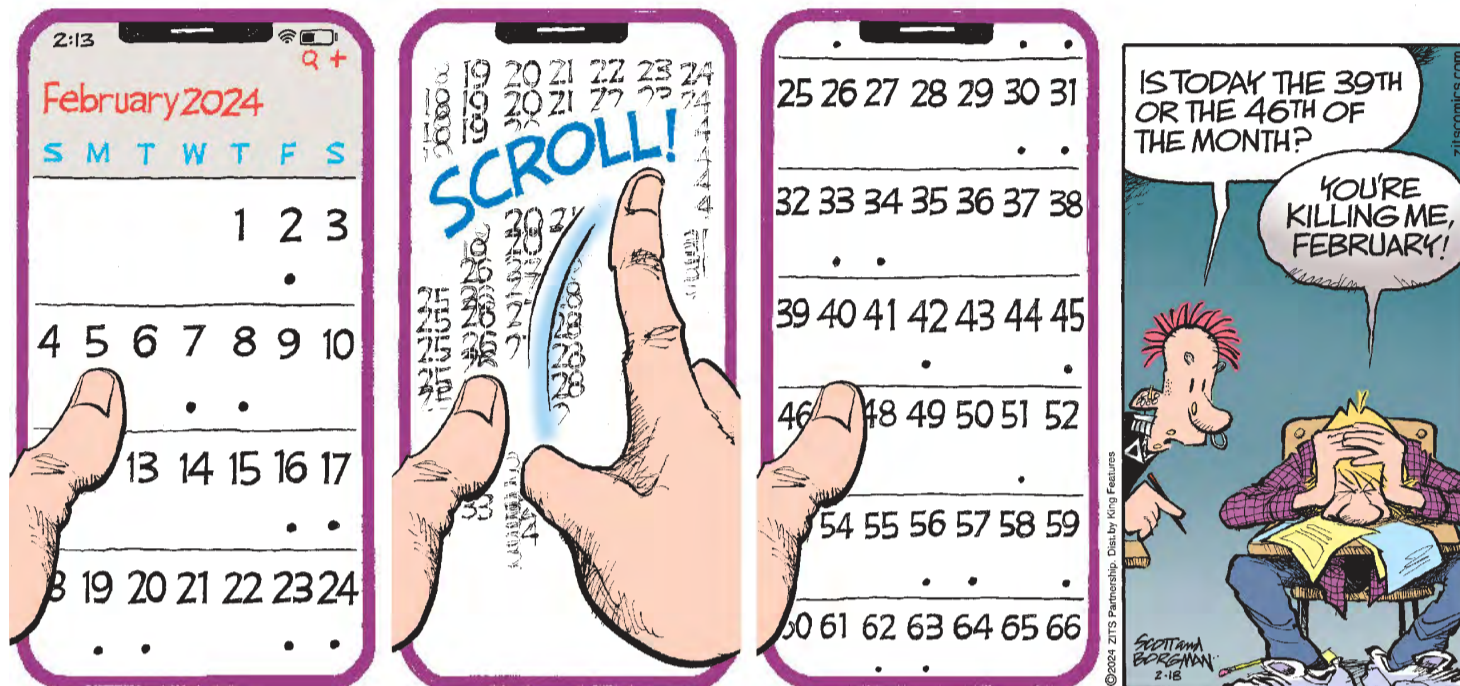
MUTTS By Patrick McDonnell



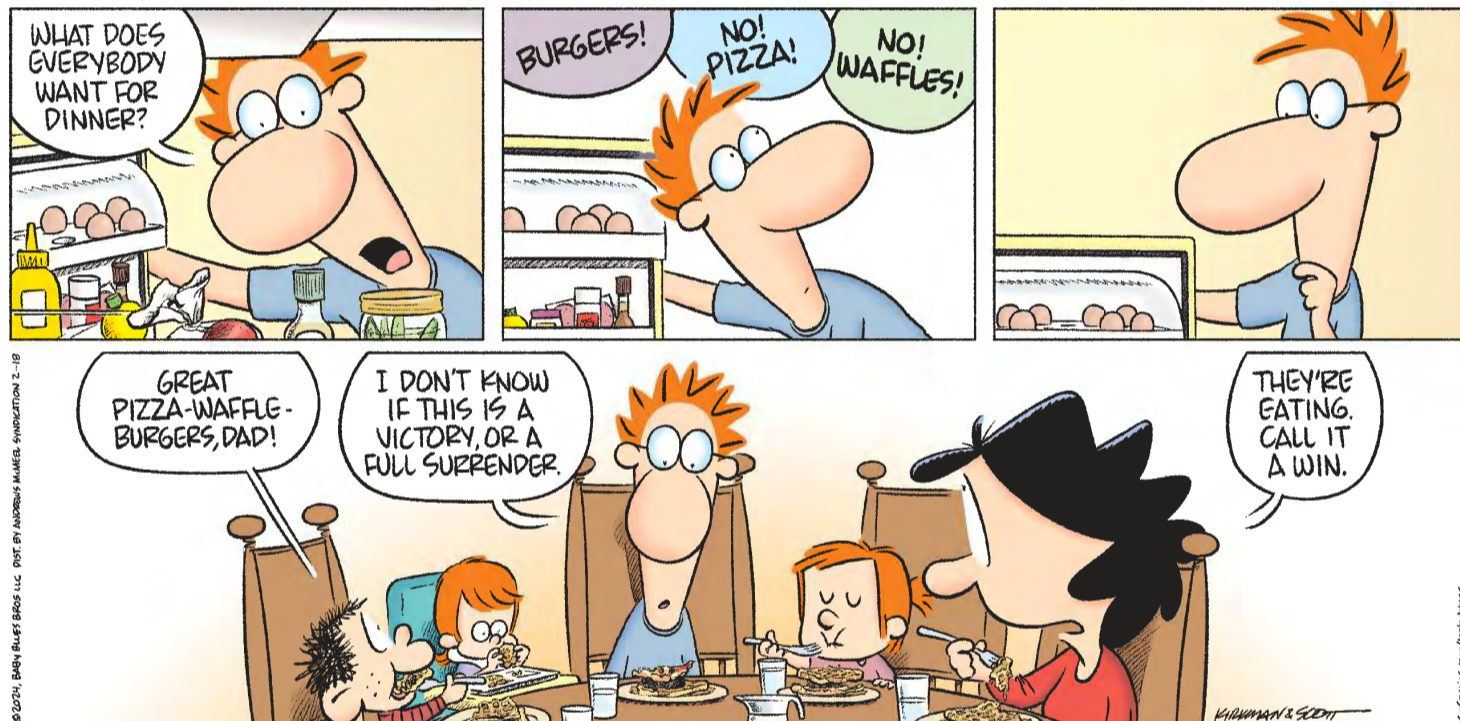
BLONDIE By Dean Young & John Marshall



ZITS By Jerry Scott and Jim Borgman



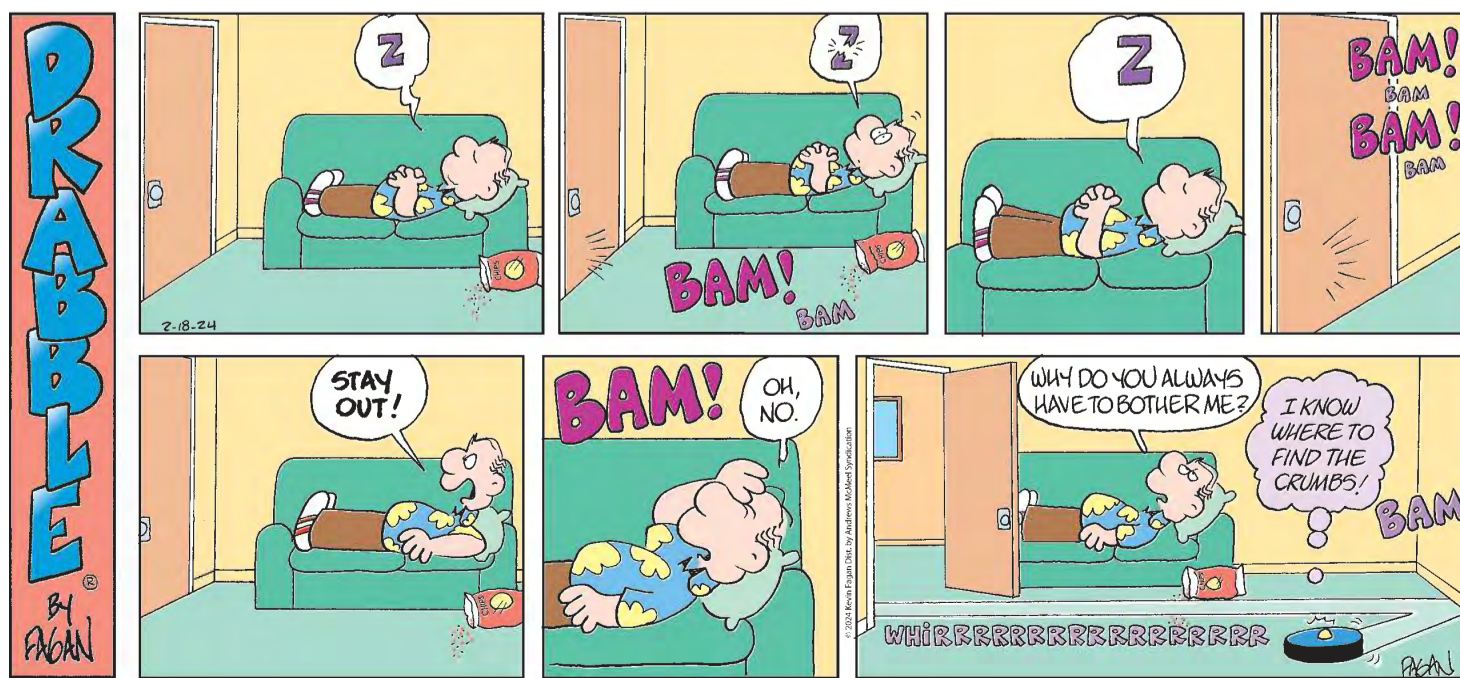
BABY BLUES By Rick Kirkman and Jerry Scott



MARMADUKE By Brad & Paul Anderson



MACANUDO By Liniers



DOG GONE FUNNY TULSA, OK
 GREAT DANE **BRUTUS** IS YOUNG **JOAN GALLO**'S BEST FRIEND. THEY WOULD **SWIM** IN LAKE MICHIGAN AND **FROLIC** IN THE **SAND**. **BRUTUS'** FEET GOT QUITE **DIRTY**, BUT NOT TO WORRY. **BRUTUS** ALWAYS **WIPED HIS FEET** BEFORE GOING INTO THE HOUSE.

HOROSCOPE

HOLIDAY MATHIS

Aries (March 21-April 19): Today is nonstop movement toward one particular goal...

Taurus (April 20-May 20): You may find yourself stretching to meet one of your responsibilities...

Gemini (May 21-June 21): You have the chance to right a wrong. Share your opinion and you'll quickly learn that you're not the only one who holds it.

Cancer (June 22-July 22): When you agreed to help out, you had no idea it would take this long or lead to so many other things.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 22): As for the rebel inside you, sometimes it has a cause, and more often, being rebellious is enough of a purpose.

Virgo (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): You've already proved yourself. You don't have to talk about your work, defend your actions or explain yourself in any way.

Libra (Sept. 23-Oct. 23): You'll get information in a psychic flash and follow through immediately on the impulse — good, because this one can't wait.

Scorpio (Oct. 24-Nov. 21): Making a certain person smile will occupy your thoughts. Mahatma Gandhi suggested, "To give pleasure to a single heart by a single act is better than a thousand heads bowing in prayer."

Sagittarius (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Justice will prevail, although reciprocity won't necessarily come in the form of an equal exchange with the same individuals.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You'll be spinning on good ideas in the morning and great ideas at night. Your work keeps improving because you're not afraid to go for something better.

Aquarius (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): You are effortlessly charming and often unaware there's anything out of the ordinary happening at all.

Pisces (Feb. 19-March 20): You're doing a juggling act today. But no matter how many come, you only have to handle one at a time.

Today's birthday (Feb. 18): You dreamed you would be able to have a certain special thing and share it with your loved ones and the world one day. This year, that day comes.

Mathis writes her column for Creators Syndicate Inc. The horoscope should be read for entertainment.

Position Papers

EDITED BY PATTI VAROL

BY JOHN LIEB

ACROSS

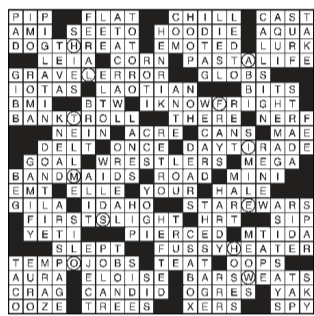
- 1 "Doctor Who" ailer
4 Comedian Wong
7 North African expanse
13 Flying disc game
19 Traffic regulator in a construction zone
21 Chemical cousin
22 First-string units
23 Periodical for prosecutors, defense attorneys, and judges?
25 Xterra maker
26 Yalies
27 Promo
28 Altercations
29 Commoner
30 Paint brand sold at Home Depot
31 Canoe material
34 Foreign policy gp.
36 Support
37 Rooney of "Women Talking"
38 Guitar accessories
40 880 square feet, for a pickleball court
41 ... for con artists?
44 ... for kitchen remodelers?
46 Drift
47 Captain Nemo creator
49 Geek
50 Org. created two years before the 1896 Athens games
53 Major work
54 Cape —, Massachusetts
55 Actor Vigoda
58 "Monday Night Football" channel
61 Pod members
63 Everyone

- 65 Missed the mark
67 ... for aspiring entertainers?
71 Physicist Mach
72 Squeeze (out)
73 Gaming tile
74 Retired jets
75 Kama Sutra topic
76 Informal greetings
78 Sonic the Hedgehog platform
79 Gaming cubes
81 Paris river
83 Ohio home of Minor League Baseball's RubberDucks
84 Shel Silverstein's "A Light in the ..."
88 ... for potato chip aficionados?
91 ... for scuba divers?
95 Granola bar bits
96 Sag
97 Private aid gps.
98 "Insecure" star Issa
99 Sample on a swab
100 Soul singer Baker
102 Gear parts
103 Cross products
104 Like hot yoga
108 Venus flytrap snack
110 Sandy sediment
111 Margaret Atwood's homeland
112 ... for clockmakers?
116 Spring river phenomenon
117 Amp toter
118 Takes the plunge
119 Talks to online
120 Bays, e.g.
121 Sigma follower
122 Show with an early a.m. after-party

DOWN

- 1 Fave pal
2 Offside boundary in hockey
3 Picked in class
4 Gremlins, or where some saw "Gremlins"
5 Southeast Asian language
6 Yet to be delivered
7 Instrument that dates to the Mughal Empire
8 Nile vipers
9 Biblical peak
10 Alaskans, Hawaiians, etc.
11 Hi or low follower
12 "— longa, vita brevis"
13 "Citizen —"
14 Bickering
15 Jay's home
16 "All the President's Men" Oscar winner
17 Stockpiles
18 Yahoo! rival
20 Smooth-talking

Last week's solution: "Center of Attention"



ASK AMY

Dear Amy: My wife, kids and I had a wonderful time visiting recently with my sister, her new husband and their daughter, "Evie," at their home in Florida.

I was very bothered that during our time there, Evie always had a vaping pen in her hand.

On several occasions, I observed her going onto the "smoking porch" with her folks and my wife, and vaping while the adults smoked.

I asked my sister why she allows Evie, who just turned 15, to do this.

She said Evie picked up smoking from her and her husband. They got her a vaping pen as an alternative to cigarettes.

My wife smokes, but our kids know there will be major consequences if they are caught smoking or vaping.

My sister and her husband want to take a cruise and asked if Evie could stay with us. We agreed, but how do we deal with the issue with her vaping, since her parents allow it?

WORRIED UNCLE

Dear Worried: These parents' choice to hook their daughter on vaping nicotine, allegedly in order to protect her from cigarettes, is not reprehensible.

It is now illegal in all 50 states for anyone under 21 to purchase tobacco products, including vaping products.

You've heard the cliché: "My house, my rules?" Calmly, assuredly and pointedly raise this in advance of the visit, sharing your non-negotiable with Evie and her parents: "We look forward to having Evie visit us, but we don't allow any underage person in our home to smoke in any form. That includes vaping. Evie, will you agree not to vape at our house?"

Your wife should not smoke at all in the presence of any of these young people.

During the week she is with you, communicate privately with Evie about vaping, and assume that she will hide her habit while with you. Don't overly police her or go through her things.

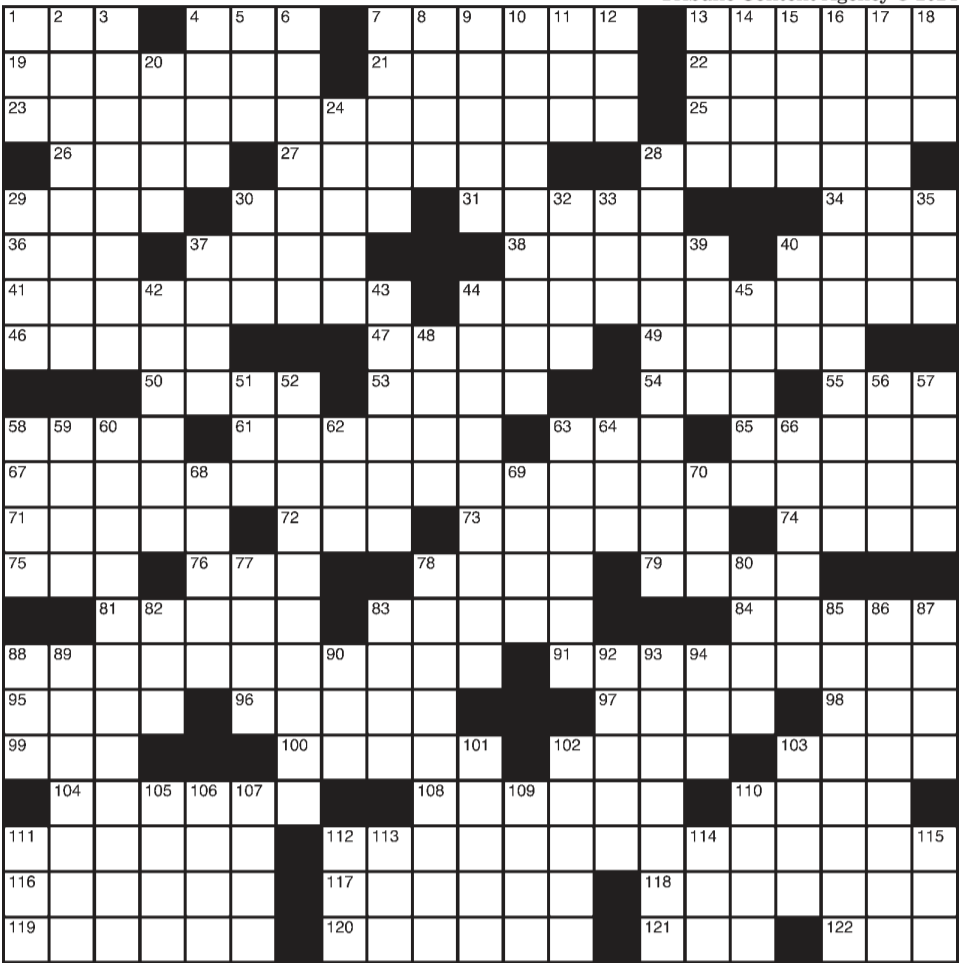
Email questions to Amy Dickinson at askamy@amydickinson.com.

- 24 Post-injury regimen
28 "Grey's Anatomy" production company
29 Bygone
30 The Orioles, in box scores
32 Broccoli —
33 Cost-of-living fig.
35 Purr-former
37 Baseball VIPs
39 In stitches
40 Mimic
42 Hurts
43 Increase in complexity, perhaps
44 Passionate activists
45 Moral principle
48 Fencing sword
51 Yelps of pain
52 Charcuterie board accompanier
56 Tucked out
57 Ice cream brand
58 Peepers

- 59 Vexed
60 "Groundhog Day" town
62 "Raiders of the Lost —"
63 Actor Assante
64 Wearable wreath
66 Met, as a challenge
68 Set of principles
69 Enticing sales acronym
70 Showy carp
77 With sharp resolution
78 Having doubts
80 Cleveland NBAers, for short
82 Nav. rank
83 Mine, in Marseille
85 Indefatigable
86 "Things never go my way!"
87 Copyright symbols
88 Cape —, Massachusetts
89 Rifle
90 Cyclotron particle
92 Pre-flood Biblical patriarch

- 93 Custardy dessert
94 Like a negative number squared: Abbr.
101 Battery terminal
102 Hands over
103 Flamingo hue
105 Wyatt of the Old West
106 Together, in music
107 Souvenirs from an island vacation?
109 Bit of pique
110 California sch. of Padres legend Tony Gwynn
111 Prefix with gender
112 — Lanka
113 Geological stretch
114 "Candyman" director DaCosta
115 Gateway Arch city, for short

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POKER JONATHAN LITTLE

I was recently told about a poker hand that demonstrates an error that many small stakes players make on a regular basis: min-raising after the flop.



hands that are drawing nearly dead while also pricing out the draws.

The aggressive player pushed all in for \$165 total and Hero called. The opponent lost with J♠ 4♣ for top pair with no kicker.

While check/min-raising does not make sense against competent players, perhaps our Hero knew that this specific player is not capable of folding his marginal-made hands on a draw-heavy board to a min-raise, making the assumption that Hero must have a draw to play his hand in this aggressive manner.

Clearly a lot of knowledge about the opponent is necessary before min-raising becomes a consideration. While this play worked out well for Hero, check-shoving all in will work out better in the long run.

Little is a professional poker player and author with more than \$7 million in live tournament earnings.

the third blind led for \$35 out of his \$165 remaining stack into the \$61 pot. Everyone folded back around Hero, who check-raised the minimum to \$70.

I am strongly against min-raising when facing competent opponents when you cannot fold any reasonable hand if they go all in. Notice that even if your opponent has a hand like ace-jack, he should consider folding, assuming you rarely min-raise, which is often the case in small stakes games.

So, if he has a marginal-made hand — another likely leading hand — he has an easy fold and if he has a strong draw, he has an easy call. By check-raising minimum, our Hero forces his opponent to play perfectly, which is the exact opposite of what you want to do.

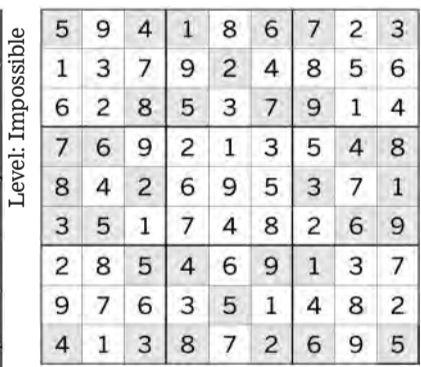
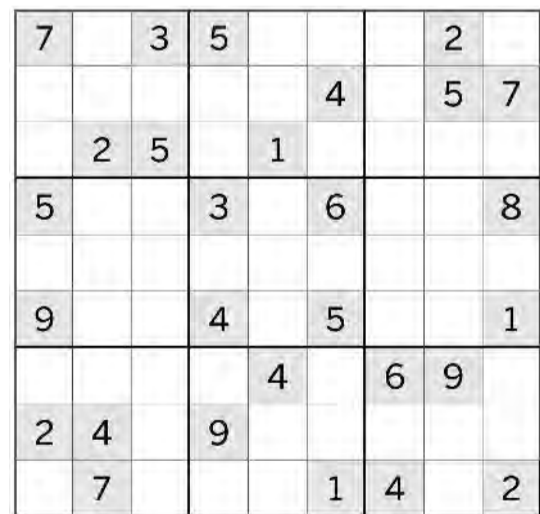
The aggressive player in

Notice that even if your opponent has a hand like ace-jack, he should consider folding, assuming you rarely min-raise, which is often the case in small stakes games.

So, if he has a marginal-made hand — another likely leading hand — he has an easy fold and if he has a strong draw, he has an easy call. By check-raising minimum, our Hero forces his opponent to play perfectly, which is the exact opposite of what you want to do.

Hero should have gone all in to get called by the opponent's strong and decent made

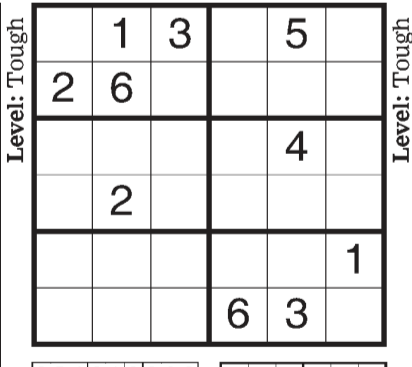
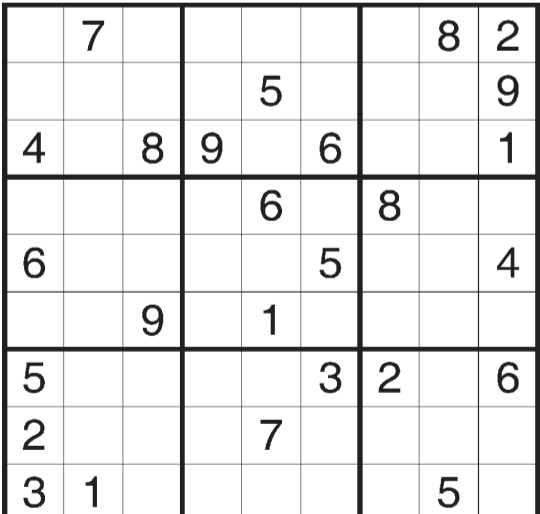
SUDOKU



Solution to last week's puzzle

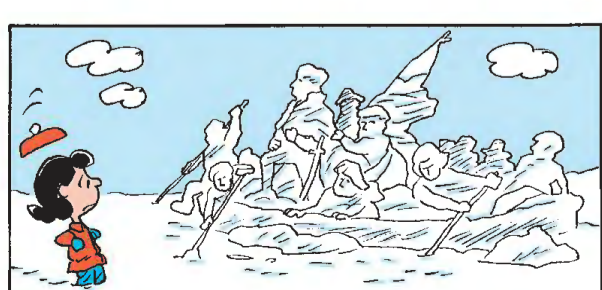
More Online

For other brain-teasing challenges, go to latimes.com/games.



Solutions to Saturday's puzzles

Complete the grid so each row, column and 3-by-3 or 2-by-3 box contains every digit from 1 to 9 (or 1 to 6 for the smaller grid). For strategies on how to solve Sudoku, visit www.sudoku.org.uk.



FoxTrot

by Bill Amend

HAVE YOU NOTICED OUR SNOW SOCCER GAMES ALWAYS END IN A 0-0 TIE?

IT'S CRAZY HOW EVENLY MATCHED WE ARE.

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JUMP START

Starring JOE & MARCY

By ROBB NIKSTRONG

SUNNY!

THANK YOU FOR THE LOVE YOU BROUGHT MY WAY!

SUNNY! THANK YOU FOR THE TRUTH YOU LET ME SEE!

SUNNY!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SMILE OF GLEE!

...THE DARK DAYS ARE GONE AND THE BRIGHT DAYS ARE DUE...

SUNNY ONE SO TRUE -

I LOVE YOU!

GET BACK, JOJO!

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IN THE BLEACHERS By Steve Moore

WHO ARE YOU WORKING FOR?! TALK!

IT'S NO USE, CHIEF... HE'S STONEWALLING US.

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NON SEQUITUR By Wiley

THE DISCOUNT CARNIVAL SIDESHOW

SEEING IS BELIEVING!

WORLD'S SHORTEST GIANT!

WILL TELL YOU WHAT YOU'RE DOING WRONG WITHOUT BEING ASKED!

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FILED THEIR INCOME TAX RETURN IN JANUARY!

WORD PROCESSOR THAT WORKS WITHOUT ELECTRICITY!

WAS ONCE AN INFANT!

RELATED TO LIONS!

TEEN NOT ON SOCIAL MEDIA!

COMING SOON ...MAYBE

BOOK BANNING ADVOCATE WHO ACTUALLY READ THE BOOK!

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CANDORVILLE By Darrin Bell

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My day rate is six endangered seals and two fishermen all doused in oyster sauce.

Please send details about your project, and note whether your skill is sweet or tangy.

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FRAZZ By Jef Mallett

HOW DID YOUR TEAM DO?

WE... WON.

HOW DID YOUR TEAM DO?

THEY... LOST.

GROWN-UPS ARE SO TRANSPARENT.

WE...

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BIZARRO

BARK

SPEAK

WOOF

BARK

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A FILM BY CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

OPPENHEIMER



A FACE. Gaunt, tense. EYES TIGHTLY SHUT.
The face SHUDDERS - the sound CEASES as my
EYES OPEN, STARING INTO CAMERA:

Peer into my soul - J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER,
aged 50, close cropped greying hair. The
gentle sounds of bureaucracy...

Super title:

1. FISSION

VOICE (O.S.)

Dr. Oppenheimer, as we begin, I believe you
have a statement to read into the record?

I glance down at my notes.

OPPENHEIMER

Yes, Your Honour-

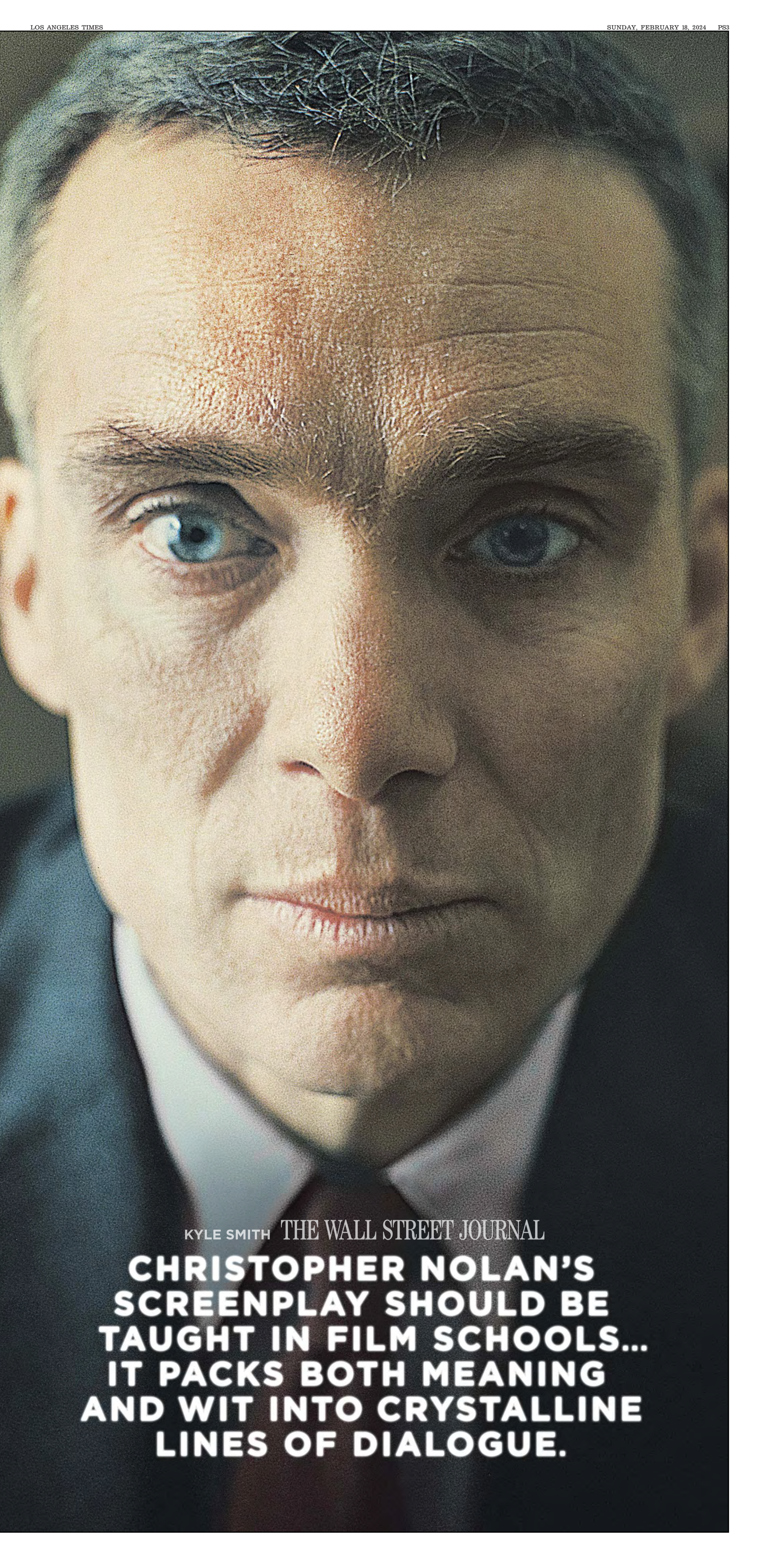
OPPENHEIMER

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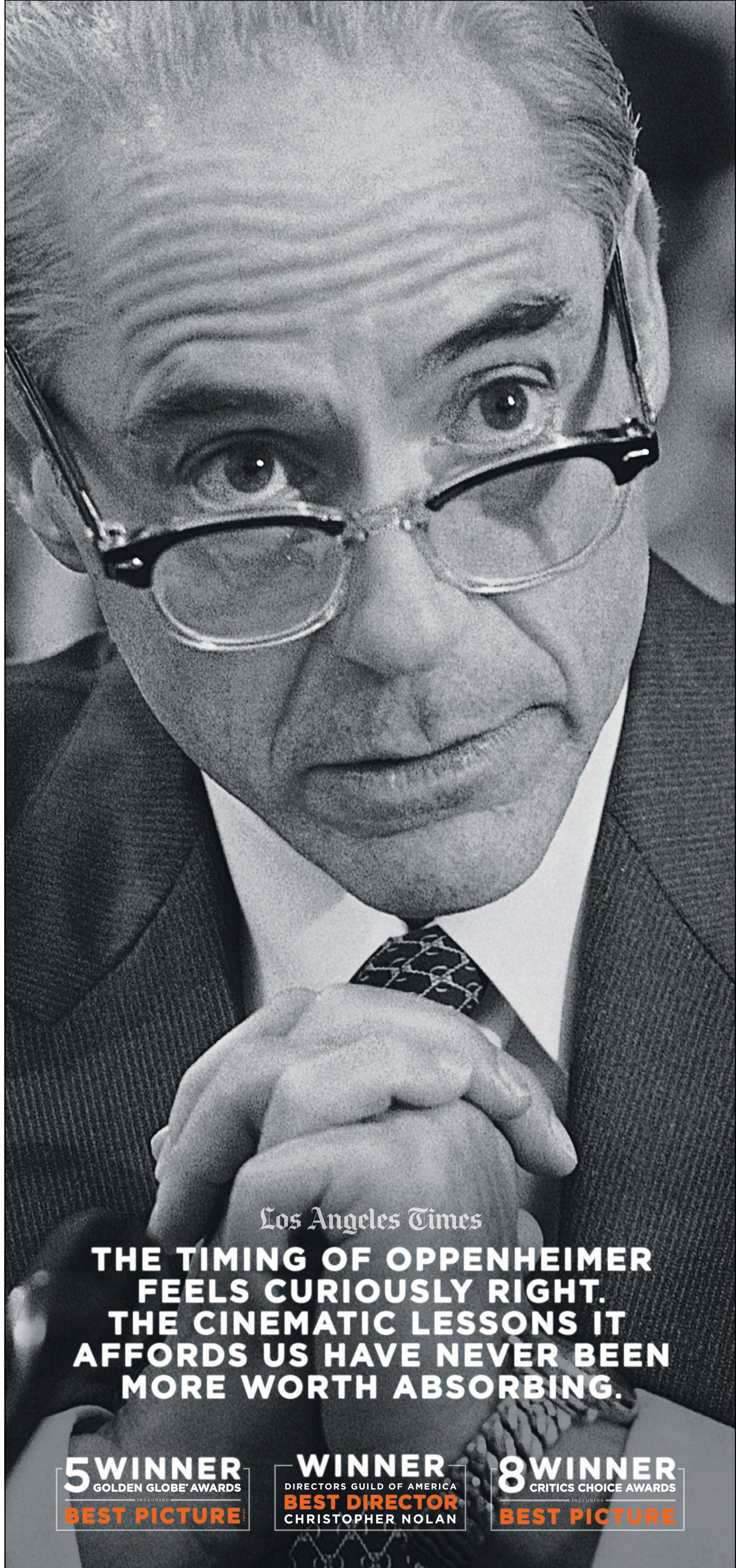
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

BASED ON THE BOOK "AMERICAN PROMETHEUS: THE TRIUMPH AND TRAGEDY
OF J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER" BY KAI BIRD AND MARTIN J. SHERWIN



KYLE SMITH THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

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TAUGHT IN FILM SCHOOLS...
IT PACKS BOTH MEANING
AND WIT INTO CRYSTALLINE
LINES OF DIALOGUE.**



Los Angeles Times

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FEELS CURIOUSLY RIGHT.
THE CINEMATIC LESSONS IT
AFFORDS US HAVE NEVER BEEN
MORE WORTH ABSORBING.**

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GOLDEN GLOBE AWARDS
INCLUDING
BEST PICTURE

WINNER
DIRECTORS GUILD OF AMERICA
BEST DIRECTOR
CHRISTOPHER NOLAN

8 WINNER
CRITICS CHOICE AWARDS
INCLUDING
BEST PICTURE