



WSJ

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL WEEKEND



DOW JONES | News Corp. ***** SATURDAY/SUNDAY, DECEMBER 2 - 3, 2023 ~ VOL. CCLXXXII NO. 130 WSJ.com ***** \$6.00

What's News

Business & Finance

- ◆ **Meta has spent months** trying to fix child-safety problems on Instagram and Facebook, but it is struggling to prevent its own systems from enabling and even promoting a vast network of pedophile accounts. **A1**
- ◆ **Chinese property giant** Evergrande and its biggest foreign creditors are negotiating a deal to prevent a liquidation of the company's offshore businesses on Monday. **B1**
- ◆ **Apple and Paramount** have discussed bundling their streaming services at a discount, the latest attempt by rival entertainment giants to team up. **B1**
- ◆ **Amazon said it hired** Musk's SpaceX to conduct three rocket launches for the Seattle company's planned satellite-internet division. **B9**
- ◆ **Neiman Marcus rejected** Saks Fifth Avenue's most recent takeover offer, which valued the upscale chain at close to \$3 billion, according to people familiar with the situation. **B9**
- ◆ **Hopes that the Fed** is done raising rates turbocharged a rally. The Dow added 2.4% for the week, notching a fifth weekly gain, its longest winning streak since late 2021, while the S&P 500 and Nasdaq added 0.8% and 0.4%, respectively. **B11**

World-Wide

- ◆ **The House voted** to expel embattled Rep. Santos over allegations the New York Republican stole money from his own campaign and committed other misdeeds. **A1**
- ◆ **Sandra Day O'Connor**, the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court and its most powerful justice for much of her tenure, died at 93. **A1, A7**
- ◆ **Negotiators scrambled** to reinstate a weeklong truce between Israel and Hamas that expired, as both sides resumed fighting a nearly two-month-old war. **A1, A8-9**
- ◆ **The U.S. has provided** Israel with large bunker-buster bombs, among tens of thousands of other weapons and artillery shells, to help dislodge Hamas from Gaza. **A8**
- ◆ **The CDC is urging** people to avoid eating certain cantaloupe products amid a salmonella outbreak that has resulted in at least two deaths in the U.S. **A3**
- ◆ **Trump's efforts** to claim absolute immunity to ward off criminal and civil legal actions against him were rebuffed twice in separate legal decisions. **A4**
- ◆ **Ukraine's Zelensky** ordered the construction of a network of fortifications aimed at holding back Russian forces, signaling a switch to the defensive posture after a Ukrainian counteroffensive yielded only small gains. **A10**

NOONAN
AI is the Y2K crisis, only this time it's real **A15**

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Sandra Day O'Connor, shown in her office in 2009, considered herself a plain-spoken cowgirl but rose to become the first woman on the Supreme Court, where she served nearly 25 years.

1930-2023

O'Connor, First Woman On High Court, Dies at 93

By JESS BRAVIN

Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman appointed to the Supreme Court and its most powerful justice for much of her tenure, died Friday.

O'Connor, who retired in 2006 after nearly 25 years on the court, died in Phoenix of complications related to advanced dementia and a respiratory illness, the court said in an announcement. She was 93 years old.

"A daughter of the American Southwest, Sandra

Day O'Connor blazed an historic trail as our Nation's first female Justice," Chief Justice John Roberts said in a statement. "She met that challenge with undaunted determination, indisputable ability, and engaging candor."

O'Connor was an Arizona state judge in 1981 when Republican President Ronald Reagan, fulfilling a campaign pledge to break the male monopoly on the high court, selected her to succeed retired Justice Potter Stewart.

Over the next 24 years,

O'Connor came to wield the deciding vote between the court's conservative and liberal wings. She displayed a knack for moderation and compromise that sat well with the broad American mainstream, even as it frustrated ideological purists.

Born March 26, 1930, in El Paso, Texas, and raised on her family's Arizona ranch, the Lazy B, Sandra Day always

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◆ **Pragmatic legacy fades on polarized court.....** **A7**

House Expels Santos After Ethics Report

Rare vote to oust the New York Republican follows alleged stolen funds, other misdeeds

By KATY STECH FERREK AND JIMMY VIELKIND

WASHINGTON—The House voted Friday to expel embattled Rep. George Santos over allegations the New York Republican stole money from his own campaign and committed other misdeeds, in only the sixth expulsion from the chamber and the first of a member who wasn't a felon or supporter of the Confederacy.

Lawmakers voted 311 to 114 to remove him, above the two-thirds House supermajority required by the Constitution. While almost all Democrats and many Republicans supported the move to expel Santos, more than half of GOP lawmakers—including Speaker Mike Johnson (R., La.) and other members of party lead-

ership—said he shouldn't be ousted before his criminal case was resolved as it would set a bad precedent.

Another consideration for GOP lawmakers was that Santos's expulsion narrows Republicans' thin majority ahead of contentious votes on issues including Ukraine aid, border policy and the advancement of an impeachment probe of President Biden. At 221-213 now, the party can afford to lose only three votes if all Democrats are opposed, down from four previously.

The vote on Santos marks the culmination of a saga that started shortly after he was elected in 2022, when a New York Times report detailed that he lied about his work history, educational achievements and family background, prompting deeper scrutiny of his campaign funds and financial dealings.

New York federal prosecutors subsequently charged Santos with an array of crimes, including for allegedly

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George Santos exits after the House voted to expel him.

Gaza Fight Resumes After a Fragile Truce

TEL AVIV—Negotiators scrambled to reinstate a weeklong truce between Israel and Hamas that expired Friday, as

By David S. Cloud, Vivian Salama and Summer Said

both sides resumed fighting a nearly two-month-old war that has left large parts of Gaza in ruins and more than 100 hostages still in captivity.

Israel launched new bombing attacks and warned Palestinians of imminent combat in parts of southern Gaza, en-

dangering more than a million people, including hundreds of thousands who fled there after weeks of fighting in the northern part of the enclave. Israel said Hamas violated the cease-fire first, by refusing to hand over a complete list of hostages to be released and by firing rockets toward Israel.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government is

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- ◆ **U.S. provides bunker-buster bombs to Israel.....** **A8**
- ◆ **How Thailand managed to free hostages.....** **A9**

Meta Is Struggling to Boot Pedophiles Off Its Platforms

Company steps up enforcement on Facebook and Instagram, but its algorithms continue to promote problematic content

By JEFF HORWITZ AND KATHERINE BLUNT

Meta Platforms has spent months trying to fix child-safety problems on Instagram and Facebook, but it is struggling to prevent its own systems from enabling and even promoting a vast network of pedophile accounts.

The social-media giant set up a child-safety task force in June after The Wall Street Journal and researchers at Stanford University and the University of Massachusetts Amherst revealed that Instagram's algorithms connected a web of accounts de-

voted to the creation, purchasing and trading of underage-sex content.

Five months later, tests conducted by the Journal as well as by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection show that Meta's recommendation systems still promote such content. The company has taken down hashtags related to pedophilia, but its systems sometimes recommend new ones with minor variations. Even when Meta is alerted to problem accounts and user groups, it has been spotty in removing them.

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Does Your Wedding Need A 'Social-Media Concierge'?

Vendors now include wedding content creators; some have their 'knickers in a twist'

By ALEXA CORSE

Yssabel Pangilinan, a software engineer in the San Francisco Bay Area, hired a traditional photographer and videographer to capture memories of her wedding at a Napa Valley estate in June.

"For me, that wasn't good enough," says Pangilinan, 30. Conventional pictures and videos often take weeks to be edited and delivered. "I wanted to be able to

see something right away," she says.

So she spent about \$4,000, including paying for travel, to bring in a "wedding content creator," who would be on hand with an iPhone to curate the perfect social-media-ready images of the nuptials and celebration.

Brides and grooms are shelling out for yet another vendor service: the wedding content gurus who are also

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Tiers of joy

EXCHANGE



MUNGER'S SECRET
The legendary investor who relished destroying his own best-loved ideas **B1**

Golf's Hottest Courses: No Greens, No Fairways

By WILL FEUER

Trevor Underwood now plays golf in a complex off the highway more often than on the lush course he has frequented for years.

"It sure beats the driving range," says the 34-year-old marketing executive from New Braunfels, Texas. Underwood says his local Topgolf, a chain that offers food, drinks and simulated golf, is more convenient, even when driving there takes him past his longtime traditional golf course.

Golf's reach is expanding from the course to high-tech driving ranges and other grassless settings, potentially upend-

ing what it means to be a golfer. Last year, the number of off-course golfers—those going to simulators, driving ranges and venues like Topgolf—surpassed that of on-course golfers in the U.S., according to the National Golf Foundation, citing survey data.

Broadening where and how the game is played could help deliver a new set of golfers as the industry looks to build on rising interest coming out of the pandemic. The more entertainment-focused venues, ranging from gamified driving ranges to indoor simulators with bars, are breaking down some stereotypes of the sport.

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U.S. NEWS



THE NUMBERS | By Josh Zumbrun

Crime Drops, but More Feel Victimized

Crime has been generating what look like contradictory headlines. In October, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's annual report showed violent crime in 2022 fell to its relatively low, prepandemic level. Yet in November, Gallup reported that a record-high 63% of U.S. adults said the "crime situation in the U.S. is extremely or very serious."

This seems to suggest that either the crime data is wrong or people are unrealistically negative. There is another possibility: More people are experiencing crime, but it isn't captured in FBI measures.

"There has long been a mismatch between public perception and reality on crime," said Ames Grawert, senior counsel at the Brennan Center for Justice, a liberal-leaning legal-policy institute. "But it's understandable that people would be worried about crime today, and we have to take them seriously."

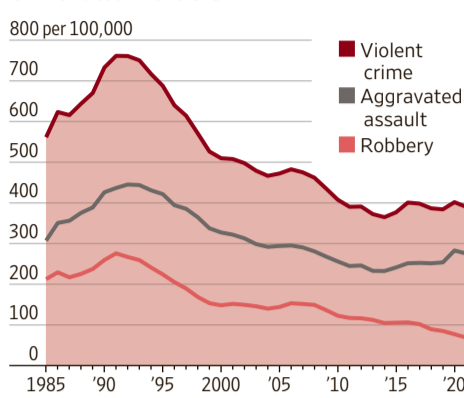
When you look at how crime statistics come together, it shows that violent crime can fall and people can simultaneously experience more crime.

The FBI's crime-statistics system originated in 1930. Its most reported figure, the rate of violent crime, combines the most serious offenses: homicide, rape, aggravated assault and robbery.

This rate is back to its prepandemic level, which itself came near the end of a multidecade decline. From

The rate of violent crime dropped in 2022 to its prepandemic level, with falling numbers of aggravated assaults and robberies making up most of the decline since the 1990s.

Crime rates in the U.S.



Percentage of respondents who said they would describe the problem of crime in the U.S. as extremely/very serious



Sources: FBI Crime in the U.S. (crime rates); Gallup polls, most recent of which conducted Oct. 2-23, 2023, of 1,009 adults; margin of error +/- 4 pct. pts.

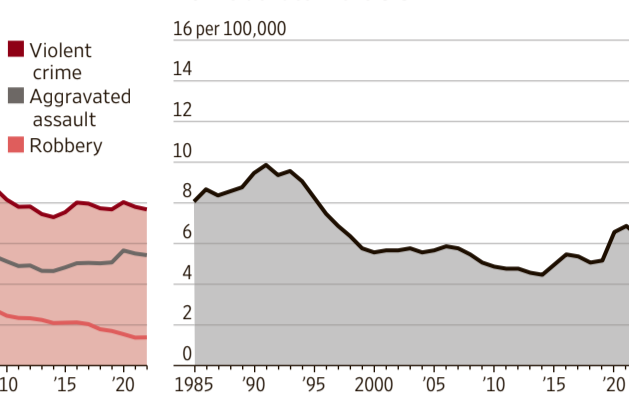
1991 until 2014 violent crime in the U.S., like much of the world, fell sharply, from 783 incidents per 100,000 people to 362. Grawert called it "one of the least remarked upon but most important social phenomena of our lifetimes."

In 2022, the rate stood at 381, down from a recent peak of 399 in 2020 and back to its 2019 figure, also 381.

But these figures come with qualifiers. The FBI has been changing to a more

granular data-reporting system. The switch was supposed to be completed in 2021. But that year many police departments were still learning the new system, so the FBI used data from police departments covering only 52% of the country, and extrapolated the rest, making it difficult to know whether violent crime actually rose or fell compared with 2020. For 2022, the FBI has data from departments covering 94% of the country.

Homicide rate in the U.S.



Percentage of households that were victimized by one or more of seven crimes



Note: Includes nonviolent crimes

Another caveat is that the violent-crime rate is largely driven by aggravated assaults and robberies, which are far more numerous than homicides. Homicides are naturally a major concern, and the homicide rate abruptly soared in 2020 amid the pandemic—and in 2022 was still 43% higher than in 2014. Much of the decline since the 1990s has been reversed during the past three years.

An even more important caveat is that violent crimes reported to the police almost certainly undercount actual crimes experienced by people, and trends in the two can diverge. Separate from the FBI, which gets its data from the police, the Justice Department asks people whether they have been the victims of crime and whether they reported it to the police. The September National Crime Victimization Survey showed only about 40% of violent crimes were reported to the police in 2022. The number of people who said they were a victim of violent crime rose 42% from 2021, but only 29% more reported crimes to the police.

This data has caveats, too. The survey, traditionally conducted in person, temporarily switched to phone interviews in 2020, and its data that year was at odds with other sources. (It showed no particular increase in crime.) That means 2021's data isn't easy to compare to the previous year, leaving the exact crime trend over the past three years unclear.

Most important, people worry about more than violent crime. In 2023, 28% of people told Gallup, as part of its annual survey on crime, that their household had been hit by a crime, up from 20% in 2020. Not all of those are violent—Gallup asks about seven crimes, including nonviolent ones—but they nonetheless matter to the affected household.

"A lot of this is pretty minor crimes like vandalism," said Jeffrey Jones, a senior editor at Gallup. "But if you've been victimized by a crime, and trends in the two can diverge. Perhaps unsurprisingly, 75% of households who report being victimized by a crime say they believe crime is rising in their area, versus 47% of those who weren't victimized, Jones noted.

Several high-profile types of crime also seem to be on the rise. Carjackings—a subtype of robbery—climbed in 2022, according to the FBI. Retail theft, which isn't included in violent-crime statistics, is also going up, driven especially by New York City and Los Angeles; in many other cities such thefts are falling. An analysis from John Jay College of Criminal Justice finds retail thefts at major commercial retailers such as drug and department stores in New York City soared from 31,000 in 2014 to 54,000 in 2022.

Some people say only corporations are victimized by this sort of crime, but in its aftermath, some customers will notice that they have to ask an employee to unlock the detergent shelf. These people might correctly conclude crime is going up even if they aren't personally a victim of it.

It is certainly good news that violent crime, with the notable exception of homicide, is down. But given the rise in other types of crime, it isn't surprising households are concerned.

Rate Hikes Are Likely Over, but No One Will Say So Yet

By NICK TIMIRAO

Federal Reserve officials are increasingly confident that they don't need to keep raising interest rates to defeat inflation. But they aren't ready to declare an end to hikes—let alone to start a discussion about lowering rates.

On Friday, Fed Chair Jerome Powell offered the strongest signal yet that officials are likely done raising rates by saying that their policy setting is "well into restrictive territory, meaning that tight monetary policy" is slowing economic activity.

But his remarks were laced with caution. "It would be premature to conclude with confidence that we have achieved a sufficiently restrictive stance,"

Powell said in remarks at Spelman College in Atlanta.

Recent slowdowns in inflation and wage growth provide evidence that the Fed's rate increases were succeeding, and officials expect the economy to cool further, he said. As a result, he signaled a higher bar for any further increases when he said officials would "tighten policy further if it becomes appropriate to do so."

Powell also said it was too soon "to speculate on when policy might ease," nodding to financial-market participants' growing expectations that the Fed will lower rates as soon as next spring.

Powell's comments leave officials on track to hold rates steady at their December meeting while maintaining

public guidance that their next rate change is more likely to be an increase than a cut.

Bond yields fell Friday as investors continued to dial up their expectations for the Fed to lower interest rates next year. Powell's threat of further hikes and his dismissal of rate cuts seemed halfhearted, said Karim Basta, chief economist at III Capital Management in Boca Raton, Fla.

The Fed has boosted its benchmark federal-funds rate at the fastest pace in four decades and most recently lifted it in July to a range between 5.25% and 5.5%. Holding it steady for a third-consecutive policy meeting would leave it unchanged at least through January.

Powell said Friday that af-



Fed Chairman Jerome Powell

ter increasing so rapidly, officials are moving forward carefully because the risks of raising rates too much or too little are better balanced now than previously.

Monetary policy is at its most economically restrictive setting in 25 years, and it will need to stay tight "for quite some time," New York Fed President John Williams said at a conference on Thursday.

Several months of subdued inflation readings have led investors to speculate that the Fed will cut rates by May or even earlier. But officials aren't ready to entertain such deliberations. They want to see more evidence that monthly inflation readings remain subdued or that the economy and hiring are slowing more than they anticipate.

That means the Fed at its Dec. 12-13 meeting will focus on how much longer to signal that rate increases remain a possibility. Officials are un-

likely to remove this so-called tightening bias at the gathering, which would be a necessary first step before considering whether to cut rates.

"If inflation is going to flare back up, I think you want to have the option of doing more on rates," Richmond Fed President Tom Barkin said recently. Officials are cautious for several reasons. They don't want to hastily announce "mission accomplished" on inflation, even if they are heartened by the recent slowdown, because the economy and inflation have been tricky to forecast in the past three years.

In 2021, inflation surged in the spring and then initially retreated that summer, giving the central bank false comfort the pickup would be short-lived. The Fed maintained an ultra-stimulative monetary policy put in place when the Covid pandemic erupted. Price increases accelerated that fall, forcing the Fed to make an abrupt policy U-turn.

As a result, officials today want to see more evidence that inflation doesn't settle above 3%, a level unacceptably high for a central bank with a 2% target.

Fed officials also don't want to encourage market rallies that could stimulate economic activity by declaring an end to rate hikes. They particularly want to avoid prompting investors to expect even more aggressive cuts than officials are willing to entertain when the economy is still growing.

—Eric Wallerstein contributed to this article.

Inflation Fight Comes Down to Housing, Goolsbee Says

Inflation seems on track toward the Federal Reserve's 2% target and now the big question is what will happen with housing in 2024, a top Fed official said Friday.

"It was absolutely where we wanted it to be," Chicago Fed President Austan Goolsbee said of the government's latest inflation data.

The Commerce Department reported on Thursday a slowdown in inflation in October, with the personal-consumption expenditures price index up 3% on a year-over-year basis, compared

with 3.4% in September. Price growth as measured by the PCE index is the Fed's preferred inflation gauge.

Inflation related to services and goods such as cars and appliances has declined substantially from pandemic highs. "The key thing we have to watch is housing," Goolsbee said.

House prices and rents have been snags for the Fed despite a barrage of interest-rate hikes, 11 in all since March 2022.

Mortgage rates have risen and home sales have fallen.

But prices have mostly continued to rise because of what experts say are structural issues in the market, including a dearth of homes for sale and homeowners unwilling to sell because they are locked into low-rate mortgages.

Goolsbee's comments at a talk in Chicago were similar to those of other Fed officials who have expressed positive sentiments about inflation data. Fed policy makers will meet Dec. 12-13 to make their next decision on interest rates.

—Bob Fernandez

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL
(USPS 664-880) (Eastern Edition ISSN 0099-9660)
(Central Edition ISSN 1092-0935) (Western Edition ISSN 0193-2241)

Editorial and publication headquarters:
1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, N.Y. 10036
Published daily except Sundays and general legal holidays.
Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and other mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to The Wall Street Journal, 200 Burnett Rd., Chicopee, MA 01020.

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CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

A statement describing Paul Whelan's assault in a Russian prison was released by his family. A World News article on Thursday about Whelan, a U.S. citizen who has been held in Russia since 2018, said the statement came from his sister.

Nearly 200 nations and business leaders pledged eight years ago to a target of keeping Earth from warming by no more than 1.5 degrees Celsius as measured from the preindustrial average temperature. Also, during the first nine months of 2023, the daily global average temperature exceeded that target on 86 days. A Nov. 29 World News article about the threshold to limit warming said the pledge was to keep Earth from warming above 1.5 degrees Celsius and that the daily global average temperature exceeded 1.5 C on 86 days during the first nine months of the year, without making it clear that "1.5 degrees Celsius" referred to a gain in temperature from the preindustrial average temperature and not the temperature itself.

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U.S. NEWS

CDC Warns On Eating Certain Cantaloupe

By JENNIFER CALFAS

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is urging people to avoid eating certain cantaloupe products amid a salmonella outbreak that has resulted in at least two deaths in the U.S.

At least 117 people across 34 states have become sick after eating contaminated cantaloupe since mid-October, according to the CDC. At least 61 people have been hospitalized and two have died in Minnesota. The federal agency said the number of people sickened is likely much higher.

The agency said it is particularly concerned about the outbreak because the illnesses have been severe and some have occurred in long-term-care facilities and child-care centers. Fourteen people in long-term-care facilities and seven children who attended child-care facilities have been sickened, the CDC said.

Whole cantaloupes with Malichita or Rudy brand labels were recalled in November, according to the Food and Drug Administration. These whole cantaloupes may have stickers that read "Malichita," "Rudy," "4050" or "Product of Mexico/produit du Mexique," according to the CDC.

Recalled pre-sliced cantaloupes were sold at stores such as Aldi, Kwik Trip, Sprouts Farmers Market, Trader Joe's, Kroger and Walmart in some states. Those products are made from the recalled whole cantaloupes, according to the FDA.

The CDC is recommending people not eat pre-sliced cantaloupe if they can't tell whether it comes from a recalled brand. If a sticker is missing from a whole cantaloupe, the agency said, people should contact the store selling the product to ensure it's not recalled.

The Public Health Agency of Canada is also investigating a salmonella outbreak linked to cantaloupe products, with at least 63 illnesses tied to the outbreak. Seventeen people have been hospitalized, and one person has died, the agency said.

There are about 1.35 million salmonella infections in the U.S. each year, according to the CDC. Those infected with salmonella may experience fever, diarrhea and stomach cramps, with symptoms beginning between six hours to six days after infection.

Many people recover from the illness, called salmonellosis, within a week. But others, particularly young children and older adults, are vulnerable to more severe illnesses.

EV Rules Leave Room for Chinese Suppliers

By ANDREW DUEHREN

The Biden administration is moving to jolt the domestic electric-car industry out of its reliance on China. But much-awaited rules released Friday appear to leave some room for U.S. companies to work with Chinese partners.

The new requirements will likely reduce the number of electric-vehicle models that consumers can buy and qualify for a \$7,500 tax credit. How many vehicles are eligible will hinge on automakers' ability to build cars that comply with the rules.

At issue is a new requirement that Americans can't claim the subsidy for buying any electric vehicle that contains battery materials produced by a "foreign entity of concern." The administration said Friday the definition would cover any firm based in China, including subsidiaries of U.S. companies, as well as companies elsewhere that are 25% or more controlled by Chinese state entities. Other arrangements that involve Chinese companies, such as licensing technology, might be permissible under the rules, officials said.

The decision could come as a relief to some automakers that already have relationships with industry-leading Chinese battery companies or were considering such ties. But it will likely frustrate lawmakers who wanted to see the U.S. auto industry severed from Chinese suppliers, the dominant source of minerals and components that power electric vehicles.

Biden administration officials declined to comment on whether specific companies' plans would meet the new definitions. Ford Motor has a lot at stake, lobbying the administration in recent months to allow technology-licensing deals, such as its agreement with the Chinese battery maker Contemporary Amperex Technology Co. Ltd., also known as CATL, under the subsidy rules.

Congress included a series of changes to the electric-vehicle buying subsidy in the Inflation Reduction Act and directed the Biden administration to work out the details of how to implement them. The Treasury Department has already narrowed the list of models that consumers can buy and claim the full \$7,500 tax credit, based on other requirements in the law. For example, to get the credit, electric vehicles can't cost more than \$80,000 for a van, pickup truck, or sport utility vehicle, or \$55,000 for any other vehicle.

Officials worked for months to define a foreign entity of concern under the battery provision, trying to balance their goals of making EVs cheaper, to bring down carbon emis-



FROM TOP: ALISHA JAEVIC/BLOOMBERG NEWS, NICK HAEHN FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



U.S. officials have tried to balance the goals of making EVs cheaper, to bring down emissions, with reducing reliance on China. At left, an electric Ford F-150 Lightning is displayed at the 2023 International Auto Show.

partments will be released for public comment and could change. Treasury plans to phase in enforcement.

"We appreciate the clarity today's guidance provides and the flexibility it creates for automakers," said Jennifer Safavian, president and chief executive of Autos Drive America, a trade group representing German, South Korean and Japanese car companies. A spokeswoman for General Motors said "we believe GM is well positioned to maintain the consumer purchase incentive for many of our EVs in 2024 and beyond."

When the rules fully take effect, EVs that contain battery materials produced in China won't be eligible for the car-buying subsidy. Even U.S. automakers with factories in China, such as Tesla, won't be able to import their materials for electric vehicles sold in the U.S. and remain eligible for the consumer subsidy, officials said.

While that approach will limit options for procuring minerals and components to manufacture electric vehicles eligible for the subsidy, car manufacturers had largely expected it.

A more-complicated question had been whether Chinese companies operating in the U.S. or in mineral-rich countries such as Morocco and Indonesia could play a part in the supply chain for electric vehicles that qualify for the subsidy.

Administration officials said such Chinese companies would comply with the rules as long as less than 25% of their equity and board seats are controlled by Beijing. They didn't say how many Chinese companies would fall afoul of that standard, and Biden administration officials declined to comment on how it would apply to major Chinese battery companies.

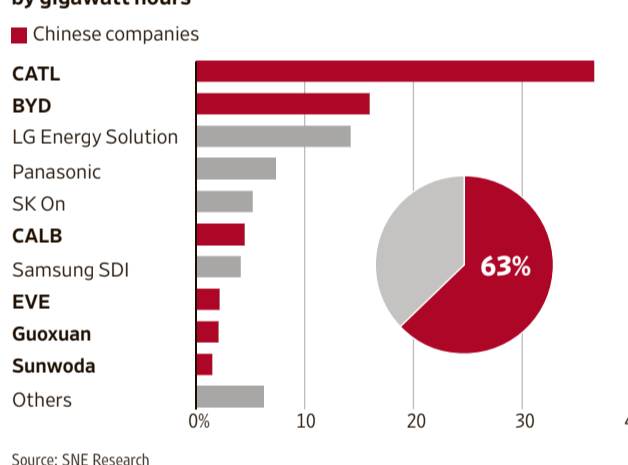
sions, with reducing reliance on China.

Some Biden administration officials worried that interpreting a foreign entity of concern too strictly could make the tax credit impossible for consumers to claim. Officials have also sought to compel companies to make a serious effort to move supply chains out of China.

"Overdependence, including on China, makes America more vulnerable to risks that disrupt our access to that foreign production, from natural disasters, to macroeconomic forces, to deliberate actions such as economic coercion," Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said Thursday while visiting Livent, a lithium company, in North Carolina.

Sen. Joe Manchin (D., W.Va.), the key author of the Inflation Reduction Act, blasted the administration's decision Friday, arguing it

Share of global EV battery market as measured by gigawatt hours



Source: SNE Research

didn't go far enough to push automakers to move supply chains from China. He said he would seek to force Treasury to change the rules, such as by supporting lawsuits that might emerge opposing them.

The rules, which also cover Iran, North Korea and Russia, apply to battery components starting in 2024 and the minerals that go into them in 2025. The proposals issued Friday by the Treasury and Energy de-

Court Tells Texas to Lift Border Buoy Barrier

By ALICIA A. CALDWELL AND ELIZABETH FINDELL

A federal appeals court has ordered the state of Texas to remove a 1,000-foot floating barrier deployed in the Rio Grande to block migrants from crossing the border illegally.

A three-judge panel of the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled 2-1 Friday to reinstate a lower court's ruling that the barrier illegally blocks the river and should be taken out of the water.

In a September ruling that was later put on hold pending this appeal, U.S. District Judge David Ezra, a Reagan appointee, ordered state officials not to expand the barrier and remove it from the water.

Texas authorities installed the string of orange buoys anchored by concrete blocks in the river near Eagle Pass, Texas, in July as part of the state's broader "Operation Lone Star" border-enforcement effort. But the barrier failed to deter migrants, who instead crossed the river and walked into Texas at other spots.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said in a statement posted to X, formerly Twitter, that the state would seek a rehearing before the full Fifth Circuit and take the case to the U.S. Supreme Court, if necessary.

"The 5th Cir. Court of Appeals' denial of Texas' sovereign authority to secure the border with floating marine



Buoys installed in July failed to deter migrants, who crossed the Rio Grande at other spots.

barriers is clearly wrong," Abbott, a Republican, said on X.

The Justice Department declined to comment.

The Department of Homeland Security applauded the ruling Friday night. "Enforcing immigration law is a federal responsibility and the U.S. Border Patrol is on the front lines enforcing the law by apprehending individuals who have crossed onto U.S. soil without authorization and applying immigration consequences," an agency spokesman said.

The Biden administration filed suit over the barrier in late July, its first significant effort challenging the state's bor-

der-enforcement apparatus. The administration argued that the barrier violates the federal Rivers and Harbors Act because it creates an obstruction in the river that makes it impossible to navigate.

Texas has argued that the barrier is necessary to prevent what authorities there describe as an "invasion" at the border and that the river in fact isn't navigable there.

Texas has spent or allocated nearly \$10 billion for its border security operations, including an operation to arrest migrants accused of trespassing on private land, as the number of arrests along the southern bor-

der has set records. In the past two years, federal authorities have made more than 2.4 million arrests of migrants crossing the border illegally, including nearly 1.3 million in Texas.

This past week, state legislators approved an additional \$1.54 billion for more border barriers.

In November, Texas lawmakers approved giving state and local authorities the power to arrest and deport migrants found crossing the river between ports of entry. Legal experts called the measure, which Abbott has said he would sign, a clear violation of federal authority.

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U.S. NEWS

Trump's Agenda Upends GOP Orthodoxy

A second-term platform envisions a muscular use of federal authority

By Andrew Restuccia
and Aaron Zitner

WASHINGTON—As he campaigns to retake the White House, Donald Trump has increasingly tossed aside the principles of limited government and local control that have defined the Republican Party for decades.

The former president is laying plans to wield his executive authority to influence school curricula, prevent doctors from providing medical interventions for young transgender people and pressure police departments to adopt more severe anticrime policies. All are areas where state or local officials have traditionally taken the lead.

He has said he would establish a government-backed anti-“woke” university, create a national credentialing body to certify teachers “who embrace patriotic values” and erect “freedom cities” on federal land. He has pledged to marshal the power of the government to investigate and punish his critics.

It is a governing platform barely recognizable to prior generations of Republican politicians, who campaigned against one-size-fits-all federal dictates and argued that state legislators, mayors and town halls were best positioned to oversee their communities. While many of his proposals would be difficult to achieve, the second-term agenda outlined by Trump could require waves of new federal intervention, even as he calls for firing government workers, neutering the “deep state” and cutting regulations.

“If Trump wins, the days of small government conservatism may be over,” said Lan-
hee Chen, a fellow at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution who served as the policy director of Mitt Romney’s 2012 presidential campaign.

Reshaping the party

For Trump, a second presidential term would mark the culmination of a yearslong campaign to reshape the party in his image, moving away from the core ideals espoused for decades by Ronald Reagan, Barry Goldwater, William F. Buckley and other idols of the conservative movement. Instead, Trump has rallied his millions of supporters in part by tapping into the cultural and social grievances that animate the conservative base.

The rapid shift in the priorities of the party has led to something of an existential



Donald Trump has outlined a governing platform that is barely recognizable to previous generations of Republican politicians.

A Closer Look at Trump's Second-Term Proposals

Here are some of former President Donald Trump's more notable proposals if he were to win a second term:

EDUCATION: Trump has promised to take funds from private university endowments to create a government-backed “American Academy” that would provide free online courses and allow people to achieve the equivalent of a bachelor's degree.

He would implement college entrance and exit exams and impose new standards on colleges in an effort to defend “the American tradition.” He has also pledged to create a new

credentialing body to certify teachers “who embrace patriotic values and support the American Way of Life.”

He would cut federal funding and potentially launch civil rights investigations into schools that teach critical race theory, discuss transgender issues and “other inappropriate racial, sexual, or political content on our children.”

GENDER: Trump would declare that any hospital or healthcare provider that approves medical interventions for young transgender people will “no longer meet federal health and safety standards for Medicaid and Medicare.”

He would direct his Justice Department to investigate whether pharmaceutical companies and hospital networks conspired to promote medical interventions for transgender people and illegally marketed puberty blockers and hormones.

POLICING: Any law enforcement agency that receives grants from the Justice Department would be required to implement policing measures like stop-and-frisk. The grants would also be conditioned on “strictly enforcing existing gun laws, cracking down on the open use of illegal drugs, and cooperating with [U.S. Immigration and Customs

Enforcement] to arrest and deport criminal aliens.”

CITIES: Trump has proposed erecting 10 “freedom cities” on undeveloped federal land. Under the plan, which includes few details, the government would hold a contest to generate proposals for cities the size of Washington, D.C., and then award development charters to the best ideas.

The former president has also proposed a countrywide “beautification” campaign, which would involve “getting rid of ugly buildings” and refurbishing public spaces.

crisis for longtime Republican officials. They have privately said the GOP of today is unrecognizable from even a decade ago, when many Republicans were campaigning on leaner government, balanced budgets, entitlement reform and free trade.

As president, Trump presided over four years of rising annual deficits, signing bipartisan budget agreements that boosted federal spending. He launched a trade war with China. And earlier this year, he warned his party not to “cut a single penny from Medicare or Social Security.”

“What do we stand for as Republicans? The orthodoxy is a little bit upside down,” said Margaret Spellings, who led the Education Department and the Domestic Policy Council during the George

W. Bush administration.

Culture wars

The former president's allies contend that the party needed shaking-up, and that Republicans were losing elections because they misjudged what American voters wanted. They contend that government intervention is a necessary corrective to what they view as overreach at the hands of liberals promoting their own ideas on diversity and education.

Trump's approach has won partial buy-in from powerful conservative groups. Heritage Foundation President Kevin Roberts said conservative policy has to “account for the reality of the damage that has been imposed by the culture war.”

Though Trump's education

policy proposals break with the longstanding conservative belief that schools should be controlled locally, Roberts argued that exceptions should be made to ban critical race theory from school curricula, for example, or to ensure that transgender athletes compete on teams only of the sex they were assigned at birth.

‘Not a conservative’

Some Republicans warn that Trump is going too far.

Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, a former Republican senator and governor, said Trump's ideas were “antithetical to conservative thought and conservative history.” The federal government funds only a small portion of elementary and secondary education and yet Trump would use that

money to “mandate 100% of the control.”

“That’s not conservative—but that’s the point: Trump is not a conservative,” said Gregg, who has endorsed former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley's presidential bid. “He’s an iconoclastic populist, and his views have no relation to any philosophical views.”

Even some of Trump's allies have privately expressed doubts about several of his proposals. Several former Trump administration officials said they were skeptical of the feasibility of the former president's plan, announced in a video message on his social-media platform last month, to establish an “American Academy” funded by “taxing, fining and suing” what he calls “excessively large” private university endowments. Trump

pitched the government-backed free online school as an alternative to the current higher education system.

Roberts, Heritage's president, said he applauds the university plan but opposes Trump's proposal for federal certification of teachers. “I hate it. It's a terrible idea,” he said. Heritage wants to end teacher certification altogether.

Trump's platform is an expansive example of the reorientation among some within the GOP more broadly in favor of a more active federal government. In Congress, some Republicans have pushed for such federal measures as caps on credit-card interest rates, social-media regulations and worker protections in contracts that fit awkwardly with the party's business-oriented impulses.

Like Trump, several other GOP presidential candidates say that an aggressive use of federal authority is needed to push back against a liberal social agenda that they say has taken hold in schools, academia, the media and corporate boardrooms. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis has argued that “old-guard corporate Republicanism isn't up to the task.”

More bureaucracy

Implementing many of his other proposals could require building additional layers of government bureaucracy, some of which could overrule or duplicate existing state and local efforts. Credentialing teachers on the federal level could mean creating a new government body that would complicate existing state certification efforts.

Setting up a new government-backed university could require a labyrinthine system of government contracts to hire instructors and staff. Trump's proposals to direct the government to investigate everything from MSNBC to hospitals could require hiring additional lawyers and other employees to carry out the probes.

Washington policy-making veterans said many of Trump's plans are unlikely to come to fruition even if he wins a second term, citing logistical and financial hurdles, potential opposition from Congress and likely court challenges.

The former president's proposals “might make for good stump speech fodder (at least for his MAGA base), but are miles from the real world of programs and policies,” Michael Petrilli, an education policy analyst and the president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, said in an email. “The point of these proposals is to take sides in the culture war, not to present a governing agenda.”

JOURNALISTS DON'T 'JUST WRITE STORIES.'

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Courts Bat Down Trump's Immunity Claims

WASHINGTON—Former President Donald Trump's efforts to claim absolute immunity to ward off criminal and civil legal actions against him were rebuffed twice Friday in separate legal decisions.

By Sadie Gurman,
Jan Wolfe
and C. Ryan Barber

U.S. District Judge Tanya Chutkan, presiding over Trump's election-interference case brought by special counsel Jack Smith, rejected the former president's bid to have that case tossed out on the grounds that he enjoys “absolute immunity” from criminal prosecution. The former president's lawyers argued that his efforts to challenge his November 2020 election loss had been “within the ‘outer perimeter’ of his official responsibility” as president.

“Whatever immunities a sitting President may enjoy, the United States has only one Chief Executive at a time, and that position does not confer a lifelong ‘get-out-of-jail’ pass,” Chutkan wrote. Trump, the judge added, “may be subject to federal investigation, indictment, prosecution, conviction, and punishment for any criminal acts undertaken while in office.”

The former president has pleaded not guilty and has called Chutkan a “very Biased,



Trump supporters and police facing off on Jan. 6, 2021.

Trump Hating Judge.”

Chutkan's ruling was her first denying one of Trump's multiple motions to dismiss the election-interference case and head off his jury trial, set to begin in March at a federal courthouse blocks from the Capitol. Her decision was expected by Trump's lawyers and sets the stage for an appeal that could delay the trial.

Trump spokesman Steven Cheung suggested the former president would appeal and said “radical Democrats” were attempting to “destroy bedrock constitutional principles and set dangerous precedents that would cripple future presidential administrations.”

Earlier Friday, a federal appeals-court panel ruled that

civil lawsuits seeking to hold Trump accountable for the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the Capitol can move forward. It expressed similar skepticism toward the former president's claims of “absolute immunity” from allegations that he incited violence that day.

The three-judge panel of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit said while presidents can carry out their official duties without exposure to lawsuits, plaintiffs including Capitol Police officers had adequately established that Trump wasn't acting in that capacity while campaigning for re-election.

When a president “acts outside the functions of his office, he doesn't continue to

enjoy immunity from damages liability just because he happens to be the President,” Chief Judge Sri Srinivasan wrote. Trump can try to claim immunity again later, the opinion said, but not at this early stage of the proceedings.

Srinivasan, appointed to the bench by former President Barack Obama, was joined on the panel by Circuit Judges Judith Rogers and Gregory Katsas. Rogers was appointed by former President Bill Clinton, while Katsas is a Trump appointee.

Katsas joined Srinivasan's decision, but wrote a separate concurring opinion to clarify the limits of the majority decision. He wrote that the panel didn't definitively rule on whether Trump was acting in an official capacity when he gave his Jan. 6 speech. Instead, the court held that the plaintiffs had met their burden to survive Trump's motion to dismiss, Katsas wrote.

Trump spokesman Cheung said, “The facts fully show that on January 6 President Trump was acting on behalf of the American people, carrying out his duties as President of the United States.”

The ruling affirms a lower judge's decision last year to dismiss Trump's immunity claims in lawsuits brought by Capitol police officers and Democratic lawmakers. Those suits can now move forward.

U.S. NEWS

House Kicks Out Santos

Continued from Page One
scamming political donors, lying to the Federal Election Commission and illegally receiving unemployment-insurance benefits. He pleaded not guilty to a 23-count superseding indictment. He is scheduled to go on trial in September.

Santos, 35 years old, was defiant in the days ahead of the vote, saying he was being treated unfairly and wouldn't resign, repeatedly daring colleagues to oust him.

As House members trickled into the chamber Friday morning, Santos sat by himself in the last row. He voted quickly and left the chamber as the votes piled up.

Santos left the Capitol and got in a waiting car. "They just set new dangerous precedent for themselves," he said of his former colleagues. "The hell with this place."

The effort to oust Santos gathered steam after a report from the House Ethics Committee, released before Thanksgiving, found there was substantial evidence that he stole money from donors and filed false disclosures with election officials. Other alleged misdeeds included spending campaign money on personal credit-card balances and buying goods and services at Hermès, Sephora and OnlyFans. Santos "sought to fraudulently exploit every aspect of his House candidacy for his own personal financial profit," the report said.

The committee said Santos's conduct "warrants public condemnation, is beneath the dignity of the office, and has brought severe discredit upon the House," but it didn't issue a formal recommendation that he be removed from office. Ethics Committee Chairman Rep. Michael Guest (R., Miss.) then proposed a resolution to expel him.

Following the report's release, Santos said he wouldn't



George Santos spoke Friday with reporters on Capitol Hill ahead of the vote to oust him from his position as a Republican Congressman from New York.

run for re-election, but dismissed the document as a "disgusting politicized smear."

What to do about Santos has divided Congress for most of this year. An earlier vote to expel him, led by a group of New York Republicans in competitive districts, fell well short of the two-thirds required, with 179 in favor of expulsion and 213 against. But after the report, many lawmakers who had voted to keep Santos in office said they changed their minds as they believed he had now received sufficient due process.

Republicans remained divided, with some saying that a court first should weigh in on Santos's guilt or innocence, while others thought Santos had committed crimes against the House and should be ex-

pelled immediately.

Rep. Nancy Mace (R., S.C.) voted against expulsion. "George Santos is an ass, but who, like every American, deserves the presumption of innocence until proven guilty in a court of law," she said.

Other Republicans joined Democrats in saying Santos's behavior demanded that he be ousted now, and that the Ethics report was sufficient to address fairness concerns.

"This was not about party. This was about what is right for voters, for the American people, for the country and the institution that we serve in," said Rep. Mike Lawler (R., N.Y.), an outspoken proponent of expulsion. "George Santos was unfit for public office. His conduct was not only unbecoming and em-

barrassing, it was criminal." Santos has declined to address questions about the specific allegations against him or his campaign, citing his continuing criminal case.

Santos "is a serial fraudster who conducted himself in a manner unbecoming of the House of Representatives," said House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D., N.Y.) on Friday. He has said Republicans didn't move to oust him earlier because they needed his vote. "It is unfortunate that George Santos was coddled for so long."

Heading into Friday, only two House lawmakers since the Civil War had been expelled. In 1980, Rep. Michael Myers (D., Pa.) was removed on a 376-to-30 vote after being convicted on charges of bribery and conspiracy in the Abscam sting, in which Federal Bureau of Investigation operatives posed as Arab sheikhs seeking favors from members of Congress.

Rep. James Traficant (D., Ohio) was expelled in a 420-to-1 vote in 2002 after being convicted on felony counts including taking bribes and filing false tax returns.

Three House lawmakers were expelled during the Civil War for supporting the Confederacy.

Under New York law, Democratic Gov. Kathy Hochul has up to 10 days to call a special election, which must be scheduled between 70 and 80 days from her order. No party primaries are held in such a contest; party leaders in Queens and Nassau counties, parts of which are in Santos's district, would designate their candidates.

Hochul said she was ready to call a special election.

"I'm glad he's gone because I need people I can work with to fight for New York," she said Friday on NY1. "George Santos just took up space."

Potential Democratic candidates include former Rep.

Tom Suozzi, who represented the district from 2017 to the start of this year; former State Sen. Anna Kaplan; and Robert Zimmerman, a Democratic National Committee member who lost the 2022 race to Santos.

The Republican field includes Jim Toes, Nassau County Legislator Mazi Pilip, Greg Hach, Daniel Norber, Tom Ludwig and Kellen Curry, an Air Force veteran who began his campaign in April. Mike Sapraicone, a retired New York City police detective, has lent his campaign \$300,000, and as a result has more cash on hand than any other declared GOP candidate, according to the most recent disclosure filings.

'The hell with this place,' Santos said as he left the U.S. Capitol.

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U.S. NEWS

U.S. WATCH

ARIZONA

Inmate Charged in Attack on Chauvin

An incarcerated former gang member and onetime FBI informant was charged Friday with attempted murder in the stabbing of ex-Minneapolis police Officer Derek Chauvin at a federal prison in Arizona.

John Turscak stabbed Chauvin, who was convicted of murdering George Floyd, 22 times at the Federal Correctional Institution in Tucson, federal prosecutors said. Turscak is serving a 30-year sentence.

Turscak, 52 years old, is accused of attacking Chauvin with an improvised knife in the prison's law library on Nov. 24. Chauvin was taken to a hospital for treatment.

Floyd, who was Black, died on May 25, 2020, after Chauvin, who is white, pressed a knee on his neck for more than 9 minutes on the street outside a convenience store where Floyd was suspected of trying to pass a counterfeit \$20 bill.

—Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA

Ski Masks Banned in Some Areas

Philadelphia City Council passed legislation to ban ski masks in some public spaces, a measure supporters say will increase public safety amid high violent crime, but opponents argue will unfairly target people without proof of any wrongdoing.

The legislation passed on Thursday with a 13-2 vote, and now goes to Democratic Mayor Jim Kenney.

A spokesperson said he would review the legislation and "looks forward to our ongoing work with City Council on the urgent matter of ensuring public safety."

The measure would ban ski masks, or balaclavas, in public spaces like schools, recreation centers, parks, city-owned buildings and on public transportation.

A \$250 fine would be imposed against anyone who violates the law. It has exceptions for religious garb and protests.

—Associated Press

NEW YORK

Catholic College Will Close in May

The College of Saint Rose, a century-old Roman Catholic college in Albany, N.Y., will close in May 2024 after years of financial struggles, college officials announced Friday.

"It is with a heavy heart that the Board decided to close the college at the end of this academic year," Jeffrey D. Stone, chair of the college's board of trustees, which voted to close the school on Thursday, said.

The college will help students either graduate in May or continue their studies elsewhere, officials said. The college was founded in 1920 by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet as a women's college. It became fully coeducational in 1969. Notable alumni include "Tonight Show" host Jimmy Fallon.

—Associated Press

CDC

Flu Cases Rise; RSV May Be Peaking

Flu is picking up steam while RSV lung infections that can hit children and older people hard may be peaking, U.S. health officials said Friday.

Covid-19, though, continues to cause the most hospitalizations and deaths among respiratory illnesses—about 15,000 hospitalizations and about 1,000 deaths every week, said Dr. Mandy Cohen, head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The agency is also looking into reports of pneumonia outbreaks in children in two states, but Cohen said "there is no evidence" that they are due to anything unusual. In the last month, RSV infections rose sharply in some areas, but "we think we're near the peak of RSV season or will be in the next week or so."

—Associated Press



Players hit balls from the hitting bays at a Topgolf in Redondo Beach, Calif., recently.

MAGGIE SHANNON FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

Simulators Eclipse Real Golf

Continued from Page One

Courses and country clubs are striving to welcome the new-to-golf customers, relaxing longstanding dress codes and hosting more events around nontraditional, on-course games, such as rounds that mix and match tees and greens from different holes. Courses are adding new Topgolf-like facilities, and some are reducing the number of holes to make a round shorter.

Such changes are golf's response to "the rise of the strip-mall country club," says Eric Resnick, chief executive of KSL Capital, a private-equity firm that owns several dozen golf courses, including Stone Harbor Golf Club in New Jersey and Port Royal Golf & Racquet Club in South Carolina.

For years, golf executives, including those at PGA of America, have said any activity that puts a golf club in more people's hands widens the funnel for new golfers.

Topgolf, even if not the same as traditional golf, draws more people to the sport, executives say, and some of those budding golfers will eventually find their way to a traditional course.

Topgolf operates about 80 venues in the U.S. that fuse elements of a sports bar with that of a driving range. The venues' golf balls are embedded with microchips that track shots, allowing golfers to, among other options, virtually play on famous courses and compete in videogames.

Golf-equipment maker Callaway invested in Topgolf in 2006. In the following years, participation in traditional golf steadily declined, according to NGF data. In 2020, Callaway agreed to buy the rest of Topgolf in an all-stock deal that valued Topgolf at \$2 billion.

The path forward has been bumpy. The pandemic boosted the golf industry, and flexible work schedules allowed more golfers to fit in more rounds. Callaway's legacy business thrived, and last year, businesses turned to Topgolf in a bid to draw workers back to in-person gatherings.

This year, though, demand for Callaway balls has cooled, and business at Topgolf is slowing. Chief Executive Chip

Brewer says the softening of corporate events is driving most of the slowdown, but consumers are also cutting back on midweek visits. Shares of Topgolf Callaway Brands are down about 34% this year; the stock closed Friday at \$13.07. Shares of rival, Titleist-owner Acushnet Holdings, are up 37% this year.

It takes about 10 years for someone picking up a club at an off-course venue to convert to a dues-paying member of a private golf club, estimates David Pillsbury, CEO of country-club operator Invited. He says he isn't concerned about Topgolf and growing simulator-based venues eating into demand for traditional golf.

"Ultimately, every golfer's aspiration is to play green-grass golf," he says.

Still, the green-grass golf industry hasn't yet found an ideal bridge to move people from Topgolf and similar venues to traditional courses, says TJ Schier, former chief operating officer of BigShots, a chain similar to Topgolf.

Topgolf broadened the funnel of new, more casual golfers, Schier says, but it still isn't clear how many of those people will stick around. "You've got a drip coming out of that funnel," he says.

For Brian Miller, a self-described golf purist from Tampa, Fla., Topgolf doesn't quite satisfy his golf appetite. The 45-year-old real-estate agent, speaking from the green of the Cypress Run Golf Club, said he prefers his members-only course, where he pays \$500 a month.

"It's a much different animal in my mind," he says.

According to the NGF, traditional golfers who have started going to off-course venues such as Topgolf still play just as much green-grass golf as they used to.

For \$65 an hour, Krystal Michnya of Staten Island, N.Y., celebrated her 32nd birthday at a Topgolf hitting bay. She and her family warmed up with a target-hitting challenge. A range of Callaway clubs are provided, but some golfers, such as Michnya's stepdad, bring their own.

Michnya, a restaurant server, says she plays on courses occasionally and has been to Topgolf about five times in the past couple of years.

"It's intimidating on a course. You've got intense guys watching you and waiting on you. You don't want to take too long," she says. "Here you can just relax, have a drink and whack some balls."

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U.S. NEWS

Pioneering Woman Justice Dies

Continued from Page One
considered herself a plain-spoken cowgirl rather than an intellectual theorist. But she was an exemplary student, entering Stanford University at age 16 and continuing to the Stanford Law School, graduating in 1952 alongside a future chief justice, William Rehnquist, whom she briefly dated.

While the corridors of power immediately opened for Rehnquist, who went to Washington as a law clerk for Justice Robert Jackson, O'Connor recalled that in an era when women lawyers were rare, she received just one job offer—as a secretary. After marrying a fellow Stanford law student, John O'Connor, the future justice found work as a lawyer for the county attorney's office in San Mateo, Calif.

The couple later settled in Phoenix and, along with raising three sons, O'Connor became involved with GOP politics, working on Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign. Beginning in 1969, she served in the Arizona Senate, rising to majority leader. She was elected to the Maricopa County Superior Court in 1974, and elevated to the state Court of Appeals five years later.

Chief Justice Warren Burger met O'Connor during a 1979 visit to Arizona and became one of her principal advocates when Reagan was weighing his first Supreme Court appointment.

Confirmed unanimously by the Senate, O'Connor prompted changes in the formerly all-male institution; most obviously, the traditional courtesy title of "Mr. Justice" was dropped, in favor of "Justice" alone. Donning a leotard, she inaugurated an aerobics class for women law clerks.

The pragmatic jurisprudence O'Connor championed, however, largely has been discarded by today's more conservative court, including several of her



Clockwise from above: Justice O'Connor spoke with law clerks at her chambers in 2002. After retiring, O'Connor championed civics education, testifying before the Senate in 2012. President Reagan welcomed O'Connor to the all-male court 1981.



most significant opinions.

Although she had told Reagan she considered abortion "personally abhorrent," she joined Justices Anthony Kennedy and David Souter to write the controlling opinion in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, a 1992 case that sought a middle ground by upholding several state restrictions on the procedure, while affirming the "essential holding" of *Roe v. Wade*, the 1973 decision recognizing a constitutional right to terminate pregnancy. The precedent survived until June 2022, when a more conservative court rescinded the constitutional right to abortion.

Likewise, in 2003, when the court considered two affirmative-action programs at the University of Michigan, O'Connor voted to strike down an undergraduate admissions formula for focusing too much on race, while writing the majority opinion upholding the law school's more individualized consideration of race among an applicant's characteristics. That precedent fell in June, when the court ruled any consideration of race in admissions violated the Constitution.

O'Connor had strong views in some areas, and as a former state legislator believed that the Constitution imposed tighter

limits on federal power than did her liberal colleagues.

She was an incrementalist, however. That pragmatic view often brought her into conflict with the second Reagan appointee, Justice Antonin Scalia, who derided one O'Connor opinion as so flawed that it "cannot be taken seriously."

O'Connor's most controversial moment came during the 2000 election crisis, when the presidential race hung on the disputed outcome in Florida. As *The Wall Street Journal* reported at the time, John O'Connor had remarked at an election night party that his wife wished to retire and

would prefer that a Republican president select her successor. The next month, Justice O'Connor voted with the four other Republican-appointed justices to halt the Florida recount with GOP candidate George W. Bush ahead by 537 votes.

Later, she reflected that possibly the justices shouldn't have accepted the case; the decision gave the court a "less than sterling reputation," she noted. Yet she was no foot-soldier in Bush's wars; one of her most significant opinions came in 2004, when she ruled that a dual U.S.-Saudi citizen taken to Guantanamo Bay could chal-

lenge his detention in court. "A state of war is not a blank check for the President when it comes to the rights of the Nation's citizens," she wrote.

In 2005, with John O'Connor suffering from Alzheimer's disease, the justice announced she would retire. But she said she regretted the more conservative direction the court, including her replacement, took after she left.

After informing then-President Bush of her intentions, Rehnquist died of thyroid cancer, creating two simultaneous vacancies—a disruption that justices try to avoid when they have the flexibility to time their retirements. John O'Connor, meanwhile, deteriorated faster than expected and had to be institutionalized. He died in 2009.

The justice Bush appointed to her seat, Samuel Alito, brought more conservative views than O'Connor. Before he joined the high court, he voted to uphold a Pennsylvania law requiring spousal notification before abortions, something O'Connor held unconstitutional. On the court, Alito voted to overturn precedents O'Connor had supported, including the 2010 *Citizens United* decision that overruled a 2003 case where O'Connor had upheld federal restrictions on corporate and union political spending.

In retirement, O'Connor kept a schedule at least as busy as she did on the Supreme Court. She spent much of that time hearing cases on federal appeals courts, under a law that allows retired justices to fill in on the lower courts. "I did not step down because I felt I no longer was capable of sitting," she said in a 2009 *Journal* interview.

But the disease that afflicted her husband struck O'Connor. Suffering from dementia, she announced in October 2018 that she no longer could participate in public life.

"How fortunate I feel to be an American," she said in her October 2018 farewell statement. "As a young cowgirl from the Arizona desert, I never could have imagined that one day I would become the first woman justice on the U.S. Supreme Court."



O'Connor, with Sen. Barry Goldwater at her side, sworn in at her 1981 confirmation hearings.

Pragmatic O'Connor Legacy Fades on Polarized Court

By JESS BRAVIN

For nearly a quarter-century, Sandra Day O'Connor, who died Friday at age 93, was perhaps the most powerful woman in America, often casting the deciding vote when her Supreme Court colleagues divided 4-4 along ideological lines.

Her decisions on issues including abortion, affirmative action, voting rights and the line between church and state often reflected a pragmatic middle ground that frequently aligned with mainstream public opinion.

O'Connor's retirement in 2006 sent the court in a new direction. Republican presidents selected justices devoted to formal theories that seek constitutional fealty regardless of contemporary social values. Where O'Connor took each case as it came, today's majority views the litigation before it as part of a larger struggle over the Constitution's meaning.

Some "criticized her for lacking principles," said University of Chicago law professor Anup Malani, a former O'Connor clerk. "Her principle was the need to compromise and come together as a community."

Yet O'Connor, President

Ronald Reagan's first appointee, was no liberal.

From 1994 to 2004, she most frequently agreed with conservative Chief Justice William Rehnquist, in 84.2% of cases, and least often with Justice Potter Stevens, then leader of the liberal minority, in 66.6% of cases, according to research by political scientist Andrew Martin, chancellor of Washington University in St. Louis.

The country's first female Supreme Court justice "was not out to make grand theory, she was not out to be a philosopher," said Viet Dinh, who also clerked for O'Connor before teaching law at Georgetown and serving in the Justice Department under President George W. Bush.

Instead, O'Connor asked, "What is the question presented in this case and how do I answer it to resolve the matter as narrowly as possible?" said Dinh, the outgoing chief legal officer of Fox Corp., which shares common ownership with News Corp, parent of *Journal* publisher Dow Jones.

As it has overturned many of O'Connor's opinions, the court has seen its public approval drop, with more Americans seeing it as a political institution and less of a judicial one. There is an irony to that,

because O'Connor's approach was shaped in part by her own experience as Republican majority leader of the Arizona State Senate, a job that called on her political skill of building consensus.

"Her instinct that the court should broadly reflect the moderate constitutional views of a majority of the country increased the court's legitimacy and helped it rise above politics," said Jeffrey Rosen, president of the National Constitution Center.

In 2001, Rosen wrote that "we are all living now in Sandra Day O'Connor's America." Today, he said, that America seems but a hazy memory.

"The fact that it's hard to think of a younger generation of lawyers who reflect her legacy is a poignant sign of just how polarized law has become," Rosen said.

O'Connor "did not temper her analysis to be in line with what the public thought," said retired Arizona Supreme Court Chief Justice Ruth McGregor, who clerked for O'Connor just after her 1981 appointment. Rather, O'Connor's decisions tracked the mainstream "because her thinking was very much in line with public opinion," McGregor said. "That's who she was."



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WORLD NEWS

U.S. Provides Bunker-Buster Bombs to Israel

A surge in arms includes 15,000 bombs and 57,000 artillery shells

By JARED MALSIN
AND NANCY A. YOUSSEF

The U.S. has provided Israel with large bunker-buster bombs, among tens of thousands of weapons and artillery shells, to help dislodge Hamas from Gaza, U.S. officials said.

The surge of arms, including about 15,000 bombs and 57,000 artillery shells, began shortly after the Oct. 7 attack and has continued in recent days, the officials said. The U.S. hasn't previously disclosed the total number of weapons it sent to Israel nor the transfer of 100 BLU-109, 2,000-pound bunker-buster bombs.

The airlift of hundreds of millions of dollars in munitions, primarily on C-17 military cargo planes flying from the U.S. to Tel Aviv, shows the diplomatic challenge facing the Biden administration. The U.S. is urging its top ally in the region to consider preventing large-scale civilian casualties, while supplying many of the munitions deployed.

"I made clear that after a pause, it was imperative that Israel put in place clear protections for civilians, and for sustaining humanitarian assistance," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Friday.

Some security analysts say the weapons transfers could undercut the administration's pressure on Israel to protect civilians.

"It seems inconsistent with reported exhortations from Secretary Blinken and others to use smaller-diameter bombs," said Brian Finucane, a

senior adviser at the nonprofit International Crisis Group, and a former attorney-adviser at the State Department.

Unlike in Ukraine, where the U.S. has published regular updates on some of the weapons it has provided to support Kyiv's fight against the Russian invasion, Washington has disclosed little about how many and what types of weapons it has sent to Israel during the current conflict. U.S. officials say the lack of disclosure is a result partly of the fact that Israel's weapons come through a different mechanism, including military sales. Israel also is one of the largest recipients of U.S. military aid, receiving \$3.8 billion annually.

Israel resumed its offensive in Gaza on Friday after negotiations to extend a weeklong cease-fire broke down. Israeli officials have said they planned to resume the war at the end of the truce, which began on Nov. 24 with an agreement that freed dozens of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

The arsenal of artillery, bombs and other weapons and military gear have been used by the U.S. in Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia and Libya, among other places, usually to target large groups of gathered enemy forces. In Gaza, by contrast, Israel is battling militants who are among civilians in dense urban environments.

"They are kind of the weapons of choice for the fights we had in Afghanistan and Syria in open, nonurban areas," said Mick Mulroy, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense and officer in the Marine Corps and C.I.A. "The U.S. may use them in more-urban areas, but first it would do a lot of target analysis to make sure the attack was proportional and



Israeli airstrikes hit the Gaza Strip as a cease-fire ended and fighting resumed between Israel and Hamas militants Friday.

Gazans Told to Use Interactive Map

As bombing resumed in Gaza, Israel published an interactive map dividing the coastal enclave into hundreds of numbered zones that it said residents should consult for instructions about where to move to avoid active combat.

The map was released in Arabic "in preparation for the next stages of the war," said Avichay Adraee, the Israeli military's Arabic-language spokesman, in a statement on X.

The numbered areas correspond to "known neighborhoods in order to

allow Gazans to orient themselves, understand instructions, and move from specific places if they are asked to do so."

"This is to ensure their safety," Adraee added, advising them to "follow the map carefully."

The Israeli military dropped leaflets in the southern Gaza Strip warning people to "leave immediately and head toward shelters" in the Rafah area, at the southernmost tip of Gaza. Khan Younis, a city in the south, "is a dangerous war zone," the leaflets said.

based on military necessity."

The Israeli Prime Minister's Office and the Ministry of Defense didn't respond to a request for comment on the weapons transfers. The White House National Security Council didn't respond to a request

for comment.

President Biden initially expressed full support for Israel and its military campaign to destroy Hamas after the Oct. 7 attack, but the soaring civilian death toll in the Gaza Strip has caused the administration

to shift in recent days.

Israel's military says it already takes precautions to protect civilians, though in the initial days of the war its air force also said its strikes were causing "maximum damage." Israeli officials also have said they have a limited capacity for precision strikes because its forces are stretched thin.

More than 15,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in Gaza since the war began, according to the authorities in the Hamas-controlled enclave. The number doesn't distinguish between civilians and combatants. Hamas killed more than 1,200 Israelis, most of them civilians, during the Oct. 7 attack.

Among the munitions the U.S. has transferred to Israel are more than 5,000 Mk82 unguided or "dumb" bombs, more than 5,400 Mk84 2,000-pound warhead bombs, around 1,000 GBU-39 small-diameter bombs, and approximately 3,000 JDAMs, which turn unguided bombs into guided "smart" bombs, according to an internal U.S.

government list of the weapons described to The Wall Street Journal by U.S. officials.

The BLU-109 bunker-buster carries a 2,000-pound warhead and is designed to penetrate a concrete shelter. The U.S. also used the bombs in the Gulf War and in Afghanistan.

Military analysts say the transfer of large bombs to Israel illustrates the choices facing the Israeli military as it attempts to wipe out Hamas in Gaza, a tiny, densely populated ribbon of land that is home to more than two million Palestinians. Israel urged more than a million civilians to leave the northern part of the Gaza Strip to give its military a freer hand there, but tens if not hundreds of thousands of civilians have stayed in the area.

In Gaza, Hamas's military wing also uses a vast network of underground tunnels, which Israel could attempt to strike with the bunker busters, analysts say. The tunnels, however, lie beneath Gaza's urban landscape of apartment blocks, schools, hospitals, and other civilian buildings.

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Push Is On To Revive Cease-Fire

Continued from Page One
aiming to step up pressure on Hamas with a revived military campaign intended to either force the U.S.-designated terrorist group to release more hostages or to continue until the militants are defeated.

But Israel is facing pressure from the families of hostages not to abandon the indirect talks with Hamas and from the U.S. to constrain the timeline and tactics of its military operation in Gaza.

Mediators from Egypt and Qatar failed to reach a breakthrough Friday and were expected to continue talks Saturday in a bid to again halt the Israeli offensive. The negotiations have stalled over which hostages would be released by Hamas next, Egyptian officials said.

Israel is willing to consider future pauses in the war in Gaza to allow for the release of as many hostages as possible, which is a high priority for the country, an Israeli official said late Friday. The official said that "we can negotiate while we still fight."

Israel says it wants Hamas to release the remaining women and children it holds, the officials said. The militant group says it doesn't hold many more women and children—a claim disputed by Israel—and has offered to release elderly men and the bodies of dead hostages, instead.

Hamas has given little indication it is prepared to release adult male hostages, Israeli soldiers and the handful of Americans in its custody.

Those categories of hostages are viewed as valuable by Hamas, which is seeking the large-scale release of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody and wants to force Israel to curtail its military operation in return for their release—demands that Israel has so far rejected.

Eran Etzion, a former deputy national security adviser in Israel, said Hamas had managed to survive Israel's initial assault and may believe it has

a chance of surviving in the long term if the pressure builds on Israel to halt its renewed offensive in southern Gaza before the militant group is defeated.

A U.S. official said that Israel has promised in recent days to undertake a more targeted military operation that would limit civilian casualties as well as damage to buildings and other infrastructure.

In meetings this past week, Secretary of State Antony Blinken also pressed Netanyahu and the Israeli war cabinet on how much longer the war would continue and received no clear answer, the U.S. official said. American officials say that international pressure could force Israel to stop its operation by early next year, especially if civilian casualties continue at high levels—a timeline that Israel hasn't accepted.

"While the U.S. believes Israel has only weeks left, it's going to be difficult for Israel to achieve its war goals within weeks," Etzion said.

Blinken also blamed the militant group for the resumption in fighting, saying it had "reneged on commitments it made" even before the fighting pause ended, fired rockets from Gaza Friday morning and carried out "an atrocious terrorist attack in Jerusalem," referring to a shooting Thursday at a bus station that left three dead.

Hamas insisted to mediators that they didn't have access to more women and children hostages that it could turn over to prolong the truce, a claim Israel didn't believe, according to the U.S. official. Attempts to extend the pause collapsed in part because Hamas was facing difficulty obtaining access to four women hostages held by other groups in Gaza, Egyptian officials said.

Hamas said Friday that Israel refused an offer to release more captives and the bodies of members of an Israeli family killed in Israeli airstrikes. It had previously said that Shiri Bibas, 32, and her children, 4-year-old Ariel and 10-month-old Kfir, were killed in an Israeli airstrike.

Hamas also agreed to a pro-

posal by Egypt and Qatar for a release of elderly men, according to Egyptian officials, which Israel didn't accept.

Netanyahu's office declined to comment on the Hamas account.

U.S. citizen Judi Weinstein, 70, is one of the last remaining older female hostages in Hamas captivity, Israeli officials say. Weinstein and her husband Gad Haggai, 70, were kidnapped from their kibbutz on Oct. 7 while out on their morning walk and taken to Gaza, her daughter, Iris Weinstein Haggai, said. Based on a subsequent video of her father's body, he is believed to be dead.

The number of hostages confirmed by Israeli authorities to have died continued to rise on Friday, as an Israeli kibbutz and a hostages forum reported the deaths of six people abducted in the attacks on southern Israel on Oct. 7.

The Israeli military also said it had recovered the body of hostage Ofir Tzarfati, 27, from the Gaza Strip.

Israel is facing pressure from the families of hostages not to abandon talks.

Israel's military offensive has killed more than 15,000 Gazans, Hamas-controlled authorities in Gaza say, most of them women and children.

That figure doesn't distinguish civilians from militants.

The Palestinian militants who raided Israel in the Hamas-led attacks on Oct. 7 killed around 1,200 people, abducted over 240 civilians and soldiers and brought them back to the Gaza Strip.

The renewed fighting has the potential to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in the enclave.

At Abu Yusef al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah City in southern Gaza, the bodies of several people killed in the fresh bombing were collected on the ground outside, wrapped in body bags.

Ramadan Miqdad and his wife Fatten were grieving over their daughter, Joury, who was killed Friday morning when the home they were sheltering in Rafah was bombed.

"I want to make you a birthday party; you are only 5 years old," said Fatten.

—Stephen Kalin and William Mauldin contributed to this article.

WORLD NEWS

How Thais Scrambled to Free Hostages

Bangkok navigated the surprise release of 23 of its citizens; 'I'm not dead yet!'

By JOE PARKINSON
AND DREW HINSHAW

NA PHO, Thailand—Four days after Hamas militants tore through southern Israel, a mournful procession of local officials here came to tell the family of Wichai Kalapat that the 28-year-old fruit farmer was among those killed. His girlfriend, Kittiya Thuengsaeng, hung a picture of him outside her front door.

On Saturday, Wichai appeared, Lazarus-like, in footage from a prisoner exchange. Shortly before midnight, his siblings glimpsed him, smiling from the back of a Red Cross landcruiser, in a picture on Facebook, reluctant to believe it was him until his face appeared on a video call hours later.

"I'm not dead yet!" he reassured Kittiya, from the inpatient room at Israel's Shamir Medical Center.

Wichai's resurrection is one of the strangest aspects of a hostage crisis that has forced some 30 governments from Argentina to Nepal to navigate the chaos of wartime Gaza as they scramble to retrieve kidnapped citizens. Wichai is one of four Thai farmers presumed to have died, only to emerge smiling from captivity in just over the past week.

It has been a crash course in hostage recovery and Middle East conflict politics for Thailand, which has somehow, through all the confusion, managed to extract 23 of its citizens from Hamas custody, more than any other foreign nation.

The government in Bangkok has tapped backchannels including Iranian and Malaysian diplomats, the governments of Qatar and Turkey, The International Committee of the Red Cross and politicians from Thailand's local Muslim minority.

While evacuating some 8,000 citizens from Israel, Thai officials managed to simultaneously secure a key proof-of-life image of those being held in Gaza. Deals to free them came together, then collapsed, time and again.

The Thai government believes about nine more of its nationals are still captive in Gaza. Thai diplomats aren't entirely sure who remains in custody, or who is holding them.

Senior Thai officials in a specially created command center have improvised over video calls to make sense of hostage-release counts changing by the hour. Last Friday, Thailand announced that 12 of its citizens had been set free, only to learn that only 10 Thais had been released, alongside a laborer from the Philippines, apparently mistaken as Thai by Hamas.

To understand how the southeast Asian nation managed to retrieve its citizens, The Wall Street Journal spoke to Thai, Israeli, Qatari, Turkish and U.S. officials involved in hostage-recovery efforts. Reporters traveled to remote regions in eastern Thailand to meet relatives who were grieving loved ones that have since been freed.

"I thought he was dead, the light in my life was suddenly gone," said Khongpana Sudlamai, who had made funeral arrangements at a local Buddhist temple for his son, Phonsawan, released on Monday morning. He canceled them after he received a voice note: "I'm alive."

Thai workers at Kibbutz Alumim, right; a CCTV still showed two hostages at Al-Shifa hospital, below. One was identifiable by his tattoos as Phonsawan.



An International Red Cross vehicle carries Thai hostages released by Hamas militants.

Promised Land

The Thai fruit and dairy farmers taken hostage constituted an unlucky slice of Thailand's 30,000 workers in Israel. Their labor formed an alternative source of farm hands, caretakers, and domestic laborers—performing jobs Palestinians once filled, until Hamas swept to power in Gaza in 2006.

Thai workers earned five times what they could expect to net monthly back home. They fed a remittance economy that transformed poor villages along their country's rural border with Cambodia, paying for detached new homes with SUVs in the drive.

At Kibbutz Alumim on Israel's Gaza border, Phonsawan worked alongside his friend Korawit Kaeoeked and 22 other Thais, who sent money home and spent days off swimming together at a local pool.

Trucks delivered southeast Asian spices and ingredients for *som tam* papaya salad that the men would cook while they shared stories of home.

Some felt unnerved by the tensions between Israel and the Palestinian territories. When occasional rockets flew overhead, skirting Israel's Iron Dome air defenses, avocado farmer Nattapong Pinta would call his older sister in northern Thailand for reassurance, telling her he would come home as soon as he had the cash to pay off a \$6,000 debt and help his wife open a coffee shop.

On Oct. 7, those workers became collateral damage as Hamas militants tore through farmsteads of southern Israel.

In Kibbutz Alumim, militants tossing grenades and firing weapons killed 10 Nepali workers before torching the buildings behind them. They abducted at least one Thai,

Phonsawan, and one Nepali, Bipin Joshi, who is still a presumed hostage. At Nir Oz, to the south, militants took a 33-year-old Filipino worker, killed his Israeli employer, then kidnapped Wichai. As bodies came in, the Thai Foreign Ministry reported that 39 Thais had died in the attack.

Not all of them, however, really had.

The procession of municipal and regional officials pulled up to Wichai Kalapat's rural home in a convoy of vehicles, bearing condolence gifts of rice, canned food and medical supplies donated from the Ministry of Interior's Association of Homemakers.

His bereaved girlfriend, Kittiya Thuengsaeng, posted her grief onto her Facebook wall: "Please come back, I have been waiting."

For four days, 65-year-old Wilart Tanna drove his motorbike around villages near the

Cambodian border, looking for anybody with a relative in Israel who might be able to search for his son, Pongsak Tanna.

Each day for weeks, the Thai embassy in Tel Aviv's landline rang with a call

from the sister of Nattapong Pinta, the worker who had been saving up for a coffee shop. The message, from the embassy's staff of six, was always: "We still have no details, but we will try our best."

Other calls poured into the consular section of Israel's embassy in Bangkok.

"We try to answer," Israeli Ambassador to Thailand Orna Sagiv said in a Nov. 3 interview. "But I have to say, the information we have is so limited."

Thailand began to try other solutions to sort out who had been taken. To each of 76 provinces, Bangkok sent out orders for local Labor Ministry officials to comb through families

of the tens of thousands of Thai workers in Israel and ask: Had any of them lost contact with their relatives?

Hostage diplomacy

In the makeshift command center, officials from the prime ministry, foreign and labor ministries and intelligence officials were coordinating on several calls a day how to solve the riddle of their captive citizens. They also had to bring the survivors home.

Fresh detachments of diplomats were deployed to bolster the embassy in Tel Aviv, as it scrambled to house thousands of Thais looking for safety.

Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin began shuttling between countries that he hoped could reach Hamas, starting with Malaysia, his Muslim-majority neighbor, which hosts a Palestinian embassy and doesn't recognize Israel. On

Oct. 20, he met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman at the Ritz Carlton in Riyadh. The crown prince said he would "do his utmost," according to a readout.

The following week, Thailand's foreign minister, Parnpree Bahiddha-Nukara, flew to Qatar to see if the Middle Eastern government with the best links to Hamas could secure his nationals' release. Hamas didn't seem to know which Thais it was holding, said one Thai official.

Frustrated with the Thai government's lack of results, one of the country's Muslim-minority leaders, former Education Minister Areepun Uthairasin, flew to Iran, where he was welcomed over a lunch of grilled lamb by Hamas officials and Mohammad Hassan Akhtari, a former Syrian ambassador and chairman of Iran's Committee for the Support of Islamic Revolution of

the Palestinian People.

One after the next, Thailand's entreaties to Hamas began to gather force. In the first week of November, the country's command center called an emergency video meeting.

Thai intelligence had obtained a photograph of Thai hostages seated in a Gaza bunker, crossed legged, about a dozen in all. It was one of the first proofs of life of any nationality held captive in Gaza.

In Thailand's rural east, provincial authorities had fanned out to notify families that their sons and husbands had been confirmed as kidnapped. They brought instructions to have fathers give biometric samples at local medical centers that could help link any bodies or hostages recovered with their paternal DNA.

On Nov. 20, a few flickering seconds of CCTV imagery offered a glimpse of hope. Israel's army released footage from Gaza's Al-Shifa hospital which showed two hostages being bundled through the wards by armed men. One of them, wheeled on a gurney and identifiable by his tattoos, was Phonsawan.

"I knew it was him. The light that had gone out started to spark again," said Khongpana Sudlamai, his dad.

When the first hostage exchange finally came—13 Israelis for a group of 39 Palestinian prisoners—Thailand was caught by surprise. As a last-minute addition, not part of the broader settlement, Hamas had agreed to release a batch of Thai captives. Ten Thais emerged.

The next day four more came out. One, seated by a passenger window, was wearing a yellow T-shirt and a smile that his family immediately recognized. It was nearly midnight in Thailand when Wichai's girlfriend caught a glimpse of him.

—Kris Phasukpak
contributed to this article.



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WORLD NEWS



Restoring a forest with its original flora makes it more likely that the trees will be there for the long term.

Booming Carbon-Credit Market Helps Brazil Regrow Rainforest

By PAULO TREVISANI AND LUCIANA MAGALHAES

EUNÁPOLIS, Brazil—With his leather antiskate boots snug around his ankles, Mauricio Penteado recently trudged through purple-flowered jacaranda, Brazilwood and other saplings no more than 12 feet high on land that until recently was a cattle pasture.

A forest engineer and chief operating officer at a company called re.green, Penteado is growing a budding forest here in a humid corner of northeast Brazil, covering just 3 square miles. But re.green's ambition is far bigger: to use a fast-expanding carbon-credit market to blanket an area larger than Baltimore with native trees, reversing some of the vast destruction of Brazil's woodlands.

"Our challenge here is to do it on a scale that will make a difference, something that was never done before," Penteado said about regrowing Brazil's rainforests. With global corporations willing to pay top dollar to offset their pollution, companies such as Rio de Janeiro-based re.green are selling carbon credits to finance the complex and expensive restoration of 6,000 square miles of Brazilian rainforest.

While most reforestation worldwide has focused on plantations of a single tree species, often to produce timber and pulp, companies are now using carbon credits for the slower and more sustainable regrowing of native landscapes in tropical countries where massive rainforest destruction is cited by scientists as a major cause of global warming.

Restoring the Earth's rainforests is essential to keep the planet from overheating, scientists say. Rainforests suck in and store massive amounts of the carbon dioxide produced when vehicles and factories burn fossil fuel, absorbing 7.6 billion metric tons of CO₂ a year, according to a 2021 study published by Nature. That is about 20% of the annual global CO₂ emissions scientists blame for rising temperatures. Brazil theoretically could capture up to 746 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent a year by regrowing cleared forests. No other country comes close.

Carbon trading is making large-scale projects that cultivate native vegetation economically viable, say reforestation companies. Sales of credits for forest restoration average \$20 each, up from \$7 a year ago, according to OPIS, an en-

ergy- and carbon-data company owned by Dow Jones, parent of The Wall Street Journal.

Global carbon markets are today worth more than \$1 billion, by some estimates. That includes companies and individuals buying carbon credits because they want to reduce their carbon footprint, and corporations that must do so to comply with regulations. Morgan Stanley says the market is likely to grow to \$250 billion by 2050.

"As reforestation gets more traction in the carbon markets in the coming years, we'll see a lot more successful programs," said Campbell Moore, managing director of carbon markets at the Nature Conservancy, a global environmental group.

In June, Britain's AstraZeneca said it was investing \$400 million in forest restorations in Brazil, India, Vietnam, Ghana and Rwanda as part of a strategy to reach net-zero emissions by planting 200 million native trees by 2030. Nearly \$62 million was pledged to an Ambipar project in São Paulo, Brazil's most industrialized state, to regrow up to 290 square miles of rainforest destroyed nearly a century ago.

Plinio Ribeiro, chief executive at Ambipar Decarbon, said he needs to sell credits for at least \$30 each to

finance projects carried out by Ambipar on once-denuded land in farm-rich São Paulo state. Each credit is equivalent to one metric ton of CO₂ removed from the atmosphere.

"With carbon markets, we don't have to rely on donations," said Ribeiro, who has reforested 6 of 23 square miles he hopes to turn back into native woodlands. "The carbon market lets us think of restoration at a larger scale, which can really make a difference."

The potential is significant in Brazil, with its vast biodiversity and its relative affluence compared with other developing countries. The administration of President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, whose return to power in January was welcomed by environmentalists, has revived Brazil's pledge to reforest 46,000 square miles—an area the size of Pennsylvania—through 2030. That objective is to be partly powered by carbon credits, government officials say.

In the Brazilian Amazon, deforestation declined 22% between August 2022 and July compared with the prior 12-month period as the da Silva administration reined in illegal logging, government data released in November show. But the destruction was still twice as much as the low in 2012.

Fossil-Fuels Rift Will Dominate Climate Summit

By STACY MEICHTRY AND MATTHEW DALTON

DUBAI—World leaders gathered for climate talks in this oil-rich corner of the globe amid sharp divisions about how quickly governments need to wean their economies off fossil fuels to prevent the planet from blowing past the Paris accord's temperature targets.

Vice President Kamala Harris was expected to join King Charles III, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, French President Emmanuel Macron and a host of leaders from across the Gulf region Friday at the start of a two-day summit to kick off the United Nations' annual climate talks, known as COP28.

During the next two weeks, negotiators from more than 190 countries are expected to prepare the first-ever "global stocktake," assessing how much progress the world has made in implementing the Paris accord.

That landmark climate agreement, signed in 2015, calls for governments to limit warming to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius over preindustrial levels and attempt to hold it to 1.5 degrees.

A technical analysis for the stocktake published in September was downbeat, saying governments were far from meeting those goals.

The threat of an overheating planet is driving demands from the U.S. and other governments for sharp reductions in fossil-fuel burning. Western officials are calling for a global halt to the construction of coal-burning power plants as they push for the final stocktake to include a call for a "phaseout" of fossil fuels.

Big developing countries such as China, India and Saudi Arabia are expected to resist, saying that poorer nations will need coal, oil and natural gas for decades to power economic growth and provide energy security. Developing countries also say the U.S., Europe and other wealthy countries haven't cut their emis-

sions as promised over the past 20 years. They say developed countries bear responsibility for the brunt of emissions that have been pumped into the atmosphere since the dawn of the industrial age.

"Over the past century, a small section of humanity has indiscriminately exploited nature," Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi told delegates, adding that all of "humanity is paying the price for this."

Developing countries say wealthy nations must make good on their Paris accord pledge to help poorer economies pay for the transition to cleaner sources of energy and adapt to the effects of climate change. Modi said climate finance commitments need to go from billions to trillions of dollars.

The United Arab Emirates, the summit's host, on Friday said it would make a major investment to that effect. The oil-rich country is injecting \$30 billion of capital into a new fund, dubbed

Alterra, with a mission to invest in clean energy across the developing world. The fund aims to mobilize \$250 billion from other investors by 2030.

Alterra is pledging \$6.5

billion—along with giant investment funds BlackRock, Brookfield and TPG—to several climate-investment vehicles to start, the U.A.E. said. The initial funds are intended to finance 6,000 megawatts of clean energy in India, including 1,200 megawatts of wind-power capacity by 2025, it said.

The U.A.E.'s investment is notable because it is considered a developing country under the U.N. climate treaties, despite its oil wealth.

The U.S. and Europe say higher-income countries that are considered developing under U.N. climate treaties—such as China and the Persian Gulf states—should contribute to the goal. The International Monetary Fund says developing countries need \$2 trillion a year starting in 2030 to respond to climate change, with much of that coming from wealthy nations.

'A small section of humanity has indiscriminately exploited nature.'

Zelensky Orders Defenses Fortified To Halt Russia

By MATTHEW LUXMOORE

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky ordered the construction of an extensive network of fortifications aimed at holding back Russian forces, signaling a switch to the defensive posture after a months-long Ukrainian counteroffensive yielded only small gains.

Zelensky's message in a video address late Thursday is the clearest official acknowledgment that Ukraine faces a hard winter defending the territory it holds, with little immediate prospect of major advances against the nearly 20% of its land occupied by Russia. Instead, as the war approaches a third year, Ukraine is digging in just as winter starts to bite, with Russia pursuing grinding military offensives in the east and northeast.

Zelensky's announcement came after a day traveling the northeast and southeast for meetings with military commanders and soldiers, as well as a tour of schools operating from underground bomb shelters and subway stations.

One meeting, he said, concerned fortifications "on all the main fronts, where we need to dig in, speed up the pace of construction." He said the focus would be the east and northeast, where Russia has sought to advance for months, achieving small gains at heavy cost. He also said that fortifications should be built in the Kyiv region along with others that border Russia

and Belarus, from where Moscow launched its full-scale invasion in February 2022.

Ukraine's summer counteroffensive failed to secure significant territorial gains in large part because of the strength of Russia's deep and extensive fortifications.

Zelensky's call for improvements to defensive structures comes as Russia steps up its own offensives in the east and amid uncertainty about additional military aid from the U.S., Ukraine's most important backer.

He called on private companies and donors to get involved in a campaign to finance and build the fortifications, and thanked Ukrainians engaged in sourcing and manufacturing the required materials.

Last week, Ukraine's Defense Ministry announced the launch of a new department that would work around the clock to oversee the construction of defensive lines and coordinate efforts by the military and local governments aimed at expediting the process.

In the south, Ukrainian forces have established a foothold on the eastern bank of the Dnipro River across from the regional capital Kherson. Since Russia's withdrawal from Kherson last fall, the river has served as a boundary between the two armies.

Zelensky named Kherson as another area that must be strengthened with new defenses.



HISTORY ON THE MARCH: Near the Czech town of Slavkov u Brna on Friday, enthusiasts in regimental uniforms advanced toward Saturday's 218th-anniversary re-enactment of Napoleon's triumph in the Battle of Austerlitz on Dec. 2, 1805.

RUSSIA Detention Goes On For U.S. Journalist

A Russian court extended by two months the detention of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty journalist Alsu Kurmasheva, a dual U.S.-Russian citizen awaiting trial on a charge that she failed to register as a foreign agent.

The Sovetsky District Court in Kazan, a city in southwest Russia, on Friday ordered Kurmasheva be held until Feb. 5, her company said. She was initially taken into custody in October, while visiting Russia for a family emergency, and her detention was subsequently prolonged until Dec. 5.

"Alsu has spent 45 days behind bars in Russia, and to-

day, her unjust, politically motivated detention has been extended," RFE/RL acting President Jeffrey Gedmin said. He added that Russian authorities haven't granted Kurmasheva access to U.S. consular officers, and called on them to do so immediately.

"Alsu must be released and reunited with her family," said Gedmin.

RFE/RL and Kurmasheva's family believe Russian authorities targeted her because of her U.S. citizenship and her profession.

Relations between Washington and Moscow have starkly deteriorated since Russia invaded Ukraine last year.

—Ann M. Simmons

EL SALVADOR Bukele Gets Leave To Seek Re-Election

El Salvador's Congress has granted President Nayib Bukele leave for six months to allow him to campaign for re-election despite constitutional objections, and approved the president's selection of his private secretary to be the country's interim leader.

Bukele will seek a second five-year term for the New Ideas party in the Feb. 4 national elections. Vice President Félix Ulloa was also granted leave to campaign again as Bukele's running mate.

Lawmakers on Thursday voted 67 to 12 to approve Bukele's request for leave. Congress then voted to ap-

prove Bukele's selection of Claudia Juana Rodríguez de Guevara, his private secretary, to fill in until his term ends May 30. Rodríguez de Guevara has been a Bukele associate since the president's political start as mayor of Nuevo Cuscatlan.

Constitutional lawyers maintain that Bukele's re-election bid violates at least four articles of the constitution. But the Supreme Electoral Tribunal ruled earlier last month that Bukele's candidacy met the legal requirements.

While highly popular for his aggressive war against gangs, Bukele has faced international criticism for consolidating power and not respecting human rights.

—Associated Press

FROM PAGE ONE

Meta Tries To Boot Pedophiles

Continued from Page One

The tests show that the problem extends beyond Instagram to encompass the much broader universe of Facebook Groups, including large groups explicitly centered on sexualizing children. Facebook, which counts more than three billion monthly users worldwide, promotes its groups feature as a way to connect users with similar interests.

A Meta spokesman said the company had hidden 190,000 groups in Facebook's search results and disabled tens of thousands of other accounts, but that the work hadn't progressed as quickly as it would have liked. "Child exploitation is a horrific crime and online predators are determined criminals," the spokesman said, adding that Meta recently announced an effort to collaborate with other platforms seeking to root them out. "We are actively continuing to implement changes identified by the task force we set up earlier this year."

The company said it also has introduced other ways to find and remove accounts that violate its child exploitation policies, and has improved technology to identify adult nudity and sexual activity in live videos.

The Stanford Internet Observatory, which has been examining internet platforms' handling of child-sex content, credited Meta in a September report with some progress, but said of the connection among pedophiles on Instagram that "the overall ecosystem remains active, with significant room for improvement in content enforcement."

The Canadian Centre for Child Protection, a nonprofit that builds automated screening tools meant to protect children, said a network of Instagram accounts with as many as 10 million followers each has continued to livestream videos of child sex abuse months after it was reported to the company. Facebook's algorithms have helped build large Facebook Groups devoted to trading child sexual abuse content, the Journal's tests showed.

Task force

Meta said its task force, which at times has numbered more than 100 employees, had banned thousands of hashtags that pedophiles used to promote or search for content sexualizing children, removed pedophilic accounts and provided more guidance to content reviewers. The company said it is working to bolster software tools to restrict its algorithms from connecting pedophiles and to help target the forums and content that attract them.

Meta in recent years has shifted attention and resources to artificial intelligence, virtual reality and the metaverse. Broad cost cuts over the past year have resulted in the layoffs of hundreds of safety staffers focused on "high se-



Meta's headquarters in Menlo Park, Calif., above, and its office in Dublin, below, its base for worldwide content moderation.

verity" content problems, including some child-safety specialists, according to current and former employees.

Meta said that the company continues to invest in child-safety work, including by assigning a team to find and remove child exploitation material on the platform.

Meta has been reluctant to significantly limit the systems that present personalized content and user experiences, which have helped make it the world's biggest social-media company. A spokesman said that bluntly restricting or removing features that also connect people with acceptable content isn't a reasonable approach to preventing inappropriate recommendations, and that the company invests in safety to keep its platform healthy. "Every day our systems help connect millions of people with interesting and positive groups relevant to them," he said, including cancer support and job listings.

Company documents reviewed by the Journal show that senior Meta executives earlier this year instructed the company's integrity team, which is responsible for addressing user safety issues, to give priority to objectives including reducing "advertiser friction" and avoiding mistakes that might "inadvertently limit well intended usage of our products."

"It is a given for members of the integrity team that their top priority is keeping the community safe," the Meta spokesman said.

Meta, like other tech companies, has long had to fight the use of its platform to groom children or trade child-sexual abuse material. The Journal's article in June showed Instagram wasn't just hosting such activities, but its recommendation systems were connecting pedophiles with one another and guiding them to content sellers.

During the past five months, for Journal test accounts that viewed public Facebook groups containing disturbing discussions about children, Facebook's algorithms recommended other groups with names such as "Little Girls," "Beautiful Boys"

hiring a wedding content creator was definitely worth it. "You pay so much for a wedding, right?" she says. "You want to be able to capture every single little bit of it."

Couples hired 14 wedding vendors on average—a conga line of them: wedding planner, florist, DJ, videographer, photographer, caterer, hair stylist, cake baker and more.

Your iPhone-wielding wedding guests will likely share plenty of selfies and pictures of the event on social media. But do you really want to count on your tippy frat brother and his plus-one to present the best of the day?

"Couples lose control over the narrative," cautions wedding-industry site Wed Society Pro, touting the reasons why one should consider a "wedding social media assistant."

The trend is, however, sparking something of a turf battle among vendors.

"The whole wedding industry is getting its knickers in a twist about it," destination-wedding videographer Emma Wilson, 51, of Story Of Your Day, wrote in an open letter to clients about the trend in June. While social media might be a fun way to share snippets of



and "Young Teens Only." Users in those groups discuss children in a sexual context, post links to content purported to be about abuse and organize private chats, often via Meta's own Messenger and WhatsApp platforms. Journal reporters didn't comment, click on any of the links or join any chats.

Boosted in part by Facebook's "Groups You Should Join" algorithm, membership in such forums can swell rapidly. In one public group celebrating incest, 200,000 users discussed topics such as whether a man's niece was "ready" at the age of 9, and they arranged to swap purported sex content featuring their own children.

When a Journal research account flagged many such groups via user reports, the company often declared them to be acceptable. "We've taken a look and found that the group doesn't go against our Community Standards," Facebook replied to a report about a large Facebook group named "Incest."

Only after the Journal brought specific groups to the attention of Meta's communications staff did the company remove them.

Meta said revamped software tools will help address such problems by limiting the ability of pedophilic accounts

to connect on its platforms. That effort is focused on expanding the use of a technology meant to identify "potentially suspicious adults" by evaluating users' behavior to determine whether they pose a threat to children.

The technology previously has been used to restrict Facebook or Instagram accounts that Meta's system deemed likely to belong to pedophiles from finding and contacting children. Meta now aims to use it to prevent pedophiles from following one another and forming like-minded groups. The technology aims to restrict the recommendation of accounts and groups that exhibit a range of suspicious behavior.

For the first time, Meta has begun disabling individual accounts that score above a certain threshold of suspicious behavior, a spokeswoman said.

In May, an outside researcher in the U.S. documented that a network of Instagram accounts, some with millions of followers, was livestreaming videos of child sex abuse. The researcher reported that activity to both Meta and authorities. The Journal also flagged those accounts to Meta's communications staff, which said at the time that it was investigating.

Meta said in late October

that it had taken down hundreds of accounts. But more than five months after the network was reported to Meta, accounts affiliated with the network continue to regularly broadcast a mixture of adult pornography, child sexual abuse and bestiality videos, according to separate research by the Canadian Centre for Child Protection.

'Massive networks'

"We often wonder, 'Why is it that we can, within minutes, find these massive networks?'" said Leanna McDonald, the center's president. "Why is no one over there dealing with this?"

Researchers at the Stanford Internet Observatory found that when Meta takes down an Instagram or Facebook hashtag it believes is related to pedophilia, its system often fails to detect, and sometimes even suggests, new ones with minor variations. After Meta disabled #Pxdobait, its search recommendations suggested to anyone who typed the phrase to try simply adding a specific emoji at the end.

The Stanford group provided Meta with an analysis of groups popular with Instagram's child sexualization community. Five months later, some of the groups it flagged are still operating.

The Meta spokesman said that taking down groups is complex and time-consuming. The company, he said, has removed 16,000 groups since

July 1 for violating child-safety policies.

Although Meta lets users flag problem content, the Journal's June article showed that its system often ignores or dismisses reports of child exploitation. Meta said at the time that it had discovered and fixed a software glitch that was preventing a substantial portion of user reports from being processed, and was providing new training to company content moderators.

Four months after the Journal alerted Meta to the problem with pedophilic Facebook Groups, however, user reports about them filed by a Journal research account still weren't being routinely addressed.

Meta has said its review calls are around 90% accurate. But an internal review by the company in May found that its decisions about user reports of underage sex content were routinely inexplicable.

Through the late spring and into summer, the company laid off child-safety specialists and a significant portion of its Global Operations Team, which handled "high severity" content moderation issues that sometimes included child safety. In Dublin, where Meta's worldwide content moderation is based, more than 130 employees were cut, and some North America-focused safety work was passed to staffers assigned to Central Europe and the Middle East.

A Meta spokesman said that the laid-off Dublin staffers only occasionally handled child-safety issues.

"Human review of content suspected of including child sexualization material is done by people trained specifically to review such material," said a spokesman.

After the Journal published its findings in June, Meta said it was rethinking the balance between child safety and giving maximal freedom to users.

Previously, Meta had resisted banning the Instagram and Facebook hashtag #CP, an abbreviation for "child pornography" commonly used by pedophiles, because the same initials were sometimes used on posts about cerebral palsy and caldo de pollo, Spanish for chicken soup.

Meta restricted the searchability of that term and thousands of others, including #incest and #lolita.

A review of Instagram by Stanford researchers in September found that some of the same underage sellers of sex content that they had identified in the spring still had active accounts and were using minor variations on previous hashtags to promote illegal material.

An Instagram system designed to help users find new content automatically suggests personalized variants of search terms as a user types them. The Stanford researchers found that to be happening even with search terms that Meta had banned.

On a Journal Instagram test account, Meta wouldn't allow search results for the phrase "Child Links," but the system suggested an alternative: "Child Pornography Links." After Meta blocked that term following a query by the Journal, the system began recommending new phrases such as "child lingerie" and "childp links."

The problem extends beyond Instagram to Facebook Groups.

Weddings Get Content Creators

Continued from Page One

known as "social media wedding concierges," with prices that can go from just over \$1,000 to north of \$3,500.

They cater to the many now used to sharing their life—and all those fabulous, enviable moments—in near-real time on social media. Not-so-close friends who didn't make the guest list can now watch the groom crash into Aunt Alice in an Electric Slide mishap soon after it happens in real life.

Pangilinan says she wound up with more up close and personal moments, including a short video stitching together shots of the flowers, table settings and other décor at the bucolic estate. It went onto Instagram two days after the wedding, with the tagline: "when all your wedding dreams finally come true."

Pangilinan wouldn't call it a necessary expense but she says



Caroline Vonachen Carleton worked on the L'Heureux wedding.

the day, she wrote, it isn't a substitute for a professionally made film.

"I'm offering a service that my client has paid an awful lot of money for," says Wilson, who lives in Switzerland, in an interview. "I don't want that diluted by a little Instagram reel."

Wilson and other wedding photographers and videographers, who also move around the wedding capturing candid and poignant moments, fret about too many cooks in the kitchen.

"Sometimes, more often

than not, there's more than one photographer," Wilson explains. "Then you've got Uncle Bob taking photos. Then you've got everybody in the aisle leaning out and taking photos."

Wilson, who doesn't want to seem old-fashioned, says her team can produce images for social media instead of bringing in yet another vendor.

Wedding social-media mavens say they often talk with photographers or wedding planners beforehand to ease coordination. They say they are meeting a burgeoning demand,

not trying to replace photographers or videographers. Their services can include a handful of edited Instagram Reels or TikToks and hundreds of raw iPhone photos and videos delivered the night of the wedding, or soon after, and posting on social media for clients throughout the wedding day itself.

"I create viral video content in real time for couples on their wedding day," touts the website of Plan with Laur, run by Lauren Ladouceur. "You want to share the special moments from your wedding right when they happen," the site says.

The 26-year-old says businesses like hers are disrupting the wedding industry.

Stacey Moran, 30, of San Diego, Calif., launched BTS Bride after she got married in 2022 and realized she had to rely on bridesmaids and guests to capture the iPhone photos and videos she wanted to share on social media.

Moran, who has a full-time job in marketing, is on pace to work more than two dozen weddings and other events this year—including Pangilinan's Napa Valley wedding in June.

Moran recently expanded by hiring nine other wedding con-

tent creators. "We are your built-in social media besties," says their website.

In Orange County, Calif., wedding content creator Kaitlyn Cabrera, 28, says she and her small team at Gifts for the Girls are working around 70 events this year. Her typical packages start at \$1,550 or \$2,195.

Some of her clients want to re-create a popular bit making the rounds on TikTok, where wedding guests take turns donning a pair of snazzy sunglasses and striking a pose.

Also popular is a so-called game day video showing groomsmen getting ready and strutting by as if they are pro athletes before a big game.

Abby L'Heureux, 27, and her husband Ryan, 34, in Newport, R.I., were initially skeptical. Ryan is a middle-school teacher and Abby works in customer service, and they tend to be more private on social media.

"I had a couple friends that were like, 'that's very millennial of you,'" Ryan recalls.

One favorite: A video of Abby, still in her wedding dress, dancing at a local bar.

Her mother says: "It was the best money we spent on the wedding."

SPORTS

By LAINE HIGGINS

This is the college football season when some very un-Alabama things happened to Alabama.

It started when the Crimson Tide lost a game in September. Things got worse when they rotated through three quarterbacks before finally naming a starter. They needed a second-half comeback to squeak past South Florida and then a miracle to win the Iron Bowl. The whole thing was deeply weird and unsettling, like Nick Saban cracking a smile.

"You're used to seeing Alabama just go out and destroy teams from start to finish," said Greg McElroy, who got an up-close look at those eviscerations as Alabama's quarterback from 2007 to 2010. "It was just so out of character for Alabama to look so human."

But now that the last weekend of the season is here, Alabama has somehow found itself in the most Alabama spot possible: one win away from a spot in the College Football Playoff.

Should the Crimson Tide defeat No. 1 Georgia in Saturday's Southeastern Conference championship game, they would be all but certain to advance to the playoff semifinals, locking up their eighth final four appearance in the 10 years since college football's current post-season format was introduced.

If that makes it sound like this season's resurgence was as inevitable as Saban reaching for a box of Little Debbie's at breakfast time, the reality is that it was anything but. When Alabama fell to its worst nonconference home loss since the dawn of the Saban era following an early-season collapse against Texas, then found itself locked in a dogfight with lowly South Florida one week later, it looked more like Saban's reign was coming to an end.

That Alabama not only recovered, but did so by diverging from the classic Crimson Tide playbook, makes this one of the more remarkable coaching jobs of Saban's 17-year tenure.

"I'm very proud of the transformation of our team from the beginning to the end, the hard work and preparation that our players have been focused on all year long," Saban said this week.

For most of his time in Tuscaloosa, Saban's teams have followed the same basic blueprint: Beat up on opponents in the first half, then stick in the backups for the second. But this season, Alabama has had to learn how to navigate a series of nail-biters and how to come from behind to win.

Since 2018, Alabama has spent just 8.6% of its games trailing—and sometimes significantly less than

Wait, Is Alabama About to Crash The College Football Playoff?

The Crimson Tide overcame an early loss and QB instability to get to the SEC Championship



Nick Saban has led Alabama to an 11-1 record this season. Isaiah Bond caught a game-winning touchdown to beat Auburn in the Iron Bowl.

he looked at the guys in his quarterback room this summer, Saban wasn't only unsure if he had a first-rounder. He was unsure who to name as the starter.

Three players were vying for the starting spot: redshirt sophomore Jalen Milroe, a bona fide dual-threat quarterback; classmate Tyler Buchner, who followed his offensive coordinator Tommy Rees by transferring from Notre Dame in the spring; and redshirt freshman Ty Simpson.

The results were, predictably, chaotic. Milroe started the first two games, but got benched after throwing two costly picks in Alabama's double digit loss to Texas. Buchner started against South Florida, but lasted all of five scoreless drives before being replaced by Simpson, who tied things up at 3-3 by halftime and went on to eke out a 17-3 win.

"That was really an eye-opener," McElroy said. "That game should not have been close."

Alabama went back to Milroe for good the following week, but was operating in something close to survival mode, said McElroy. It

wasn't until the bye week in late October that they were able to hit the reset button and hit their stride.

"It was the first opportunity all season to really work on themselves," McElroy said. "They were able to really look at who they are, who they wanted to be and how they wanted to attack. It has changed quite a bit since then for the better."

Before playing Louisiana State in November, Milroe was trying to play like a pocket passer and hadn't really been going to his legs. During the bye week, Saban told him to play the way that made him a four-star recruit in high school—like "a point guard with a football," Milroe said.

In basketball, the best point guards know when to make a pass and when to drive to the rim. Against LSU Milroe did just that. He finished the game with 219 passing yards, 155 rushing yards and four rushing touchdowns in the Crimson Tide's 42-28 win.

"The transformation of Jalen Milroe at quarterback, to be productive, has been huge in terms of elevating the confidence of the entire offensive team," Saban said on Thursday.

On the other side of the ball, things have been much more familiar. Even before he arrived at Alabama, Saban was known for fielding some of the stingiest defenses in college football. That hasn't changed in 2023—the Tide rank 17th in yards allowed per game.

But it's the surprising offensive explosion that makes Alabama a threat to crash the college football playoff party. In the games before the bye week, Alabama's offense put up 30.7 points per game. Milroe and company have scored 46 points per game since.

They'll need all of that firepower and then some if they hope to end Georgia's 29-game winning streak. Alabama is a 5 1/2-point underdog on Saturday.

That might not be quite as ominous as it seems, however. The last time the Crimson Tide marched into Atlanta as underdogs was in 2021, when the Bulldogs were 6-point favorites. That game ended in a decisive 41-24 win for Alabama.

By LINDSEY ADLER

WHEN SHOHEI OHTANI taped a television segment in mid-November to accept his Most Valuable Player Award, he brought along a friend. The companion in question was a sprightly little dog who had no idea that his owner was likely about to sign the most lucrative contract in the history of American sports.

The existence of that four-legged friend was possibly the most revelatory piece of information about Ohtani's personal life to date. An intensely private superstar, Ohtani broadcasts little about his life and spends as much time as he can back in his native Japan. Even the dog's name is unknown to the public.

But that closely guarded secret pales in comparison to the question everyone in baseball is asking: Where will one of the greatest talents baseball has ever seen play next?

With MLB's winter meetings commencing next week in Nashville, it remains unclear what Ohtani is seeking both in location and compensation. But he is expected to command a record-setting deal worth more than \$500 million. Ohtani has yet to drop any clues—about his free agency or any other elements of his life. This is a man whose two-way talent is discernible to the untrained eye and plays professional sports in an era when everyone knows everything about everyone, who has somehow managed to retain nearly impenetrable privacy.

This is just the way Ohtani likes it.

When he first left Nippon Professional Baseball for Major League Baseball, many believed that Ohtani's preference was to play for a West Coast team due to

Baseball's Most Expensive Secret: Ohtani's Plans Remain a Mystery

its relative convenience for a trans-Pacific lifestyle. But now, after spending six years withering in broader irrelevance for the Los Angeles Angels, it is not clear how much he values the opportunity to reach a World Series or set a new threshold of compensation for both pitchers and hitters.

The shroud of mystery extends to the torn elbow ligament he sustained last season. Even the specific surgical procedure he underwent to repair it earlier this

offseason hasn't been disclosed by his camp. While Ohtani isn't expected to pitch in 2024 and play only as a full-time designated hitter, the lack of clarity around the procedure on his elbow leaves another void of information about how long it might take him to get back on the mound.

The only certainty is that one team will soon bet its next decade on this luxury DH and eventual pitcher. Currently, the teams leading the pursuit of Ohtani in free agency are the Dodgers, Cubs, Giants, Blue Jays, and his former home team in Anaheim.

The Dodgers, who pursued Ohtani hard before he signed with the Angels in late 2017, appear to be the team most motivated to acquire the two-way star. The Dodgers have a rare-for-them low starting payroll ahead of the 2024 season, and are both perennial contenders and located on the West Coast. The Blue Jays, however, are owned by Rogers Communications, a gigantic telecommunications corporation that



Shohei Ohtani with his dog before the 2023 AL MVP announcement.

could theoretically make an enormous financial commitment to Ohtani.

Meanwhile, in San Francisco, the Giants will continue their efforts to land one major free agent after years of watching Bryce Harper, Aaron Judge, and others pass them by. The Giants need a serious superstar to reinvigorate their fan base, both from an on-field production standpoint and for commercial reasons. The Cubs may be the wild card here, attempting to climb back to big-market relevance after a string of

down years following their historic 2016 World Series win. The team already made a shocking statement of intent upon hiring manager Craig Counsell away from the division-rival Brewers. Acquiring Ohtani would immediately cement them as the most improved team of the offseason.

On the margins, the Yankees would seem to have use for Ohtani both as a left-handed hitter and as a demonstration that team ownership is still willing to flex its financial might. Yet the Yankees could be more inclined to split the

difference, and have been linked with Japanese pitcher Yoshinubo Yamamoto as a free agent and Padres outfielder Juan Soto in a potential trade.

As for the Angels, the team that brought Ohtani to America hopes that six years of hospitality in Anaheim will outweigh the constant turnover in the front office and coaching staff and failure to reach the postseason even once during his time there. Should the Angels lose Ohtani in free agency—the most probable outcome—his time in Anaheim will instantly rival one of the great free agency fumbles in baseball history: the Pittsburgh Pirates' letting Barry Bonds sign with the Giants in 1992.

Ohtani's defense of his privacy has outdone even the most famously guarded professional athletes. Derek Jeter, known for his ability to say mostly nothing about everything, was still a constant tabloid presence during his playing career. Mike Trout, Ohtani's teammate for six years with the Angels, often has little to say about himself, but is widely known to be a fanatic of the Philadelphia Eagles and the Weather Channel.

Yet Ohtani's efforts at locking down every detail about his life away from the box score hardly put a dent in his lucrative marketability. He is the unknowable man whose likeness will soon be even more present than it has been since his MLB debut in 2018. He's an enigma, and he is on the precipice of making history.

But as even the most plugged-in members of the baseball industry continue to speculate about where Ohtani will wind up next, one expert has already deciphered the second biggest mystery about the international superstar.

Ohtani's dog, according to a breed specialist at the American Kennel Club, appears to be a Nederlandse Kooikerhondje. The name is still a secret.

OPINION

Henry Kissinger, Statesman and Friend

By Eric Schmidt

My father, who worked for the U.S. Treasury in the 1970s, called Henry Kissinger the smartest, hardest-working person he ever knew. As a teenager, I responded by demonstrating against the Nixon administration and the Vietnam War. Little did I understand that Kissinger was working step by step to end the war while the demonstrations took place.

Years later I met Henry for the first time. He asked me about how Google worked and joined me on stage at headquarters where he announced that Google was “a threat to the world’s civilization.” The Googlers loved it, and Henry eventually became my best friend.

To work with Henry was unlike working with anyone else. In our collaborations, I wrote long technical memos that he would digest. Later, by himself listening to loud classical music and writing in indecipherable longhand, he would incorporate each of my points in majestically crafted language.

At 100, he was constantly thinking, taking joy in following a new idea, a new strategy, a new challenge.

I decided Henry would benefit from modern technology, including an iPad. His first email was to his wife, Nancy: “The world has changed forever.” We did his first selfie together. Not every experiment was a success: While Google Voice can perfectly transcribe both English and German speech, Henry’s accent proved too much for it, so we went back to longhand.

Nancy was his true love. They were married for nearly five decades, and he was so devoted to her that when I spoke with him my first question was always, “How are you both?” He adored and admired her, and she understood that to be married to a genius is a unique privilege.

Most accounts of Kissinger’s

Cold War diplomacy missed how he actually operated. Henry had a simple model of geopolitical progress: You try to figure out what the other side wants, understand its motivations and pain points, and then find something that is possible and that it will see as an improvement. He was a fearsome negotiator with an impressive grasp of other countries’ history and an ability to assess their leaders realistically and to think three moves ahead. He viewed American culture as not strategic in this way: We tend to approach adversaries with a list of demands when we should have a conversation about a stable long-term outcome.

Grand strategy in his mind was exactly that. The exploitation of the Sino-Soviet split was a natural outgrowth of this approach. A young Kissinger today wouldn’t have such a simple intellectual structure—always be closer to your opponents than they are to each other—but he would have a similar approach: Build allies where you can, push hard in defense of democracy and freedom, and stick to your principles.

If realism is a doctrine of taking the world as it is, Henry was ultimately an idealist. He used realism, informed by deep research, to understand what people and leaders wanted. He always started by asking the other side to explain its goals. He sized up the world frankly, which often led observers to mistake him for a pessimist. But he thought that confronting the truth is the only way to solve problems. He usually told the other side exactly what he wanted and worked hard to make his objective inevitable. He was slow and methodical, considering every step over and over. But when a breakthrough occurred, he moved quickly to seize the moment. Diplomacy is an art of patience and speed, listening and telling, and he was the master.

I often wonder what he must have been like when he was 32 and I was born. I imagine the smartest person at Harvard, engaged in the deep thinking that developed modern nuclear-arms strategy. The story of his youth—of a young Jewish German becoming a teenager under Nazi



Henry Kissinger in 2016.

rule, then escaping to the U.S. in 1938—was riveting.

He idolized his father, who was from a tiny rural town and wanted to serve society as a teacher in the Gymnasium system. The fall of German democracy taught Henry that governmental systems can collapse and that catastrophic failure is to be avoided at all costs. Thirteen of his relatives, including his grandmother and four of his father’s sisters, were killed in the Holocaust.

He spoke in the matter-of-fact language typical of the Greatest Generation when he described prewar New York, where he worked in a shaving-brush factory, and the Army, in which he fought bravely, was awarded a Bronze star, and liberated a concentration camp.

Drafted in World War II, Pvt. Kissinger was cleaning latrines when a general came by and asked him to explain a situational map. He was quickly transferred to a more senior role. Later that year, he met Col. Fritz Kraemer, an officer who had a good eye for talent. Kraemer later was influential in Henry’s decision to go to Harvard. Henry liberally credits others with taking chances on him as a young man, and we should remember that the next generation needs as much help as Kissinger—or I—did to be able to make a difference in the world.

Henry was originally captivated by Kant, Spinoza and other German thinkers of the Enlightenment. In the 1950s he was a pioneering thinker in the new field of nuclear strategy. Decades later, having been trained to look for structural changes in the public sphere and for technological transformations of geopolitics, he saw Google in its early years, recognized its importance, but didn’t quite know why.

More recently, as the artificial-intelligence revolution began unfolding, Henry listened to a speech by the computer scientist Demis Hassabis and concluded that we are developing a new kind of intelligence that we don’t understand. Henry decided the technical people don’t ask the right questions, and at age 95 he set out in his thorough way to understand a completely new field. He started with algorithms and how computers work, and learned the technology all the way up to ChatGPT by sheer effort. He also found time to write “Leadership: Six Studies in World Strategy” (2022), which I recommend.

How did Henry make it to 100? He never retired. Until shortly before his death, he was working as hard as he did when he was 70. From the moment he woke up, he was thinking, taking joy in following a new idea, a new strategy, a

new challenge. He never lost his deep commitment to making the world safer and more prosperous. In his final year, he still advised governments, and Republicans and Democrats made the pilgrimage to his country home, knowing that he often saw a path where others didn’t.

Henry was extraordinarily loyal to his friends. He got to know their fears and ambitions and—as any great mentor does—encouraged the right part of their motivations. He encouraged and assisted me in my transition from running a corporation to working on hard technical and political problems. He prided himself on eulogizing the friends he outlived. He woke up in the morning as an optimist about the world. He believed that our present problems are solvable, that the future promise of AI is achievable, and that our social divisions can be bridged. He believed that the U.S. could coexist with China through mutual understanding, that Russia could eventually rejoin the community of nations, and that Arab-Israeli tensions could be reduced.

But he also believed that the world sorely lacks great leadership. We simply have too few people with the vision we need. He would suggest we compare our leaders today with, for instance, the Roosevelts to understand what we are missing.

Henry lived for a century and saw it all. Those of us who are younger should remember that he experienced World War II; that he faced fears of nuclear Armageddon for four decades and helped us control the danger; and that he saw in his 100 years an enormous increase in freedom, education and wealth all around the world. Imagine seeing the world through his eyes—compare what we are dealing with now to being a Jewish boy in Hitler’s Germany—and you understand why Henry was an optimist.

Mr. Schmidt was CEO of Google, (2001-11) and executive chairman of Google and its successor, Alphabet Inc. (2011-17), and is co-author, with Kissinger and Daniel Huttenlocher, of “The Age of AI: And Our Human Future.”

Title IX and the Assault on Hillsdale College

By Tunku Varadarajan

Hillsdale, Mich.

Embedded in a civil lawsuit against Hillsdale College is an assault on the fabric of this small, private Christian school founded in 1844. The lawsuit, brought by two undergraduate women who allege that they were raped two years ago by male Hillsdale students of their acquaintance, alleges not only that the college was negligent in handling their complaints, but also that it failed to afford them the protection to which they were entitled under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

In 2011 the Obama administration turned Title IX into a sword in the armory of federal civil-rights law. On pain of losing federal money, including student financial aid, the Education Department compelled schools to adopt rules that deprived those accused of sexual misconduct of basic due-process protections. The Trump administration undid those rules, and the Biden administration is working to reinstate them. The problem with

invoking Title IX against Hillsdale, however, is that the college takes no money from the government. “Not a cent,” says its president, Larry P. Arnn, which means that Hillsdale isn’t bound by Title IX.

In their lawsuit, filed on Sept. 25 in federal court, the plaintiffs assert that Hillsdale “does not accept government funding in a misguided and ineffective attempt to avoid its obligations under Title IX.” Mr. Arnn calls that claim “insidious and baseless.” Robert Norton, Hillsdale’s general counsel, says the college’s process for investigating and resolving allegations of sexual assault are “stronger, quicker, and more confidential” than the Education Department’s Title IX standards. He also says the college found the two male students had engaged in “conduct unbecoming,” even though no criminal charges were brought after the accusers filed complaints with the local police.

The lawsuit seeks to impose Title IX’s strictures on Hillsdale, arguing that the college’s tax-exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of

the Tax Code “operates as a subsidy, which is a form of federal financial assistance.”

Mr. Arnn sees a darker ideological intent in this claim. “This is about the kind of society some people want us to have,” he says. “The principle that because you have a tax deduction you’re spending government money can’t mean anything

The school gets no federal money, but a lawsuit seeks to rope it in because it’s a tax-exempt nonprofit.

other than that all money, in principle, belongs to the government.” This “tax-deduction thing,” as he calls the argument, “would be a massive expansion of government authority in one go. And of course, there are many people who seek that in America.”

Such a ruling would “sweep into the government’s net hundreds of

thousands of American institutions that have sought to stay out of it,” Mr. Arnn says. The argument has won favor recently in two district courts, in California and Maryland. The latter case, *Buettner-Hartsoe v. Baltimore Lutheran High School Association*, has been accepted for interlocutory appeal by the Fourth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. A friend-of-the-court brief filed there by the Napa Institute, a Catholic nonprofit, argues that the ordinary meaning of “federal financial assistance” in Title IX refers to “funding or active support affirmatively provided by the federal government—not to an entity’s tax-exempt status.” Congress couldn’t have intended to alter the fundamental details of a regulatory scheme in vague terms, to “hide elephants in molehills,” the brief says, invoking a metaphor Justice Antonin Scalia favored.

Mr. Norton, the general counsel, tells me that Hillsdale will “fight the point vigorously,” but prefers not to expose his argument, at this stage, to the other side. Walter Olson, a senior fellow at the libertarian Cato Institute,

says: “The proposition that nonprofit tax status should subject private institutions to the regulations applied to government grantees would be a radical departure from longstanding tax and legal principles and would put at risk the fundamental independence of America’s private charitable and educational sectors, to say nothing of its religious institutions.”

Treating a private institution as “philanthropic, charitable or not intended for profit can amount to a simple recognition of its structure and purpose,” Mr. Olson continues, “not some sort of seal of approval, let alone subsidy.” Neither Mr. Olson nor Mr. Norton—and certainly not Mr. Arnn—believes the Supreme Court would go along with this evisceration of America’s nonprofits. But until the argument is put to rest, Hillsdale will have to fight this assault on its character.

Mr. Varadarajan, a Journal contributor, is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and at New York University Law School’s Classical Liberal Institute.

Cities Use Covid Funds to Run Guaranteed-Income Experiments



CROSS COUNTRY
By Leslie Ford

Alexandria, Va. Dozens of cities around the country have launched welfare experiments called guaranteed-income pilots to send monthly checks of up to \$1,000 to needy people. The goal is to demonstrate that giving the poor direct cash aid can improve their economic stability, their children’s educational attainment, and even their mental health. Most of the pilots are “no strings attached,” meaning that the cash aid doesn’t come with any restrictions on how it can be spent or any work requirement.

At least eight cities—including Chicago, Newark, N.J., San Diego, and St. Paul, Minn.—are using leftover Covid relief money to finance their experiments. Taxpayers should understand they are funding a failed idea that could push low-income people away from work and marriage.

Last year, Alexandria, Va., began to use federal pandemic money to send \$500 a month to 170 people for 24 months, with no requirement that

they work. Less than a year in, program managers say they are happy with the results. Julie Mullen, the city’s economic mobility program officer, told local news site AXLnow that she’s excited to see the checks “lightening people’s mental load . . . which is what we wanted.”

These guaranteed-income pilots mimic the Biden administration’s expanded child tax credit. Between July and December 2021, the federal government sent between \$250 and \$300 a month per child to parents. While the administration wanted to extend this handout indefinitely, at a cost of \$1.6 trillion over a decade, Congress let it expire amid legitimate concerns over excess federal spending. Lawmakers also worried that the child tax credit would severely inhibit workforce participation. University of Chicago researchers estimate that if the expanded child tax credit became permanent, 1.5 million people—nearly 3% of all working parents—would stop working.

These concerns notwithstanding, Mayors for a Guaranteed Income, the group that coordinates the pilot projects, has explained that “there is a very real chance to revive” the expanded child tax credit. Yet history

is already repeating itself. AXLnow reports that at least one participant in the Alexandria program has cut back his work hours, swapping his paycheck for a government handout. Many likely will make the same choice over time.

The pilot programs typically run for a year or two, which isn’t long enough to demonstrate the lasting harm that guaranteed income does.

There is already plenty of evidence that government handouts are harmful to poor families.

The programs seem designed to make cash handouts appear harmless. They conflate paid employment with caretaking and don’t report work hours. The idea is to make congressional opposition to this policy seem misplaced at best and heartless at worst.

Yet Congress was right to kill the expanded child tax credit, and it would be just as right to keep guaranteed income without work off the table in any end-of-year tax package.

The guaranteed-income experiment has been tried many times before. It has always led to less work among low-income Americans, weaker families, and more poverty.

The U.S. tested guaranteed income in four large-scale random assignment pilots in the 1970s. Overall, \$1,000 in added benefits was offset by a \$660 earnings reduction. The reduced earnings persisted long after the programs ended. Each \$1 increase in benefits led to a roughly \$5 drop in recipients’ lifetime earnings.

The same thing happened with the Aid to Families with Dependent Children program, established by the Social Security Act of 1935. It sent money to low-income single mothers without requiring them to work. By 1996, when welfare reform brought the program to an end, barely 1 in 10 recipient families included a worker. Most were stuck in long-term poverty.

AFDC even appears to have made it less likely that low-income children would be raised in two-parent families. Guaranteed money from the government made it more financially beneficial to cohabitate than to marry. Decades of research shows that married households are

better for children on a wide variety of outcomes. In 1970, 85% of children had two married parents. Twenty-five years later, that had fallen to 68%. The nonmarried childbirth rate among welfare recipients stabilized only after Congress passed the 1996 reform, directly connecting welfare to work. Employment in these families rebounded and child poverty dropped for the first time in decades.

The new push for guaranteed income without work will bring back this trend and likely worsen it, since the pilot programs are funding more than mothers and children. Taxpayers deserve to know that the money intended to pay for the Covid crisis is funding a new welfare expansion, one that could cost them dearly while hurting the people it’s supposed to help. If Congress repeats history, Alexandria isn’t the only city that will see the guaranteed harm that comes with unconditional guaranteed income.

Ms. Ford is an adjunct fellow at the American Enterprise Institute’s Center for Opportunity and Social Mobility. She served on the White House Domestic Policy Council, 2018-20.

OPINION

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

The Biden-Blinken Rules of War

War is back against Hamas, but will the Biden Administration let Israel win? Secretary of State Antony Blinken delivered the bad news to Jerusalem before the truce ended: He wants Israel on a short leash.

Hamas fired rockets at Israel Friday morning, in violation of the pause, and failed to produce the remaining female hostages to trade for more time and terrorists. It also claimed that its last child hostages, 10-month-old Kfir Bibas and his four-year-old brother, Ariel, are dead.

Mr. Blinken understands that Israel has more to do to defeat Hamas. "Hamas cannot remain in control of Gaza," he reiterated at a press conference in Israel Thursday. Israel's campaign has so far secured much of Gaza's northern half, smashing several Hamas brigades and destroying its tunnels and hospital headquarters. The pressure this put on Hamas yielded a deal that freed 105 hostages. More pressure on Hamas now could spring some of the 137 hostages who remain in captivity.

Letting a pause turn into a more lasting cease-fire would repeat the mistake of past bouts with Hamas: leaving it in control of territory. Hamas still rules south Gaza, a base from which it would plot the next massacre, as its leaders have repeatedly pledged to do. That's why Israel will take the fight south.

But how should this next phase of the war be waged? Here, Mr. Blinken is adamant: It must be nothing like the operation in north Gaza. The Secretary of State said he "underscores" to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "the imperative to the United States that the massive loss of civilian life and displacement of the scale we saw in northern Gaza not be repeated in the south." He said Israel must take "more effective steps to protect the lives of civilians."

The best way to save civilians is to get them far from urban combat zones, away from Hamas strongholds like the city of Khan Younis. But Mr. Blinken demands "avoiding further significant displacement of civilians inside of Gaza." Instead, he called on Israel to create "safe zones" for civilians near the fighting.

But what should Israel do when Hamas positions itself in those zones? That's how it used hospitals and schools in the north. Could Israel

attack Hamas in those sanctuaries?

Mr. Blinken tried to close that door, too. Protecting civilians "means avoiding damage to life-critical infrastructure like hospitals," he said. "Intent matters, but so does the result."

If Israel must do more to protect civilians but can't evacuate them and can't hit Hamas when it hides in key civilian infrastructure and safe zones, how is it to fight at all? It could try a methodical, grinding campaign to force Hamas into the open. But Mr. Blinken demands Israel keep fuel flowing—precisely what Hamas needs to hunker down in its tunnels. That leaves relying on the infantry, at great cost in Israeli lives.

During a meeting of Israel's war cabinet, Mr. Blinken may also have tried to nix a long campaign. When Israel's Defense Minister told him, "The entire Israeli society is united behind the goal of dismantling Hamas, even if it takes months," the Israeli press reports that Mr. Blinken pushed back, replying, "I don't think you have the credit for that." He means credit with President Biden, as the White House bends to the growing pressure against Israel from the Democratic left.

The argument that Hamas is an "idea," and thus war can never defeat it, has also been gaining among U.S. progressives. As Mr. Biden tweeted Tuesday, "To continue down the path of terror, violence, killing, and war is to give Hamas what they seek." By this logic, Hamas would hate nothing more than . . . to be left in power? How quickly they forget Oct. 7.

Israel has a right to defend itself, which it reasonably believes requires destroying Hamas. The terrorist group rejoiced again on Thursday when two of its terrorists opened fire, during the truce, at Jewish civilians at a Jerusalem bus stop. Intent does matter, and blame for civilian deaths in Israel and Gaza resides with the terrorists.

Israel deserves U.S. support as it topples Hamas, not a repeat of Mr. Biden's Ukraine treatment: rules, restrictions and hesitations that push a decisive victory further away. Israelis may find that victory requires calling the President's bluff. Turning on Israel in wartime would alienate the much larger pool of pro-Israel American voters.

The U.S. tells Israel how to fight in Gaza, which could help Hamas.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A Threat to the American Way of Real Estate

Recent antitrust developments and potential regulatory changes could reshape the U.S. real-estate landscape, making the American dream a potential nightmare ("A Big Legal Defeat for the Realtors," Review & Outlook, Nov. 1). In Missouri, U.S. District Judge Stephen Bough found that settlements in the first of numerous antitrust class actions are "fair, reasonable and adequate." We agree, and we welcome improvements that enhance commission transparency, ensure an open marketplace and maintain a framework that ensures agents are representing the interests of both the seller and the buyer.

Overreach beyond these rules—as contemplated in some quarters—may jeopardize one of the pillars of fair transactions: buyer agency. This risks leaving the next wave of home buyers navigating the financial decision of a lifetime without professional support.

Negotiated upfront commissions between the listing agent and the buyer agent promote fairness, transparency and representation for both sides. Sellers can negotiate commission rates, and listing agents can decline a listing if compensation doesn't suit them. Listing agents can offer as much or as little as they'd like to buyer agents for finding suitable buyers. Sellers and listing agents can also take their chances to find buyers on their own by offering no commission at all to buyer agents.

In international markets where buyer agents aren't prevalent, on top

of any commission that sellers pay the listing agent for a successful sale, they typically also pay upfront and material costs for staging costs and advertising to find buyers. Sellers in the U.S. may well prefer the current model, where the listing agent is out of pocket and at risk for these costs, which are contingent on a sale.

Under a radically different regulatory regime, the absence of negotiated upfront commissions between the listing agent and buyer agent could mean that prospective home buyers would enter the biggest transactions of their lives on their own. Buyers could be left to navigate listing sites that gloss over property drawbacks like flood plains and fire zones. And good luck negotiating with someone who knows more about the true value of local property, and negotiates for a living. First-time home buyers and the most vulnerable in society will face disproportionate disadvantage.

Buying a home is a life-altering decision. The process requires fairness, transparency, an open market and trust. Hindering buyers' access to all the information and independent representation compromises these values. Buyers, and the community at large, should beware.

DAMIAN EALES
Austin, Texas

Mr. Eales is CEO of Move Inc., the operator of Realtor.com. Move Inc. is a subsidiary of News Corp, which owns the Journal's parent company.

Defeat Hamas First, Then Turn to Diplomacy

Alex Rowell draws the wrong conclusion about the Israel-Hamas conflict from his work on Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser ("When Israel's Great Nemesis Accepted Peace," Review, Nov. 25). First, he describes how Nasser turned to diplomacy after being defeated decisively on the battlefield in 1967. Yet the lesson Mr. Rowell draws is that military action won't bring a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A different conclusion appears more plausible,

namely, that a diplomatic resolution can't be achieved before Hamas is dealt a crushing military defeat.

Second, Mr. Rowell mentions that Gaza was occupied by Egypt until the 1967 war, but he leaves out that the West Bank and East Jerusalem were occupied by Jordan. It is an oft-forgotten fact that both Jordan and Egypt chose not to create a Palestinian state from 1948 to 1967.

EDIEAL PINKER
Stamford, Conn.

Congress Expels Santos. Who's Next?

George Santos, assuming that's his real name, is a classic type, and in another era he'd be selling miracle elixirs out of a horse-drawn wagon or perhaps founding a religion based on his divine revelations. Instead he went to Congress. On Friday the House expelled the indicted New Yorker, but however bad Mr. Santos's conduct, it's a worrying precedent for a polarized age.

Mr. Santos faces 23 federal charges, including fraud and identity theft. Yet he has pleaded not guilty, and even politicians get a presumption of innocence. Before Friday's expulsion, which passed 311-114, only five people in history had been booted by the House. Three were removed in 1861 for serving the Confederacy. The other two, in 1980 and 2002, were convicted of serious crimes.

The drawback of waiting for due process and a criminal conviction is that scoundrels can linger in office. Those with a sense of shame often spare themselves and the country by resigning, which Mr. Santos refused to do. But he said he wouldn't run for re-election, his trial is scheduled for next September, and two months after that voters could pick his replacement.

One advantage of holding off on expulsions is that a conviction provides a clear, neutral

limiting principle. What's the rule now? Shortly after Mr. Santos's ouster, Pennsylvania Sen. John Fetterman renewed his call to eject Sen. Bob Menendez, who recently pleaded not guilty to federal crimes. "If you are going to expel Santos," he said, "how can you allow somebody like Menendez to remain?" Mr. Santos's lies were almost funny, he added: "Menendez, I think, is really a Senator for Egypt."

After Friday, drawing lines will be more difficult. It's no good to argue that Mr. Santos is a fabulist who fibbed his way into office. How is that a distinction? When a politician is engaged in wrongdoing, he tends not to advertise it. Instead he tells voters that he goes to church on Sundays, he's committed to honest dealing, and he named his three daughters Faith, Prudence and Rectitude.

Mr. Santos is clearly disreputable, and his constituents in New York have a right to be angry about his behavior. But in breaking the seal of expulsion without conviction, Friday's majority has lowered the bar in a way that partisans will be tempted to abuse. As much as the House didn't want to put up with Mr. Santos for another minute, lawmakers may come to regret that they didn't leave his fate to the courts and the voters.

What Is the Message of Taylor Swift's Music?

Thank you, Peggy Noonan, for writing a piece on the phenomenon, and phenomenal, Taylor Swift ("We Should All Give Thanks for Taylor Swift," Declarations, Nov. 25). I read your column every week with my 13-year-old daughter, so that she can learn what common sense and respectful, politically moderate speech looks like. She was so excited to read that a successful, intellectual adult appreciates Ms. Swift the same way she does.

GITA LISKER
Queens, N.Y.

Ms. Noonan writes that thanks should be given to Ms. Swift for the economic boost she has brought to

the cities she has performed in and for many other of her ventures. While this is true, she admits that many of the lyrics in her songs were inspired by her breakup with this or that boy or man, leaving her heartbroken, only to be restored whole by another love of her life . . . and on it goes. In my opinion, this continuous melodious message of failed relationships isn't healthy for the young women who idolize her.

While her physical appearance is healthy, her music gives her young audience the OK to be forever lost in the search for romantic love. That is an unhealthy state of mind that makes it almost virtuous to be hurt and disappointed by a man.

BECKY SMITH
Roswell, Ga.

Media Failures on 2016 and 2020 Conspiracy Theories

In "Collusion vs. Stop the Steal" (Business World, Nov. 25), Holman Jenkins, Jr., correctly notes the resemblance between the 2016 Russia-collusion theory and the 2020 election-denial myth. He says, however, that "one difference" between the two is the "broad, voluntary effort by the establishment, including the news media," to propagate the theory that the 2016 election had been stolen by Russia for Donald Trump.

Apparently, he doesn't believe there was a similar effort on the other side in 2020. To the contrary, the reason millions of Americans falsely believe that the 2020 election was stolen is that they were led to believe this by a concerted effort on the part of many in conservative media, at least some of whom knew better.

BEN CONNELLY
Charlottesville, Va.

Abbas's Fatah Is Hamas-Lite

When moderates call for a two-state solution, they don't seem to comprehend that they're asking Israel to live next door to the equivalent of an ISIS-supporting entity ("Don't Give Gaza to the Palestinian Authority" by Eugene Kontorovich and Itamar Marcus, op-ed, Nov. 27). Fatah is run by Mahmoud Abbas, who wrote his dissertation blaming the Holocaust on the Jews. Many liberals choose to ignore this fact. Fatah, funded by U.S. taxpayers, also pays Palestinian terrorists' families for each attack committed against Jews. It is Hamas-lite.

YAFIT OVADIA
Tel Aviv

I second Ms. Noonan's nomination for Ms. Swift for Time magazine's Person of the Year. She is a world-wide economic force, but more important, she is extremely loving and respectful to her parents, and doesn't blame them for any of her self-perceived problems. I'm a mother of five, and she has my vote.

LAURA SORGI
Hingham, Mass.

Not the Best Example for FBI

I find it incredible that Stewart Whitson uses the terrorist incident in Garland, Texas, to support his op-ed citing the need for credit data that helped apprehend an accomplice ("The CFPB Targets an Antiterror Tool," Nov. 29). An FBI agent had been following the terrorists when the shooting began, yet it fell to a local police officer to fatally shoot both attackers. The FBI did nothing to warn the police officer or stop the terrorist attack.

MICHAEL J. GALASSI
Hurst, Texas

Sandra Day O'Connor, 1930-2023

Sandra Day O'Connor, who died Friday at age 93, is being remembered as the first woman to serve as a Justice of the Supreme Court. But her far more consequential legacy was as a champion of the role of the states in the Constitution.

Ronald Reagan nominated O'Connor in 1981 while she was a state judge in Arizona. That in itself was unusual since she wasn't on most short lists for the High Court. But the Gipper had promised to appoint a woman, and at the time there weren't many women on the federal bench.

Raised on her family's Arizona ranch, O'Connor served in the state Legislature before she became a judge. She brought to the Court a Western sensibility and a respect for the prerogatives of the states that had fallen into disfavor amid the assertion of progressive federal power in the 20th century.

Along with Chief Justice William Rehnquist, her classmate at Stanford Law School, she sought to put limits on federal intrusions on state power. She provided the fifth vote for the majority in *U.S. v. Lopez* (1995), which struck down a federal ban on carrying a gun in a school zone. The majority ruled that Congress had exceeded its power to regulate under the Commerce Clause.

The *Lopez* line of cases has restored some balance to constitutional federalism that was much needed, and still is. Justice O'Connor offered an especially vigorous dissent in *Gonzales v. Raich* in 2005 when the Court stretched the Commerce Clause to allow the feds to regulate

marijuana cultivation for medical use.

"This case exemplifies the role of States as laboratories. The States' core police powers have always included authority to define criminal law and to protect the health, safety, and welfare of their citizens," O'Connor wrote in a dissent joined by Justice Clarence Thomas and Rehnquist.

In a 1982 case, *FERC v. Mississippi*, Justice Harry Blackmun wrote with disapproval that Justice O'Connor had a view "of state sovereignty that is almost mystical." Being accused of legal mysticism by Justice Blackmun is hilarious, given his opinion in *Roe v. Wade*. But we wouldn't mind more of that federalist mystery on the current Court.

Justice O'Connor could be frustrating in that she often sought a middle ground on the Court that didn't resolve festering legal sores. One example was her support for racial preferences in college admissions in *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), a 5-4 decision that the Court all but turned this year in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*.

She was also on the wrong side in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey* (1992) when five Justices sought to solve the legal abortion morass created by *Roe* but merely drew the High Court deeper into abortion politics. The Court overturned it in 2022 in *Dobbs*.

As Viet Dinh writes nearby, Justice O'Connor spent her years after retirement from the Court promoting a variety of public causes, notably the teaching of civics. We could use more of that O'Connor legacy today as well.

The Justice championed the role of the states in the Constitution.

Pepper ... And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"At what point does slow jogging become walking?"

Letters intended for publication should be emailed to wsj.letters@wsj.com. Please include your city, state and telephone number. All letters are subject to editing, and unpublished letters cannot be acknowledged.

OPINION

AI Is the Y2K Crisis, Only This Time It's Real



DECLARATIONS
By Peggy Noonan

Recently while sharing a meal an acquaintance said something arresting. We were speaking, as happy pessimists do, about where the 21st century went wrong. We're almost a quarter-century into it, it's already taken on a certain general shape and character, and I'm not sure I see much good in it beyond advances in medicine and science. He said he was working on a theory: The 21st century so far has been a reverse Y2K.

By 12/31/99 the world was transfixed by a fear that all its mighty computers would go crazy as 23:59:59 clicked to 0:00:00. They wouldn't be able to transfer over to 2000. The entire system would have a hiccup and the lights go out. It didn't happen. Remedies were invented and may have saved the day.

Computers didn't cause the expected havoc as we rang 2000 in. They've been doing so slowly ever since.

It is since 2000, the acquaintance said, that the world's computers have caused havoc, in the social, cultural and political spheres. Few worried, watched or took countering steps. After all, 2000 turned out all right, so this probably would too. We accepted all the sludge—algorithms designed to divide us, to give destructive messages to kids, to addict them to the product—passively, without alarm.

We are accepting artificial intelligence the same way, passively, and hoping its promised benefits

(in medicine and science again) will outweigh its grave and obvious threat. That threat is one Henry Kissinger warned of in these pages early this year. "What happens if this technology cannot be completely contained?" he and his co-authors asked. "What if an element of malice emerges in the AI?" Kissinger was a great diplomat and historian, but he had the imagination of an artist. AI and the possibility of nuclear war were the two great causes of his last years. He was worried about where this whole modern contraption was going.

I've written that a great icon of the age, the Apple logo—the apple with the bite taken out of it—seemed to me a conscious or unconscious expression that those involved in the development of our modern tech world understood on some level that their efforts were taking us back to Eden, to the pivotal moment when Eve and Adam ate the forbidden fruit. The serpent told Eve they would become all-knowing like God, in fact equal to God, and that is why God didn't want them to have it. She bit, and human beings were banished from the kindly garden and thrown into the rough cruel world. I believe those creating, fueling and funding AI want, possibly unconsciously, to be God, and think on some level they are God.

Many have warned of the destructive possibilities and capabilities of AI, but there are important thoughts on this in a recent New Yorker piece on Geoffrey Hinton, famously called the godfather of AI. It is a brilliantly written and thought-through profile by Joshua Rothman.



A California storefront in December 1999.

Mr. Hinton, 75, a Turing Award winner, had spent 30 years as a professor of computer science at the University of Toronto. He studied neural networks. Later he started a small research company that was bought by Google, and he worked there until earlier this year. Soon after leaving he began to warn of the "existential threat" AI poses. The more he used ChatGPT, the more uneasy he became. He worries that AI systems may start to think for themselves; they may attempt to take over human civilization, or eliminate it.

Mr. Hinton told Mr. Rothman that once, early in his research days, he saw a "frustrated AI." It was a computer attached to two TV cameras and a robot arm. The computer was told to assemble some blocks spread on a table. It tried, but it

not as awful for humanity as it might be?"

Why, Mr. Rothman asks, don't we just unplug it? AI requires giant servers and data centers, all of which run on electricity.

I was glad to see this question asked, because I have wondered it too.

Mr. Hinton said it's reasonable to ask if we wouldn't be better off without AI. "But it's not going to happen. Because of the way society is. And because of the competition between different nations." If the United Nations worked, maybe it could stop it. But China isn't going to.

I found this argument, which AI enthusiasts always make, more a rationale than a thought. If China took to hunting children for sport, would we do it? (Someone reading this in Silicon Valley, please say no.)

What is most urgently disturbing to me is that if America speeds forward with AI it is putting the fate of humanity in the hands of the men and women of Silicon Valley, who invented the internet as it is, including all its sludge. And there's something wrong with them. They're some new kind of human, brilliant in a deep yet narrow way, prattling on about connection and compassion but cold at the core. They seem apart from the great faiths of past millennia, apart from traditional moral or ethical systems or assumptions about life. C.S. Lewis once said words to the effect that empires rise and fall, cultures come and go, but the waiter who poured your coffee this morning is immortal because his soul is immortal. Such a thought would be familiar to many readers but would leave Silicon Valley blinking with bafflement. They're modern and beyond beyond. This one injects himself with the blood of people in their 20s in his quest for longevity; that one embraces extreme fasting. The Journal this summer reported on Silicon Valley executives: "Routine drug use has moved from an after-hours activity squarely into corporate culture." They see psychedelics—Ketamine, hallucinogenic mushrooms—as "gateways to business breakthroughs."

Yes, by all means put the fate of the world in their hands. They're not particularly steady. OpenAI's Sam Altman, 38, the face of the movement, was famously fired last week and rehired days later, and no one seems to know for sure what it was about. You'd think we have a right to know. There was a story it was all due to an internal memo alerting the board to a dangerous new AI development. A major investor said this isn't true, which makes me feel so much better.

We are putting the fate of humanity in the hands of people not capable of holding it. We have to focus as if this is Y2K, only real.

Justice O'Connor Knew the Limits of Judging—and Government

By Viet D. Dinh

Sandra Day O'Connor shattered expectations and made history as the first woman to serve on the Supreme Court. She was often the pivotal vote, and her jurisprudence leaves a lasting mark on American law, from national security and education to federalism and beyond.

As important, she was a model of judgment and civility. After retiring from the bench to take care of her beloved husband, John, she dedicated herself to reviving the nation's civic culture. With faith in our established structures at an all-time low, O'Connor's second act, as a champion for American institutions and good citizenship, provides a timely reminder of this country's enduring promise.

Born to an Arizona ranching family in 1930, O'Connor knew about rugged individualism and what government—the federal government in particular—could, couldn't and shouldn't do. Her public life started in state politics: She served as an assistant attorney general, state senator, the first female majority leader of any state legislative chamber and a state appellate judge. So

when President Ronald Reagan appointed her to the court in 1981, she brought a deep respect for small government.

She breathed new life into federalism, placing guardrails on federal power. She wrote the court's opinion in *New York v. U.S.* (1992), which reinvigorated the 10th Amendment and restrained Congress's previously unlimited Commerce Clause authority. She dissented vigorously in *Gonzales v. Raich* (2005), which allowed Congress to override state drug laws within state borders under its authority to regulate interstate commerce.

She was my mentor and champion, and a great teacher in the craft of law. Her approach was simple: Consider the question presented, assess the facts, apply the law and make a decision. She didn't play philosopher-king but decided the cases before her. She was, plain and simple, a good judge.

Consider her careful approach to what was then one of the most pressing questions of constitutional law, the military detention of enemy combatants during the war on terror. At one pole was Justice Clarence Thomas's near-total deference to the

executive's war-making power. At the other, Justices Antonin Scalia and John Paul Stevens would insist on affording full constitutional rights to criminal defendants.

Justice O'Connor's controlling opinion in *Hamdi v. Rumsfeld* (2004) was sensitive to executive prerogatives but simultaneously alert to the requirements of due process. She respected order and liberty and understood that the president had broad

A rugged individualist, she approached cases with care, humility and a regard for the facts above all else.

authority but held that the Constitution required an opportunity for combatants to challenge their detention. She gave the necessary breathing room for the branches of government to act while deciding the case before her and articulating the boundaries of law.

So too with the use of race in university admissions. In *Gratz v. Bollinger* (2003), O'Connor joined conservative colleagues to reject a rigid,

points-based system of affirmative action in the University of Michigan's undergraduate application process. But in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, decided the same day, she wrote a majority opinion upholding the Michigan law school's ability to factor in race to promote a diverse student population.

Critics might see inconsistency. But O'Connor was evaluating fact-specific remedies on the record. And when a very different record was at issue in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard* (2023), the court built on O'Connor's jurisprudence to invalidate that system of impermissible racial preferences. Far from repudiating her approach, subsequent justices grappled and dealt with her rationales, just as she did with her predecessors'.

The use of traditional tools to reach the right legal conclusion was hardly revolutionary. And that was the point. She rejected the notion of a grand unified theory of constitutional law and instead practiced a kind of judicial humility that respected the institutions of government.

That is why she became a videogame mogul after retiring from the court. Sensing a decline in civic lit-

eracy as school curriculums abandoned the topic, she dedicated herself to reinvigorating knowledge of constitutional structure and to sharing her love of American government with students. The result was iCivics, a digital platform providing interactive games and lesson plans designed to promote civic education and active citizenship to students and educators alike.

Though hardly tech-savvy, O'Connor understood earlier than most that technology would come to dominate all aspects of life, including how young people learned. Since its founding, iCivics has reached more than five million students with tens of million interactions. It was a joy for O'Connor to share her love of America and its cherished institutions. Until the end, she was a tireless advocate for rule of law and civic virtue.

Sandra Day O'Connor wasn't a crusader or a philosopher. She aspired to be a good judge and a loyal citizen. In succeeding, she has become a pioneer and a national treasure.

Mr. Dinh is chief legal and policy officer for Fox Corp. He served as a clerk for Justice O'Connor, 1994-95.

Will GM Shareholders Survive the EV Meltdown?



BUSINESS WORLD
By Holman W. Jenkins, Jr.

Her peers in the car business can afford an unscripted moment but the head of General Motors, a company whose political risk every time its chief opens her mouth is comparable to the U.S. president's, can't.

From time to time, though, when a presidential election is looming and a labor strike is dominating the news, Mary Barra makes a point of emphasizing how much GM's profits depend on gas-powered pickup

trucks, not the electric cars that Washington wants her to build.

She did so at this point in the cycle in 2019, touting in a way that was meant to be noticed the enduring "earnings power of our full-size truck business." On Wednesday, she did so again, ordering up a giant share buyback to underline the ability of gasoline-powered profits to keep covering GM's losses on government-mandated electric vehicles and shower cash on shareholders.

Luckily, the U.S. legal system allows a safe harbor for "puffery," or what courts have considered window-dressing predictions not meant to be taken seriously. Ms. Barra's reliable patter, ever since 2017, about

GM's commitment to an "all-electric future" is an example. This continued on her Wednesday conference call. It's also a fantasy. Voters won't tolerate limits on their choice of vehicle; politicians won't ban gasoline cars however much they pretend otherwise, not least because the regulatory setup that politicians themselves long cultivated needs gasoline-powered profits to keep unionized auto workers employed.

Then why does GM's share price remain dramatically depressed in relation to its expected earnings? The \$10 billion Ms. Barra committed on Wednesday to a share buyback represents a quarter of the company's entire value. Think about it. The most obvious explanation is that investors don't see an escape yet from the government's requirement that GM keep losing billions on electric vehicles the public doesn't want, which Biden administration regulators insist must account for 50% of new car sales in just six years.

A truism about things that are unsustainable still holds, and the Biden plan is certainly unsustainable. The one reliable empirical quantum on which the climate issue rests is the rising CO2 content of the atmosphere. At some point it stands to reason that EV policy will hit the rocks when the public realizes that trillions spent on subsidies for electric cars and other green technologies are having no impact on this quantum.

Ms. Barra's tenure has been a

sorry one for shareholders despite the enormous reported profits, with shares still below their post-bankruptcy price of 13 years ago. But her political antennae are highly acute. With its recent settlement, GM has stabilized relations with the powerful auto workers union for another four years. Joe Biden is looking weaker by the day. The EV political

With a big share buyback, Mary Barra reminds investors that gas-powered trucks provide the profits.

bubble is demonstrably bursting amid stalled sales. For the first time ever, GM had the nerve this year to "just say no" to U.S. fuel-economy mandates and pay the obligatory fines as Mercedes and BMW have long done.

Ms. Barra's whopping buyback announcement this week sums up the impolitic signal: Investors should expect to rely on gasoline-powered profits for as far as the eye can see. Forget the whole idea of a forced march to an EV future.

If you haven't figured it out, I can only explain one more time that subsidizing electric vehicles and other green-energy technologies doesn't cause people to use less fossil fuels. Only taxing those fuels will do so, and there is little

political appetite currently for this. In consequence, the U.S. auto companies have become only more captured by politicians looking to make gestures. From safety technology and labor costs to fuel-mileage rules, car-loan terms and trade policy, they already exist in deep entanglement with government. It's no exaggeration to say the \$120 billion the Big Three have committed to invest in EVs was never driven by customer demand. It was driven by the need to support throwaway lines in Joe Biden (and before him, Barack Obama) speeches and press releases.

The markets are also beginning to understand something else: The 2009 bailout was a critical turning point. Until then, the domestic auto manufacturers had largely depended on hidden regulatory and trade favors to keep them afloat, with the galumphing exception of the 1979 Chrysler loan guarantees that were repaid early and in full.

Since then, the bailout has increasingly consisted of tax dollars distributed directly to the companies and their customers without any expectation that taxpayers will be repaid for much of it, hardly a propitious look for private, supposedly capitalist businesses. Ms. Barra's decade of operating in this world has been a wonder to behold as GM's large cash profits surely testify. The end is still likely to be bad for the company's shareholders, and the stock price knows it.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

PUBLISHED SINCE 1889 BY DOW JONES & COMPANY

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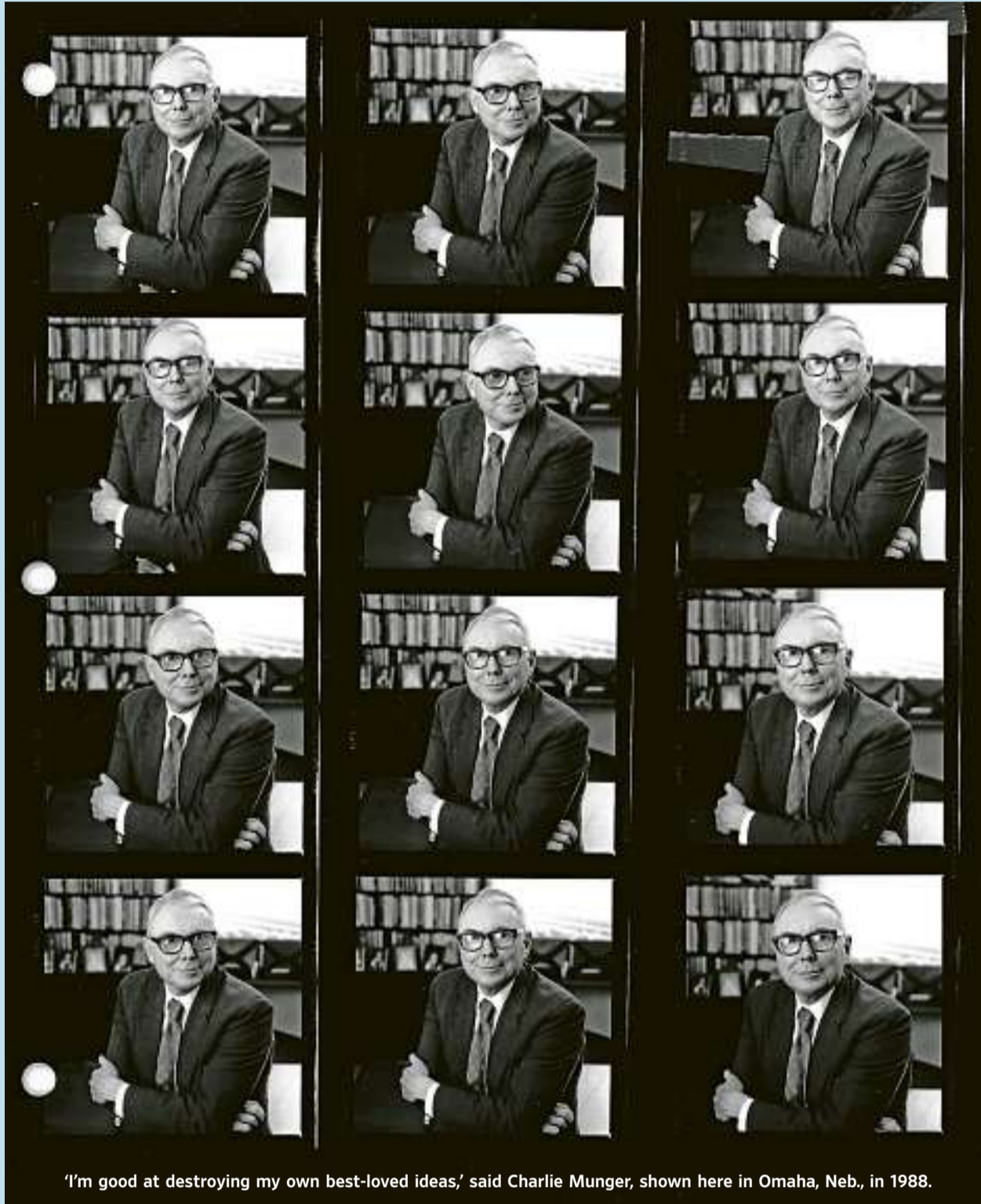
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THE INTELLIGENT INVESTOR | JASON ZWEIG

Charlie Munger's Reflections on His Life, Luck and Success



'I'm good at destroying my own best-loved ideas,' said Charlie Munger, shown here in Omaha, Neb., in 1988.

IT'S 1931, AND A BOY and girl, both about seven years old, are playing on a swing set on N. 41st St. in Omaha. A stray dog appears and, without warning, charges. The children try to fight the dog off. Somehow, the boy is unscathed, but the dog bites the girl. She contracts rabies and, not long after, dies. The boy lives. His name? Charles Thomas Munger. Charlie Munger, the brilliant investing billionaire who died on Tuesday in a California hospital 34 days before his 100th birthday, told me that story when I interviewed him last month. I'd asked the vice chairman of Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway: What do you think of people who attribute their success solely to their own brilliance and hard work? "I think that's nonsense," Munger

The late billionaire knew he was an outlier. His intelligence and hard work were just part of the reason why.

snapped, then told his story, which I can't recall him ever publicly recounting. "That damn dog wasn't 3 inches from me," he said. "All my life I've wondered: Why did it bite her instead of me? It was sheer luck that I lived and she died." He added: "The records of people and companies that are outliers are always a mix of a reasonable amount of intelli-

gence, hard work and a lot of luck." I had the extraordinary good luck to get to know Charlie Munger in the past two decades. Those who know only a little about him think Munger was a paragon of how to pick stocks—which he was. But those who knew him well consider him a moral exemplar—someone who showed how to think clearly, deal fairly and live fully. He took nothing for granted. More than almost anyone I've ever known, Munger also possessed what philosophers call epistemic humility: a profound sense of how little anyone can know and how important it is to open and change your mind. Of course, many people regarded Munger as an arrogant curmudgeon, like a hybrid of Mr. Burns and Grampa Simpson. *Please turn to page B4*

Evergrande, Creditors in Discussions To Prevent Liquidation

Last-ditch effort comes as embattled Chinese property developer faces Monday deadline

By ALEXANDER SAEEDY AND REBECCA FENG

Chinese property giant **Evergrande** and its biggest foreign creditors are negotiating an 11th-hour deal to prevent a liquidation of the company's offshore businesses on Monday, according to people familiar with the matter. Evergrande and a group of its bondholders have been negotiating to restructure the financially troubled company after Chinese regulators vetoed a previous version of their plan, according to the people. In a recent proposal, Evergrande has offered to give control of around 20% of its Guangdong-based parent company, China Evergrande Group, to its creditors, the people said. To comply with Chinese regulators' demands, Evergrande wouldn't issue new debt as part of the restructuring, the people said. Additionally, Evergrande is in discussions with **NWTN**, a Dubai-based electric-vehicle company, to invest *Please turn to page B10*

Paramount, Apple Eye Streaming Package

By JESSICA TOONKEL

Apple and **Paramount Global** have discussed bundling their streaming services at a discount, the latest attempt by rival entertainment giants to team up as they look to make their offerings more affordable and attractive. The companies have talked about offering a combination of Paramount+ and Apple TV+ that would cost less than subscribing to both services separately, according to people familiar with the discussions. The discussions are in their early stages, they said. The discussions come as most entertainment giants are dealing with competitive pressures. They have been raising prices sharply in recent months in an effort to bring their streaming businesses to profitability, but have in turn faced rising levels of customer defections. Because most streaming services are available through a monthly subscription, it is easy for viewers to cancel when they are done binge-watching a specific show. Offering multiple services as part of one package decreases the likelihood that subscribers *Please turn to page B2*

What It's Like Inside Goldman When a Big Project Fails

The Wall Street firm was looking to get out of consumer lending, once a big area of expansion. But Apple dumped it first.

By ANNAMARIA ANDRIOTIS

At an off-site in upstate New York last month, during a dinner lasting roughly three hours, Goldman Sachs Chief Executive David Solomon told partners that the firm had made some mistakes with consumer lending. But, he said, the business wasn't as bad as they thought and they didn't understand the details. He wouldn't tolerate partners trash-talking Goldman's decision to get into consumer lending, he told them. Goldman has known for a while that consumer lending wasn't really working out, and the bank has been looking for the exits. But it was Apple that sealed it. The tech giant recently sent a pro-

posal to Goldman that would pull the plug on their credit-card partnership, the crown jewel of the business. The split will effectively bring an end to Goldman's once-grand plan to be a bank for the masses—an experiment it began about a decade ago as a way to build something different after the global financial crisis. But the old and new never fit together. Engineering hires wooed from Silicon Valley grumbled about a stuffy culture. Executives in trading and investment banking, Goldman's traditional powerhouses, groused about the money-losing consumer endeavors. In the fall of 2021, Goldman was forging ahead with plans to expand the con-

sumer business. It was in the process of making a massive acquisition and was courting new credit-card partners. Solomon told deputies that if Goldman was going to be in the consumer business, it needed to go big. Still, even Solomon began to think the business was weighing Goldman down, according to people familiar with the matter. Shares were around \$400 at the time, already near their record high, but shareholders had expressed skepticism to Goldman about its consumer plans. Solomon told colleagues he thought the stock could go much higher if Goldman was to get an outside investor for the consumer business. *Please turn to page B5*



Goldman, headquarters left, partnered with Apple, with its tech-forward stores, right, to offer a credit card touted in ads as 'designed by Apple, not a bank.'

BOONIE SCHIFFMAN/GETTY IMAGES

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EXCHANGE

THE BUSINESS WEEK IN 6 STOCKS

Shopify Rings Up a Holiday Win, GM Shifts Gears

CIGNA GROUP

CI
8.1%

Cigna and Humana are in talks to join forces in a stock-and-cash deal that could be struck by the end of the year, The Wall Street Journal reported Wednesday. The possible deal would create a healthcare powerhouse worth roughly \$140 billion and give the firms scale to rival that of UnitedHealth Group and CVS Health. Cigna has a huge pharmacy-benefit business and strength in commercial insurance, while Humana has the second largest Medicare Advantage business after UnitedHealth. Cigna shares **fell 8.1% Wednesday**, while Humana lost about 5.5%

GENERAL MOTORS

GM
9.4%

General Motors is shifting gears. The automaker on Wednesday announced plans for a \$10 billion stock buyback for next year. The share repurchase is aimed to assuage investors about the health of its business amid setbacks in its electric-vehicle and driverless-car pursuits. GM will fund the buyback in part with capital previously earmarked for those areas. The company also said it would work to offset higher labor expenses, which will add \$9.3 billion in costs over about four years. General Motors shares **jumped 9.4% Wednesday**.

DAVID KAWALIBLOOMBERG NEWS



E-commerce platform Shopify said its merchants hit a sales record.

SHOPIFY

SHOP
4.9%

The after-Thanksgiving shopping rush was a windfall for online vendors. E-commerce platform Shopify said its merchants recorded \$4.1 billion in Black Friday sales, up 22% from a year earlier. Including Cyber Monday, its merchants reached a record of \$9.3 billion in sales, a 24% increase from 2022. An Adobe report predicts Cyber Monday to be the biggest online shopping day of all time, forecasting more than \$12 billion spent by consumers. Shopify shares **climbed 4.9% Monday**.

\$4.1 billion

Shopify merchants' sales during Black Friday

\$9.3 billion

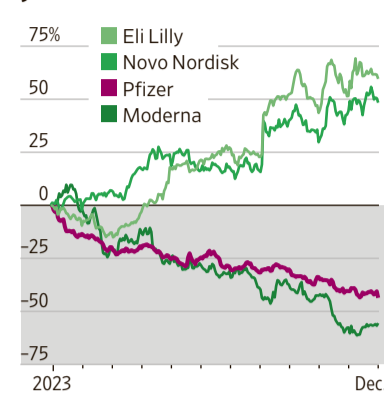
Shopify merchants' sales during Black Friday through Cyber Monday

PFIZER

PFE
5.1%

Pfizer faces a setback in its weight-loss drug ambitions. The pharmaceutical giant said Friday that it will not move to a late-stage trial of the twice-daily weight loss pill danuglipron, after the medication showed too many side effects. The anti-obesity drug craze has bolstered rivals such as Ozempic-maker Novo Nordisk and Mounjaro-maker Eli Lilly this year, leaving behind early-pandemic winners as Covid vaccine demand falls. Pfizer said that it will focus its efforts on a once-daily formulation of the drug, that it said could play a role in obesity treatment. Pfizer shares **lost 5.1% Friday**.

Performance of pharma stocks, year-to-date



Source: FactSet

SALESFORCE

CRM
9.4%

Salesforce on Wednesday posted strong earnings in its latest quarter, beating analyst expectations. This year, the company has focused on cutting costs and reducing staff to outweigh slowdowns in sales of its business software. Salesforce is competing with rivals like Microsoft in the artificial-intelligence arms race, and has launched several AI products and tools. Salesforce's latest results impressed investors, and the stock led both the Dow and the S&P 500 during November's final trading session. Salesforce shares **soared 9.4% Thursday**.

TESLA

TSLA
1.7%

Tesla's Cybertruck has finally arrived. Chief Executive Elon Musk on Thursday unveiled the electric pickup two years after its planned release. The entry-level model of the truck—which has a unique angular design and stainless-steel exterior—sells for roughly \$61,000. It will also sell two other, higher-end versions with the most expensive—the Cyberbeast—starting at nearly \$100,000. The delayed launch comes as Tesla faces increased EV competition. Tesla shares **lost 1.7% Thursday**.

—Francesca Fontana

TAX REPORT | LAURA SAUNDERS

A Charitable Way to Get Income for Life

There's a new tax break that allows seniors to support their favorite causes with funds from their IRAs



Tax breaks for charitable donations come in many flavors, and this year Congress has a new one for seniors called an IRA charitable gift annuity. It allows older owners of traditional IRAs to donate account funds to a charity and get tax breaks plus income payments for life.

Brian and Deborah Smith of Park City, Utah, plan to try this option next year. That's when Deborah Smith turns 73 and has to begin required withdrawals from her traditional IRA. She will donate \$53,000 of her \$550,000 account to the Episcopal church where the couple is active and Deborah serves on the board.

In return, says Brian Smith, the annuity will pay his wife about \$300 a month during her life, based on a 7% rate. This will provide a nice boost to her Social Security payments. Because Deborah's required withdrawal from her IRA will be used for a charitable donation, the payout won't raise their taxable income for 2024. The donation also will help damp the income-related charges for Medicare premiums known as Irmaa.

Brian, a professional investor, says he and his wife live mainly on investment income, and he suspects the annuity's fixed rate will look even better in several years.

"Making this big donation to the church while we're alive feels good, and getting a monthly payment back feels good too," he says. "It's a win-win."

For charities, a big advantage is that baby boomers holding lots of assets in traditional IRAs have a new way to make large donations to beloved causes and get something back. Millions of these givers have had few or no specific tax breaks for donations since the 2017 tax overhaul nearly doubled the standard deduction, which has reduced the percentage of filers itemizing from about 30% to under 10%.

But these donations are not for everyone. "I don't see too many of our clients doing it," says Dan Griffith, who directs strategies for high-net worth clients at Huntington Private Bank in Columbus, Ohio.

Among other things, he points to the low lifetime limit for the donations, the higher growth potential for assets left in the account, and the need to vet the nonprofit paying the annuity.

With pitches for IRA gift annuities coming thick and fast as year-end approaches, donors will want to consider all the angles. Here's more to know.

What's new about IRA charitable gift annuities? The ability to use IRA assets to do them. While charitable gift annuities have long



existed and are widely offered by colleges, churches and healthcare nonprofits, typically they have been funded with cash or appreciated assets like stock.

In essence, IRA gift annuities are a subset of qualified charitable distributions. Many rules are the same, and these donations are subtracted from the total annual limit for QCDs. So if a donor does a \$50,000 IRA gift annuity this year, he or she has \$50,000 left for other QCDs.

How do these annuities work?

IRA owners age 70½ or older make irrevocable donations of up to \$50,000 to one or more 501(c)(3) charities directly from their account. The limit is adjusted for inflation, and in 2024 it

An IRA gift annuity won't be right for everyone. Seniors should consider all the angles before jumping in.

will be \$53,000.

Under current law, IRA gift annuities can only be done once in a donor's lifetime—although the giver can split the total among several nonprofits in that year.

The charity then pays an annuity at a fixed rate set at the time of the gift. It is based on the donor's age and an anticipated 50/50 split of funds between the donor and the charity. The payments aren't adjusted for inflation, and

they end with the death of the owner or the owner and spouse, depending on the annuity's setup.

What are the rates? They are the same rates as for other charitable gift annuities, which are typically lower than for noncharitable annuities.

Rates vary according to the recipient's age and the charity, but many nonprofits use rates recommended by the American Council on Gift Annuities. The law mandates a rate of at least 5% for these annuities.

For 2024 the ACGA's recommended rates are expected to be 6.3% for a 70-year-old and 8% for an 80-year-old, about 0.4 percentage point higher than for this year.

How are IRA charitable gift annuities taxed? IRA gift-annuity payments to the donor are taxable at ordinary income rates.

As with QCDs, there is no tax deduction for the donation. But unlike a standard IRA withdrawal, the gift doesn't raise adjusted gross income. AGI is used to determine some other taxes and the Medicare premiums known as Irmaa.

The IRA donation also offsets part or all of the account owner's annual minimum withdrawal for that year, if one is required.

How does the donation limit apply to married couples? The limit is per IRA owner. If each spouse has a traditional IRA, then each can use up to \$50,000 of his or her account funds this year for an IRA gift annuity, for a total of \$100,000 per couple.

In addition, an annuity can be set up so that payments end with the death of the second spouse. In that case, the payments will be lower.

What are the fees and risks? According to ACGA President Joe Bull, the group's recommended rates assume an annual management fee of 1% paid by the charity, although arrangements vary. Be sure to ask about fees and other costs.

Charities usually bear the burden of making sure the annuity is paid—so recipients can suffer if the charity does, and there have been a few scandals. Check the group's stability, and whether state regulations offer protections.

Sometimes the annuity recipient lives much longer than expected. In this case, the charity may ask the recipient to forgo further payments, although the donor can refuse. This request is less likely if other donations are expected from that giver.

What are the rules on receiving goods and services from the charity for donors with these annuities? Don't take the freebies! The rules aren't the same as for other charitable donations. With those, a free ticket to a gala worth \$250 can simply be subtracted from the contribution.

But not for QCDs, which include IRA gift annuities. Instead, the free gala ticket worth \$250 would likely disqualify the tax-free IRA donation. The IRS might not find out, of course, but it's not worth the risk.

Apple, Paramount Eye Bundle

Continued from page B1
will cancel on any given month, according to data from Antenna, a subscriber-measurement company.

The rebundling of streaming services is happening "faster than we thought," said Erin McPherson, senior vice president and chief content officer at Verizon Communications, which launched its own marketplace of streaming services last year. "It's clear that bundles are here to stay."

Two high-profile streaming services, Netflix and Max, are being bundled together as part of a deal with Verizon, The Wall Street Journal reported in November. Similar deals are expected, as Warner Bros. Discovery Chief Executive David Zaslav recently said he was open to bundling Max with other streaming services.

Both Apple TV+ and Paramount+ had a customer-defection rate—known in the industry as churn—of more than 7% in October, a higher rate than the 5.7% average for the streaming industry as a whole, according to Antenna data. Disney has been offering Disney+, Hulu and ESPN+ à la carte as well as part of a package and has seen lower rates of subscriber defections for its bundle offering, according to Antenna data.

Apple currently offers Apple TV+ as part of an entertainment bundle that includes other Apple services such as Apple Music and Apple Arcade. That bundle, known as Apple One, has a far-lower churn rate than the stand-alone Apple TV+, according to Antenna.

Paramount used to offer a bundle of its own: a combo deal for its Paramount+ and Showtime streaming services, but the company earlier this year decided to combine the two into Paramount+. It also raised the price of the ad-free tier of the service to \$11.99 from \$9.99. In October, Apple raised the price of Apple TV+ to \$9.99 from \$6.99 in the U.S.

Paramount and Apple are hardly alone in raising prices. The average cost of watching a major ad-free streaming service has gone up by nearly 25% over the past year or so, according to a Wall Street Journal analysis, as entertainment giants bet that customers will either pay up or switch to their cheaper and more-lucrative ad-supported plans.

As more streaming bundles look to join forces, different flavors of bundles are emerging. For example, when Charter Communications renewed its carriage deal with Disney in September, the cable-TV giant got the right to provide access to Disney+ and ESPN+ to its pay-TV subscribers.

On Wednesday, NBCUniversal's Peacock streaming service and the grocery-delivery service Instacart announced a deal under which customers of Instacart+, which costs \$9.99 a month, now get Peacock with ads at no extra cost.

EXCHANGE

By BOB TITA

Veteran Brazilian steel executive Lourenco Goncalves has a booming voice. He's used it to demand customers buy more steel and to dress down analysts who've dared to critique his company's performance. In the past three years, he's shouted his way to the top of the U.S. steel industry.

Goncalves, 65, is on the precipice of the boldest move of his career: acquiring 122-year-old United States Steel. If he prevails, the deal would reshape the U.S. steel industry, making Cleveland-Cliffs—an iron ore mining company just a few years ago—the largest domestic steelmaker by volume and the 10th largest in the world.

"He came up the tough way through the steel industry and if that's your background, there's no quit in you," said John Packard, a steel-industry consultant.

On a recent investor call, Goncalves scolded steel distributors for not buying during the recent U.S. automotive strike, comparing their reluctance to a doctor who's afraid to touch blood.

"Now, they need to touch steel. They need to buy," he said. "That's why they got a price increase. And there is more to come."

Cleveland-Cliffs is often one of the first steel companies to announce price increases when steel demand starts to improve.

He fumed during a 2018 call that an analyst with a negative interpretation of Cleveland-Cliffs' quarterly earnings and investors who bet on the company's stock price to fall weren't reading the company's financial reports correctly—and vowed revenge by buying back shares to make the price rise.

"You are messing with the wrong guy," he said. "We are going to screw these guys so badly that I don't believe that they will be able to only resign, they will have to commit suicide."

Goncalves stunned the steel industry when he revealed in August that Cleveland-Cliffs had made an unsolicited cash-and-stock offer for U.S. Steel worth more than \$7 billion. U.S. Steel rejected that deal, but Goncalves has persisted, and U.S. Steel since then has said it is evaluating multiple offers for all or parts of the company. Pittsburgh-based U.S. Steel is expected to begin considering final offers this coming week, according to people familiar with the company's process.

Cleveland-Cliffs declined a request to interview Goncalves.

A Cleveland-Cliffs acquisition of U.S. Steel would whittle the number of major steel producers in the U.S. to three from four, and would expand Cleveland-Cliffs' market share of some types of automotive steel to as much as 80%. The two companies also are the only domestic steel companies capable of producing specialized steel for electric

'I Want Everything.' A Brazilian Steel Mogul Takes His Biggest Swing

Lourenco Goncalves used an iron-ore company to build one of the largest steelmakers in the U.S. Now he's trying to buy U.S. Steel.



Lourenco Goncalves

- **Star student:** He won scholarships to some of Brazil's top schools
- **Teacher:** He taught chemistry while in college
- **Night shift:** He used to sleep overnight at the steel mill as a young manager
- **In the family:** His son Celso is chief financial officer of Cleveland-Cliffs

vehicle motors.

Automakers in the U.S. have warned that combining the two companies would drive up the auto industry's steel costs. Cleveland-Cliffs and U.S. Steel supply most of the complex lightweight, high-strength steel used by the industry. Goncalves in recent years has been pressuring automakers to also give his company more orders for steel that is easier to produce.

"I want everything," he said in a 2022 interview. "I'm not interested in supplying just the difficult stuff."

Goncalves is married and has two daughters and a son, Celso, who was appointed Cleveland-Cliffs' chief financial officer in 2021 after serving as treasurer.

The CEO grew up in one of Rio de Janeiro's poor neighborhoods. He was the older of two boys in a family with an absentee father and a mother who worked as a teacher. He excelled at school and parlayed his high grades into a series of full scholarships to some of Brazil's top institutions.

He started college as a chemical

night on a cot at the mill.

He was promoted to run sales and production and joined the executive team that privatized CSN. Brazilian mining company Vale recruited him, making him chief executive of California Steel Industries in Fontana, Calif., in late 1997. Dan Dienst, the then-chairman of Metals USA, brought Goncalves to the Houston-based steel distributor in 2003 to restore profits. Dienst said the prevailing attitude at many steel distributors was that it is better to accept lower offers from customers for the sake of keeping up sales volumes. Goncalves focused on raising profit margins, even if it meant passing up some business.

"Lourenco was really good about giving salespeople the power to say 'no,'" Dienst said. "It was scary at first because sales volumes dropped."

Some 10 years later, Goncalves was out of a job when Metals USA was bought, but not for long. Activist hedge fund Casablanca Capital offered him the CEO's job at mining company Cliffs Natural Resources.

engineering major but switched to metallurgical engineering because the course load allowed him to moonlight as a chemistry teacher to support his family. After graduating, he accepted a job in research and development at state-owned steel company Companhia Siderúrgica Nacional, or CSN. He later became an assistant manager at a CSN mill where he immersed himself, in some cases sleeping over-

Casablanca and Goncalves gained control of the company in 2014 after dislodging the incumbent management team in a proxy fight. It was the first move in a deal-making spree that led to U.S. Steel.

The CEO shed the Cleveland-based company's money-losing operations, leaving mostly its iron ore mines in Minnesota and Michigan. Narrowing Cleveland-Cliffs' business left it more exposed to struggling steel companies in North America. If their mills closed, demand for Cleveland-Cliffs' ore would collapse as well.

Buying up Cleveland-Cliffs' customers brought stability for the company's ore business and put Goncalves in charge of a steelmaking company. Cleveland-Cliffs snapped up Ohio-based AK Steel, the smallest and weakest of the major U.S. steel producers, at a bargain in 2020 and later that year, the company bought most of steel giant ArcelorMittal's U.S. mills. The deals turned Cleveland-Cliffs into the second-largest steel company in the country and the largest supplier to the U.S. automobile industry.

"He's not a guy who gives up. He finds complacency to be his enemy and he's super competitive," said Dienst.

Goncalves sued analyst Gordon Johnson in 2017, claiming that he was defamed by an error in Johnson's note to investors about the number of Cleveland-Cliffs shares Goncalves bought. Johnson said the stock price slumped after Goncalves purchased shares. The case was settled for an undisclosed amount.

Johnson, who continues to cover Cleveland-Cliffs, said he's skeptical about Goncalves' pursuit of U.S. Steel because the premium being offered for the company's shares isn't justified by U.S. Steel's nearly flat profit outlook for next year.

Some steel analysts predict Cleveland-Cliffs would face tough scrutiny from government antitrust regulators if it prevails.

Goncalves has countered that steel is a global commodity product and Cleveland-Cliffs has to compete against imported steel from Europe, South Korea, Japan and other countries.

The United Steelworkers union trusts him. Goncalves attributes his strong relationship with the union to their shared interests in making steel and preserving U.S. manufacturing.

Goncalves is counting on the union's support and members of Congress from the Midwest who have come out in favor of the deal to help convince the Biden administration that combining the two companies would protect union jobs. Union leaders are pressuring U.S. Steel to accept Cleveland-Cliffs offer by threatening to oppose a sale to another company.

"I'm from steel making. I started in the shop. I'm good at this," he said in 2022. "If I tried to play the piano, it would be a disaster."

KEYWORDS | CHRISTOPHER MIMS

Is This the End of 'Intel Inside'? Not If Intel Has Anything to Say About It

Decades of 'Wintel' chip dominance are fading as rivals muscle in



It might not look like it yet, but Intel is in a fight for its life.

The stakes are high, and likely to turn on some fierce battles for market share that will play out in 2024 and beyond.

For the everyday consumer, what's at stake is mostly nostalgia. One day, the little "Intel Inside" sticker that's been on PCs since 1991 could cease to exist.

Instead of an Intel chip, these computers could have processors from an array of manufacturers, principally Qualcomm, but also possibly Nvidia, AMD, and lesser-known companies like Santa Clara, Calif.-based Amlogic and Taiwan-based MediaTek.

The shift has been decades in the making. Ever since a chip-design company called ARM built the mobile processor for Apple's first Newton personal digital assistant, released in 1993, it's been gaining steam, primarily in the mobile-phone business. By the time Intel sought to enter the mobile-processor business in 2011, it was too late.

Apple was the first company to bet that ARM-based processors could be the brains of even the most powerful desktop computers. This gave Apple a huge head start over Intel in designing chips that prioritized power-sipping performance in a world where that's become the primary limiting factor in the performance of all devices, not just phones.

Now, Google, Qualcomm, Ama-

zon, Apple and others can use ARM's blueprints to custom-design the chips that power everything from phones and notebooks to cloud servers. These chips are then typically produced by Samsung or Taiwan-based TSMC, which focus on making chips for other companies.

The threats to Intel are so numerous that it's worth summing them up: The Mac and Google's Chromebooks are already eating the market share of Windows-based, Intel-powered devices. As for Windows-based devices, all signs point to their increasingly being based on non-Intel processors. Finally, Windows is likely to run on the cloud in the future, where it will also run on

When it comes to Intel, says a former competitor, 'Never count these guys out.'

non-Intel chips.

Apple has moved almost entirely away from Intel's chips, which it used for over a decade for all of its desktop and notebook computers.

These days, it's not just Apple moving away from Intel's chips. Microsoft is accelerating its yearslong effort to make Windows run on ARM-based processors, so that the entire PC ecosystem isn't doomed by Intel's failure to keep up with Apple and TSMC. Google's Chrome OS, which works with either Intel

or ARM-based chips, is also an emerging threat to Microsoft.

This means the threat to Intel comes from a whole ecosystem of companies with deep pockets and sizable profit margins, each trying to take their piece of the company's market share. In many ways, it really is Intel versus the world—and "the world" includes nearly every tech giant you can name.

It wasn't always this way. For decades, Intel enjoyed PC market dominance with its ride-or-die partner, Microsoft, through their "Wintel" duopoly.

It's ironic, then, that Microsoft is one of the companies leading the charge away from Intel's chips.

This estrangement is taking several forms, which shows how seriously Microsoft is taking this shift away from Intel. Microsoft declined to comment for this column.

Microsoft is working to make Windows and the rest of its software accessible in the cloud, which can save money for customers because it lets them use computers that are much cheaper and simpler than conventional PCs. It also means that ARM-based devices can be put on workers' desks in place of more powerful, Intel-powered ones. And the version of Windows that workers are accessing remotely, in the cloud, can run on ARM-based chips in the data center too.

In mid-November, Microsoft unveiled its first ARM-based custom chips. One of them, called Cobalt, is intended to live in data centers and could power such cloud-based Windows experiences.

These efforts are getting a boost



from Amazon, which recently unveiled a small cube-shaped PC-like device that can stream Windows and applications from the cloud—like Netflix, but for software instead of entertainment. It's a repurposed Fire TV Cube streaming device, costs \$200, and is powered by an ARM-based chip from Amlogic.

Qualcomm also has forthcoming ARM-based chips for notebook computers, but these are intended not merely to connect these devices to the cloud. Rather, they'll directly replace Intel's processors, handling heavy workloads within the device itself. At the same time, they're intended to go head-to-head with Apple's best chips. Key to their adoption: Microsoft is putting a huge amount of effort into making Windows run on these processors, while encouraging developers of apps to do the same.

I asked Dan Rogers, vice president of silicon performance at Intel, if all of this is keeping him up at night. He declined to comment on Intel's past, but he did say that since Pat Gelsinger, who had spent the first 30 years of his career at Intel, returned to the company as CEO in 2021, "I believe we are un-

leashed and focused, and our drive in the PC has in a way never been more intense."

Intel plans a new generation of chips in what Rogers calls the "thin and light" category of notebooks, where Apple has been beating the pants off Intel-powered Windows devices.

In terms of advanced chip-manufacturing technology, Intel has promised to catch up with its primary competitor, Taiwan-based TSMC, by 2025.

The consumer-electronics business is full of reversals, and Intel is still a strong competitor, so none of this is predestined.

Geopolitical factors, for one, have the potential to change the entire chip industry virtually overnight. Intel could suddenly become the only game in town for the most advanced kind of chip manufacturing, if American tech companies lose access to TSMC's factories on account of China's aggression toward Taiwan, says Patrick Moorhead, a former executive at Intel competitor AMD, and now head of tech analyst firm Moor Insights & Strategy.

When it comes to Intel, he adds, "Never count these guys out."

EXCHANGE

Getting a Word in With Charlie Munger

An interview in the investor's Los Angeles home turns into four hours packed with candor, lessons and the odd lament

By GREGORY ZUCKERMAN

I ARRIVED AT CHARLIE MUNGER'S Los Angeles home early one morning in September, hoping for some thoughts and opinions.

For nearly four hours, Charlie wouldn't stop. Successes and mistakes. Artificial intelligence and venture capital. Elon Musk and Donald Trump. Munger's legacy. Even his painful hemorrhoids.

We had never met and I wasn't sure he'd be open or loquacious. Munger usually let longtime partner Warren Buffett steal the spotlight at Berkshire Hathaway's annual meetings. Munger was content offering a witty quip or "I have nothing to add." I brought fresh croissants and muffins, hoping to sweeten his mood.

I needn't have bothered. His aide ushered me into the den, pointed me to a couch, and Munger jumped right in, employing a characteristic and refreshing bluntness.

Could I tape the interview? Ask questions for a book as well as a Wall Street Journal article?

"Do whatever you want," he said, all but rolling his eyes.

Munger sat in a tan recliner, hardly budging. His voice was a bit weak and he didn't appear very mobile. But he was sharp, witty and full of humor.

I asked about lessons from his key investments, both at Berkshire Hathaway, where he was the longtime vice chairman, and on his own. He said Berkshire's 1972 purchase of See's Candies was a crucial deal. When See's raised prices without affecting the volume of sales, it changed Munger's approach to investing. He learned that paying full price for a beloved brand could be a bargain.

He and Buffett began looking for other companies with loyal customers, leading to their big



Charlie Munger, right, was Warren Buffett's vice chairman at Berkshire Hathaway, and his closest friend.

purchases of shares of Coca-Cola and other stocks and to paying a premium for Israeli toolmaker Iscar, he said, deals that paid off.

Costco taught Munger the value of treating customers well. Munger never sold his personal stake in Costco, which amounts to 187,760 shares worth about \$111 million. The stock has returned 31% this year, including dividends, and 475% over the past 10 years.

As a longtime outside director, Munger encouraged Costco to pay up for choice real estate, he said, and to enter China, a nation he long admired for the work ethic of its citizens. But he kept most of his opinions to himself: Few executives want to hear critiques from outside directors, he said.

"I've had to pick my spots and be gentler than is my inclination," Munger said.

Berkshire owned Costco stock for a while but exited its position in 2020. Buffett sometimes teased Munger for his passion for the

company, an example of how they didn't always agree on investment strategies.

"Warren has a prejudice against retailing," Munger said.

BYD was a bet on Wang Chuanfu, someone Munger viewed as an especially capable leader. But it also demonstrated the importance of good fortune. Munger urged

'If anything, my fun has increased with time.'

CHARLIE MUNGER

Wang not to enter the challenging automobile business. Wang ignored the warning, shifting BYD into electric vehicles. Today, the company is Tesla's biggest threat. "It teaches you to be humble," Munger said.

Munger missed out on Amazon,

even though he was a fan of founder Jeff Bezos. He also passed on automaker Tesla, whose shares have soared, but he had fewer second thoughts on that one. Munger called Musk "an extreme talent" but said "I would go crazy if I took the risks he did."

Berkshire's purchase of Apple was one of its biggest home runs, but Munger wished his company had bought even more of the stock. Both he and Buffett were slow to appreciate the iPhone maker's strengths, he said, and had to overcome their long-held caution about tech stocks.

Expressing a tenet he often shared about both investing and life, Munger said: "You have to let ideas die" and regularly challenge your own beliefs.

Munger said the rush to embrace artificial intelligence was likely overdone—"I don't want something that behaves like a human"—and worried that too much money is chasing venture-capital deals. A lifelong Republican,

Munger said he agreed with some of Trump's policies while in office but said could never vote for him, citing character flaws and his business practices before making it to the White House.

"Biden is a typical Democratic politician," he said. "I'm used to that type of defect."

Munger expressed optimism about the U.S., despite its abundant challenges.

"A great nation has a lot of collapse in it," he said.

Munger didn't dwell on his investment legacy. He seemed prouder that his many aphorisms, which some have termed "uncommon sense" have become so popular.

"When someone says uncommon sense they really mean common sense," he said.

As he spoke, I soaked up the surroundings, realizing I'd likely never have another chance. Voluminous about Benjamin Franklin, Albert Einstein and Costco. A table stacked with financial books sent by various publishers. To Munger's left sat a small wooden table with two oversize and worn Value Line binders featuring details of various companies. Munger said he relied on these relics of a bygone era to evaluate new investments.

"They're easy to navigate and you get a good overview of companies," he explained.

Munger seemed to enjoy himself during our interview. He volunteered a healthy respect for the press and the role it plays scrutinizing companies, executives and others. But he really lit up toward the end of the morning when a 35-year-old neighbor, Avi Mayer, came by, clutching a handful of documents for Munger to review and sign. It turned out that the unlikely duo had launched a real-estate partnership that owned thousands of garden apartments around the country, an enterprise Munger detailed with excitement. Munger shared their plans for growth, expressing pride in his partner.

It was a lesson in the value of learning fresh skills and exploring new pursuits throughout one's life, and the need to meet new people. It also was a testament to how newfound passions, even those discovered late in life, can inspire and invigorate.

"If anything, my fun has increased with time," Munger said.

An Investing Legend's Reflections

Continued from page B1

son from "The Simpsons," who had been handed billions of dollars and one of the biggest microphones in the business world.

"In my whole life nobody has ever accused me of being humble," Munger admitted in 1987. "Although humility is a trait I much admire, I don't think I quite got my full share."

Munger—who graduated magna cum laude from Harvard Law School without ever earning a college degree—knew perfectly well how smart he was. And it is an understatement to say he didn't suffer fools gladly. In an interview with The Wall Street Journal in 2019, he used the phrase "massively stupid" at least seven times to describe other people and even entire professions.

So was he a cocky, cranky old man yelling at the clouds?

No way. If there was one thing Munger knew, it was himself. As he told me in 2014, "Confucius said that real knowledge is knowing the extent of one's ignorance.... Knowing what you don't know is more useful than being brilliant."

Munger (and Buffett) called this "the circle of competence" and often pointed out that the diameter of the circle doesn't matter. What does matter is making sure you don't fool yourself into thinking the diameter is wider than it is.

That's why the two men had what they called their "too-hard pile," a mental dustbin into which they threw every investment idea they felt they couldn't understand. That's why Munger said investors should wait years, or decades, for a good idea at a great price—and do nothing the rest of the time.

"Part of the reason I've been a little more successful than most people is I'm good at destroying my own best-loved ideas," Munger told the Journal in 2019. "I knew early in life that that would be a



Investors have flocked to Omaha, Neb., for Berkshire Hathaway's annual meeting for decades. Above, attendees await entry to this year's meeting in May.

useful knack and I've honed it all these years, so I'm pleased when I can destroy an idea that I've worked very hard on over a long period of time. And most people aren't."

His curiosity and mental agility kept Munger working—and brought people on pilgrimages to see him—until a few days before he died.

He may well have been the busiest near-centenarian in business history. Besides being Buffett's right-hand man, Munger was chairman of legal publisher Daily Journal, director of retailing behemoth Costco Wholesale, an active investor in Chinese companies and a partner in one of Southern California's biggest apartment developers. He also met several times a week with chief executives, government officials, university presidents, scientists, venture capitalists, fund managers, Silicon Valley entrepreneurs and others eager to tap his experience and expertise.

In his spare time Munger still indulged his hobby of designing architectural projects.

In late October, the day after participating in an all-day Costco board meeting on a Zoom call, Munger showed no signs of fatigue when he spoke with me for an hour. "You don't call it work when you enjoy it," he said. "That doesn't mean I enjoy all my work—I don't—but I enjoy most of it."

Added Munger: "My days are not as full as when I was 40 or 50,

but I haven't slowed down a lot. I've just changed a little."

The main change: Although he still traveled locally by car and whizzed around in a golf cart inspecting apartment buildings and construction sites, Munger seldom got on airplanes anymore.

Instead, people came to him—either on Zoom or in person.

Munger deliberately kept himself surrounded by people he liked. "Many of the richest people have holes inside of them that they're always trying to fill," Munger's friend Peter Kaufman said last month. "But Charlie knows you can't fill those holes with money. That's why he spends so much time with friends and family."

For his 100th birthday, Munger's family was planning to host a black-tie evening party on New Year's Eve—with more than 500 invited guests—at the California Club in downtown Los Angeles.

Immediately after New Year's Day, Munger told me, he planned to get right back to work.

Typically over lunch, sometimes at dinner, Munger would answer questions and hold forth on various topics for hours. The food and flowers came from Costco. So did most of his clothes and his \$75 wristwatch.

Most days, Munger got up between 6 a.m. and 8 a.m. and usually went to bed about 10 p.m., Oscar Estrada Gómez, his household manager, told me last month. Munger would watch "Seinfeld"

reruns on TV for a while, then read himself to sleep with a book on science or history. He still consumed dozens of books a year.

"Sometimes he reads until 1 a.m.," said Gómez. "If he's obsessed with a book, it's like when a dog is chewing on a bone and devouring it."

Munger did have less energy in the mornings than in the afternoons, said visitors who came to see him over lunch and dinner. Overall, though, they said he gave them extraordinary insights.

"He doesn't just give you advice, but he thinks about it for a couple of hours a week for a few weeks and keeps fine-tuning it and iterating on it," said John Conlin,

former CEO of investment bank Robertson Stephens, now a money manager and frequent attendee at regular gatherings at Munger's Los Angeles home. "Not much feels better than having somebody do that for you."

And what did high-tech entrepreneurs think they could learn from a 99-year-old notorious for ridiculing overpriced technology stocks?

"Duration," said Patrick Collison, co-founder of digital-payments company Stripe and a frequent visitor at Munger's gatherings. "Duration enables compounding. If we're to be successful into the future, we will have to get really deft at thinking and investing on long-term horizons."

Berkshire Hathaway, where Buffett has been chairman since 1965 and Munger vice chairman since 1978, is a model of adaptive survival, said Collison.

One lesson: the importance of what Munger called "a seamless web of deserved trust" in which a company deals fairly with employees, customers, competitors and other constituencies.

"If you're structurally adversarial to those adjacent to you in the ecosystem, maybe you prosper for five years," said Collison, "but not for 75 years!"

On Dec. 5, Stripe Press, a unit of Stripe, will publish a new, abridged edition of "Poor Charlie's Almanack," a compendium of speeches and writing by and about Munger. Existing editions have sold about 175,000 copies in English and 1.2 million copies in Chinese.

"It's very rare for people to have sound judgment and to be untouched by the magnitude of emotions that surround them. You can only do that after years of self-cultivation," said Li Lu, who runs Himalaya Capital, a global investment firm in Seattle with large holdings in Chinese stocks. "People in China really do regard Charlie as an example of modern Confucianism."

Munger talked frequently about the importance of investing for decades into the future, a focus he maintained to the very end.

"You know how a lot of old people say, 'At my age I don't even buy green bananas?'" regular guest John Hawkins, co-founder of private-equity firm Generation Partners, said recently. "Well, Charlie is buying green bananas by the truckload. He's making investments for the next 10, 20, 30 years. He has his foot on the gas and is not taking it off."

One Friday, several friends arrived for lunch to find Munger seated at his dining-room table.

Instead of getting a head start on the meal, he was poring over architectural plans and financial statements as he decided whether to develop a piece of property he owns. After lunch that

day, he had a 4 p.m. business meeting, then a working dinner.

That was a year ago, one month shy of Munger's 99th birthday.

Last month, I asked Munger how long he could keep going at a pace that might tire many people one-third his age.

"I haven't the faintest idea," he said. "When it stops working I'll stop doing it."

Then I asked what he might want for an epitaph of no more than 10 words.

His reply was immediate and full of epistemic humility: "I tried to be useful."

Not "I was useful." That would be for other people to judge. But "I tried." That much he knew.

Scan this code to hear Jason Zweig discuss investing legend Charlie Munger on The Journal podcast.

EXCHANGE



Alex Gerko cannot wait to lose \$10 million.

The founder of the algorithmic trading firm XTX Markets, Gerko is now one of the world's richest men. But he's not spending his fortune on a sports team or a flight to space. This billionaire is plowing his money into a different, even wilder adventure: He wants to conquer the world's most prestigious high-school math competition.

This past week, his company unveiled an intriguing new contest called the AI-MO Prize, which might be the geekiest way for someone to collect millions of dollars. XTX is offering a bounty to the first team that develops a public artificial-intelligence model smart enough to perform at the highest levels of the International Mathematical Olympiad.

Basically, as soon as AI can win IMO gold, Gerko's company will have to pay up.

And he sounds totally psyched about it.

"I'll be very excited," he said.

The International Mathematical Olympiad is the annual summer event where hundreds of top high-school students from around the world challenge themselves and compete with each other to solve problems that would make your brain hurt. Less than 10% leave with a gold medal, which is not just an indicator of their mathematical aptitude but "a strong predictor of future success," says the AI-MO Prize team. Especially now. The best of the brightest have the kind of sharp quantitative minds that have never been valued so highly by Wall Street and Silicon Valley.

The math whizzes at IMO face a series of six questions covering topics in algebra, combinatorics, geometry and number theory. Even some gold medalists nail only four of them. The answers require these high-schoolers to invent their own logical arguments on the spot. They are proofs that demand imagination, creativity and "the highest cognitive function of human beings," said Gregor Dolinar, the IMO president.

"You do not need any university knowledge of mathematics: no integrals, no differential equations, no matrices," Dolinar said. "What you need are very clever ideas, abstract thinking, rigorous reasoning, sometimes also out-of-the-box ideas and in the end a clear presentation of the solution."



SCIENCE OF SUCCESS | BEN COHEN

The \$10 Million Quest to Win the World's Nerdiest Gold Medal

AI isn't smart enough to ace the International Mathematical Olympiad—yet. Can a billionaire's money change that?

Which explains why ChatGPT can't do this sort of math. Yet.

AI is excellent for telling you how to do things that have already been done. But humans still trounce machines when it comes to being original. Gerko told me an AI model could ingest every math textbook ever written and it would still be "quite easy to confuse it with relatively simple math problems." And the math problems at IMO are not relatively simple. They're insanely difficult.

"The spirit of making an IMO problem is to make something that you will have to generate new ideas for," said Po-Shen Loh, a Carnegie Mellon University math professor. "And the harder IMO problems require more idea generation."

I met Loh last summer as he

was traveling across the country and explaining to students (and their parents) that being human will become more important as AI becomes more advanced. But that wasn't the only reason I called him about the AI prize. Loh also spent the past decade as the coach of the U.S. team, and he was an IMO contestant himself as a brilliant high-schooler. He knows how hard it is to win a gold medal: He won a silver.

Gerko, 43, would've loved the chance to win a medal of any color. He grew up in Russia, where he earned admission to a famed school for gifted math students, and he says he placed 10th in the nationwide high-school math rankings. There are only six spots on IMO teams.

"I was extremely competitive and it was quite upsetting to never make it to IMO," he told me. "But it was always an interest of mine. What if?"

That idea stuck with him even when he made the sort of fortune that can make someone forget about not making a math team. After getting his Ph.D. in math from Moscow State University, he left school to trade equities and currencies at Deutsche Bank. Then he

joined the hedge fund GSA Capital in 2009 and founded London-based XTX in 2015.

"I moved into finance because I found working with data very interesting," he said. "And the money. Obviously."

I figured that someone with a quant-trading firm had professional reasons for his philanthropic investments. And of course he does: XTX is in the market for the nerds who dominate IMO. But he said his motivations were personal.

"I retained my interest in math education because this was the path from, let's say, an underprivileged background to a very lucrative career," Gerko said.

That interest was piqued when someone recently asked him when he thought an AI model could win IMO gold. He wasn't sure. But he remembered that researchers had launched a similar challenge in 2019, pre-ChatGPT, and he felt it was the right time to give their project a financial boost. He knew it would take more effort than existing \$1 million challenges, so he made this one worth \$10 million. The result was the AI-MO Prize.

Unlike the IMO, you don't have

to be in high school to participate, and the winners almost certainly won't be. This is a project worthy of a Ph.D. in machine learning. Gerko is betting that \$10 million will entice those researchers with the tools to explore a new frontier of knowledge and expedite the future.

Most details of this math prize remain fuzzy at the moment. Gerko said he's in the process of hiring a director, finding advisers and specifying the criteria, like what counts as performance equivalent to a gold medal.

"It's very important to define these things very precisely," he said. "That's why everything is kind of vague right now."

But one exuberant math evangelist is a big fan of the idea. When Loh read about the initial AI challenge for IMO, he thought it was both noble and doomed to fail. "Honestly, my response was: 'Good luck, guys, but I'm never going to see this in my lifetime,'" he said. That was four years ago—an eternity in AI. "Now," he said, "I'll definitely see it in my lifetime."

Gerko believes he won't have to wait long.

"I think we will part with this money within five years," he told me.

I shared that prediction with Loh and could see him running the numbers in his head.

"I wouldn't be surprised," he said.

He also pointed out that anybody who can devise AI systems powerful enough to win it won't have to worry about money.

"Whoever manages to claim the prize is going to have a company worth \$5 billion," he said. "And maybe \$50 billion."

Gerko's firm is subsidizing this prize because he's seen for himself how other, smaller challenges have stoked innovation in everything from self-driving cars to Netflix algorithms.

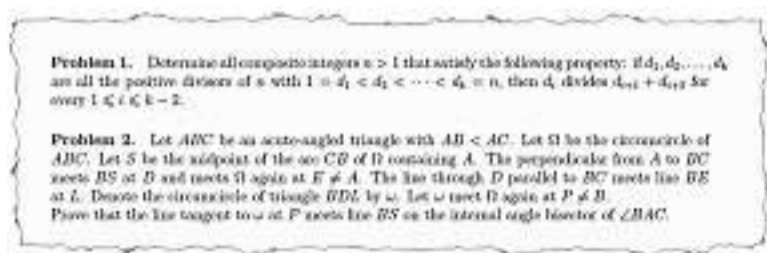
Money can't buy success. But it can buy some progress.

Just ask Terence Tao. He was the youngest IMO bronze, silver and gold medalist, winning gold when he was a 13-year-old prodigy. Now a 48-year-old professor at UCLA, he also won the Fields Medal, math's version of the Nobel Prize. The man known as the Mozart of mathematics says this prize will serve two useful purposes.

"Firstly, it is an accessible way to showcase progress (or lack thereof) in using AI to assist in mathematical thinking," he said in an email. "Secondly, it provides an important objective benchmark to measure progress (or lack thereof)."

The big prize is more seductive, but Tao believes the smaller progress prizes will be more essential to helping advance intelligence of all kinds. That would be worth every penny.

"I think this is a case where the journey may be more valuable than the destination," he said.



Two problems from the 2023 International Mathematical Olympiad.

When a Goldman Project Fails

Continued from page B1

Goldman began talking to a private-equity firm, Silver Lake, to see whether it could spin the consumer business into a joint venture, according to people familiar with the matter. It called the plan Project Maryland, the "M" a reference to Marcus, the name for its consumer brand. Goldman code-named itself "Georgia," and Silver Lake was "South Carolina." The talks fell apart after the two sides couldn't agree on how much control each would have over the new venture.

There were plenty of reasons for Goldman's top brass to be on edge.

Goldman had agreed in 2021 to buy GreenSky, a lender that makes home-improvement loans, at a hefty price. Some executives had told Solomon that it wouldn't be a good fit.

Solomon had also been pushing for Goldman to expand into checking accounts. After top executives in the consumer business urged him not to, saying the bank should stay focused on a small number of products, Solomon told them they had no vision, according to people familiar with the matter.

The Apple credit card went live in 2019 with great fanfare, promising cash rewards. The partnership had red flags from the outset.

Goldman badly wanted to get that deal, and that meant accepting a number of unusual terms from Apple. For example, Goldman agreed not to charge late fees or sell customer data, trading away two massive streams of income.

When Apple unveiled the credit card in 2019, it did so with a

zinger. "Designed by Apple, not a bank," its ads chirped.

Goldman partners complained that the firm was throwing good money after bad. Soon, that wasn't the only issue.

In 2022, the Federal Reserve found problems with the bank's consumer business. It had concerns that Goldman didn't have proper monitoring and control systems.

That same year, Goldman disclosed that the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau was investigating its credit-card practices, including how the bank resolved billing disputes and refunded cardholders. Those probes continue.

Employees in the consumer business were frustrated. They had been asking since at least 2019 for the bank to invest more money in the operations that handle customer complaints, according to people familiar with the matter. Some also blamed Apple, at least privately, for the regulatory problems. Most card programs send out cardholders' bills on a rolling basis throughout the month. Apple insisted that its cardholders get their bills at the beginning of each month. That means Goldman customer-service employees are flooded with com-

Apple wants out of its deal with Goldman in the next 12 to 15 months.

plaints and requests during the first few days of every month, making it hard for them to keep up.

Adding to the tension: Investment banking fell off a cliff in 2022, both at Goldman and at rivals, hurt by rising interest rates and a big drop in stock prices. Goldman's usual power brokers be-



Investment-banking star Stephanie Cohen was tapped by CEO David Solomon to help lead the firm's consumer-banking business.

came more incensed that the bank was spending money on a consumer business they didn't want. Later, Goldman would disclose that a big chunk of its consumer-lending operations had lost billions of dollars.

The internal noise to kill the consumer experiment grew. Solomon's No. 2, bank president John Waldron, ordered a review of the entire consumer operation.

At a management-committee meeting last fall, Marc Nachmann, one of the most senior partners at Goldman, blasted another Goldman partner, Stephanie Cohen, about her business, according to people familiar with the matter. He told Cohen, who was coleading the consumer push, that she wasn't making sense, according to people who were present.

Some committee members looked on uncomfortably.

Cohen had been a star in Goldman's investment bank, and Solomon had tapped her two years before to help run the consumer unit. She inherited a troubled business. At the management-committee meeting blowup, she had just returned from a personal leave.

There were other instances where Nachmann criticized Co-

hen's business, people familiar with the matter said. Solomon at times spoke up in defense of the business.

While Cohen was away, Solomon and his deputies decided to reorganize the entire bank, including her domain. The bank announced in October 2022 that Cohen would be head of a new unit called Platform Solutions. That unit would include GreenSky and the bank's two credit-card partnerships—the one with Apple and another with General Motors.

The deposits—arguably the most enviable part of the consumer franchise—would move to another new unit called asset and wealth management, run by Nachmann.

What Goldman did made clear to the world: It announced, finally, that it was scaling back its Main Street ambitions.

The Waldron-ordered review had concluded that the consumer business couldn't produce the returns that Goldman wanted within the near term, according to people

familiar with the matter.

By early this year, Goldman executives began looking for ways out of the Apple partnership, and even approached American Express to gauge their interest. Still doubting, they forged ahead anyway with new Apple products. A savings account launched in the spring, as well as a buy now, pay later service.

One worst-case internal projection: The savings account would lose money for the next 10 years after operating expenses were factored in.

Now, the consumer unit is quickly disappearing piece by piece.

The checking accounts never materialized. The bank has stopped originating personal loans and sold off most of those balances. It is unloading GreenSky at a steep loss. In November, it informed employees that it will move to unload its credit-card partnership with GM.

Cohen went back on leave in June. Some employees who were once tasked with consumer lending have been moved to focus on fixing regulatory issues.

The bank for now is still responsible for the Apple card and the GM card, an arrangement that includes providing customer service. Goldman employees will also have to prepare for transferring balances to the company or companies that take over the cards, a process that needs employees with experience.

At a meeting last month, when the bank told employees it would be unloading the GM card, it offered them a sweetener to stay. Many will be eligible for pay equal to one year of their compensation if their jobs are eliminated. People familiar with the matter said the same will apply for employees who work on the Apple card.

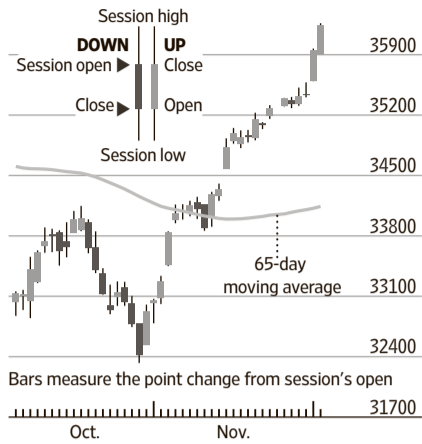
As for Apple, it wants out within the next roughly 12 to 15 months.

—Laura Cooper contributed to this article

MARKETS DIGEST

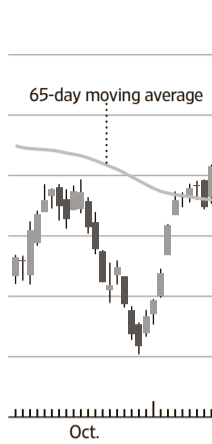
Dow Jones Industrial Average

36245.50
 ▲ 294.61
 or 0.82%
 All-time high
 36799.65, 01/04/22
 Current divisor
 0.15172752595384



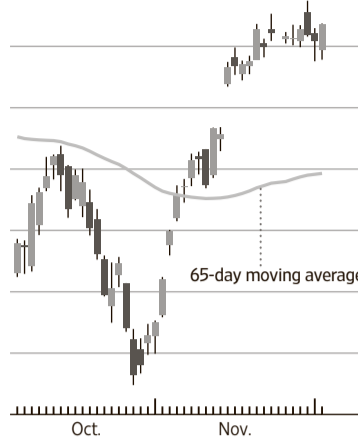
S&P 500 Index

4594.63
 ▲ 26.83
 or 0.59%
 All-time high
 4796.56, 01/03/22



Nasdaq Composite Index

14305.03
 ▲ 78.81
 or 0.55%
 All-time high:
 16057.44, 11/19/21



Weekly P/E data based on as-reported earnings from Birinyi Associates Inc. † Based on Nasdaq-100 Index

Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

	High	Low	Latest Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg	YTD	3-yr. ann.
Dow Jones										
Industrial Average	36264.85	35914.45	36245.50	294.61	0.82	36245.50	31819.14	5.3	9.3	6.7
Transportation Avg	15471.78	15018.10	15463.76	445.25	2.96	16695.32	13298.36	6.5	15.5	7.4
Utility Average	876.06	861.81	876.01	9.25	1.07	1002.11	783.08	-10.2	-9.4	0.3
Total Stock Market	45825.48	45280.55	45805.16	390.37	0.86	45969.67	37910.34	11.9	18.9	6.5
Barron's 400	1010.21	985.23	1009.51	21.63	2.19	1036.97	881.58	2.7	9.7	7.6
Nasdaq Stock Market										
Nasdaq Composite	14311.95	14135.00	14305.03	78.81	0.55	14358.02	10213.29	24.8	36.7	5.0
Nasdaq-100	16013.75	15834.93	15997.58	49.71	0.31	16027.06	10679.34	33.4	46.2	8.7
S&P										
500 Index	4599.39	4554.71	4594.63	26.83	0.59	4594.63	3783.22	12.8	19.7	7.9
MidCap 400	2626.38	2555.59	2625.58	61.96	2.42	2728.44	2326.82	2.0	8.0	6.2
SmallCap 600	1205.09	1164.89	1204.52	33.86	2.89	1315.82	1068.80	-3.3	4.1	4.8
Other Indexes										
Russell 2000	1863.66	1800.81	1862.64	53.62	2.96	2003.18	1636.94	-1.6	5.8	0.5
NYSE Composite	16271.70	16062.04	16263.75	174.91	1.09	16427.29	14599.05	3.2	7.1	4.8
Value Line	559.26	544.77	559.13	13.01	2.38	606.49	498.09	-2.1	4.2	0.9
NYSE Arca Biotech	4923.58	4807.63	4923.58	71.19	1.47	5644.50	4544.40	-9.4	-6.8	-4.0
NYSE Arca Pharma	888.48	882.90	885.90	-0.10	-0.01	925.61	791.91	1.7	2.1	9.5
KBW Bank	87.35	84.57	87.26	2.32	2.74	115.10	71.71	-18.0	-13.5	-1.9
PHLX [®] Gold/Silver	125.94	122.82	125.80	2.45	1.98	144.37	103.31	1.1	4.1	-3.5
PHLX [®] Oil Service	83.82	81.45	82.73	0.80	0.98	98.76	69.29	-2.3	-1.3	26.7
PHLX [®] Semiconductor	3744.73	3675.29	3738.27	13.69	0.37	3861.63	2453.49	34.9	47.6	11.3
Cboe Volatility	12.96	12.48	12.63	-0.29	-2.24	26.52	12.46	-33.7	-41.7	-15.3

† Nasdaq PHLX Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Trading Diary

Volume, Advancers, Decliners

	NYSE	NYSE Amer.
Total volume*	1,014,381,079	11,956,643
Adv. volume*	881,184,035	8,645,426
Decl. volume*	129,065,073	2,998,233
Issues traded	2,940	320
Advances	2,469	219
Declines	421	89
Unchanged	50	12
New highs	179	7
New lows	16	6
Closing Arms*	0.95	0.53
Block trades*	4,769	136

* Primary market NYSE, NYSE American, NYSE Arca only. (†TRIN) A comparison of the number of advancing and declining issues with the volume of shares rising and falling. An Arms of less than 1 indicates buying demand, above 1 indicates selling pressure.

International Stock Indexes

Region/Country	Index	Close	Net chg	% chg	YTD
World					
	MSCI ACWI	697.51	3.13	0.45	15.2
	MSCI ACWI ex-USA	302.19	0.36	0.12	7.4
	MSCI World	3040.70	17.07	0.56	16.8
	MSCI Emerging Markets	982.14	-4.96	-0.50	2.7
Americas					
	MSCI AC Americas	1743.96	11.74	0.68	19.7
	S&P/TSX Comp	20452.87	216.58	1.07	5.5
	MSCIEM Latin America	2494.08	22.66	0.92	17.2
	BOVESPA	128184.91	853.79	0.67	16.8
	S&P IPSA	3308.36	38.33	1.17	4.3
	S&P/BMV IPC	53901.43	-158.58	-0.29	11.2
EMEA					
	STOXX Europe 600	466.20	4.59	0.99	9.7
	Euro STOXX	463.33	3.77	0.82	13.0
	Bel-20	3578.91	49.89	1.41	-3.3
	OMX Copenhagen 20	2233.68	7.24	0.33	21.7
	CAC 40	7346.15	35.38	0.48	13.5
	DAX	16397.52	182.09	1.12	17.8
	Tel Aviv	1774.13	...	Closed	-1.3
	FTSE MIB	29928.45	191.07	0.64	26.0
	AEX	771.37	6.33	0.83	12.2
	Oslo Bors All-Share	1521.36	-2.31	-0.15	11.6
	FTSE/JSE All-Share	75705.85	171.50	0.23	3.6
	IBEX 35	10140.80	82.60	0.82	23.2
	OMX Stockholm	841.16	6.74	0.81	7.6
	Swiss Market	10887.36	33.04	0.30	1.5
	BIST 100	8026.27	77.67	0.98	45.7
	FTSE 100	7529.35	75.60	1.01	1.0
	FTSE 250	18408.65	175.19	0.96	-2.4
Asia-Pacific					
	MSCI AC Asia Pacific	161.77	-0.46	-0.28	3.9
	S&P/ASX 200	7073.20	-14.13	-0.20	0.5
	Shanghai Composite	3031.64	1.96	0.06	-1.9
	Hang Seng	16830.30	-212.58	-1.25	-14.9
	S&P BSE Sensex	67481.19	492.75	0.74	10.9
	NIKKEI 225	33431.51	-55.38	-0.17	28.1
	Straits Times	3090.31	17.32	0.56	-5.0
	KOSPI	2505.01	-30.28	-1.19	12.0
	TAIEX	17438.35	4.50	0.03	23.3
	SET	1380.31	0.13	0.01	-17.3

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Percentage Gainers...

Company	Symbol	Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg
Garden Stage	GSIV	10.20	6.20	155.00	11.70	4.00	...
NexImmune	NEXI	6.05	3.57	143.95	20.35	1.25	-42.5
Elastic	ESTC	110.20	29.84	37.13	111.75	46.18	96.7
Coya Therapeutics	COYA	6.92	1.59	29.83	8.00	3.21	...
Intensity Therapeutics	INTS	3.15	0.70	28.55	6.75	2.01	...
Leafly Holdings	LFLY	6.49	1.40	27.51	18.40	4.68	-58.9
Kirkland's	KIRK	3.11	0.66	26.94	4.87	1.40	-19.0
UIPath	PATH	25.04	5.28	26.72	25.47	10.98	72.3
Immuneering	IMRX	8.27	1.71	26.07	14.29	3.70	39.5
Samsara	IOT	34.59	7.05	25.60	34.74	10.48	190.7
XBP Europe Holdings	XBP	23.85	4.85	25.53	37.99	9.85	130.7
ShiftPixy	PIXY	10.44	2.11	25.33	599.28	4.60	-97.1
Applied Optoelectronics	AAOI	16.45	3.20	24.15	16.48	1.60	609.1
Stronghold Dig Mining	SDIG	5.15	0.98	23.50	12.50	3.46	-24.5
China SXT Pharm	SXTC	2.61	0.49	23.11	24.50	1.65	-86.1

Percentage Losers

Company	Symbol	Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low	% chg
Ampio Pharmaceuticals	AMPE	3.22	-2.54	-44.10	8.30	1.86	-53.3
Smart for Life	SMFL	1.36	-1.05	-43.57	189.00	1.34	-99.2
Incanex Healthcare	IXHL	5.23	-2.76	-34.54	12.57	0.80	29.1
Minim	MINM	3.19	-1.29	-28.79	14.00	0.60	-17.7
PROOF Acquisition I CIA	PACI	14.50	-5.50	-27.50	35.00	9.94	44.0
Marpai	MRAI	1.50	-0.56	-27.18	13.60	0.33	-59.7
Cardio Diagnostics Hldgs	CDIO	1.55	-0.49	-24.02	8.50	0.17	-26.9
Worthington Steel	WVS	22.20	-5.30	-19.27	27.50	22.20	-0.0
Vivos Therapeutics	VVOS	19.90	-4.60	-18.78	74.05	2.73	65.8
Royalty Management	RMCO	3.20	-0.73	-18.59	22.97	3.00	-68.0
Sigma Additive Solutions	SASI	3.03	-0.68	-18.33	14.58	2.39	-74.7
WaveDancer	WAVD	2.07	-0.44	-17.53	14.30	1.10	-67.7
Curis	CRIS	11.86	-2.45	-17.12	20.00	3.80	-25.9
RedHill Biopharma ADR	RHLL	1.66	-0.34	-17.00	11.50	0.26	-84.4
Genesco	GCO	31.36	-6.01	-16.08	51.04	17.31	-31.2

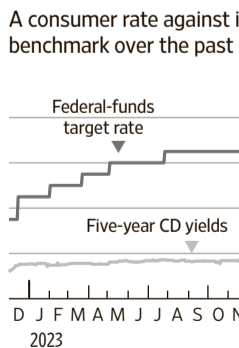
Most Active Stocks

Company	Symbol	Volume (000)	% chg from 65-day avg	Latest Session Close	% chg	52-Week High	52-Week Low
Bit Brother CI A	BETS	419,205	1639.4	0.04	43.17	12.00	0.02
Green Giant	GQQ	204,043	14785.2	0.30	66.43	3.42	0.16
ProSh UltraPro Shrt QQQ	SHQQ	122,921	-4.7	15.90	-0.78	58.29	15.35
Tesla	TSLA	121,028	-0.6	238.83	-0.52	299.29	101.81
Pfizer	PFE	103,330	255.7	28.91	-5.12	54.93	28.30

* Common stocks priced at \$2 a share or more with an average volume over 65 trading days of at least 5,000 shares † Has traded fewer than 65 days

Consumer Rates and Returns to Investor

U.S. consumer rates



Selected rates

	5-year CDs
Bankrate.com avg:	2.83%
Barclays Bank	4.50%
Wilmington, DE	888-720-8756
Quorum Federal Credit Union	4.50%
Purchase, NY	(800) 874-5544
First Internet Bank of Indiana	4.59%
Indianapolis, IN	888-873-3424
Merrick Bank	4.65%
South Jordan, UT	866-638-6851
Popular Direct	4.70%
Miami Lakes, FL	800-274-5696

Interest rate	Yield/Rate (%)	52-Week Range (%)	3-yr chg (pct pts)
Federal-funds rate target	5.25-5.50	3.75	5.50
Prime rate*	8.50	8.50	5.25
SOFR	5.33	5.31	5.35
Money market, annual yield	0.48	0.64	0.64
Five-year CD, annual yield	2.83	2.59	2.87
30-year mortgage, fixed†	7.74	7.84	8.28
15-year mortgage, fixed†	6.98	7.15	7.42
Jumbo mortgages, \$726,200-plus†	7.82	7.90	8.33
Five-year adj mortgage (ARM)†	6.82	6.86	7.16
New-car loan, 48-month	7.70	6.44	7.70

Bankrate.com rates based on survey of over 4,800 online banks. *Base rate posted by 70% of the nation's largest banks. † Excludes closing costs. Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data; Bankrate.com

Treasury yield curve

Yield to maturity of current bills, notes and bonds

MARKET DATA

Futures Contracts

Table with columns for Metal & Petroleum Futures, Copper-High (CMX), Gold (COMX), Palladium (NYM), Platinum (NYM), Silver (CMX), Crude Oil, Light Sweet (NYM), NY Harbor ULSD (NYM), Gasoline-NY RBOB (NYM), Natural Gas (NYM), and Agriculture Futures (Corn, Oats, Soybeans, Soybean Meal, Soybean Oil, Rough Rice, Wheat).

Table with columns for Open, High, Low, Settle, Chg, Open Interest. Includes Hogs-Lean (CME), Lumber (CME), Milk (CME), Cocoa (ICE-US), Coffee (ICE-US), Sugar-World (ICE-US), Sugar-Domestic (ICE-US), Cotton (ICE-US), Orange Juice (ICE-US), and 30 Day Federal Funds (CBT).

Table with columns for Ultra Treasury Bonds (CBT), Treasury Bonds (CBT), 5 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT), 2 Yr. Treasury Notes (CBT), and 30 Day Federal Funds (CBT).

Table with columns for Currency Futures (Japanese Yen, Canadian Dollar, British Pound, Swiss Franc, Australian Dollar, Mexican Peso, Euro).

Table with columns for Index Futures (Mini DJ Industrial Average (CBT), Mini S&P 500 (CME), Mini S&P Midcap 400 (CME), U.S. Dollar Index (ICE-US)).

Table with columns for Mini Nasdaq 100 (CME), Mini Russell 2000 (CME), Mini Russell 1000 (CME), U.S. Dollar Index (ICE-US).

Bonds | wsj.com/market-data/bonds/benchmarks

Global Government Bonds: Mapping Yields

Yields and spreads over or under U.S. Treasuries on benchmark two-year and 10-year government bonds in selected other countries; arrows indicate whether the yield rose (▲) or fell (▼) in the latest session

Table showing bond yields and spreads for various countries including U.S., Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, and U.K. Columns include Coupon (%), Maturity, Yield, and Spread.

Corporate Debt

Prices of firms' bonds reflect factors including investors' economic, sectoral and company-specific expectations

Investment-grade spreads that tightened the most...

Table showing investment-grade spreads for companies like Sprint Capital, Coca-Cola, Rabobank, HSCB Holdings, Toronto-Dominion Bank, Siemens, Bank of Nova Scotia, and Citigroup.

...And spreads that widened the most

Table showing widened spreads for Toyota Motor Credit, United Investors, HCA, Vodafone, Valero Energy, Banco Santander, and CF Industries.

High-yield issues with the biggest price increases...

Table showing high-yield issues with biggest price increases for Tenet Healthcare, Rakuten, Sealed Air, Bausch Health, Occidental Petroleum, Teva Pharmaceutical Finance, Intesa Sanpaolo, and Dish DBS.

...And with the biggest price decreases

Table showing price decreases for Toledo Hospital, Hughes Satellite Systems, Dish DBS, Prime Service Services Borrower, Seagate HDD Cayman, Telecom Italia Capital, and Bombardier.

*Estimated spread over 2-year, 3-year, 5-year, 10-year or 30-year hot-run Treasury; 100 basis points=one percentage pt.; change in spread shown is % Z-spread. Note: Data are for the most active issue of bonds with maturities of two years or more

Dividend Changes

Table showing dividend changes for companies like Cisco, Global Water Resources, Disney, Initial, and Stocks.

Exchange-Traded Portfolios | WSJ.com/ETFResearch

Table showing largest 100 exchange-traded funds, latest session, with columns for ETF, Symbol, Closing Price, Chg, YTD (%)

ETF

Table showing various ETFs with columns for Symbol, Closing Price, Chg, YTD (%)

Borrowing Benchmarks | WSJ.com/bonds

Table showing borrowing benchmarks for Switzerland, Britain, and Australia.

Money Rates

December 1, 2023. Key annual interest rates paid to borrow or lend money in U.S. and international markets.

Inflation

Table showing inflation levels for Oct. index and Chg From (%) for Sept '23 and Oct '22.

U.S. consumer price index

Table showing U.S. consumer price index for All items and Core.

International rates

Table showing international rates for U.S., Canada, and Japan.

Policy Rates

Table showing policy rates for Euro zone.

New Highs and Lows

The following explanations apply to the New York Stock Exchange, NYSE Arca, NYSE American and Nasdaq Stock Market stocks that hit a new 52-week intraday high, or low in the latest session. % CHG-Daily percentage change from the previous trading session.

Table showing new highs and lows for various stocks, categorized by Highs and Lows.

Table showing stock price movements for various companies, categorized by 52-Week High/Low and % Change.

Table showing stock price movements for various companies, categorized by 52-Week High/Low and % Change.

Table showing stock price movements for various companies, categorized by 52-Week High/Low and % Change.

Table showing stock price movements for various companies, categorized by 52-Week High/Low and % Change.

BIGGEST 1,000 STOCKS

How to Read the Stock Tables

The following explanations apply to NYSE, NYSE American and Nasdaq Stock Market listed securities. Prices are composite quotations that include primary market trades as well as trades reported by Nasdaq BX.

The list comprises the 1,000 largest companies based on market capitalization. Underlined quotations are those stocks with large changes in volume compared with the issue's average trading volume. Boldfaced quotations highlight those issues whose price changed by 5% or more from their previous closing price was \$2 or higher.

Footnotes: +New 52-week high. -New 52-week low. dd-Indicates loss in the most recent quarter. FD-Friday of trading.

h-Does not meet continued listing standards. f-Temporary exemption from Nasdaq listing rules. n-Not a U.S. company. v-Trading halted on primary market. W-Bankruptcy or reversionary or being reorganized under the Bankruptcy Code, or securities assumed by such companies.

Stock tables reflect composite regular trading as of 4 p.m. and changes in the closing prices from 4 p.m. the previous day.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections A, B, and C.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections D, E, and F.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections G, H, and I.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections J, K, and L.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections M, N, and O.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections P, Q, and R.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections S, T, and U.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections V, W, and X.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections Y, Z, and AA.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections AB, AC, and AD.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections AE, AF, and AG.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections AH, AI, and AJ.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections AK, AL, and AM.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections AN, AO, and AP.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections AQ, AR, and AS.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections AT, AU, and AV.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections AW, AX, and AY.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections AZ, BA, and BB.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections BC, BD, and BE.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections BF, BG, and BH.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections BI, BJ, and BK.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections BL, BM, and BN.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections BO, BP, and BQ.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections BR, BS, and BT.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections BU, BV, and BW.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections BX, BY, and BZ.

Table with columns: YTD %Chg, 52-Week %Chg, HI, Lo, Stock, Yld, PE, Last, Net Chg. Includes sub-sections CA, CB, and CC.

Mutual Funds

Top 250 mutual-funds listings for Nasdaq-published share classes by net assets. e-E-X distribution. p-Previous days' quotation. f-Footnotes x and s apply. F-Footnotes x and s apply. R-Rebalanced by Lipper, using updated data. p-Distribution choices apply.

Available via Footnotes x and e apply. Dividend: *Footnote x, s and s apply. Not applicable due to incomplete price, performance or cost data. NE-Not released by Lipper; data under review. NN-Fund not tracked. NS-Fund didn't exist at start of period.

Table with columns: Fund, NAV, Chg %Ret, YTD NAV, Chg %Ret. Includes sub-sections AB, AC, AD, AE, AF, AG, AH, AI, AJ, AK, AL, AM, AN, AO, AP, AQ, AR, AS, AT, AU, AV, AW, AX, AY, AZ, BA, BB, BC, BD, BE, BF, BG, BH, BI, BJ, BK, BL, BM, BN, BO, BP, BQ, BR, BS, BT, BU, BV, BW, BX, BY, BZ, CA, CB, CC, CD, CE, CF, CG, CH, CI, CJ, CK, CL, CM, CN, CO, CP, CQ, CR, CS, CT, CU, CV, CW, CX, CY, CZ, DA, DB, DC, DD, DE, DF, DG, DH, DI, DJ, DK, DL, DM, DN, DO, DP, DQ, DR, DS, DT, DU, DV, DW, DX, DY, DZ, EA, EB, EC, ED, EE, EF, EG, EH, EI, EJ, EK, EL, EM, EN, EO, EP, EQ, ER, ES, ET, EU, EV, EW, EX, EY, EZ, FA, FB, FC, FD, FE, FF, FG, FH, FI, FJ, FK, FL, FM, FN, FO, FP, FQ, FR, FS, FT, FU, FV, FW, FX, FY, FZ, GA, GB, GC, GD, GE, GF, GH, GI, GJ, GK, GL, GM, GN, GO, GP, GQ, GR, GS, GT, GU, GV, GW, GX, GY, GZ, HA, HB, HC, HD, HE, HF, HG, HH, HI, HJ, HK, HL, HM, HN, HO, HP, HQ, HR, HS, HT, HU, HV, HW, HX, HY, HZ, IA, IB, IC, ID, IE, IF, IG, IH, II, IJ, IK, IL, IM, IN, IO, IP, IQ, IR, IS, IT, IU, IV, IW, IX, IY, IZ, JA, JB, JC, JD, JE, JF, JG, JH, JI, JJ, JK, JL, JM, JN, JO, JP, JQ, JR, JS, JT, JU, JV, JW, JX, JY, JZ, KA, KB, KC, KD, KE, KF, KG, KH, KI, KJ, KK, KL, KM, KN, KO, KP, KQ, KR, KS, KT, KU, KV, KW, KX, KY, KZ, LA, LB, LC, LD, LE, LF, LG, LH, LI, LJ, LK, LM, LN, LO, LP, LQ, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, LW, LX, LY, LZ, MA, MB, MC, MD, ME, MF, MG, MH, MI, MJ, MK, ML, MN, MO, MP, MQ, MR, MS, MT, MU, MV, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NB, NC, ND, NE, NF, NG, NH, NI, NJ, NK, NL, NM, NO, NP, NQ, NR, NS, NT, NU, NV, NW, NX, NY, NZ, OA, OB, OC, OD, OE, OF, OG, OH, OI, OJ, OK, OL, OM, ON, OP, OQ, OR, OS, OT, OU, OV, OW, OX, OY, OZ, PA, PB, PC, PD, PE, PF, PG, PH, PI, PJ, PK, PL, PM, PN, PO, PP, PQ, PR, PS, PT, PU, PV, PW, PX, PY, PZ, QA, QB, QC, QD, QE, QF, QG, QH, QI, QJ, QK, QL, QM, QN, QO, QP, QQ, QR, QS, QT, QU, QV, QW, QX, QY, QZ, RA, RB, RC, RD, RE, RF, RG, RH, RI, RJ, RK, RL, RM, RN, RO, RP, RQ, RR, RS, RT, RU, RV, RW, RX, RY, RZ, SA, SB, SC, SD, SE, SF, SG, SH, SI, SJ, SK, SL, SM, SN, SO, SP, SQ, SR, SS, ST, SU, SV, SW, SX, SY, SZ, TA, TB, TC, TD, TE, TF, TG, TH, TI, TJ, TK, TL, TM, TN, TO, TP, TQ, TR, TS, TU, TV, TW, TX, TY, TZ, UA, UB, UC, UD, UE, UF, UG, UH, UI, UJ, UK, UL, UM, UN, UO, UP, UQ, UR, US, UT, UV, UW, UX, UY, UZ, VA, VB, VC, VD, VE, VF, VG, VH, VI, VJ, VK, VL, VM, VN, VO, VP, VQ, VR, VS, VT, VU, VW, VX, VY, VZ, WA, WB, WC, WD, WE, WF, WG, WH, WI, WJ, WK, WL, WM, WN, WO, WP, WQ, WR, WS, WT, WU, WV, WX, WY, WZ, XA, XB, XC, XD, XE, XF, XG, XH, XI, XJ, XK, XL, XM, XN, XO, XP, XQ, XR, XS, XT, XU, XV, XW, XZ, YA, YB, YC, YD, YE, YF, YG, YH, YI, YJ, YK, YL, YM, YN, YO, YP, YQ, YR, YS, YT, YU, YV, YW, YZ, ZA, ZB, ZC, ZD, ZE, ZF, ZG, ZH, ZI, ZJ, ZK, ZL, ZM, ZN, ZO, ZP, ZQ, ZR, ZS, ZT, ZU, ZV, ZW, ZX, ZY, ZZ.

Mutual Funds

Table with columns: Fund, NAV, Chg %Ret, YTD NAV, Chg %Ret. Includes sub-sections AA, AB, AC, AD, AE, AF, AG, AH, AI, AJ, AK, AL, AM, AN, AO, AP, AQ, AR, AS, AT, AU, AV, AW, AX, AY, AZ, BA, BB, BC, BD, BE, BF, BG, BH, BI, BJ, BK, BL, BM, BN, BO, BP, BQ, BR, BS, BT, BU, BV, BW, BX, BY, BZ, CA, CB, CC, CD, CE, CF, CG, CH, CI, CJ, CK, CL, CM, CN, CO, CP, CQ, CR, CS, CT, CU, CV, CW, CX, CY, CZ, DA, DB, DC, DD, DE, DF, DG, DH, DI, DJ, DK, DL, DM, DN, DO, DP, DQ, DR, DS, DT, DU, DV, DW, DX, DY, DZ, EA, EB, EC, ED, EE, EF, EG, EH, EI, EJ, EK, EL, EM, EN, EO, EP, EQ, ER, ES, ET, EU, EV, EW, EX, EY, EZ, FA, FB, FC, FD, FE, FF, FG, FH, FI, FJ, FK, FL, FM, FN, FO, FP, FQ, FR, FS, FT, FU, FV, FW, FX, FY, FZ, GA, GB, GC, GD, GE, GF, GH, GI, GJ, GK, GL, GM, GN, GO, GP, GQ, GR, GS, GT, GU, GV, GW, GX, GY, GZ, HA, HB, HC, HD, HE, HF, HG, HH, HI, HJ, HK, HL, HM, HN, HO, HP, HQ, HR, HS, HT, HU, HV, HW, HX, HY, HZ, IA, IB, IC, ID, IE, IF, IG, IH, II, IJ, IK, IL, IM, IN, IO, IP, IQ, IR, IS, IT, IU, IV, IW, IX, IY, IZ, JA, JB, JC, JD, JE, JF, JG, JH, JI, JJ, JK, JL, JM, JN, JO, JP, JQ, JR, JS, JT, JU, JV, JW, JX, JY, JZ, KA, KB, KC, KD, KE, KF, KG, KH, KI, KJ, KK, KL, KM, KN, KO, KP, KQ, KR, KS, KT, KU, KV, KW, KX, KY, KZ, LA, LB, LC, LD, LE, LF, LG, LH, LI, LJ, LK, LM, LN, LO, LP, LQ, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, LW, LX, LY, LZ, MA, MB, MC, MD, ME, MF, MG, MH, MI, MJ, MK, ML, MN, MO, MP, MQ, MR, MS, MT, MU, MV, MW, MX, MY, MZ, NA, NB, NC, ND, NE, NF, NG, NH, NI, NJ, NK, NL, NM, NO, NP, NQ, NR, NS, NT, NU, NV, NW, NX, NY, NZ, OA, OB, OC, OD, OE, OF, OG, OH, OI, OJ, OK, OL, OM, ON, OP, OQ, OR, OS, OT, OU, OV, OW, OX, OY, OZ, PA, PB, PC, PD, PE, PF, PG, PH, PI, PJ, PK, PL, PM, PN, PO, PP, PQ, PR, PS, PT, PU, PV, PW, PX, PY, PZ, QA, QB, QC, QD, QE, QF, QG, QH, QI, QJ, QK, QL, QM, QN, QO, QP, QQ, QR, QS, QT, QU, QV, QW, QX, QY, QZ, RA, RB, RC, RD, RE, RF, RG, RH, RI, RJ, RK, RL, RM, RN, RO, RP, RQ, RR, RS, RT, RU, RV, RW, RX, RY, RZ, SA, SB, SC, SD, SE, SF, SG, SH, SI, SJ, SK, SL, SM, SN, SO, SP, SQ, SR, SS, ST, SU, SV, SW, SX, SY, SZ, TA, TB, TC, TD, TE, TF, TG, TH, TI, TJ, TK, TL, TM, TN, TO, TP, TQ, TR, TS, TU, TV, TW, TX, TY, TZ, UA, UB, UC, UD, UE, UF, UG, UH, UI, UJ, UK, UL, UM, UN, UO, UP, UQ, UR, US, UT, UV, UW, UX, UY, UZ, VA, VB, VC, VD, VE, VF, VG, VH, VI, VJ, VK, VL, VM, VN, VO, VP, VQ, VR, VS, VT, VU, VW, VX, VY, VZ, WA, WB, WC, WD, WE, WF, WG, WH, WI, WJ, WK, WL, WM, WN, WO, WP, WQ, WR, WS, WT, WU, WV, WX, WY, WZ, XA, XB, XC, XD, XE, XF, XG, XH, XI, XJ, XK, XL, XM, XN, XO, XP, XQ, XR, XS, XT, XU, XV, XW, XZ, YA, YB, YC, YD, YE, YF, YG, YH, YI, YJ, YK, YL, YM, YN, YO, YP, YQ, YR, YS, YT, YU, YV, YW, YZ, ZA, ZB, ZC, ZD, ZE, ZF, ZG, ZH, ZI, ZJ, ZK, ZL, ZM, ZN, ZO, ZP, ZQ, ZR, ZS, ZT, ZU, ZV, ZW, ZX, ZY, ZZ.

BUSINESS NEWS

Neiman Marcus Rejects Saks's Latest Merger Bid

Luxury downturn adds urgency to talks but chains can't agree to deal terms

BY SUZANNE KAPNER
AND LAUREN THOMAS

Saks Fifth Avenue wants to buy rival Neiman Marcus. Neiman is open to a deal. But the two luxury retailers can't agree on the terms of a marriage.

This week, Neiman rejected Saks's most recent takeover offer, which valued the upscale chain at close to \$3 billion, according to people familiar with the situation. Neiman objected to the deal's structure, a significant portion of which wasn't in cash, some of the people said.

The two companies have been negotiating for months, the latest round of on-again, off-again talks that date back more than a decade. A combination would give the luxury department store chains more clout with designer brands as consumers curtail spending on pricey goods.

The talks are continuing, but a deal, if one is reached, is unlikely to come before early next year, the people continued. Both companies are controlled by investor groups.

Both companies have also had recent struggles. Neiman filed for bankruptcy in 2020 but is on stronger footing since emerging from court protection with far less debt. Saks, which is owned by HBC, has delayed paying some suppliers to help manage its cash.

HBC, which also owns the Hudson's Bay department-store chain in Canada, recently raised \$340 million by selling real estate—cash that will help fund its retail operations.

"HBC is committed to its vendor partners and to ensuring that we fulfill all financial obligations," a spokeswoman said. "Any delayed payments are due to HBC managing through the challenging environment that is impacting the wider retail industry, particularly in Canada."

The world of retailing has changed dramatically since the two companies were founded



The two companies have been negotiating for months. A Saks Fifth Avenue window display.

more than a century ago. They introduced European luxury brands to well-heeled American shoppers. These days, brands are increasingly calling the shots. They sell directly to consumers with their own stores and e-commerce sites, creating fresh competition for the department stores that carry their wares.

The brand owners are getting so big, they wield tremendous power. LVMH Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton, a conglomerate that includes Louis Vuitton, Celine and Fendi, has a market capitalization of roughly \$385 billion. LVMH Chief Executive Bernard Arnault has competed with Elon Musk for the title of the world's richest person.

Gucci owner Kering earlier this year said it was buying a stake in Valentino, adding the Italian luxury label to a portfolio that includes Balenciaga and Saint Laurent. And in the U.S., a recent deal will put the Coach, Michael Kors, Kate Spade, Versace, Jimmy Choo and Stuart Weitzman brands under one roof.

A merger of Saks and Neiman could help the chains negotiate better terms with suppliers and allow them to strip out duplicate costs. Saks has 39 stores; Neiman has 36 department stores, two Bergdorf Goodman stores and five Last

Call discount stores.

There are eight malls that have both a Saks and Neiman Marcus store, according to Green Street, a real-estate research firm, raising the potential of closing some overlapping locations.

Saks and Neiman discussed merging in 2017, but Neiman's \$5 billion in debt from two successive private-equity buyouts made a deal untenable at the time.

Neiman's bankruptcy in 2020 and the restructuring helped the retailer shed \$4 billion in debt. It emerged from court protection later that year with new owners, including Pacific Investment Management, Davidson Kempner Capital Management and Sixth Street Partners.

Both chains rode a pandemic wave of luxury-goods purchases, but the retailers and some brands are reeling from shifts in spending among affluent shoppers. A string of European luxury brands earlier this year reported declining U.S. sales, including Kering, Burberry and Prada.

Neither Saks nor Neiman report financial results publicly. But sales at both companies are down from their rapid pace of a year ago, according to people familiar with the matter.

Neiman's sales declined 8% to \$948 million in the three

months ended Oct. 28. Earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization were \$95 million, compared with \$112 million in the same period a year ago, according to a presentation reviewed by The Wall Street Journal that the retailer shares with investors.

"U.S. consumers have continued to ease their spending on luxury goods," wrote Saks.com CEO Marc Metrick in a letter to suppliers dated Sept. 6. "While we don't foresee a significant change in these spending behaviors in the near term, we expect our comparable performance to improve versus the second half of last year, when spending among these shoppers first began to soften."

For the three-month period that ended in July, gross merchandise value—which measures the total value of merchandise sold—declined 11% at Saks.com and the physical stores.

In 2021, HBC split the Saks e-commerce business from the stores.

A survey conducted by Saks in late July found that 58% of luxury consumers planned to spend the same or more on luxury goods over the next three months, the first increase since the survey asked this question in May 2022.

Quora CEO Bridges The Past, Future For OpenAI Board

BY DEEPA SEETHARAMAN
AND SARAH E. NEEDLEMAN

In the surprise ouster and restoration of Sam Altman as chief executive officer at OpenAI, only one person, Adam D'Angelo, managed to play a role on each side of the drama.

D'Angelo, a former Facebook executive and founder of the question-and-answer platform Quora, was one of four members of the board who fired Altman, and the sole surviving director named to a new board of the artificial-intelligence company that took over on Wednesday.

That puts D'Angelo in a unique position as someone who voted to oust Altman, his longtime acquaintance, and now will play a central role in shaping the future governance of the company Altman has returned to lead as CEO.

During negotiations for Altman's return, D'Angelo was the only director both sides could agree on, according to people familiar with the talks. Management didn't want all three of the independent directors to stay on the board, the people said, and the old board—including D'Angelo—was insistent that they retain some representation under the new structure.

On the new board, D'Angelo is expected to help ensure the board exercises active oversight and has a direct line to employees beyond the management team, the people said. He is one of three incoming directors including tech veteran Bret Taylor, who was formerly co-CEO of Salesforce and chairman of Twitter, and Larry Summers, who previously served as both Treasury secretary and Harvard University's president. Microsoft also gained a nonvoting board observer position.

Several people who previously worked with D'Angelo described him as a principled person who slowly makes up his mind, often asking direct, piercing questions to help him arrive at a conclusion. He

"doesn't suffer fools," one of the people said. D'Angelo has tended to keep a low profile and rarely appears in the press—a contrast to Altman, who has cultivated relationships with tech reporters over the years.

A high-school classmate of Facebook co-founder Mark Zuckerberg at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, D'Angelo has long operated near centers of power in the tech industry without having attained the fame of some of his friends.

The New York native graduated with a bachelor's degree in computer science from the California Institute of Technology in 2006, the same year he became chief technology officer of Facebook, which has since rebranded as Meta Platforms. He left that company in 2008 to found Quora the next year.

D'Angelo and Altman, who are both in their late 30s, met around 2010 through Silicon Valley networking circles. In 2014, Quora joined Y Combinator, a venture firm that Altman was president of at the time.

Altman invited D'Angelo to join OpenAI's board in 2018. D'Angelo already had a rapport with Greg Brockman, the OpenAI co-founder who quit in protest of Altman's firing, and who, like Altman, is now back at the company.

Once on the board, D'Angelo began helping some of the other independent directors understand the quirks of being a tech startup, explaining that OpenAI's rapid pace of development was typical for Silicon Valley, people familiar with the matter said.

Altman posted on X Wednesday that D'Angelo has always been clear with him and OpenAI's board about potential conflicts of interest between the company and Quora.

So far Altman and D'Angelo appear to be on good terms. On Thanksgiving Day, Altman posted on X that he and D'Angelo had "just spent a really nice few hours" together.

Soon after, the Quora CEO reposted it.



Adam D'Angelo has tended to keep a low profile.

Amazon Hires SpaceX for 3 Rocket Launches

BY MICAH MAIDENBERG

Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk have both spent decades building space companies. Now, Bezos' Amazon.com is turning to Musk's SpaceX for a ride to orbit.

Amazon, which Bezos founded and where he still serves as executive chairman,

said Friday that it hired SpaceX to conduct three launches for the Seattle company's planned satellite-internet division.

The agreement marks the first time Amazon has turned to SpaceX as it builds the satellite business. Amazon had hired Bezos' space company Blue Origin, as well as Arianespace and United Launch Alliance, to han-

dle the vast majority of the launches, using new rockets that have faced delays.

An Amazon spokesman declined to comment on terms of the deal with SpaceX, which charges \$67 million per flight under its standard plan, according to its website. "The additional launches with SpaceX offer even more capacity to

support our deployment schedule," Amazon said. SpaceX didn't immediately respond to a request for comment.

Musk and Bezos both founded their space companies in the early 2000s, but SpaceX has pulled far ahead of Blue Origin in terms of conducting missions and gaining customers.

Florence Is Fighting Back Against Airbnb Infiltrating Historic City

BY ERIC SYLVERS

FLORENCE, Italy—The city of Botticelli's "Venus" and Michelangelo's "David" is now the city of Airbnb.

The spread of short-term rentals has pushed up rents and priced out residents. Shops that once served locals have become rarities. Lockboxes for keys sit next to the doorbells at many buildings' entrances.

On some streets in central Florence, most of the buildings have at least one lockbox, which allows visitors to access their short-term apartment without having to meet the owner. Some buildings have four or five.

The telltale lockboxes have also proliferated along the canals of Venice, the small alleys of the Cinque Terre and the chaotic streets of Rome.

As Airbnb has moved in, residents have moved out. Almost 30% of homes in central Florence are listed on Airbnb, according to a study by two professors at Rome's La Sapienza University. That doesn't include the apartments listed on other platforms such as Vrbo.

Florence's historic center—a Unesco World Heritage site—has more beds listed on Airbnb than it has residents, according to the study. "Even if you have a lot of money, you

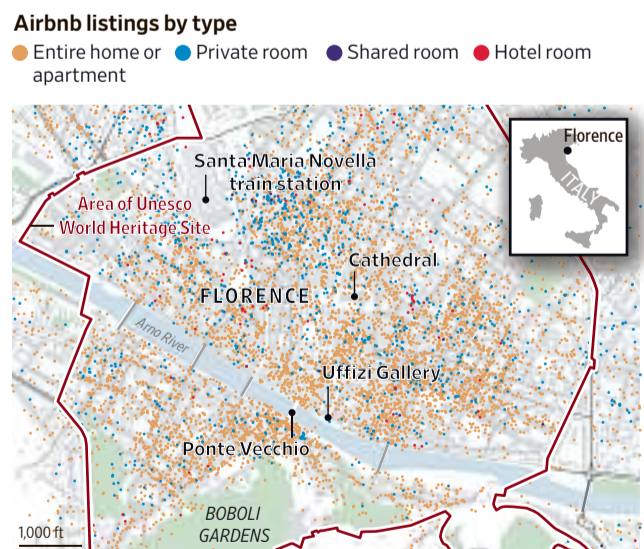
can't find a place to rent in Florence because all the apartments are on Airbnb," said Linda Sanesi, who lives outside the city's central area and runs a hair salon with her husband on a small street next to Florence's cathedral.

Up until the 1990s, stores serving locals populated the downtown area. Few have survived. About 60% of Sanesi's clients are tourists looking for a haircut.

Airbnb is aware of the problems and pressures that large numbers of tourists can create in historic cities such as Florence, a spokesman for Airbnb said.

Italy has mostly allowed short-term rental sites to operate without regulation. The result has been an explosion of listings. Airbnb listings in Florence have more than doubled since 2016. Long-term rents have risen by 42% in that time, according to Mayor Dario Nardella. Three-quarters of the short-term rentals in Florence are in its historic center.

The 40,000 residents who remain in central Florence "have suddenly found themselves living in condominium-hotels with costs that have increased by up to 30%, dirty sheets everywhere, noise, intercom calls at all hours from tourists asking residents for assistance as if they were ho-



tel staff," Nardella said.

"If you're the only resident in a building and the other seven apartments are on Airbnb, you resist for a while—then you leave," said Massimo Torelli, a Florence native and a member of a left-wing association that fights for affordable housing for residents. "How long are you going to endure people coming and going at all hours, partying, all the stuff we do when we're on vacation? It's normal, but do you want to live there? Venice has been lost, but we can still save Florence."

The squeeze on affordable housing won attention in Italy this year after students began camping out in front of universities in Milan, Rome and other cities to protest the high rents.

Property owners in Italy often prefer to offer their apartments on Airbnb than to find a long-term tenant. It can be not only more profitable but also less risky. Italian law makes it difficult to evict long-term tenants who don't pay the rent they owe. If the tenants have children living with them, it is almost impossible.

Residents of Florence, however, have had enough of Airbnb. In October, the city passed a law banning new listings on Airbnb in the historic center. Properties that already offered short-term rentals can continue. The city hopes to be a trailblazer in Italy, showing that the spread of Airbnb can be stopped.

"We're trying to break through the country's inertia," Nardella said. He said that he has done all he can as mayor, given municipalities' limited powers and that Italy needs a national law regulating short-term rentals. "I'm convinced that if we take the first step, others will follow."

The Airbnb spokesman said the company "recognizes the challenges facing historical cities and welcomes progress from the Italian government on new national rules, which will help support the policy goals of cities like Florence."

Florentine property owners and professional managers of short-term rentals are promising to fight the city's restrictions in court.

Italy's government has debated what to do about short-term rentals, but has yet to make any significant intervention. Its draft budget for 2024 would raise the tax rate on rental profits to 26% from 21%, starting with the second

apartment an owner rents out. The first rental would still be taxed at 21%. Critics say it will make little difference.

Other European tourist destinations have restricted short-term rentals. Amsterdam introduced its first regulations in 2014, under which apartments generally can't be rented out on platforms such as Airbnb for more than 30 days a year. Owners can rent out only one property, and a permit is needed for offering an entire apartment. Barcelona, Paris and Berlin have also aggressively reined in short-term rentals.

New York City began enforcing new rules in September that Airbnb called "a de facto ban on short-term rentals." Hosts must register with the city, can't rent out an entire property and must be present when they have paying guests.

Critics say Florence's ban on new offerings doesn't go far enough.

"Freezing the situation doesn't resolve the existing problems," said Filippo Celata, one of the authors of the Sapienza University study. "Cities such as Amsterdam that moved several years ago have managed to control the growth of short-term rentals. It might be too late for cities that move now."

FINANCE

Investors Avoid China Amid Tensions

The mainland stock market has lost over \$24 billion in foreign money since August

By Dave Sebastian

HONG KONG—Investing in China has never been this perilous.

When global investors flocked to the country during its economic boom in the past decade, geopolitical risks were at the back of their minds. Such risks are now a top consideration for buyers of Chinese stocks, bonds and stakes in private companies—and are turning many people off investing in China.

Beijing's relationship with Washington has been deteriorating, and the impact on China's economy and financial markets has come into clear view this year.

This past summer, the U.S. restricted Americans from investing in Chinese companies in certain high-tech industries. The U.S. has also imposed export restrictions on advanced semiconductor chips that can be used to develop artificial intelligence and related manufacturing equipment, to limit their use by China's military.

High bar

Chinese internet giant Alibaba in November shelved a plan to carve out its large cloud-computing division because Washington's chip curbs could hamper the unit's business activities. Alibaba lost about \$20 billion in market value in a day, demonstrating how U.S.-China tensions can cause unexpected losses for investors.

International venture-capital and private-equity invest-

tors also have to tread extra carefully when assessing Chinese companies.

"For every deal we now look at geopolitical risk, regulatory risk even before we start properly evaluating the attractiveness of the business and the business model," Alvin Lam, a Hong Kong-based operating partner at European private-equity firm CVC Capital Partners, said at the AVCJ Private Equity & Venture Forum in November.

"The bar for a China deal is very, very high. We can see that with our clients," said Xuong Liu, co-leader of Alvarez & Marsal's Asia global transaction advisory group, at the same conference. "Clearly there are certain sectors that are out of bounds."

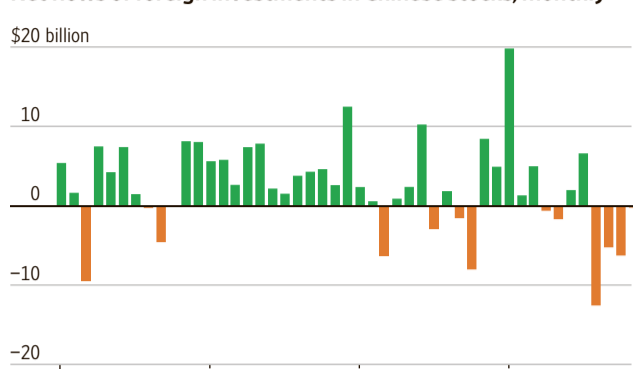
Decoupling

The economic and financial decoupling between the U.S. and China has intensified since 2021. American investors have been forced to sell shares in companies that the U.S. says are aiding China's military. That led to the delisting of Chinese state-owned telecom carriers and energy companies from U.S. stock exchanges. Americans have also been barred from investing in other blacklisted Chinese companies.

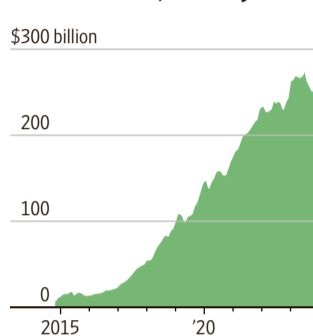
Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year, which resulted in wide-ranging sanctions on Russia and bans on investing in the country's stocks and bonds, crystallized for investors the risks of being heavily exposed to China.

Beijing has long regarded Taiwan, a democratic self-ruled island, as part of China. Communist Party leaders have threatened to take control of Taiwan by force, raising the specter of an invasion or mili-

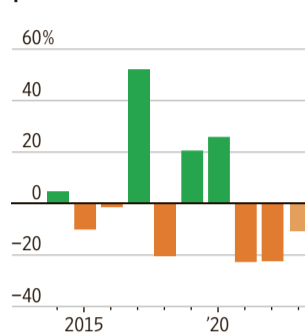
Net flows of foreign investments in Chinese stocks, monthly



Foreigners' holdings of Chinese stocks, monthly



MSCI China's annual performance



Note: Chinese stocks refer to stocks listed in mainland China via a trading link with Hong Kong; 2023 data is as Nov. 30. Sources: Wind (net flows of foreign investments, foreigners' holdings); FactSet (MSCI China)

tary conflict. Growing U.S. support for Taiwan has drawn Beijing's ire this year.

"We're all watching closely what happens with Taiwan," said David Vaughn, chief investment officer for non-U.S. and global strategies at San Diego-based ClariVest Asset Management. He added he is also concerned about China's property bust and weakening consumer confidence.

Vaughn said that if geopolitical tensions don't improve, he expects international investors to reduce their holdings of Chinese securities further. He said one worry for investors is whether the companies they hold shares in could be

hurt by export bans or other new rules.

Foreign Exodus

There has been a recent exodus of foreign money from mainland China's stock markets. Since August, international investors have pulled the equivalent of more than \$24 billion from China A shares—which are listed in Shanghai or Shenzhen—via a trading link with Hong Kong. That is the largest and most sustained net outflow of foreign funds through the link since it was established in 2014, according to Wind Information data.

STREETWISE | By James Mackintosh

Why It's So Hard to Copy Charlie Munger's Secret Sauce



If you want to invest like Charlie Munger, you're late to the

party. The investor's genius in spotting what's become known as the "quality factor"—buying good companies—made a ton of money for him and business partner Warren Buffett. Nearly 50 years on, it might not be such a great time to copy his strategy.

For those who missed the late Munger's brilliance, he's the one who persuaded the billionaire Buffett to shift Berkshire Hathaway's focus from "cigar butt" value stocks—bad companies that no one else wants, and so are cheap—to buying "wonderful businesses at fair prices."

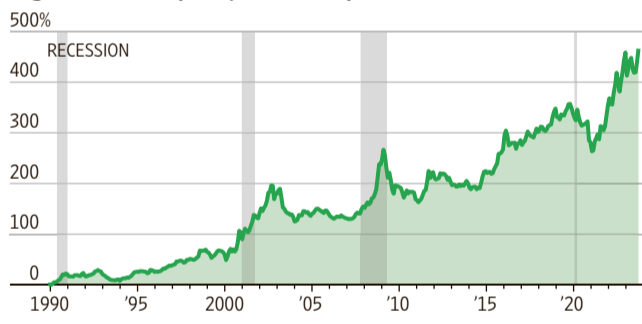
Before getting to the difficulty of doing that, consider how investors and academics define a "wonderful" business: Quality means consistent earnings growth, solid profit margins and not too much debt. These are companies for all seasons, growing less in good times than the highly leveraged boomtime winners but surviving downturns and prospering always.

That might seem reason enough to buy them and is certainly how they've been presented by Buffett and Munger over the years, thanks to the magic of compounding. However, we need to dig deeper.

For quality stocks to outperform in the long run they have to be underpriced. That's the hard part.

Their stability means quality stocks are usually more expensive than low-quality stocks. But for decades the premium was smaller than it should have been. In a perfectly efficient market, quality stocks would produce the same risk-adjusted returns as others, because everyone already knows that they're good quality and understands risk and compounding. In the

High minus low-quality U.S. stock performance since 1989*



Coca-Cola stock price



*Portfolio long the 30% highest quality, short the 30% lowest quality. Monthly data, through September. Sources: AQR Capital Management (stock performance); FactSet (stock price)

real world, markets aren't perfectly efficient, and quality stocks historically weren't as expensive as they should be, as research by AQR Capital Management demonstrated.

My favorite theory for why quality stocks were cheaper than they should be is that they don't appeal to gamblers in the market hoping to make a fast buck. Quality stocks ought to help you get rich slow, and that's just less attractive to the frequent trader, who likes the big price moves that come with leverage and unpredictable profits.

This analysis helps explain long periods of poor performance for quality stocks. In bad times they do well and accordingly become expensive as strong balance sheets and regular profits have appeal. Just as being too cheap makes for good future returns, being too expensive sets them up for years of

bad performance. This has happened after every period of great performance for quality, which tended to be around recessions—in the early 1970s, 1990s, the dot-com bust and the financial crisis.

Buffett and Munger had an even longer time in the doldrums after perhaps their biggest mistake: not selling Coca-Cola stock when it had a mini-bubble in 1998. Coke briefly traded at 50 times

earnings, an insane valuation that should have prompted them to exit their largest position. But a mantra of long-term compounding kept them in. They held on

through the bust that inevitably followed the bubble, and the stock took 13 years to get back to its high.

The risk is that something similar is on the way. High-quality stocks have resoundingly beaten low-quality ones since the collapse of the speculative frenzy in

The outflows coincided with a bout of weak Chinese economic data. The MSCI China Index has lost 10% this year, and is on track for its third consecutive year of declines.

Market strategists at some major Wall Street banks say most of the hedge funds and active-fund managers that have sold off their China stockholdings are unlikely to return until there are significant improvements in the country's growth outlook and U.S.-China relations.

Morgan Stanley strategists have warned investors of "sustained geopolitical complexity" in 2024 and an election year in both the U.S. and Taiwan.

Dialogue

Goldman Sachs said in a Nov. 12 report that under what it called a very harsh scenario, investors could sell \$170 billion more in Chinese shares—if U.S. pension funds completely liquidate their China holdings due to policy and geopolitical reasons and active mutual funds and hedge funds revert to their lowest China allocations.

Si Fu, a China equity portfolio strategist at Goldman Sachs, said the market has already priced in the geopolitical concerns, and that a harsh scenario isn't likely to occur.

"We do get some questions from clients asking if things get even worse considering the current situation, how much can they still sell?" she said, adding that there have recently been signs of improvement in the U.S.-China relationship and for China's macroeconomic outlook.

President Biden recently met with Chinese leader Xi Jinping in California, where

they agreed to begin a dialogue on the risks of AI and resume communications between the two countries' militaries.

Restrictions

The investment board for the Thrift Savings Plan, which holds the retirement savings of U.S. federal employees and members of the uniformed services, recently said its large international stock fund will shift to tracking a global MSCI benchmark that excludes China and Hong Kong.

Its reasoning for the change was deeply rooted in geopolitics. A consultant to the investment board pointed to "investment restrictions on sensitive Chinese technology sectors, the delisting of Chinese companies and sanctions on Russian securities due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict," and said such unforeseen events could cause stocks to decline in value when investors are forced to sell them.

It also said the recent technology-investing restrictions and bans on exports of U.S. technology could herald more curbs on investments in stocks in China and Hong Kong.

Teeja Boye, a portfolio manager at Arlington, Va.-based Sands Capital, said his firm's emerging-markets growth strategy had 30% of its assets exposed to China in mid-2021, and has since dropped to about 17% as of the end of October.

"Unfortunately, China is going through short-term stress in real estate and declining productivity—and at the same time it's having a worse relationship with one of the most powerful nations in the world," Boye said. "The best we can hope for is for things not to get worse," he added.

Evergrande, Creditors in Discussions

Continued from page B1

new money in Evergrande's EV unit, the people said. NWTN had agreed to invest \$500 million for a 28% stake in Evergrande Auto, which would have helped Evergrande Auto's expansion, but NWTN temporarily suspended its commitment to invest the funds when Evergrande's earlier restructuring plan fell apart, according to securities filings.

Evergrande's offshore creditors, however, have put forward a counterproposal that would give them more control over the company's offshore businesses, arguing that they would own all of the parent company if a Hong Kong court puts it into liquidation on Monday, one of the people said.

The parties are prepared to negotiate through the weekend and bondholders are still hoping to reach a consensual deal with the company, the person said.

Representatives for Evergrande and NWTN didn't immediately return requests for comment.

Evergrande has been at the center of China's growing real estate crisis for more than two years. When the company defaulted in late 2021, it was China's most indebted property developer. It owes money to thousands of suppliers and is on the hook to deliver hundreds of thousands of unfinished homes. Chinese regulators in September blocked an offshore debt restructuring and business-turnaround plan that took nearly two years for Evergrande and its advisers to put together. After the veto, the company's foreign bondholders

hoped to obtain a waiver from one of China's top regulatory agencies, the National Development and Reform Commission, to allow the previous plan to go through, but they have since walked back on their plans to do so, according to people familiar with the matter.

A court hearing on Evergrande's pending liquidation is scheduled in Hong Kong for Monday. One of Evergrande's foreign creditors, Top Shine Global, filed a petition to wind down the company in 2022.

Judge Linda Chan of Hong Kong's high court told Evergrande in October that it must present a concrete plan to restructure the company's offshore businesses by the December hearing or face an imminent liquidation order.

If the creditors take over control of Evergrande's offshore companies, they can move to exercise their authority and attempt to replace the boards of mainland China companies and push for them to be broken up and sold for parts.

Courts in China recently have started to recognize the legal authority of liquidators from jurisdictions like Hong Kong, where Evergrande's parent company is listed.

Evergrande is at the center of ongoing investigations by Chinese authorities into possible financial misconduct, as the country's real-estate sector continues to weigh heavily on economic growth. Evergrande Chairman Hui Ka Yan was detained and investigated for crimes in September, and authorities are probing whether he attempted to transfer assets overseas when Evergrande failed to complete and deliver its presold projects, The Wall Street Journal reported. Other top Evergrande executives resigned last year after they were implicated in a \$2 billion seizure of cash at Evergrande's property services arm that wasn't disclosed to investors.



A court hearing is scheduled in Hong Kong for Monday.

BLOOMBERG NEWS

MARKETS

Dow Notches Longest Winning Streak Since 2021

By GUNJAN BANERJI

Hopes that the Federal Reserve is done raising interest rates turbocharged a broad-based rally, driving prices of everything from stocks to Treasuries and gold sharply higher.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 2.4% for the week, notching a fifth weekly gain to mark its longest winning streak since late 2021. The S&P 500 added 0.8% and closed at its highest level since March 2022. The tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite added 0.4%.

On Friday, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell offered the strongest signal yet that officials are likely done raising rates, saying the central bank's policy is "well into restrictive territory." His comments were laced with caution, but they appeared to reassure investors who have been digging in on expectations of rate cuts next year. Traders were ramped up bets that the Fed will trim rates as soon as March, CME Group data show.

Powell's comments, alongside new economic data, fueled a wave of buying in the government-bond market that drove the yield on the 10-year Treasury note down to 4.225%, the lowest level since early September. The yield on 2-year Treasuries, which are especially sensitive to interest-rate expectations, recorded the biggest weekly decline since March, around the time Silicon Valley Bank collapsed.

The S&P 500 rose 0.6% on Friday, while the Nasdaq added 0.6%. The Dow industrials added 295 points, or 0.8%.

Many investors entered the year with a more cautious

stance, and the advance in stocks and government bonds has only accelerated. Now, some investors appear to be eyeing bigger gains in the final weeks of 2023. The Dow is off 1.5% from its record.

"It seems like positioning for a year-end rally," said Danny Kirsch, head of options at Piper Sandler.

Bets that the Fed can pull off a soft landing, or tame inflation without a big drop in economic growth, have led investors to pile into stocks. In one sign that some are assuming a sunnier outlook for the economy, the Russell 2000 index was a star performer Friday, gaining around 3% for the session.

This index is far more sensitive to the U.S. economy, since smaller companies are more vulnerable to rising borrowing costs and tend to get more of their revenue domestically.

"The soft landing pathway is reasonably narrow, but that pathway has widened," said Joseph Amato, chief investment officer and president at Neuberger Berman.

Data this week showed that the U.S. economy grew far more than expected in the last quarter. But some data, including activity in the manufacturing sector in November, pointed to slowing growth.

The recent drop in bond yields has given some relief to home buyers, with mortgage rates falling for a fifth consecutive week to around 7.22%, the lowest level in more than two months.

Still, some investors said that expectations for rate cuts had swelled too much.

"We think the market may have run ahead of the likely pace of cuts," wrote Solita Marcelli, chief investment officer of the Americas at UBS Global Wealth Management.

Wall Street Shrugs Off OPEC+ Cuts

By DAVID UBERTI

Members of the oil-producers group known as OPEC+ have tried to push crude prices upward with unexpected supply cuts since last year. Wall Street isn't yet convinced that will pan out.

On Thursday, a million barrel-a-day pullback surprised a market that had largely anticipated that the cartel and its allies would hold output steady. Crude prices seasawed after the announcement, ultimately slipping to their sixth-straight weekly drop, suggesting many traders were unsure if it was the surprise they wanted.

A key question, investors say, is whether the Riyadh-led Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its Kremlin-aligned counterparts can stay together amid an uncertain outlook next year. That could require smaller exporters to shoulder more of the burden by curtailing supplies and absorbing the resulting hit to revenues they use to fund development, security and social programs.

While Thursday's decision spread additional cuts across several producers, their voluntary nature led some traders to warn that they won't be strictly enforced. They fear that Saudi Arabia, which unilaterally throttled production by one million barrels a day this summer, could open the spigots if its counterparts don't follow through.

"At some point, [OPEC+ members] have to show the market that there is cohesion," said Rebecca Babin, a senior energy trader at CIBC Private Wealth US. "The strength of the pack is the wolf. The strength of the wolf is the pack."

Signs of dissent appeared when the group's meeting was postponed from its original Nov. 26 slot. Delegates from Angola and Nigeria pushed for higher production allotments. The Wall Street Journal reported, and those from Saudi Arabia argued for expanded

cuts. Ultimately, the 23-member group rolled over many of its existing quotas, but members including Iraq, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates announced voluntary cuts alongside extensions of separate restrictions by Riyadh and the Kremlin.

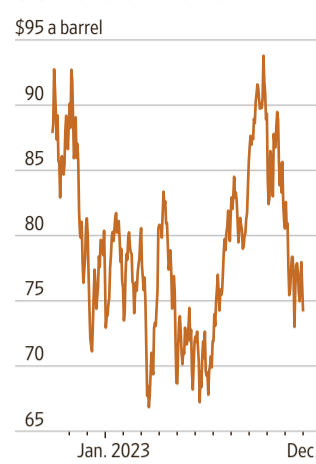
The cartel said that it invited Brazil, one of the world's fastest-growing oil producers, to join OPEC+.

On Thursday, oil prices initially jumped following the meeting but edged lower throughout the trading session as details dribbled out. The skid continued Friday as benchmark U.S. crude fell 2.5% to \$74.07 a barrel, about 21% lower than its late-September peak. Energy stocks largely avoided the selloff.

Uncertainty heading into 2024 assures that the OPEC+ goal of stabilizing prices "will not be straightforward," said Ann-Louise Hittle, an analyst at energy consulting firm Wood Mackenzie.

While average nationwide prices at the pump have fallen

U.S. crude-oil futures



Source: FactSet

for 10 straight weeks, federal record-keepers say, gas stations monitored by AAA in Orlando, Fla., El Paso, Texas, and elsewhere have begun raising prices in recent days.

Investors who project that oil prices will rise next year argue that underinvestment in new drilling around the world will eventually choke off global supplies.

But three other batches of OPEC+ members since October 2022 have so far failed to push the market into that scenario. Benchmark U.S. crude prices have actually ticked lower since then alongside start-and-stop economic growth in China and interest-rate hikes by the U.S. Federal Reserve.

Analysts who try to ballpark supply and demand by parsing everything from air-travel patterns to refiners' stockpiles to drilling efficiency have increasingly projected a 2024 market that has more than enough crude.

Drillers in the Permian Basin across West Texas and New Mexico are squeezing more oil out of shale rock than ever. Output from Guyana and Brazil has reached records. At the same time, Canadian producers are funneling more crude from the country's oil sands to American refineries.

The gusher of supplies has left Wall Street watching how deep—and how long—OPEC+ will keep cutting.

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The sale of the Interests will be subject to all applicable third party consents and regulatory approvals, if any, as well as the terms of sale prepared by the Secured Party (the "Terms of Sale"). Without limitation to the foregoing, please take notice that there are specific requirements for any potential successful bidder in connection with obtaining information and bidding on the Interests, including, but not limited to, execution of a confidentiality agreement.

The Interests are being offered as a single lot, "as-is, where-is", with no express or implied warranties, representations, statements or conditions of any kind made by the Secured Party or any person acting for or on behalf of the Secured Party, without any recourse whatsoever to the Secured Party or any other person acting for or on behalf of the Secured Party and each bidder must make its own inquiry regarding the Interests. The winning bidder shall be responsible for the payment of all transfer taxes, stamp duties and similar taxes incurred in connection with the purchase of the Interests.

The Secured Party reserves the right to credit bid, set a minimum reserve price, reject all bids (including without limitation any bid that it deems to have been made by a bidder that is unable to satisfy the requirements imposed by the Secured Party upon prospective bidders in connection with the sale or to whom in the Secured Party's sole judgment a sale may not lawfully be made), terminate or adjourn the sale to another time, without further notice, and to sell the Interests at a subsequent sale, and to impose any other commercially reasonable conditions upon the sale of the Interests as Secured Party may deem proper. The Secured Party further reserves the right to restrict prospective bidders to those who will represent that they are purchasing the Interests for their own account for investment not with a view to the distribution or resale of such Interests, to verify that any certificate for the Interests to be sold bears a legend substantially to the effect that such Interests have not been registered under the Securities Act of 1933, as amended (the "Securities Act"), and may not be disposed of in violation of the provisions of the Securities Act and to impose such other limitations or conditions in connection with the sale of the Interests as the Secured Party deems necessary or advisable in order to comply with the Securities Act or any other applicable law.

All bids (other than credit bids of the Secured Party) must be for cash, and the successful bidder must be prepared to deliver immediately available good funds as required by the Terms of Sale and otherwise comply with the bidding requirements and the Terms of Sale. Interested parties seeking additional information concerning the Interests, the requirements for obtaining information and bidding on the Interests and the Terms of Sale should execute the confidentiality agreement which can be reviewed at the website <https://tinyurl.com/UCPaytonPlace> (case sensitive). For questions and inquiries, please contact Tyler Barr at CBREUCSales@cbre.com.

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NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE - Property to be Sold

Public Sale No. 1: Tuesday, December 5, 2023 10:00 a.m. EDT. Settlement Type: Physical and DTC

Lot #	CUSIP	Issuer Name	Asset Type	Registration	Original Face
1	24433194A	DEERFIELD CAP CORP RESTR 300CT2035	CMBS	Physical(NYV)	25,000,000
2	1248MLA68	CBRE 2007-1A B	CRE CDO	DTC	4,907,975
3	1248MLA52	CBRE 2007-1A G	CRE CDO	DTC	1,226,994
4	45031W920	iStar Inc - CDFR - 1.50% - 10/2035	Secondary Senior Note	Physical(NYV)	19,000,000
5	84752A9A1	SPECIALTY TR INC 0.0 30JAN37 FRN	Subordinated Bond/Note	Physical(NYV)	11,600,000
6	89499AAD0	THORNBURG MORTGAGE 0.00 30OCT35 FRN	Subordinated Bond/Note	Physical(NYV)	25,000,000
7	06399AAA1	BAYLIS TR V113036.0 30JAN36 FRN	Trust Preferred Security	Physical(NYV)	10,000,000
8	07556Q9A5	BEAZER HOMES USA INC RESTR	Trust Preferred Security	Physical(NYV)	25,000,000
9	1405649A5	CAPITALSOURCE TR P 0.00 30JAN36	Trust Preferred Security	Physical(NYV)	25,000,000
10	3060409A6	FALCON FUNDING LLC 0.00 30JAN24 FRN	Trust Preferred Security	Physical(NYV)	27,500,000
11	37441W9B6	GGP CAP TR 10.0 30APR36 FRN	Trust Preferred Security	Physical(NYV)	25,000,000
12	48599AAH7	KKR FINANCIAL CAPITAL 8.25 30JUL36	Trust Preferred Security	Physical(NYV)	25,000,000
13	55302RAA7	MHG CAP TR PFD	Trust Preferred Security	DTC	25,000,000
14	75777GAAS	REDWOOD CAP 7.90159 30JAN37 144A FRN	Trust Preferred Security	DTC	25,000,000
15	05950VA17	BACM 2006-6 F	Zero Factor - CMBS	DTC	4,000,000
16	22545MAP2	CSMC 2006-C4 H	Zero Factor - CMBS	DTC	4,000,000
17	46629GAR9	JPMMC 2006-CB16 F	Zero Factor - CMBS	DTC	5,000,000
18	50179MAR2	LBUS 2006-C6 H	Zero Factor - CMBS	DTC	5,000,000
19	10927QAQ1	WBMT 2006-C2 G	Zero Factor - CMBS	DTC	5,000,000
20	92978MAL0	WBMT 2006-C28 G	Zero Factor - CMBS	DTC	7,446,000
21	92978PAR0	WBMT 2006-C29 G	Zero Factor - CMBS	DTC	1,554,000
22	38500KAC6	GKKRE 2007-1A A3	Zero Factor - CRE CDO	DTC	1,667,000
23	38500KAD4	GKKRE 2007-1A BFL	Zero Factor - CRE CDO	DTC	634,000
24	38500KAE2	GKKRE 2007-1A CFL	Zero Factor - CRE CDO	DTC	876,000
25	38500KAF9	GKKRE 2007-1A D	Zero Factor - CRE CDO	DTC	294,000
26	38500KAG7	GKKRE 2007-1A E	Zero Factor - CRE CDO	DTC	330,000
27	38500KAH5	GKKRE 2007-1A GFL	Zero Factor - CRE CDO	DTC	26,000

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HEARD ON THE STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

The Math Behind The Megaships

The cruise industry is bringing a whole new meaning to the phrase ‘economies of scale’

It has been nearly half a century since “The Love Boat” promised “something for everyone.” These days, it’s actually true.

Before the hit TV show helped popularize them, cruises were derided as being for the “newly wed and nearly dead,” and were a lot more expensive than they are today. Those not quite rich enough for their own yacht can still splurge on intimate, luxurious trips or high-octane adventures to places like Antarctica. But most cruisers these days are middle-class Americans or Europeans looking to be fed, pampered and entertained on a floating version of home. Many bring their children. The hyper-efficient industry has made that possible by building megaships that resemble floating theme parks, and even its own islands.

Using tax havens and employing thousands of workers from developing countries has helped keep the cost of cruises down. Their real secret formula, though, has been the economies of scale of modern ves-

sels and cruise ports. A happy side effect is that being lean also increasingly means being green.

In 1980, the first year data is available from industry body Cruise Lines International Association, there were 1.4 million oceangoing cruise passengers. That number had already begun to soar as a direct result of “The Love Boat,” the ABC show set aboard the MS Pacific Princess that began its nine-season run in 1977. It was surely one of the most lucrative product placements ever. Next year, the industry expects 36 million passengers.

Many cruises aren’t expensive, and sometimes—for example when operators were luring passengers back from the Covid-19 pandemic that shut it down—they have been outright bargains. Mass-market operators keep ticket prices low enough to reach full occupancy even during recessions because a substantial part of their cost is the vessels themselves, and their fuel. Once people are on board, more than a third of revenue can come from onboard spending such as drinks, spa treatments, specialty restaurants and gambling.

Next month will see the launch of the world’s largest passenger ship, Royal Caribbean’s Icon of the Seas, with a maximum capacity of 7,600 people, not including 2,350 crew members. It is as big as five Titanics. Its incredible size is a selling point in and of itself, but it also highlights the pursuit of savings.

“You only have one captain, only one bridge team, only one engineering team. The same thing happens in other parts of the ship,” says Bill Burke, the chief maritime officer of Carnival, the world’s largest cruise company.

The newest megaships are also saving money through energy effi-



The Icon of the Seas at a Finnish shipyard in May. The world’s largest cruise ship begins sailing next month.

ciency that executives from the Love Boat era could only dream of. That show’s star, the Pacific Princess, was among the earliest purpose-built cruise ships. Before that, the industry used converted ocean liners that had been made obsolete by intercontinental jet travel in the 1960s. The Pacific Princess burned cheap, dirty bunker fuel and carried about 600 passengers.

Carnival was pushed to the brink financially by the pandemic, but it took the opportunity to sell or “recycle” a number of older, smaller vessels. As an indirect result, it expects to hit an International Maritime Organization target for reducing the greenhouse-gas intensity of ships by 2026, years ahead of schedule. Between 2020 and 2022, some 38 ships across the industry were taken out of service, and their average age was six years younger than those retired in the preceding three-year span, according to Cruise Industry News.

The newest megaships have better environmental footprints per passenger, but they pack in the most jaw-dropping amenities too.

With 20 decks, Icon of the Seas would have Captain Stubing jumping out of his knee socks. It has about 12 times the internal area of the Pacific Princess, and features seven pools, six waterslides and dozens of places to eat, drink, gamble, exercise or listen to live music. It also has a zip-line, bumper cars, rock-climbing walls and minigolf.

Icon is powered by relatively clean liquefied natural gas, has a specially coated hull to reduce friction, can hook up to shore power, treats its own waste and can produce nearly all of its water through desalination. Being green pays dividends beyond saving on fuel. With governments and especially cruise destinations aware of the environmental impact of giant vessels and record passenger numbers, there increasingly are incentives to avoid pollution. But Carnival’s Burke points out that bigger ships have downsides, such as where they can sail: “At some point you begin to limit your ability to get into certain places.”

To get around that, and also to save energy and boost revenue,

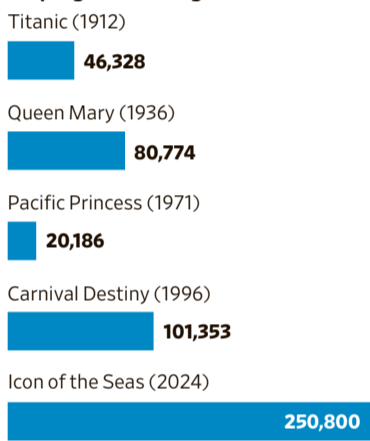
cruise lines have even leased their own private islands a short sail from Florida cruise ports, giving them new names like Castaway Cay and Perfect Day at CocoCay. Often featuring docks that can accommodate megaships, they offer a sanitized version of the tropics where every dollar spent accrues to the cruise line.

Hyper-efficiency is nearing its limit, though, and inflation has affected the industry too. Cruise lines have caused some grumbling by charging more for mandatory onboard gratuities. Norwegian Cruise Lines garnered attention earlier this year for cost-saving steps like reducing turnaround service for non-premium cabins and swapping 9-ounce burgers for 7-ounce ones.

Cruisers are showing up in record numbers anyway, and shareholders are celebrating too. After nearly going under amid Covid-19, all three major operators are laden with debt but have seen their shares rebound by an average of 85% just this year.

What’s not to love? —Spencer Jakab

Ships’ gross tonnage



Sources: HMY Yachts; Shipspotting.com; Royal Caribbean



The Cybertruck is likely to remain a niche product, appealing to Tesla fans.

Tesla’s Cybertruck Is Built for Marketing

The Cybertruck isn’t good for Tesla’s finances, so it had better be great for the brand.

On Thursday afternoon in Austin, Texas, two years later than initially planned, the electric-vehicle pioneer finally delivered its first pickup trucks, setting the financial ball rolling on its first new product since the Model Y started shipping almost four years ago. But we already know this won’t be a money-spinner like the Model Y, at least not in 2024. Chief Executive Elon Musk said in October it might take 18 months to increase output to the point where the Cybertruck makes a significant contribution to cash flows.

Even when that notoriously tough production ramp is complete, Tesla’s latest product won’t be a global bestseller like the Model Y. The company expects to ship at most 250,000 Cybertrucks worldwide when it reaches full capacity in 2025. It should deliver that number of Model Ys in Europe alone this year if the current monthly trend holds, according to JATO Dynamics data.

Pickup trucks are popular in North America, but elsewhere they are niche products. And this specific pickup will be expensive: The all-wheel drive version most buyers seem likely to want costs al-

most \$80,000, though a cheaper rear-wheel drive version will become available in 2025. While Washington’s \$7,500 tax credit for electric vehicles will reduce those prices, the Cybertruck will still be at the expensive end of the market.

The Cybertruck has already hit Tesla’s results this year. Even as price cuts have reduced the company’s gross margins, operating costs and capital expenditures have risen by more than expected. Musk’s comments about the huge challenges of mass-producing such an unusual design suggest that the Cybertruck program is in good part responsible for that.

Electric-vehicle adoption is waver- ing in the U.S. as less-affluent consumers look for more affordable models. Tesla has an answer: the so-called next-generation platform that it eventually wants to build in Mexico. But Musk has pushed back expectations for what could be an industry game-changer as Tesla grapples with the Cybertruck. The pickup feels like an idea from another era—based as it is on a prototype shown to the public four years ago.

So why doesn’t Tesla cancel a project that makes no financial sense? Jefferies analyst Philippe Houchois argued in a recent re-

port that ditching the Cybertruck would “probably be positive for the shares” by refocusing Tesla on “simplicity, scale and speed.” These are indeed the strengths that have made the company widely feared and imitated in the established automotive industry.

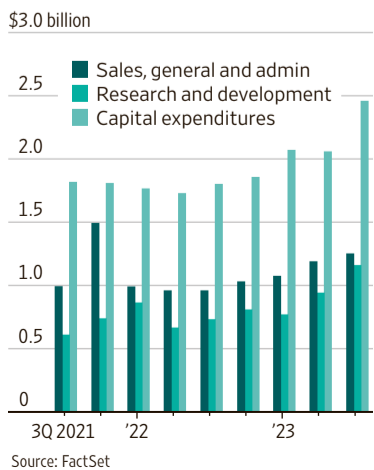
Musk clearly isn’t one to give up on dreams. But there is another justification for the Cybertruck: It could help the brand, particularly among the tech-loving Tesla fans who function as the company’s de facto advertising department. While Tesla’s financial success rests on the radical simplicity of the Model 3 and Y platform, its brand is in large part built on high-tech flourishes and promises that are anything but simple to deliver. Thanks to a large retail-shareholder base, this futuristic quality, which the Cybertruck plays into, also keeps its share price out of whack with Tesla’s finances and the wider auto industry.

Of course, the Cybertruck needs to deliver on the high-tech front if this brand halo is to materialize. Its features include stainless-steel cladding, which could be hard to restore, and a new type of battery. As unproven technologies, both could be vulnerable to defects.

Tesla’s pickup-truck project once sounded like it would be a direct attack on Detroit’s key profit engine. It has turned out to be sand in the electric gears ahead of the much more important launch of a low-cost EV. Yet the Cybertruck might at least help keep the Tesla faith alive.

—Stephen Wilmot

Tesla’s operating and capital costs, quarterly



Source: FactSet

A Land Grab Continues in U.S. Oil

Occidental’s talks with CrownRock will make the few remaining large parcels in the Permian basin pricey

It’s a seller’s market in the U.S. oil patch.

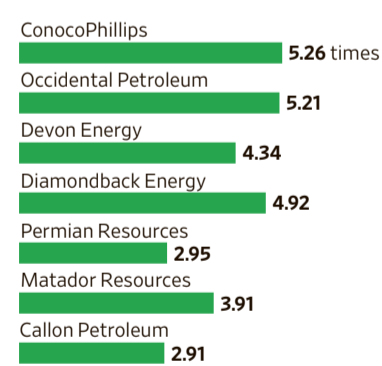
Occidental Petroleum is in talks to buy CrownRock, one of the last remaining private companies of scale in the Permian basin, The Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday. If the deal goes through, it would be the latest in a string of mergers and acquisitions this year, including Exxon Mobil’s \$64.5 billion purchase of Permian giant Pioneer Natural Resources.

The Journal report said the deal could be valued at “well above \$10 billion” including debt. CrownRock produces nearly 150,000 barrels of oil equivalent a day, according to Fitch Group. Even assuming a conservative price tag of \$11 billion, it implies Occidental would be shelling out at least \$73,000 per flowing barrel of oil equivalent a day for CrownRock.

That pricing looks steep compared with other moderately sized Permian deals signed this year. Notably, Ovintiv in April agreed to pay about \$65,000 per barrel of oil equivalent a day for Permian basin assets from private-equity firm EnCap, according to an estimate from Bison Interests, an energy-investment firm. Civitas Resources’ Permian deal from earlier this year implied a valuation of \$47,000 per barrel of oil equivalent a day, according to Bison’s estimate. Exxon forked over \$91,000 per barrel of oil equivalent a day for Pioneer, though arguably Exxon was paying partly for Pioneer’s vast undeveloped acreage—something the per-barrel metric doesn’t capture.

Not that Occidental is averse to paying up. The company famously outbid Chevron to buy Anadarko Petroleum in 2019—a deal that seemed reckless back when oil prices plunged in 2020 but has paid off handsomely. Occidental was the top performer in the S&P 500 in 2022 and the company is in a much better spot financially now, having shed some \$30 billion of long-term debt since its post-acquisition peak.

Enterprise value as a multiple of forward-12-month Ebitda.



Note: Companies ordered by enterprise value, with the largest on top. Data as of Nov. 30, 2023. Source: FactSet

The current oil market isn’t particularly supportive. Prices declined even after OPEC+ announced a further production cut on Thursday. Meanwhile, investors haven’t rewarded companies for making acquisitions, as evidenced by the lukewarm reception to Exxon and Chevron’s deal announcements.

Still, the shrinking pool of acquisition targets and the market’s discount on small producers should provide enough motivation for consolidation. An index that is heavily weighted toward Exxon Mobil, Chevron and other large producers is 43% more expensive than an index tracking smaller producers, based on enterprise value as a multiple of forward-12-month earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortization. Any company that can be “bite size” for another company is in a good position, notes Dan Pickering, chief investment officer at Pickering Energy Partners. Large Permian-focused bites include Diamondback Energy, while smaller targets include Matador Resources, Permian Resources and Callon Petroleum.

This game of musical chairs is only bound to get more intense. Whoever wants the next seat will have to pay up. —Jinjo Lee



Girls' Night
The serious pleasure of women talking together without men **C3**

REVIEW

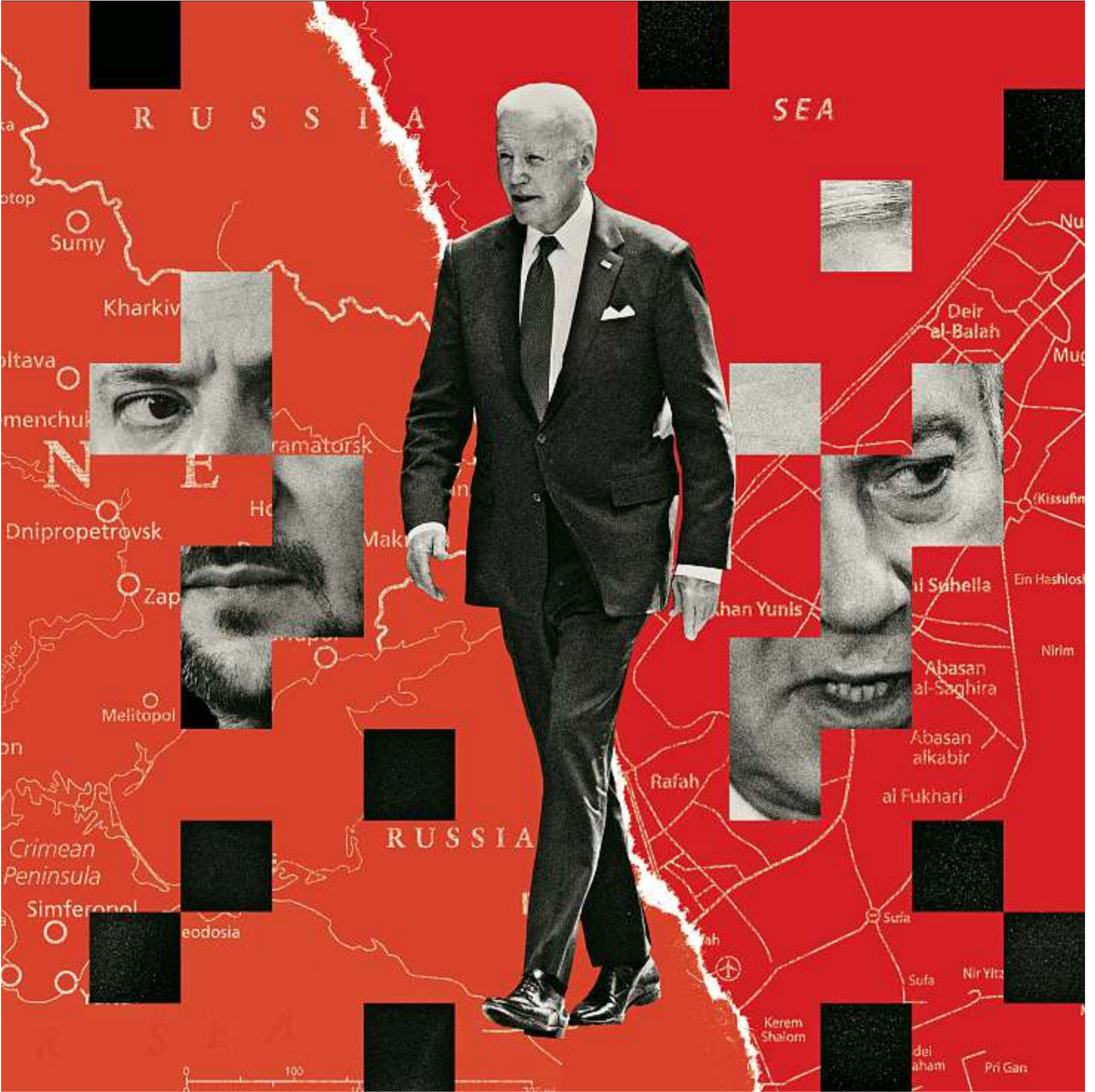
Behind the Throne
Col. Tom Parker took Elvis from Memphis to Hollywood **Books C7**



CULTURE | SCIENCE | POLITICS | HUMOR

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Saturday/Sunday, December 2 - 3, 2023 | **C1**



Left to right: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, U.S. President Joe Biden, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Does the West Have a Double Standard for Ukraine and Gaza?

Amid passionate accusations of hypocrisy, the U.S. and allies have struggled to persuade the world that they are defending the moral high ground in both conflicts.

By Yaroslav Trofimov

CARRYING PETS and dragging suitcases over blown-up bridges, millions of Ukrainians fled Russian tank columns last year, in scenes similar to the recent exodus of Palestinians from northern Gaza in response to Israel's military thrust. In the besieged Ukrainian city of Mariupol, Russian warplanes pounded into rubble hospitals, schools and a theater packed with children. The wars in Ukraine and the Middle East have become intertwined in the global debate and in American politics. Contrasting reactions to them have widened the chasm between Western democracies and much of the rest of the planet, as mutual accusations of double standards inflame passions.

The two wars, to be sure, have major differences in their roots and dynamics. The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 was unprovoked, while Israel sent troops into Gaza because of a mass slaughter of Israeli civilians by the Islamist movement Hamas on Oct. 7. But the two conflicts also have essential similarities. One is the staggering level of civilian suffering, with many tens of thousands of dead and injured in each region. Another is the shared predicament of millions of Ukrainians and Palestinians living under the indignities of military occupation. Crucially, the polarization over who to blame for each war almost mirrors the global divide over the other war. Outrage and political mobilization have become subordinated to geopolitical al-

legiances—a selective empathy that often treats ordinary Ukrainians, Palestinians and Israelis as pawns in a larger ideological battle within Western societies and between the West and rivals such as China and Russia. “The idea of humanity has yet to become fundamental to state policy and above all to our thinking,” lamented Oleksandra Matviichuk, a Ukrainian human-rights lawyer who was awarded last year's Nobel Peace Prize. “When people discuss the war in the Middle East, the first question always is: Which side are you rooting for? But what we must root for is humanity... Each life is valuable, a life in Israel, a life in Palestine—and a life in Ukraine.” With the body count in the Middle East rising, China, Russia and lesser au-

torocracies like Iran increasingly exploit the tragedy to claim a moral high ground—posing a strategic challenge to the U.S. and its allies, who have framed their support for Ukraine in stark moral terms. It's a problem acknowledged in Washington. “We have a reputation in the global south that has been suffering. And now there is concern that the U.S. is calling out certain actions by Russia and saying these are unacceptable, these are not allowable, and yet has not been as effective in calling out similar actions in Gaza,” said Sen. Chris Coons, Democrat. *Please turn to the next page*

Yaroslav Trofimov is the chief foreign-affairs correspondent of The Wall Street Journal.

Inside

SPORTS
When Muhammad Ali used a prefight weigh-in to trash-talk Sonny Liston, he shocked the boxing world—and started a tradition. **C4**



Giving Up Gifts
Jason Gay wants to downsize his family's holiday gift-giving this year. But can he? Can any of us? **C6**

WORD ON THE STREET
Beyoncé has given ‘renaissance’ its own rebirth, adopting it as the title of her concert movie. **C3**



PSYCHOLOGY
Children play make-believe, but grown-ups are the ones with genuine imagination. **C5**



REVIEW

Wars in Gaza and Ukraine Test Western Principles

Continued from the prior page

from Delaware and member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. “I disagree with many of these characterizations, but what matters is that not just the heads of government, but the average people, believe them.”

The analogies between the two conflicts are fraught. When Russia unleashed the century’s first colonial war of conquest, few of the nations, intellectuals and political groups now protesting on behalf of the Palestinian cause were similarly outraged. Some of the most influential voices on social media, in fact, fiercely supported both Russia and Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who presided over a civil war that has killed hundreds of thousands of civilians. Many parts of the developing world, and some on the American far left and far right, accepted Russia’s framing of the 2022 invasion as a move to pre-empt neocolonial encroachment by NATO—thus ignoring the aims and aspirations of Ukrainians themselves.

Iran has provided Moscow with lethal drones and artillery shells, Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas praised Russian President Vladimir

to Israel, it has also used its leverage to successfully push for deliveries of humanitarian aid to Gaza. Washington has played a key role in negotiating a temporary cease-fire that, before collapsing Friday, allowed the exchange of dozens of hostages taken by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners in Israeli custody.

Some European nations, particularly Spain, Ireland and Belgium, have taken a much more critical stance on Israel’s bombing of Gaza. “The killing of civilians needs to stop now...The destruction of Gaza is unacceptable,” Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo said during a recent visit with his Spanish counterpart to Egypt’s border with the Palestinian enclave.

Western military officials accept Israel’s insistence that, unlike Hamas, it isn’t deliberately targeting civilians. But they say that Israel’s targeting practices in Gaza, which have resulted in huge civilian casualties while minimizing Israel’s own military losses, are much looser than what the U.S. and allies had used in their campaign against Islamic State. In its war against Ukraine, which possesses modern air defenses, Russia employed devastating and unrestricted air power in only one battlefield, Mariupol, after isolating the Ukrainian port city in the first days of the war.

While the overlap between critics of Russia and critics of Israel is limited, some leaders in the developing world have been consistent—and don’t shy away from highlighting the contradictions now. One of them is Malaysia’s Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim, himself a former political prisoner who has repeatedly denounced Putin’s invasion. “We’ve been asked to condemn the aggression in Ukraine, but some remain muted in front of the atrocities inflicted on the Palestinians, particularly. It doesn’t concern their sense of justice and compassion,” he said at November’s gathering of Asia-Pacific leaders hosted by President Biden in San Francisco.

The surprise Oct. 7 attack by Hamas, in which some 1,200 Israelis, mostly civilians, were killed and some 200 others kidnapped to Gaza, repre-

Few of the nations, intellectuals and political groups now protesting on behalf of Palestinians were similarly outraged when Russia invaded Ukraine in a colonial war of conquest.

Putin for standing on the side of international justice days after he annexed four Ukrainian regions last fall, and much of Africa, the Middle East and Asia abstained on U.N. resolutions criticizing the Russian invasion. Progressive luminaries of the American left, such as Noam Chomsky, applauded Putin for waging war in a more “humane” way than the Pentagon and urged Kyiv to capitulate on Russian terms.

Alicia Kearns, chair of the foreign-affairs committee of the British parliament, noted with frustration that few of her current interlocutors who



Israeli war effort than Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky, who proclaimed that Israel and Ukraine were battling “the same evil,” citing Russia’s deepening alliance with Iran, the main sponsor of Hamas. The White House has adopted a similar narrative, linking funding for Ukraine and for Israel in the defense appropriations bill that’s currently pending in Congress. “Both Putin and Hamas are fighting to wipe a neighboring democracy off the map,” Biden wrote in a Washington Post op-ed. “And both Putin and Hamas hope to collapse broader regional stability and integration and take advantage of the ensuing disorder.”

In part, such linkage serves the political purpose of getting the Republican-controlled House to pass military aid for Ukraine, administration officials say. While the Republican Party is strongly pro-Israel, support within it for Ukraine has been fraying in recent months, becoming a political issue ahead of next year’s elections. Leading Republican advocates for Ukraine argue that connecting aid to Israel and aid to Ukraine, as the White House has done, is logical. “We aren’t taking a double standard. We have taken the side of the people who were in-



Top: In Gaza, Palestinians flee on foot to escape Israel’s bombing of northern areas and seek refuge in the south, Nov. 9. Above: In Ukraine, residents evacuate from the city of Irpin, near Kyiv, in the early days of the Russia invasion, March 7, 2022.

airspace, prompting the U.N. General Assembly and the International Committee of the Red Cross, among others, to continue considering the strip Israeli-occupied territory even as it was ruled by Hamas.

“It was honestly ridiculous that the Biden administration linked Ukraine and the war in Gaza in the opposite direction, ignoring the core connection, which is the occupation of territory—something that has obviously been the principal source of comparison across the international community from the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine,” said Shibley Telhami, the Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland, who has advised several U.S. administrations on the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Zelensky’s unrestrained embrace of Israel, meanwhile, has damaged the Ukrainian cause in much of the global south, increasing the polarization, added Timothy Kaldas, deputy director of the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. “Zelensky hitched his post to the Israelis and spoke so highly of the Israelis even when Israel itself refused for an extended period of time to forcefully support Ukraine and condemn Russia’s aggression,” Kaldas said. “That has created a lot of frustration. If you want to be arguing for a rules-based international order, if you want to be pushing back against countries taking territory with the use of force, then Ukraine shouldn’t be seeing itself as aligned with the Israelis.”

Amid the global competition for sympathy and attention, even the scale of the wars has become part of the ideological football, in part because of the strikingly different way in which the U.N. counts casualties. Arab diplomats and some international NGOs have used U.N. numbers, which the world body acknowledges represent only a fraction of the true toll for Ukraine, to argue that the tragedy in Gaza has eclipsed anything Russia has done to Ukraine and requires a fundamentally different response. South Africa, Turkey and several nations in South America withdrew ambassadors, suspended or severed diplomatic relations with Israel—a step that none of them took in Russia.

In Gaza, the U.N. has reported some 14,800 deaths, relying information collected by the health ministry of the Hamas-controlled enclave, which does not distinguish between

fighters and civilians. In Ukraine, the U.N. reported only the 10,000 civilian deaths that it has been able to verify, noting that the true figure is much higher because it has no access to Russian-occupied cities like Mariupol and front-line areas where the worst carnage has occurred. Ukrainian officials estimate that in Mariupol alone at least 25,000 civilians, and perhaps twice as many, were killed during the monthslong Russian siege last year. Some 9.5 million Ukrainians have been forced to flee their homes, and tens of thousands of Ukrainian soldiers have been killed.

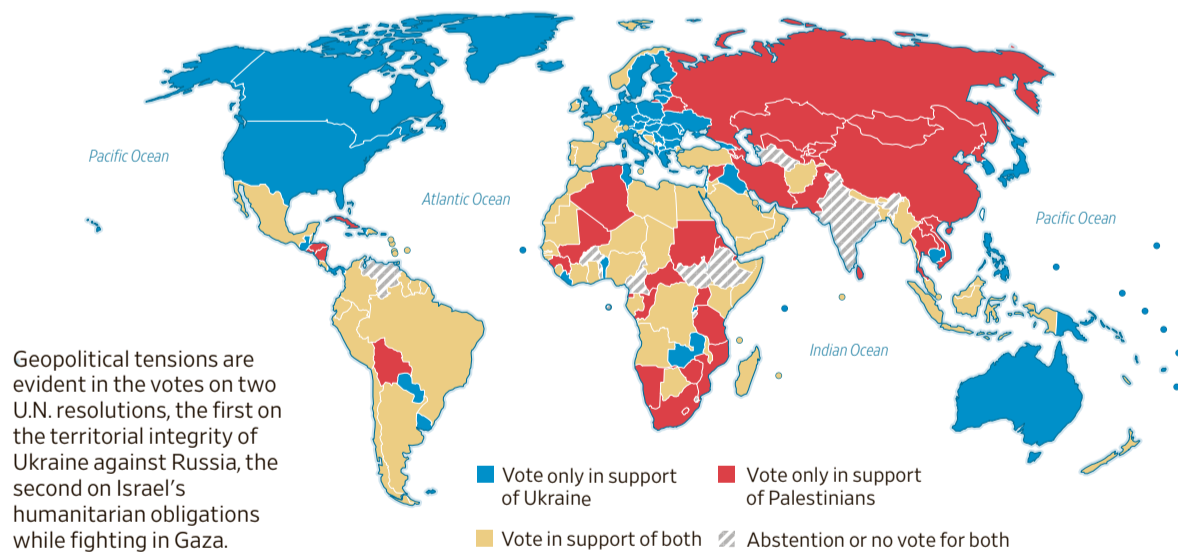
Of course, just as the conflict in Ukraine didn’t start in February 2022, the conflict in the Middle East didn’t begin with the Hamas invasion of Oct. 7. Russia, which controlled Ukraine for centuries and views ancient Kyiv as the cradle of its own nationhood, first invaded in 2014, occupying Crimea and parts of eastern Donbas region and triggering a war that killed 14,000 people at the time, according to U.N. calculations, and displaced millions.

The history of Israeli-Palestinian violence is even more tortured and dates back to the Zionist settlement movement of the 19th century. More than 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled from what is now Israel as the Jewish state was established in 1948, with most of Gaza’s population made up of descendants of these refugees. Multiple opportunities for peace in recent decades were frustrated by Hamas, which organized suicide bombing campaigns, and by the Israeli far right, one of whose members assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. While the Hamas attack of Oct. 7 was by far the bloodiest in the history of the conflict, thousands of Palestinian and Israeli civilians have died in regular flare-ups in past decades. Neither Hamas nor the current Israeli government supports a two-state solution.

The main difference between the two wars is that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with all its complexities, lacks the moral clarity of the Ukrainian resistance to Russia, said British lawmaker Alex Sobel, a Labour co-chair of the U.K. parliament’s all-party group on Ukraine.

“There is no moral justification for the Russian invasion. Zero. It’s just about Russian imperialism,” he said. “But in Israel and Palestine, it’s about the fact that there are two peoples on a very small amount of land, and political and military elites on both sides are unwilling to settle for what’s on offer. It’s not black and white at all.”

Ukraine and Gaza: Wars that Divide the World



Geopolitical tensions are evident in the votes on two U.N. resolutions, the first on the territorial integrity of Ukraine against Russia, the second on Israel’s humanitarian obligations while fighting in Gaza.

Sources: United Nation’s A/RES/ES-11/4 Resolution (on Ukraine, October 2022); United Nation’s A/RES/ES-10/21 Resolution (on Gaza and Israel, October 2023) Camille Bressange/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

seek condemnations of Israel were reaching out last year over Ukraine. “Let us recognize that we’re not happy with the way things are going, but the global south doesn’t get to now shout in support of Palestine when they were silent on Ukraine,” she said. “That is a double standard that nobody is calling out.”

Meanwhile, as parts of the Democratic Party’s base become more and more enraged by the bloodshed in Gaza, pressure is building in Congress to impose conditions on American military support for Israel. Ukraine and Gaza “are very difficult conflicts, no doubt, but the standards of morality and values must remain the same,” cautioned Rep. Jason Crow, Democrat from Colorado and himself a veteran of U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Though the Biden administration has consistently backed Israel’s military campaign and is rushing weapons

sented the biggest single loss of Jewish lives since the Holocaust and sent shock waves through Western societies. In the aftermath of that massacre, U.S. and European leaders offered immediate and unconditional support for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s military campaign against Hamas. It took weeks of massive bombing, which by then had caused thousands of Palestinian civilian deaths, for Western governments to qualify that backing with reminders to follow international humanitarian law. None of these reminders, however, came with public warnings of consequences should Israel ignore them.

The same Western leaders who described Russian targeting of Ukrainian power plants and water networks as a war crime endorsed, at least at first, the Israeli moves to deprive Gaza’s two million residents of electricity, drinking water and fuel. Few were more vocal in backing the

vaded,” said Sen. James Risch, Republican from Idaho and the ranking member of the Foreign Relations Committee, blaming global criticism of Israel on antisemitic prejudice.

But while it’s true that Hamas seeks to murder or expel nearly all Israeli Jews, and Russia wants to wipe out the Ukrainian state and culture, such parallels are flawed. Ukraine, after all, is trying to regain the roughly 18% of its internationally recognized territory that remains under Russian rule. Israel, by contrast, has maintained military occupation over Palestinian territories since 1967, with Netanyahu pursuing the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and consistently undermining Israel’s only potential negotiating partner, the Palestinian Authority.

Though Israel withdrew troops and settlers from the Gaza Strip in 2005, it has retained overall control of the enclave’s borders, waters and

REVIEW

In Praise of Girls' Night

When women get together without men, the conversation can be thrillingly honest and intimate.



an audience. Not that this can't be fun, but it is a different kind of fun from what I'm talking about.

In 1928 Virginia Woolf made a point that I sometimes think about: "Women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. Without that power probably the earth would still be swamp and jungle." I think we still do this a little bit. We still have to spend some portion of our evenings reflecting back the figure of a man at twice his natural size.

For me, in terms of socializing, girls' nights have become the pure high. I always want to collect my women friends together: my old female friends, whom I have known forever, a comfort, a sustenance, and the newer friends, exciting, intriguing.

I have also noticed that even when there are women there who have just met, or women who don't know each other well, we can still dive right into a remarkably honest, open conversation. We can still broach deep or intimate or revealing topics. The usual borders and boundaries are expanded. There is barely any boring conversation. It may be that women can access an intimacy in larger groups that men tend to preserve for one on one.

The next morning we text each other: We should do this again soon! We always think that after a women-only night. When will the next one be? As I'm clearing dishes and throwing wine bottles into the recycling, I have the feeling that progress has been made.

Even at couples' dinners recently, while the men stand in another room, I notice myself communing with women on a couch, seeking out a mini girls' night in the middle of a dinner party. It's there, in these momentary clumps of women, where we reproduce bursts of intimacy, where the real human connection occurs.

I'm not starry-eyed or utopian or sentimental about women. I see the jealousies and jostling and difficulties women sometimes have with each other. I'm talking only about the potential for transcendent conversation that a group of women can have when sitting around a room together. It is somehow ten thousand times easier to share intimacies, to confess outlandish or shocking opinions, to puzzle through complex situations, with only women.

I love and appreciate my male friends, my husband, couples' dinners and big parties, but I sometimes find myself craving the bracing, rigorous conversation of a group of women together in a room. As time goes by, these nights, when the men are banished or abandoned, are the ones glittering in memory.

On girls' nights, there is an openness I don't always feel in other sorts of group settings. As we sit around, some on sofas and chairs, some on the floor, glasses of wine scattered on the coffee table, we talk about the pressing parts of life. A very young-seeming 14-year-old who suddenly transforms into a full-blown teenager over the course of a single week. A woman who married and had kids with a man who once said, unbeknownst to her, that she was "OK if you put a bag over her head." A brilliant friend lost to addiction.

It feels like reading a few pages of

several absorbing novels all at once. There are flashes of insight. Fantastic stories about strangers. Little intriguing snippets. There is nothing like the intensity of a group of women cutting to the heart of things.

Sometimes we embark on what I can only describe as elaborate gossip projects that extend over more than one meeting. These are particularly mystifying, juicy quandaries within our extended social circles. Gossip in the highest sense of the word (and probably the lowest mixed in there too).

I have a feeling that if a man were to wander in for 20 minutes he might think this part of the conversation was "mean" or "brutal," but he would be missing some layers. Beneath the sharp observations, the cutting analyses and the jokes are also compassion, a deep desire to sort things through and a genuine effort to figure out how to live a good life.

In these all-female settings, we

have exhilarating conversations where you almost want to go home and take notes. I like the feeling of ideas buzzing, of not being able to fall asleep because you are going over things in your mind. It reminds me of an earlier phase of life—say, college or right afterward—when you stay up talking with friends until the sky is streaked with pink, some ancient excitement unearthed.

Why is a women-only setting so freeing? Though I hesitate to make sweeping, irresponsible generalizations about huge swaths of the population, women are usually better than men at analyzing a human situation (or maybe I should say generally more inclined toward this type of conversation). With couples, we tend to become our correct adult selves. The conversation often turns to schools, vacations, renovations, television, when what we want to talk about is human tragedy or betrayal or love or aspiration or grand-scale delusion or crushing disappointment.

Men, through no fault of their own, have a diluting effect. I think,

unconsciously, some of us maybe feel we need to be nicer or more tactful or less brazen or less revealing if there are men in the room. There

Some women feel we need to be nicer or more tactful or less brazen or less revealing if there are men in the room.

may still be some invisible pressure to perform a softer or showier or more attractive version of ourselves. Or maybe we just water down the conversation out of habit.

In a mixed gathering, there will also be the man telling a funny story. The man being clever about politics. The man discussing a work thing. Men, in other words, needing attention of one kind or another—



PERSONAL SPACE
KATIE ROIPHE



WORD ON THE STREET
BEN ZIMMER

A Creative Rebirth, For a Society or A Star

EXPECTATIONS HAVE RUN high for this weekend's debut of "Renaissance," a concert film written, directed and produced by Beyoncé. Much like Taylor Swift's record-setting "Eras Tour" movie released in October, Beyoncé has created a global event by bringing the big-budget concert experience to cinema

year before extending it to her concert tour. On stage, she speaks of her own personal renaissance, which she hopes her fans experience as well. She can be heard telling the crowd in one trailer, "It's a new birth. I hope you feel liberated, but the renaissance is not over."

"A new birth" is a historically accurate summation of the word. It started off as a French term rooted in the Latin verb "renascere," meaning "to be born again" and its corresponding noun "renascentia," meaning "rebirth" or "renewal." Those terms were favored by European writers who used Latin as the language of scholarship. Notably, the Dutch theologian Erasmus used "renascentia" in the early

16th century to describe a humanistic Christian philosophy that he saw as having a renewing effect.

The earliest English versions were "renascency" and "renascence." Some writers followed

in the theological path of Erasmus, as in a 1648 essay stating that "the nativity of Christ was the renaissance of man." But even early on, the word was used for more secular kinds of rebirth, as when the natural philosopher Robert Boyle wrote of "the growth and renaissance of metals" in 1674.

French-style "renaissance" did not make an appearance in English until the 1830s, and when it did, it had a much more specific meaning, looking back on a momentous period in West-

Beyoncé onstage in East Rutherford, N.J., July 29.

ern European history. "The Renaissance," with a capital "R," came to refer to a time from the 14th through the 16th centuries, recognized as the transition from medieval to modern times. In French, the period was more fully known as *la Renaissance des Lettres*, or the revival of the arts, bringing back the ideals of classical antiquity. Historians have typically pegged the birth of the Renaissance to cultural innovations in Florence under the House of Medici. (Italians have their own word for the era: *Rinascimento*.)

Scholars have long debated how best to define "the Renaissance"—or even if the term is worth using in the first place. C.S. Lewis wrote despairingly in 1954, "A word of such wide and fluctuating meaning is of no value." Still, "Renaissance" has continued to be reborn, in a variety of contexts. A person ex-

hibiting the idealized virtues associated with it got called a "Renaissance man" or "Renaissance woman," reinterpreted more broadly as someone with wide-ranging areas of expertise (like, say, singer-writer-director-producer Beyoncé).

"Renaissance" has been attached to more modern cultural renewals, such as "the Harlem Renaissance" for the efflorescence of Black arts and culture in New York in the 1920s and '30s. The word has also meshed with others, as in "Wrenaissance," an architectural movement of the early 20th century harking back to the baroque designs of Christopher Wren. When the actor Matthew McConaughey saw a career revival a decade ago, it was memorably dubbed "the McConaissance."

The word has also fit in well with self-help literature for the last century or so. Back in 1919, the syndicated columnist Helen Rowland advised readers, "This is the psychological moment for 'Personal Renaissance'—The golden hour for self-renovation and rejuvenation!" Beyoncé, it is fair to say, requires no such exhortations to achieve her personal renaissance.

[Renaissance]

audiences. And as with Swift and her "Eras," Beyoncé has structured her cinematic spectacle around a single thematic word.

Beyoncé first used "Renaissance" as an album title last



REVIEW

How Muhammad Ali Created A Trash-Talk Tradition

At a 1964 weigh-in, the fighter known as Cassius Clay got in Sonny Liston's face—and a prefight spectacle was born.

By RAFI KOHAN

In August, at a weigh-in before his highly anticipated fight with UFC star Nate Diaz, the internet influencer-turned-professional-pugilist Jake Paul stood on a scale and slashed a thumb across his throat. He screamed and cursed at the booing crowd—"Let's f---ing go!"—before making way for his opponent to take his turn. The next day, Diaz and Paul would meet in the ring at Dallas's American Airlines Center, but for now they aimed to put on a different kind of show.

At prefight events, all of the promotional apparatus builds to the point when the microphones are stripped away and the fighters are invited to share a final moment of aggressive intimacy—to look into each other's eyes from a distance of mere inches. It's a kind of spiritual confrontation that throbs with a violent compact: the promise to meet each other again soon. It's exactly the sort of drama that gets people talking, that gets them to tune in. In Dallas, when Diaz and Paul posed for the cameras in a stare-down, Diaz provoked Paul

Reporters 'genuinely thought that [Clay] had gone crazy, that he was having a panic attack.'

JONATHAN EIG
Author, 'Ali: A Life'

by raising his fists, pressing his right elbow and then forearm into his opponent's left shoulder. Paul took the bait, and a brief slap fight ensued before the fighters were forcibly separated. Paul won the actual bout.

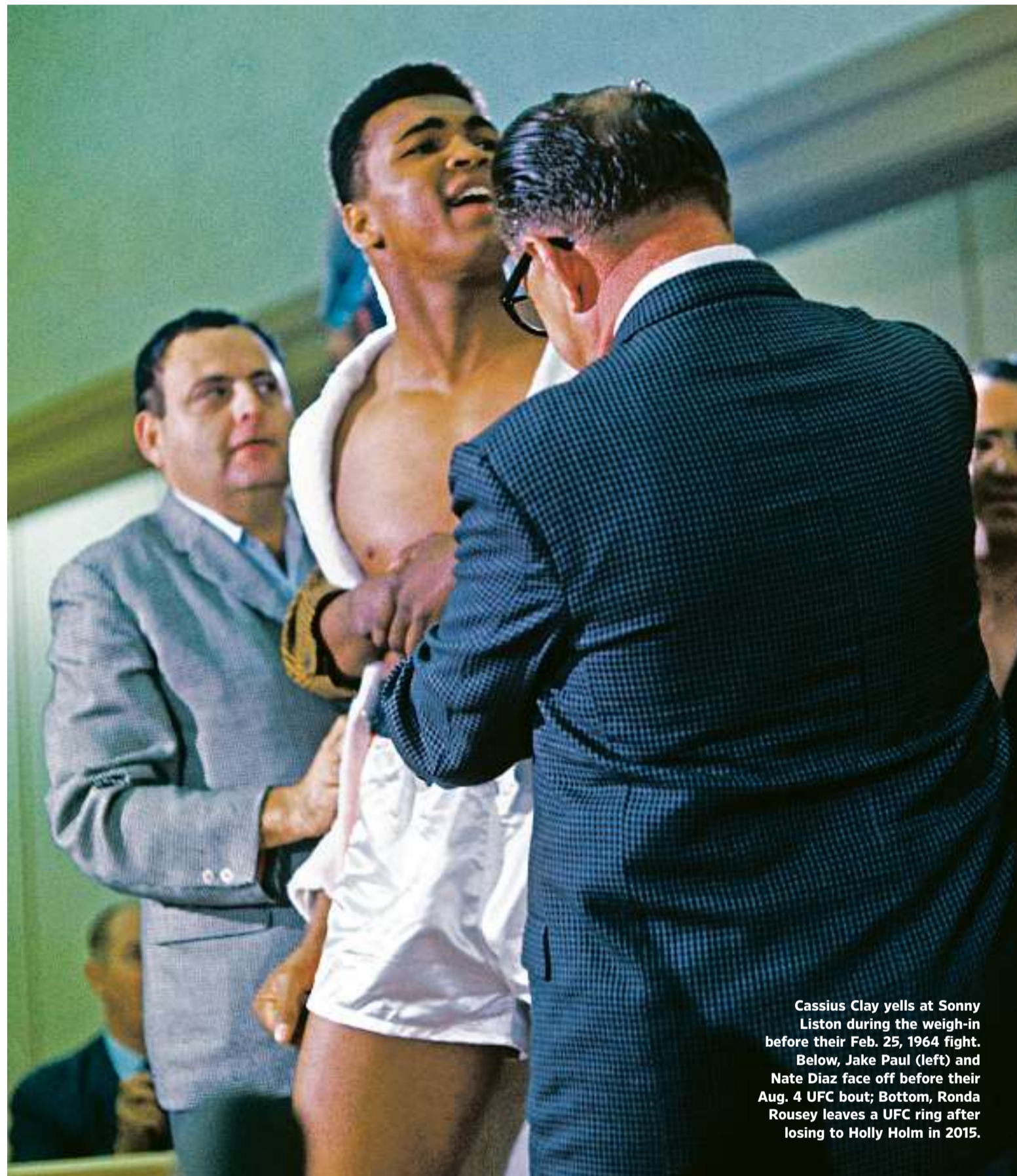
The idea of prefight weigh-ins as major media events, with personal antagonisms and physical fireworks, is one we take for granted nowadays. But they used to be perfunctory affairs, a way for reporters to squeeze a few quotes into their copy and for the boxing authorities to make sure no fighter tipped the scales above his appointed weight class. That all changed on the morning of Feb. 25, 1964, when a 22-year-old named Cassius Clay—the future Muhammad Ali—rolled up to the Miami Beach Convention Center and made just a hell of a spectacle. Later that day, Clay was to take on Sonny Liston for the heavyweight championship.

It was a confrontation months in the making. Clay had been tormenting his supposedly unbeatable opponent since the previous summer, when Liston was in Las Vegas for a rematch with Floyd Patterson. Clay showed up at a casino and mocked Liston as "a big, ugly bear" from across a craps table, while the big man gambled. Then, in the moments after Liston dispatched Patterson, Clay sneaked into the ring, found the TV cameras, and called for a fight that plenty of folks didn't believe he deserved. "Liston is a tramp! I'm the champ!" he hollered. "I want that big, ugly bear."

The abuse climaxed on the morning of their fight, when Clay arrived for the weigh-in wearing a denim jacket with "Bear Huntin'" inscribed on the back. After changing into his trunks and robe, Clay burst into a room choked with cigarette smoke and a tangle of reporters and immediately cranked up the volume. "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee," he screamed. "Rumble, young man, rumble!"

During the actual weigh-in, Clay focused only on Liston, who stood about 3 feet away. "You ain't got a chance!" he boomed, amid a stream of frenetic put-downs and angry gesticulations aimed at his stoic opponent. "I can beat you anytime, chump. You ain't no giant! I'm going to eat you alive!"

Clay was seen as so out of control, and his behavior so transgressive, that the Miami Boxing Commission announced it would fine him \$2,500, while an official doctor threatened to call off the fight. "The reporters are genuinely flabbergasted," says Jonathan Eig, author of "Ali: A Life." "I think they genuinely thought that he had gone crazy, that he was having a panic attack."



Cassius Clay yells at Sonny Liston during the weigh-in before their Feb. 25, 1964 fight. Below, Jake Paul (left) and Nate Diaz face off before their Aug. 4 UFC bout; Bottom, Ronda Rousey leaves a UFC ring after losing to Holly Holm in 2015.



But as Clay would later claim, he knew exactly what he was doing. For months, he had been waging a campaign of disrespect not just to raise his profile and earn a shot at the title but also because he believed it would enrage the image-conscious Liston—and an enraged Liston would likely be less careful and overly aggressive in the ring, Eig writes. Behind the scenes, Clay's cornerman, Drew "Bundini" Brown, advised him that to gain a psychological edge, he needed to make Liston believe he was nuts. "The only thing that scares a tough guy is a crazy guy," he told him.

According to Todd D. Snyder, author of "Bundini: Don't Believe the Hype," the whole routine was essentially choreographed. He says, "They would practice in the gym with Ali



getting up and Bundini holding him back, and then Ali would break free. They actually practiced that stuff in the gym, almost like professional wrestlers would, getting ready for a show." Clay would later describe the confrontation with Liston as "my finest piece of acting."

But whether he was trying to psych out Liston, letting off nervous steam, stirring up interest in a fight that was seen by many as a one-sided affair, or simply mugging for the cameras as he'd done so often, the man who would soon be known as Ali showed the world what was possible if you wanted to insert a little drama into a typically mundane prefight event. And he won the fight too, knocking out Liston in seven rounds.

Ali laid the groundwork for pretty much every memorable weigh-in and presser in combat-sports history. You could see his bravado in Mike Tyson's attempt to intimidate Lennox Lewis by getting in his face before their heavyweight bout in 2002 and when mixed-martial-arts champion Ronda Rousey stepped off the weigh-in scale to charge directly at her challenger Holly Holm in 2015. Ali could be felt too when Tyson Fury arrived at a 2015 prefight press conference dressed as Batman, promising his opponent Wladimir Klitschko "to rid boxing of a boring person like you."

As Thomas Hauser writes in "Muhammad Ali: His Life and Times," "Muhammad Ali reinvented the rituals of boxing, and after the show he put on in Miami Beach, weigh-ins would never be the same."

This essay is adapted from Rafi Kohan's new book "Trash Talk: The Only Book About Destroying Your Rivals That Isn't Total Garbage," published Dec. 5 by PublicAffairs.

REVIEW



Why Adults Are More Imaginative Than Children

The idea that we lose our freedom to imagine as we get older is familiar from children's books, but psychological research suggests it's a myth.

By Andrew Shtulman

The idea that children are imaginative but adults are not is a popular theme in children's literature. In "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory," Willy Wonka is intent on leaving his factory to a child because "a grown-up won't listen...he won't learn." In "Mary Poppins," only children are able to hear what the trees and the birds say, and only children are able to understand the language of the sun and the stars. "Do you really mean we won't be able to hear that when we're older?" asks one of the children. "You'll hear all right," explains Mary Poppins, "but you won't understand."

In these stories, children are open to possibilities that elude the adult mind. They grasp extraordinary ideas that adults cannot fathom and have clever insights that adults do not appreciate. It's a theme that resonates with everyday observation of children's imaginative activities. Children play elaborate make-believe games with their toys and role-playing games with their peers. They build forts, assemble costumes, bake mud pies and construct block towers. They believe in fantastical beings, like Santa Claus and the Tooth Fairy, and they are convinced that magic is real.

On closer inspection, though, children spend most of their pretend play doing realistic things, like cooking and cleaning. A study published in the *Journal of Cognition and Development* in 2020 found that "by age 4, children shown pretend and real activities in a book said they would choose to do the real activity over the pretend one." When playing games, they stick closely to the rules and are offended by anyone who might attempt to change them. Some children do invent imaginary friends and imaginary worlds, but they are imaginary in the sense that they don't exist, not that they couldn't.

Forty years of research on how people reason about novel possibilities reveals that the glorification of children's imagination is misguided. Children are no more imaginative than adults. Quite often, they are less imaginative. That is because, while children have the capacity to con-

template hypothetical ideas and counterfactual events, they do not have the knowledge or expertise to use that capacity as effectively as adults. There is room for innovation in everything we do—cooking, cleaning, writing, drawing, navigating, negotiating—but such changes require sustained effort and reflection. We have to acquire the right knowledge and cultivate the right habits of mind. Imagination, like any other faculty, has to be developed and refined through years of practice.

Every time we entertain a thought that transcends what we are currently perceiving, we are using imagination. Thinking of mermaids requires imagination, but so does thinking of past vacations, distant friends or future meetings. Almost all mental life requires traveling beyond the here and now to contemplate what was, what will be, what

might be, what should be, and what could have been. Life is a series of problems—what to eat? where to go? who to ask?—and solving those problems requires entertaining multiple possibilities and then selecting the best option among them.

Imagination is what allows us to move forward in time or backward in time or even jump to another timeline. We can contemplate events that have happened, will happen, or did not happen but might have if the circumstances had been different. The latter are known as counterfactuals: the events that underlie our regret for lost opportunities, our relief at avoiding misfortune and our surprise that events turned out one way rather than another.

Using counterfactuals to improve causal reasoning does not have to be instructed. This skill emerges on its own, early in development. Children as young as 3 recognize that a person with muddy shoes would not have muddied the floor if they had left their shoes outside. A study by psychologist Tamsin German published in the *Journal of Developmental Science* found that slightly older children can discriminate between counterfactuals that would change the course of events from those that would not. For instance, they understood that a person would not be cold if they had worn a jacket but would still be cold if they had worn a shirt of a different color.

Imagination may have evolved for contemplating alternatives to reality, but we use it most naturally to contemplate close alternatives, like preparing a different meal, rather than far alternatives, like riding on clouds. When we use imagination to contemplate far alternatives—to innovate or fabricate—we're not tapping into an innate appreciation of the extraordinary; we're coopting a tool designed to explore the ordinary. Imagination is limited in scope because it is limited in structure. When contemplating alternatives to reality, we fixate on possibilities that are physically plausible, statistically probable, socially conventional and morally permissible. When told about possibilities that violate such regularities, we usually balk at their suggestion, denying they could happen. Our ideas about what could happen are firmly rooted in what we expect to happen.

This mindset is most apparent in young children, who are quick to dismiss the unexpected as impossible. In a 2018 study I co-designed with psychologist Jonathan Phillips, 4-year-olds were told

about commonplace problems and asked to contemplate various solutions to those problems, some more unusual than others. One of the problems was about a girl named Melissa who didn't like to go to school because she missed her mother too much. We asked the children what Melissa could do to solve her problem. Could she and her mother agree to do something special after school to take her mind off her worries? Could she wear her pajamas to school for comfort? Could she bring her mother to school to attend classes with her? Could she lie to her mother and tell her that school is closed today so she doesn't have to go? Could she snap her fingers and make it Saturday so school is actually closed?

Four-year-olds thought only the first solution (the afterschool treat) could happen in real life; the rest were judged impossible. Children claimed not only that these events could not occur in real life but also that it would take magic to make them happen. Changing the day of the week is of course impossible, but the other solutions are not. There are reasons why a student might not want to wear pajamas to school or bring her mother to school or lie to her mother about school being closed, but these reasons do not preclude the events from occurring. Children's earliest intuitions about possibility conflate what could happen with what should happen.

The improbable event of traveling faster than a horse was once considered impossible, as was traveling by air or traveling into space. Before the advent of trains, planes and rocketships, there were good reasons to think that people could travel only so far and only so fast. But these reasons were empirical, not logical. They could be altered, and they were. Imagination, on its own, lumps the improbable with the impossible, but we can coordinate imagination with other faculties—namely, knowledge and reflection—to disentangle the two. The unstructured imagination of children usually succumbs to expectation, while adult imagination structured by knowledge and reflection allows for innovation.

Andrew Shtulman is a professor of psychology at Occidental College. This essay is adapted from his new book, "Learning to Imagine: The Science of Discovering New Possibilities," published by Harvard University Press.

EVERYDAY PHYSICS

HELEN CZERSKI

The Magic of Cardboard's Strength



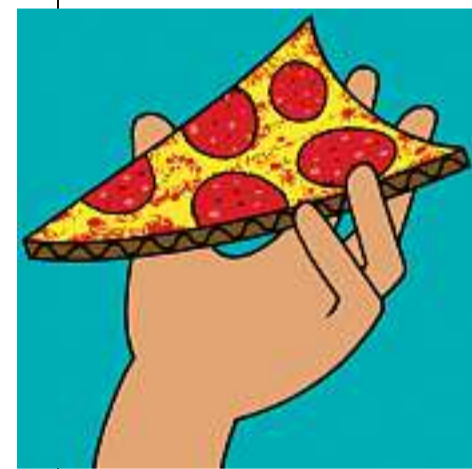
A FEW WEEKS AGO, my office was invaded by cardboard. It was a stealth assault, the flattened boxes piling up as the deliveries of equipment, tools and other sundries for a research project flowed in. It all just kept stacking up, and only when a student came to my door did the embarrassment of having to clamber over the pile force me to really look at it. This small mountain of cardboard had done me the service of protecting expensive, precious deliveries, but it barely weighed anything and it's just paper: flimsy and weak. How could something so insubstantial have any structural benefit?

Paper is something that we habitually underestimate. Members of the laboratory where I did my doctoral work at Cambridge had a favorite demonstration to impress audiences on open-house days. They'd hang up a large roll of printer paper, scroll it partway onto a suspended second roll below, with a single sheet of paper bearing the weight in between, and hang more than 150 pounds of extra weight from the lower roll.

Then they would dramatically stab through the single sheet of paper with a scalpel. The audience would gasp, but nothing moved. As they cut the hole wider, eventually the paper would rip. But the demo showed that the bonds of paper's cellulose fibers are strong in tension in one direction, despite how thin the sheet may be in another direction. The critical factor is how you arrange the paper—for instance, by pressing it into the folds and waves of corrugated cardboard.

Billions of dollars worth of goods are regularly transported in corrugated cardboard boxes, so it's no surprise that there are many scientific papers on the material's strength—equations, computational modeling and detailed consideration of humidity, temperature, paper type and box shape. They are the sorts of structural calculations you would do to design a building. It's like paper architecture.

Corrugated cardboard is made of a wavy internal layer that's sandwiched



between two flat layers. The outer layers are important because they make it harder to bend—to curve that structure, you've got to stretch the outer layer, and as the experiment with the weight demonstrates, that's very hard to do. The farther apart those layers are, the harder it is to make it curve, so the first job of the corrugations is to hold the sides apart and stop them from sliding over each other.

But the most interesting bit is the corrugations themselves. They're made of a flat surface that has been bent back and forth repeatedly as it moves laterally. It's a useful and fundamental rule for anything that starts as a flat sheet: It may be easy to bend it in one direction, but you can't also bend it in the other direction at the same time without stretching or squashing it.

Pizza-lovers will be familiar with the consequences of this idea. If you pick up a slice of pizza by its crust, the point will generally flop downward, because the crust can't hold it up. But if you fold the pizza, bending it along the axis of the slice, the point of the slice can't flop down, or bend, in the other direction—at least, as long as the crust doesn't stretch. In the cardboard, the paper won't stretch, so the corrugations make the structure strong by effectively stopping it from bending.

It's a clever idea, and I almost felt guilty about stamping on my pile of boxes hard enough to destroy the structure and flatten them beyond reprieve. It was a relief when someone finally came to collect it all. But next time I see a cardboard box, I'll at least give it the nod of appreciation that it deserves.



Dick Van Dyke and Julie Andrews in 'Mary Poppins' (1964), a film that celebrates the imagination of children.

REVIEW



WEEKEND CONFIDENTIAL | EMILY BOBROW

Greg Lukianoff

A free-speech advocate fights efforts to silence controversial voices on college campuses: 'This just makes it worse.'

With the war in Gaza dividing college campuses across the country, Greg Lukianoff believes this difficult moment reveals the depth of the free-speech crisis in higher education. As president of the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression, a nonprofit organization devoted to protecting speech, Lukianoff has observed up close the dissolution of campus discourse over the past decade. "It's particularly ugly right now, but things have been bad for a long time," he says.

Lukianoff's nonpartisan group, known as FIRE, pledges to fight censorship from all directions. This means backing an economics professor at the University of Southern California who was directed to stay away

from campus when a controversy erupted over his anti-Hamas remarks to pro-Palestinian student protesters. It also means defending chapters of Students for Justice in Palestine against bans at various public universities.

Lukianoff, 49, says that the job of civil libertarians is not to agree with what everyone says but to defend the right to say it: "You have to be consistent." Though FIRE works to protect speech that some deem offensive—for example, backing a public-college student who was suspended for shouting, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" at a pro-Israel gathering in October—Lukianoff says it does not support vandalism, violence, threats or speech that aims to incite imminent harm.

Campus unrest over the Israeli-Pal-

estinian conflict comes at a time of heightened sensitivity generally, when calls to "cancel" professors and students for dissenting opinions have been rising at an alarming rate. As Lukianoff and co-author Rikki Schlott note in their new book, "The Cancellation of the American Mind," FIRE has documented over 1,000 attempts to get professors fired, punished or otherwise silenced for speech since 2014. Two-thirds of those efforts proved successful. The numbers far exceed estimates of the academic victims of McCarthyism in the 1940s and '50s, and Lukianoff argues that even unsuccessful censorship attempts chill speech. According to FIRE surveys in 2022, more than 80% of students have self-censored and over 90% of faculty said they are likely to self-censor their beliefs.

ACLU of Northern California in 1999, he noticed a reduced interest in free-speech cases. He recalls praising the ACLU's notorious support for the rights of neo-Nazis to march in 1977 in Skokie, Ill., and says he was told, "We don't defend harassment here." As a freshly minted lawyer in 2000, he was startled to discover that the First Amendment, once embraced wholeheartedly by the left, was increasingly seen as a tool of the right.

Nowhere is this clearer, says Lukianoff, than on college campuses. He and Schlott note in their book that in the 1980s, universities across the country began introducing codes of conduct aimed at curbing potentially hurtful speech. By the mid-2010s, students armed with social media had become empowered censors themselves, demanding "trigger warnings"

and the policing of microaggressions while insisting that colleges disinvite speakers ranging from Condoleezza Rice to James Franco.

Ballooning campus bureaucracies merely reaffirmed student concerns that they needed protection from verbal "violence"—a phenomenon that Lukianoff and his co-author Jonathan Haidt described in an earlier book, "The Coddling of the American Mind." Lukianoff now worries that the threat of cancellation is pervasive enough to encourage a kind of "groupthink," particularly at elite colleges. "Viewpoint diversity has been on a rapid decline since the 1990s," he says.

Lukianoff, who lives in Washington with his wife and their two young sons, became FIRE's first legal director in 2001 and president in 2006.

Instead of muffling troubling ideas, Lukianoff argues that we should be debating them—especially in places that are meant to encourage critical thinking and a spirit of free inquiry. "People who think the solution to a very real problem of antisemitism on campus is to clamp down on certain student groups don't understand that this just makes it worse," he says.

Curbs on speech inflame tensions, Lukianoff says, so he advises the opposite: "When people believe there's a conspiracy to shut them up, do absolutely nothing that looks like a conspiracy to shut them up." Suppression also reinforces pernicious ideologies by forcing these ideas underground. He points to France, where a "ferocious" brand of antisemitism is on the rise, despite longstanding bans on hate speech. "Telling people, 'Don't have bad beliefs' never works," he says.

Lukianoff, 49, suspects that his passion for the First Amendment has something to do with being a child of immigrants—his mother is from the U.K., his father from Yugoslavia. Growing up in the working-class city of Danbury, Conn., among families from Brazil, Korea, Peru, Vietnam and elsewhere, he says almost everyone he knew seemed to grasp the value of free speech to protect minority views.

It was only when he began meeting wealthier students, while studying international relations at American University in Washington, D.C., in the early 1990s, that he found people who praised Lenin and cultivated what he calls "an elite free-speech skepticism." Although Lukianoff understands why many of his fellow students wanted limits on speech considered hateful, racist or sexist, he argues that policing language is not a route to social justice.

A campus visit from an American Civil Liberties Union lawyer helped inspire Lukianoff to specialize in First Amendment law at Stanford Law School. Yet when he interned at the

ACLU of Northern California in 1999, he noticed a reduced interest in free-speech cases. He recalls praising the ACLU's notorious support for the rights of neo-Nazis to march in 1977 in Skokie, Ill., and says he was told, "We don't defend harassment here." As a freshly minted lawyer in 2000, he was startled to discover that the First Amendment, once embraced wholeheartedly by the left, was increasingly seen as a tool of the right.

Nowhere is this clearer, says Lukianoff, than on college campuses. He and Schlott note in their book that in the 1980s, universities across the country began introducing codes of conduct aimed at curbing potentially hurtful speech. By the mid-2010s, students armed with social media had become empowered censors themselves, demanding "trigger warnings"

'Viewpoint diversity has been on a rapid decline since the 1990s.'

Though he does not shy away from defending sometimes odious speech, he notes that every case has its critics—whether he is fighting Florida's prohibition on teaching critical race theory in schools or suing California's community college system for forcing professors to teach "diversity, equity and inclusion." "The disapproval can wear on you," he admits.

Being in the culture-war crossfire, he says, is partly why he needed to be hospitalized for depression in 2007. Part of his treatment involved cognitive behavioral therapy, which taught him to contextualize his thoughts in a way that made him feel more resilient. This insight helped him appreciate the insidiousness of "safetyism" on campuses—with its safe spaces and trigger warnings—which he argues makes students more anxious and depressed by accommodating their fears and reinforcing their faith in their own weaknesses. The "cure" turns out to be a primary cause of the disease," he and Haidt wrote in their 2015 book.

It might be disorienting to see students who embrace their own fragility also cheer on brutal acts of terrorism. But Lukianoff believes American universities now have an opportunity to correct their course after years of encouraging censorship and enforcing ideological conformity. He hopes that colleges seize the chance to steer students with conflicting opinions toward a more constructive dialogue and that university presidents who struggled to appease both donors and students with their recent political statements rethink the impulse to weigh in on politics at all. "Institutional neutrality is the bedrock of a free and open campus culture," he argues.

More generally, Lukianoff argues that Americans would be better off "if we loosened elite higher education's grip on society." After "Coddling" came out, he says that heads of corporations and nonprofits called him to privately complain that young graduates from top schools were creating "serious problems" in the workplace by fixating on "minor interaction problems" with each other or with the institution itself. "My answer is, 'Could you please tell the world that?'" says Lukianoff. "People need to know that the kind of product coming out of these elite schools is unworkable."

JOEL ARBAJ/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



The Elusive Challenge Of De-Escalating Gifts

JASON GAY

LIKE A SECRET DIPLOMAT passing an envelope in neutral territory, I have carefully approached my family with a sensitive proposal: a Christmas gift de-escalation.

This proposal has come up before, and it always gets met positively, even enthusiastically, only to crumble in a sea of wrapping paper at the negotiating table. Soon I am right back where I began, panicking in deep December, stuck in the maddening holiday arms race.

Perhaps you have tried a de-escalation yourself. Your holiday season grew too hectic, too consumerized, thick with ribbons, receipts and advertisements promising 70% off. There's the perpetual challenge of buying original gifts for people you have known for a very long time, and so you turn to loved ones with a dramatic if humane idea: *How about no gifts this season? Or at least...very, very small gifts?*

Grinchy? Not really. It might be a relief for everyone. Here are a few suggestions:

- **Complete multilateral de-escalation is essential.** Everyone needs to be on board. You cannot have a situation where five people give no gifts, or tiny gifts, and then someone shows up with a wheelbarrow full of Johnnie Walker Blue and PlayStation 5s. If this means impromptu site visits to make sure a relative isn't secretly stockpiling an illicit stash of Ugg boots, so be it.
- **You may have to give some relatives considerable notice.** You can't propose gift de-escalation in late December. It's probably already too late for 2023. Or 2024. You might have a parent with a garage box full of personalized conch shells they bought in the Florida Keys six years ago. They have forgotten they're there, but they'll eventually find them and give them as ashtrays.
- **Carve-outs for children are hu-**



mane. "No gifts" is a harsh sell to kids. They dream of this time of year, concoct lists and write letters explaining how their lives will be tangibly improved by receiving a Pokémon backpack. Gift season is really about the kids, so it's easiest to keep them in the gift-giving mix. You don't want them to think you're the jerk who confiscated a Pokémon backpack.

I know there are families that de-escalate the season through clever ideas like Secret Santas and

gift swaps. Other families admirably collaborate on an act of service or charitable donations. Some families have an annual tradition of a family vacation—the vacation is the gift. If any of these families would like to adopt me, I'm game.

Keep in mind: I've never successfully pulled off a de-escalation. This is like a golden retriever giving golf advice. I am a terrible offender. I talk a good game about curbing gift-giving, but then I'm the one on the internet at midnight, about to buy you custom pajamas with photos of your cat.

I think that's part of the problem: It's never been easier to be a holiday shopaholic. Old shopaholics at least had to put in real effort. They had to get dressed and

get into the car, drive to the mall, find a parking space, endure the crowds and fight a stranger with nunchucks for the last Cabbage Patch Kid. Ask your older relatives what it used to be like. They have scars to show you. *This? This is from the year you wanted Atari.*

Now we just click and click, mindlessly, to the point we forget what we clicked and who we clicked for, and then the boxes arrive, and more boxes. It's revoltingly easy and addictive, fine-tuned with algorithms that learn that, yes, we love to give people pajamas with photos of their cats.

It's why I want to stop. I'm the problem, it's me. If I convince my family members not to give gifts, then I won't give any gifts. I'm asking them to fix my habit. I'm being selfish.

Maybe I'm misunderstanding the holiday transaction. Maybe it's the *giving* that brings us happiness. Perhaps I'm shortchanging the joy I find watching my mother, who really wanted earrings and even sent us a text with a link to the exact ones, open a pair of cat pajamas.

I hope she likes them. She's getting another pair next year.

ZOHAR LAZAR



Live Free or What?
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THE KING'S MAN Tom Parker in New York during a 1972 press conference for Elvis Presley.

Saving Col. Parker

Fans blamed Elvis Presley's crafty and colorful manager for ruining the singer's music and taking advantage of him financially. Reviving Tom Parker's reputation is a monumental task.

Elvis and the Colonel

By Greg McDonald and
Marshall Terrill

St. Martin's, 384 pages, \$32

BY PRESTON LAUTERBACH

I LOVE A good contrarian pop-culture take. The Beatles have too many fans. Monty Python is painfully unfunny. Chefs are not artists. But recasting the notorious Col. Tom Parker as a good guy is about as strong a current as you can swim against. The infamous talent manager has been blamed for ruining Elvis Presley and robbing from him for years. In "Elvis and the Colonel," Parker's former protégé takes on the monumental task of redeeming one of the more despised figures in Americana.

Greg McDonald grew up in the entertainment business with Parker's guidance, later becoming a talent manager for the singer Ricky Nelson. He eventually took over Parker's All Star Shows production company and was the president of the label that signed the Backstreet Boys and 'NSync. He also owns Parker's likeness and image.

going, the hits and dollars piled up. Mr. McDonald covers the RCA deal, Presley's enlistment and film career. The duo's charitable works, including support for the USS Arizona memorial, receive deserved, refreshed attention.

It isn't until Mr. McDonald's appearance, nearly halfway through the book, that we begin to learn some quality inside stuff. As a teenager, Mr. McDonald worked as an air-conditioning mechanic, with access to many celebrities' houses in Palm Springs, Calif. One day he stumbled upon Presley and a female companion sunbathing by a pool. Young Greg and Presley immediately hit it off, and the boy was soon introduced to Parker. The colonel and his wife also took a liking to him, and before long Greg was a regular at the Parker household. His relationship with the colonel took a surprising turn when Parker practically adopted Greg and saw to his education. It's a major plot point supporting the colonel-as-good-guy narrative.

In the ensuing years, Mr. McDonald worked hard to remain close to this potent pairing. He became a driver for Parker, and sometimes Presley, with a front-row seat to many memorable moments. He dishes on how a miscommunication between the singer and his entourage resulted in Presley missing a dinner invitation from Marilyn Monroe.

Mr. McDonald also recounts the only meeting held between Presley and the Fab Four, with more detail and richer quotes about that 1965 Bel Air encounter than I've seen anywhere else. It's a vivid scene, right down to the details of Presley's attire and the Inspector Clouseau accent affected by a nervous John Lennon. After a few moments of stoned-Beatles awkwardness, Presley threatened to go to bed if John, Paul, Ringo and George were just going to sit there staring. "I thought we might sit and talk and jam a little," Presley said. This cut through the haze and a session for the ages broke out, with Presley playing bass on the Beatles' "I Feel Fine."

Mr. McDonald is at his best when he's looking at the world as the talent promoter he eventually becomes. Observing the increasingly restless Presley of the mid-1960s—an era in his career most fans don't care about—Mr. McDonald notes: "Becoming famous is one thing; avoiding becoming infamous, entirely another." Where we see Presley practically sleepwalking through cheesy movies, Parker sensed constant danger. "Once you're at the top, you're walking across a lagoon on the backs of alligators," Mr. McDonald writes. "The press loves a fall as much it loves as a rise, and they're happy to send you in either direction." Parker's job wasn't simply to fatten the golden goose.

As for the belief that Parker robbed Presley, think of it this way: He didn't have to. Their relationship was unprecedented and up to them to negotiate. And if Presley sensed the shelf life of rock 'n' roll expiring with the '50s and sought to pivot to movies and soundtracks, who could blame him? In hindsight we may feel deprived of a precious decade of great music, but the films were a wise career move at the time. So what if the results of "Fun in Acapulco" (1963),

"Harum Scarum" (1965), "Clambake" (1967) and others—it really is a long, horrid list—pale in comparison to the singer's smoking early songs: "Mystery Train," "Heartbreak Hotel" and "Don't Be Cruel." Presley, according to Mr. McDonald, had become addicted to his lifestyle and needed the money. Parker worked tirelessly to deliver.

Who got ripped off in early rock 'n' roll? Virtually everyone. It's easy to sympathize with Big Mama Thornton and Little Richard for recording "Hound Dog" and "Tutti Frutti" for a ¼ cent a sale, but the Beatles received a similar deal. A guitarist for Manfred Mann once told me that the five members of his group split a penny for every dollar earned on hits such as "Do Wah Diddy Diddy." You know who didn't get ripped off? Elvis the movie star. For each of his films, Presley earned a six-figure salary and a profit share of nearly 50%. Unheard of. Parker got 50% of Elvis, but he earned it, Mr. McDonald tells us. "What history and countless other books on Elvis Presley don't tell you is that Colonel Parker was the first megamanager who made forays into today's multimedia world of music, film, television, publishing, and Las Vegas-style entertainment."

For the colonel to be heroic, the story's tragic conclusion requires a different villain. And there's only one choice. Hardcore fans will have to suspend disbelief as the colonel books a dangerously ill Presley into a series of tours over the final two years of the singer's life. Parker's goal, the author claims, was to provide Presley with a purpose and to counterbalance the Cadillac shopping sprees and the enabling entourage that drove him down. Despite Mr. McDonald's well-reasoned appreciation for Parker, it's understandable that people who love Presley expected more from the colonel as the king was in crisis.

Mr. McDonald and his writing partner, Marshall Terrill, have their work cut out for them making the case that the opposite of what we believe about Parker is true. For the most part, they tell the colonel's side convincingly. I believe that Presley's relationship with Parker has been oversimplified in the past, and that a Parker-centric perspective is fair. In tackling the widely held belief in the colonel's perfidy, however, the authors should have taken greater care in establishing Mr. McDonald's credibility. The exact nature and duration of Mr. McDonald's relationship with Parker goes unaddressed for too long when the authors should have been clear up front.

Parker's indefatigable energy, creativity and orneriness deserve real credit for the making of Elvis Presley. The real question Mr. McDonald doesn't quite answer is whether those same virtues were on display when Presley needed help most. Telling that part of the story in a manner flattering to Parker is not only an upstream struggle, it's a swim up Niagara Falls. But it's exactly the sort of event that Col. Tom Parker could have sold tickets to.

Mr. Lauterbach is the author of "Bluff City," "Beale Street Dynasty" and "The Chitlin' Circuit." His next book is "Before Elvis."

Ornery Opportunists, Patriots Too

Founding Partisans

By H.W. Brands

Doubleday, 464 pages, \$32.50

A Republic of Scoundrels

Edited by David Head

& Timothy C. Hemmis

Pegasus, 368 pages, \$32

BY ADAM ROWE

IN THE AFTERMATH of the American Revolution, the concepts of loyalty and legitimacy emerged fitfully and confusingly. Under the monarchy, these concepts had been straightforward: All subjects were united by their loyalty to the sovereign, whose will was their command. But in founding a republic on principles at once lofty and vague, the Founders created a problem that vexes us still. If a nation is defined by its commitment to shared ideals, who draws the line between a difference of opinion and a difference of principle? Where does loyal opposition end and treason begin? What distinguishes the transgressions of a demagogue from the enraged voice of the people?

Today we rely on nearly 250 years of shared history and tradition to navigate the vague boundaries suggested by these unanswerable questions—and yet we can hardly keep from leaping at one another's throats. The Founders built an arena of partisan politics without grasping the full fury of the beast they had unleashed within it.

"Founding Partisans" by H.W. Brands and "A Republic of Scoundrels," a collection of essays edited by David Head and Timothy Hemmis, are as different as two books on the founding can be. But each captures the moral confusion of the era, when the rules of democratic politics were still unwritten and everything seemed up for grabs.

Mr. Brands, a prolific historian and a professor at the University of Texas, provides a brisk account of the controversies that first divided the heroes of the Revolution.

He begins with the Federalists' effort to replace the Articles of Confederation with a stronger national government and concludes

with the Jeffersonian Republicans' repudiation of the Federalists in the election of 1800, the first transfer of power in U.S. history.

Though the Federalists organized themselves into a national political party, they didn't understand themselves as one. Political parties, or "factions," to use the Founders' term, were understood as regrettable evils. They existed to serve narrow or sinister interests. An organized political party was thus, by definition, "opposed to the general welfare," Mr. Brands writes.

The Founders hoped that the Constitution would suppress the influence of factions, but they assumed that virtuous leaders (namely, themselves) would naturally agree with one another. The discovery that so many leading figures disagreed on important matters came as a shock. Each side in this deepening divide began to see their opponents as a menace to the republic.

The failure to anticipate the pull of partisanship was nowhere more evident than in the Constitution's provisions for electing the president: Each appointed elector, chosen by the states in a manner determined by their legislatures, would vote for two people, at least one of whom could not inhabit the elector's own state. The thinking was that electors would name a local favorite on the first ballot and, on the second, the worthiest citizen throughout the land. The runner-up would be vice president.

This process, reflecting a hope that Americans would ultimately choose a leader independent of faction, was incompatible with an election in which a candidate would be supported by a party against his rivals. Sure enough, in 1800 the Democratic-Republicans voted in lockstep for Thomas Jefferson as their president and Aaron Burr as vice president. But no one thought to ensure that Burr received at least one less electoral vote. The result was a tie, allowing the defeated Federalists in the House to decide who would be president. Burr

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HERE COMES SANTA CLAUS

Parker and Presley ca. 1965.

In attempting to redeem his late mentor, Mr. McDonald nails a necessary prerequisite. As he recounts Parker's biography, he convincingly rehabilitates the colonel's reputation into a 20th-century American success story—the stowaway immigrant from the Netherlands who became a hobo, an Army enlistee, a carny and, ultimately, an entertainment mogul. It's impossible to dislike or disrespect Mr. McDonald's Parker.

The early years of Presley and Parker's relationship read here like a standard Elvis biography. Parker honed his game promoting the country stars Eddy Arnold and Hank Snow. Presley outgrew his local management under a Memphis disc jockey and wanted more. When Parker attended a 1954 Presley show in Texarkana, Texas, he saw the audience "going crazy, especially the young girls," he later recounted to Mr. McDonald. "They were screaming and fainting and throwing their clothes on stage." Parker realized that Snow could never amount to as much. Once Presley and the colonel got

BOOKS

‘Saturate yourself with your subject and the camera will all but take you by the hand.’ —MARGARET BOURKE-WHITE



FIVE BEST ON REBELS

Mary Gabriel

The author, most recently, of ‘Madonna: A Rebel Life’

Delphine

By Germaine de Staël (1802)

1 Napoleon so feared the effect of Germaine de Staël’s political writing that he threatened to “smash her” if she objected to his leadership. De Staël’s response was her first novel, “Delphine.” She described it as an apolitical fiction about the “destiny of women,” but it is impossible to imagine she didn’t know how political it was. Women in Napoleon’s France were restricted to the home, under the control of the men in it. De Staël’s female characters boldly challenge such confinement. Set during the early days of the French Revolution, from 1790 to 1792, the book is written entirely as letters exchanged by its characters. It’s a radical feminist statement and a searing portrayal of life amid extreme social and political turmoil. “History can teach us nothing more,” de Staël wrote, “than the general picture brought into view by the force of circumstance.” She wanted to take the reader deeper by revealing the “human heart” buffeted by those forces. The year after the book’s publication, Napoleon banished her from Paris.

Wars I Have Seen

By Gertrude Stein (1945)

2 Gertrude Stein could have fled France as the Nazis invaded in the spring of 1940. As an unmarried woman, an American, a Jew and a lesbian, she had ample reason to do so. Instead she remained to watch the war unfold as a terrifying, tragic and sometimes oddly banal drama. From her perch near the Swiss border, where she lived with her companion, Alice Toklas, and their dog, Basket, Stein wrote a meditation on the wars she had read about in James Fenimore Cooper and Shakespeare; World War I, which she had lived through; and the new world war around her. “It is funny about wars,” she wrote, “they ought to be different but they are not.” If the reasons for war have a weary sameness, life during war does, too. People—herself included—try to find ways to be themselves as best they can. “To-day we had the first lilies-of-the-valley and that is a pleasure, the room smells sweetly even if the wind is blowing a hurricane.” She describes life in occupied



SHUTTER ISLAND Margaret Bourke-White in 1943.

France as one of “hope deferred,” until news reaches her village in 1944 that U.S. troops were nearby. To that she says, “Hallelujah.”

Interview With History

By Oriana Fallaci (1973)

3 Before Oriana Fallaci was a teenager, she was a fighter. Her father had enlisted her into his gang of anti-Fascist partisans, who worked with Allied

soldiers to free Italy. That experience of conflict informed her life, and when World War II ended, she sought out more battles as a journalist, throwing herself into the middle of wars and rebellions, documenting atrocities committed by people following leaders they often knew nothing about. After the bloodshed, Fallaci set out to interview those powerful people. “I went with a thousand feelings of rage, a thousand questions,” she explained, “and with the hope of

understanding in what way, by being in power or opposing it, those people determine our destiny.” “Interview With History” features 14 powerful subjects, among them Yasser Arafat, King Hussein of Jordan and Golda Meir. She found Arafat mediocre; King Hussein “tragic by destiny, treacherous by necessity”; Meir courageous. “Only in the rarest cases,” Fallaci concluded, “did I have the certainty of finding myself face to face with a person born to lead.”

Blues Legacies and Black Feminism

By Angela Y. Davis (1998)

4 For people whose lives are deemed valueless and their ideas without merit, art can provide a means to be seen and heard. And if those people are daring, the messages they deliver can be subversive. That’s where Angela Davis positions Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday. Rainey and Smith, both early blues artists, sang a complicated story of women’s freedom. The popular tunes they performed were sassy, sexy, even bawdy. But dig deeper, Ms. Davis says, and you’ll find “emphatic examples of black female independence.” Even as the two sang of domestic violence and disappointment, their lesson was strength and an unwillingness to relinquish their independence to a different kind of “bondage” called marriage. In 1939, at the age of 24, Holiday recorded “Strange Fruit,” her song about lynching. “It almost singlehandedly changed the politics of American popular culture,” Ms. Davis writes, “and put the elements of protest and resistance back at the center of contemporary black musical culture.”

Margaret Bourke-White

By Vicki Goldberg (1986)

5 She was a glamorous adventurer, seemingly without fear, and, for decades, the pre-eminent American photojournalist. Margaret Bourke-White’s work landed on the first cover of Fortune magazine in 1930 and the first cover of Life magazine in 1936. U.S. Camera magazine called her “the most famous on-the-spot reporter the world over.” What she was after was simple: “Life as it really is.” Her career as a photojournalist began with the Depression. Her images from that period, which featured the might of industry and the misery of the people, told the story of the United States in a way that was universally understandable. Her work was democratic with a small “d”; anyone could understand it—even the illiterate—and that, too, was new. “I was to discover,” she said, “that the quest for human understanding is a lifetime one that has no end in sight.”

Divided From the Beginning

Continued from page C7

slyly advertised that he was willing to make a deal with his adversaries.

The crisis passed, thanks to Alexander Hamilton’s intervention. In this sense, the outcome seemed to vindicate the Founders’ hope that virtuous leaders would combine against conniving partisans. But it was a close-run thing.

Mr. Brands follows countless other historians in providing a blow-by-blow account of the nation’s first experience with partisan combat, though not a single historian is cited in the text or notes. He relies instead on the Founders’ own words to capture the controversies in which they participated. This choice gives his narrative an immediacy that heavy-handed analysis often diminishes. Indeed, “Founding Partisans” reads less like a work of history than a journalist’s insider account of high politics, except here the intemperate, backbiting quotations come from sources who are safely dead rather than anonymous.

But by hewing so closely to a narrow range of sources—most chapters do no more than quote and summarize a few essays or letters—Mr. Brands neglects the historian’s role as interpreter and guide. Readers unfamiliar with the era may wish for more help in understanding the context of events, invisible to those operating within it.

“A Republic of Scoundrels,” by contrast, tries to upend the pantheon of Founding Fathers with forgotten or misunderstood characters. The book’s essays, Mr. Hemmis explains, seek to

draw a portrait of the “turncoats and traitors, opportunists and con artists, spies and foreign intriguers” who made a mark on the new nation.

Some of the names remain infamous—e.g., Benedict Arnold and Aaron Burr. Others deserve to be better-known. James Wilkinson became the highest-ranking officer in the U.S. Army while serving as a paid agent of Spain, the power on the other side of America’s southern border during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. In 1799, William Augustus Bowles declared himself the founder of a nation among the Creeks and other indigenous peoples in Spanish Florida—the State of Muskogee,

During America’s infancy, the boundary between political maneuvering and disloyalty to the nation was not yet defined.

as he called it—only to be betrayed as a fraud by his supposed subjects. Matthew Lyon, an Irish immigrant and former indentured servant, rose to become a member of the House, where his contempt for elite niceties enraged his Federalist adversaries. He was the first person convicted of sedition after the Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798. Then he became the first imprisoned convict to be re-elected to Congress.

Each of the book’s “scoundrels” is considered primarily for what he reveals about the revolutionary-era norms being transgressed. The essays are uneven in quality, but the best show how changeable the line between heroism and opportunism could be.

Even the arch-traitor Benedict Arnold acted on motives not so different from those of many Patriots who condemned him, as James Kirby Martin shows in his essay. Countless Americans were driven to the Patriotic cause in the early 1770s because they felt personally dishonored, or their ambitions unjustly thwarted, by the British—precisely the sentiment that motivated Arnold’s treason.

Or consider Bowles and his State of Muskogee. A Maryland loyalist, Bowles condemned the Revolution for its “licentiousness” and “thirst for dominion.” He then attempted his own revolution, falsely presenting himself to the world as “commander in chief” of an indigenous nation-state that existed only in his own grandiose imagination. Bowles’ “grand talk,” David Narrett writes in his essay, only “became a lie when what he said for so long did not become true.” But for a few chance victories, the pretensions of the Founders might have ended the same way.

Many of the colorful schemes recounted in “A Republic of Scoundrels” occurred on the Western frontier. “The West beckoned to scoundrels,” Mr. Head writes, “calling them to break it open for their own benefit.”

The Burr conspiracy is the most dramatic of these Western intrigues. No one today knows what Burr was plan-

ning when he was arrested on charges of plotting to dismember the Western U.S. just six years after his failed bid for the presidency and two years after killing Hamilton in a duel. It’s possible that he intended to conquer Spanish territory in modern-day Texas.

The charge that Burr was plotting treason came from none other than

His official letter warning President Jefferson of “a deep, dark, and widespread conspiracy” may well have been a favor to his Spanish benefactors.

Jefferson himself had said that it might be necessary for the Western states to organize as a separate confederation. But he was determined to see Burr hanged for treason. While Burr awaited trial, Jefferson informed Congress that his “guilt is placed beyond question.” Jefferson surely understood that an individual’s guilt should be determined by a jury, not the president. His conduct toward Burr suggests that his public responsibilities were suffused with a personal vendetta.

In the end, Burr’s guilt was determined by Chief Justice John Marshall, who presided over the trial and decided that the Constitution defined treason narrowly—as the act of levying war against the U.S. This definition would require allowing Burr to carry out his scheme before being arrested for it. And yet there was, and is, wisdom in it.

A nation teeming with hustlers and partisans—and contentiously governing itself on the principle that no single caste or class has the right to equate its own narrow interests with the common good—can’t afford to indulge an expansive definition of treason. Respect for the law precludes wielding it as a political weapon.

Mr. Rowe is a historian in Tyler, Texas.



RESTORATION HARDWARE A wall painting of the Founding Fathers being restored at the U.S. Capitol in 2006.

James Wilkinson, the Army officer intriguing with Spain (and operating under the code name “Agent 13”). Wilkinson’s double-game was suspected but never confirmed during his lifetime.

BOOKS

'Man can do what he wills but he cannot will what he wills.' —SCHOPENHAUER



DEBORAH PENNELL/GETTY IMAGES

Who's Really In Charge?

DeterminedBy Robert M. Sapolsky
Penguin Press, 528 pages,
\$35**Free Agents**By Kevin J. Mitchell
Princeton, 352 pages
\$29.95

BY ANDREW CRUMEY

IS ANY CHOICE we make truly free? You might decide to answer “yes” right now, just to prove the point, but is your supposedly free choice actually an inevitable result of your personality, your background, the kind of day you’re having? If we could rewind history and repeat the moment, would you always do the same thing, as predictably as clockwork?

It’s an ancient philosophical question, lately refreshed by advances in science, and books from a pair of distinguished neuroscientists tackle it from opposing sides. Robert M. Sapolsky’s “Determined” takes the prosecution’s role with a lively and provocative account of consciousness in which free will is only an illusion. In opposition, Kevin J. Mitchell offers an eloquent defense of our common-sense understanding of the mind in “Free Agents: How Evolution Gave Us Free Will.” Both books are excellent: Neither fully convinced me.

The star witness for the case against free will is the 18th-century French mathematician Pierre-Simon Laplace, who maintained that the laws of nature are completely deterministic. If you knew to the finest detail the speed, direction and other conditions of a ball entering a roulette wheel, you could predict exactly where the ball would land. Extend that thinking to the universe itself, and everything that happens—including your own thoughts as you read these words—must be a direct consequence of subatomic motions. Mr. Sapolsky concurs. “The world is deterministic and there’s no free will.” Consciously or unconsciously, we always act for a reason, there’s a reason for that reason, and so on—a chain of causality where chance plays no part.

This is a minority opinion among philosophers and scientists, most of whom prefer compatibilism, the idea that because life is so unpredictable in practice, we can meaningfully speak of human beings as having free will. That isn’t good enough for Mr. Sapolsky, a professor of biology and neurology at Stan-

ford University, who calls his position “hard incompatibilism.”

Mr. Mitchell, a researcher in genetics and neuroscience at Dublin’s Trinity College, also has his doubts about compatibilism, because it cedes too much ground to determinists. He insists that living things act in ways that can’t be reduced to mechanistic causes. Mr. Sapolsky estimates support for compatibilism at “roughly 90 per cent of philosophers,” so he and Mr. Mitchell are intellectual extremists with big cases to prove. Mr. Mitchell has to explain how our minds can be independent of the underlying physics and chemistry of our bodies. Mr. Sapolsky has to explain why life without free will is still worth living.

After Laplace, another key witness is the 20th-century American neuroscientist Benjamin Libet. In the 1980s, Libet asked experimental subjects to push a button at a moment of their own choosing, and to note the time at which they made their choice. Electrodes recording their brain activity revealed a sudden spike just before each moment of conscious choice. Many see his work as proof that subconscious processes are the true masters of our actions. Mr. Mitchell thinks otherwise: He discusses the methodology at length and calls the spike “an artifact of the way the data are analyzed.” More surprisingly, Mr. Sapolsky also rejects “Libetian-ish neuroscience,” saying the experiment failed to address the important question, “Where does intent come from?”

One way to address these questions is to invoke the notion of a soul—though its existence wouldn’t necessarily remove the difficulties. Perhaps souls may be the judges of right and wrong, but if God makes all the choices, our fate is predestined. Dualism—the idea that matter and mind are wholly separate—is likewise indecisive on free will, and has little support among neuroscientists. Messrs. Mitchell and Sapolsky stay silent on religion and explicitly reject dualism. Both believe the mind to be a function of neurons and synapses, axons and dendrites. Their books are replete with detailed explanations of what those things are, what they do, and how their flow of neurotransmitters affects the way we think, feel and behave.

Mr. Sapolsky says there is no single “slam dunk” argument that can prove free will to be an illusion. Instead he offers a mass of circumstantial evidence drawn from a range of disciplines including social science, economics and psychology, all of which illustrates how genetics, culture and daily life can steer a person’s choices. The

best predictor, for instance, of whether a judge will grant a parole application is how long ago he or she ate a meal. Telling a lie makes you more likely to wash your hands soon afterward. Mr. Sapolsky loquaciously relates his examples in prose that is often humorous, occasionally grating, yet always highly readable.

More sober and conventional in tone, Mr. Mitchell’s book focuses on evolutionary biology, viewing living organisms as self-directing “agents” and charting their development from the earliest single cells to the appearance of human intelligence. Mr. Mitchell’s answer to a rigid chain-of-causes determinism comes in the form of quantum indeterminacy and thermal fluctuation—the fuzziness of events at the subatomic level.

Can 21st-century brain science tell us if we have free will? Two scientists think it can—but disagree about what it tells us.

He proposes an updated version of a theory of free will advocated in the late 19th century by the psychologist William James. Quantum-level randomness, Mr. Mitchell suggests, seeds the initial stage of each neural process, and a kind of Darwinian fitness selection among the possible reactions follows, resulting in “one possible action winning the competition and being released while all the others remain inhibited.” Mr. Mitchell says his two-stage model “powerfully breaks the bonds of determinism, incorporating true randomness into our cognitive processes while protecting the causal role of the agent itself in deciding what to do.”

This type of two-step model gets short shrift from Mr. Sapolsky. “Thus, ‘our brains’ generate a suggestion, and ‘we’ then judge it,” he writes. He labels this notion a variety of dualism that “sets our thinking back centuries.” He argues that quantum effects are not likely important in the workings of the brain. Some have suggested that phenomena known as tunneling and entanglement might work to free the brain from rigid causality, but Mr. Sapolsky dismisses these suggestions, citing a further phenomenon called decoherence. There’s no need to explain here what those all mean; it’s sufficient to say that Mr. Sapolsky’s argument misses the mark. Quantum randomness affects us all the time.

To understand why, think of a Geiger counter placed near a sample of radioactive metal. Every so often, an atom in the metal spontaneously decays and the Geiger counter clicks: a macroscopic event dictated by subatomic randomness. Each day we are exposed to low-level background radiation from many natural sources. If we’re unlucky, one of those particles might break a chemical bond in our body and initiate a chain of events that will result in cancer. Can we claim such events were ordained by necessity? Only if we think that quantum behaviors are themselves governed by a hidden determinism—an idea that Einstein believed but physicists now generally dismiss.

Does that spell victory for Mr. Mitchell? I’d say it’s a dead heat. Quantum randomness implies the future is not yet written, but it doesn’t prove the existence of free will. Mr. Mitchell’s model relies on randomness during the initial preconscious stage, but if that is where our choices are really made, then we’re prisoners of chance rather than determinism. If his claim is instead that choice and intention are formed within the second, conscious stage, how that actually happens is yet to be fully explained.

Having made it through the combined 800 pages of these two fine books, I’m left in a position both authors would doubtless deride—a free-will agnostic, sitting on the fence. As to which book I prefer, my vote goes to “Determined,” which is outstanding for its breadth of research, the liveliness of the writing, and the depth of humanity it conveys. As a self-proclaimed hard incompatibilist, Mr. Sapolsky has had to wrestle with the moral implications of his own theory. If there’s no free will, there’s no reason to praise or blame anyone for what they do. Rather than punish criminals, he says, we should quarantine them as sufferers of a condition over which they have no control. That idea is unthinkable in the United States but seriously entertained in Norway—a societal difference that Mr. Sapolsky attributes to genetics and environment. The trouble, as he acknowledges, is that in every culture, “we like to punish wrongdoers. It feels great.” And that’s in our genes too.

Mr. Crumey is the author, most recently, of the novel “Beethoven’s Assassins.”

Finally Telling The Other Half Of the Story

EveBy Cat Bohannon
Knopf, 624 pages, \$35

BY DAVID P. BARASH

IN “THE SECOND SEX” (1949), Simone de Beauvoir examined the social situation of women, arguing that in Western culture men are treated as Subjects whereas women are relegated to Others. Cat Bohannon’s book, “Eve,” erases any lingering misconception about the centrality of women, giving us a detailed look at women’s biology, focused on how—as the subtitle indicates—“the female body drove 200 million years of human evolution.”

Ms. Bohannon, an author and researcher who studied at Columbia University, sets out to demolish the “ill-conceived notion that women’s bodies are just bodies in general—soft and fleshy . . . but otherwise, just the same as men’s,” and she critiques the persistent tendency of researchers and physicians to take male bodies as the norm. “From mouse to human, the male body is what gets studied,” she writes. In some circles, it is heretical to maintain that women and men are biologically different, largely because such differences have in the past been manipulated toward misogynist ends. Ms. Bohannon believes that “while the majority of scientists still effectively ignore the female body, there’s a quiet revolution in the science of womanhood brewing.”

Her book is an encyclopedic guide to this revolution, delving into such questions as “Why do we menstruate? Why do women live longer? Why are we more likely to get Alzheimer’s? Why do girls score better at every academic subject than boys until puberty, when suddenly our scores drop through the floor? Is there really such a thing as the ‘Female Brain’? And why, seriously why, do we have to sweat through our sheets every night when we hit menopause?” This review can’t summarize all the answers to these and other fascinating questions, but to her credit, Ms. Bohannon attempts it. Noting something that should be obvious, Ms. Bohannon writes that “as a species we are sexed.” To understand “medicine, neurobiology, paleoanthropology, even evolutionary biology,” she insists, “we have to put the female body in the picture.”

Erroneous medieval ideas stuck around into the Renaissance. Leonardo’s anatomical drawings included a nonexistent vein that ran from the uterus to the breast.

“Eve” takes the reader through evolutionary time, as key mammalian traits such as pregnancy, lactation, childbirth and parenting emerged. The book brims with unexpected insights, described with a lovely mixture of scientific veracity and novelistic flair. “Because our hips are wider than men’s, our knees are somewhat closer together to help balance that differing center of gravity,” she writes. “That sexual dimorphism lines the pockets of orthopedic surgeons, who regularly perform significantly more knee replacements on women than men.”

We learn about the nonexistent *vasa menstrualis*, a vein that was supposed to transfer blood from the uterus to the breast, thereby providing ingredients for making milk. The notion was not entirely illogical: After all, lactating women typically don’t menstruate, yet they produce a different fluid. The fact that there is no such thing didn’t faze generations of “researchers,” including Leonardo da Vinci, who, despite conducting his own dissections, included this mythic structure in his anatomical drawings.

It is troublesome that the bottom of nearly every page—sometimes, the entire bottom half—is festooned with lengthy footnotes. This material should have been included in the text, if only to make reading easier. I also wish that this abundantly referenced tome made any mention of Natalie Angier’s “Woman” (1999), which covered much of the same ground, albeit less thoroughly and without the detailed evolutionary underpinnings, but with more panache.

Ms. Bohannon makes abundant use of what she calls “gynecology,” the ecological circumstances that promoted women’s evolution, and by which she explores what we might call (although she does not) gynanatomy, gynphysiology, gynpsychology, even gynsociology and gynecconomics. It’s not that men and women are different species; rather, women have been as much the protagonists of human evolution as men, and are every bit as deserving of scientific attention. Beauvoir would be smiling.

Mr. Barash is a professor of psychology emeritus at the University of Washington. His most recent book is “OOPS! The Worst Blunders of All Time.”

BOOKS

'The fine Latin maxim "Even if all others do—I do not!" belonged to every truly free life.' —JOACHIM FEST

Sleepwalking Into War

An Ordinary Youth

By Walter Kempowski
NYRB Classics, 480 pages,
\$19.95

By TOBY LICHTIG

WALTER Kempowski was a larcenist. The German author's 10-volume masterwork, "Das Echolot" (1993–2005), is a pirate's hoard of second-hand treasure relating to World War II: testimonies and recollections, plucked from diaries, letters, newspapers and official reports. The title, often translated as "Echo Soundings," refers to the ways in which the fragments bounce off one another, into a swell of revelatory clamor. The skill is in the arrangement, the genius in the juxtaposition.

Kempowski (1929–2007) was a late starter, but once he hit his 40s he was prolific. Perhaps his appropriative method helped. Even his more conventional fiction, such as his 1971 novel, "An Ordinary Youth," newly translated into English by Michael Lipkin, is built from borrowings. Little tics and phrases are layered through the narrative, along with clichés and sayings, snippets of song, broadcast bulletins and jokes, snatches of reported speech—the world as if overheard by an inquisitive child. (" 'Oh,' said my mother, 'the situation with Poland doesn't sound good. How could this be happening.' ") Kempowski has a wonderful ear for contradiction and absurdity, even when the subject matter is grim. And the subject matter is often grim. Kempowski was forged in the war, and the war never left him. He made it his business that it wouldn't leave anybody else.

Young Walter came from a well-to-do shipping family in Rostock, in northern Germany. As a teenager, he was drafted into the Hitler Youth, and, just before the war's end, conscripted by the Luftwaffe as a messenger. "An Ordinary Youth" draws heavily on this early biography, though a puckish epigraph reads: "All details completely made up."

This may be no ordinary childhood but Walter is, very markedly, an ordinary youth. He plays with his toy soldiers, argues with his friends about torture methods, and is developing an interest in girls. The family is comfortable, though painful memories of German eco-



AT THE END A Hitler Youth squad transporting bazookas in March 1945.

omic hardship endure. When Grandfather dies, the Kempowskis inherit an imposing house, but it proves to be heavily mortgaged and some of the rooms must be rented out. (" 'We've got a 2,500-tonne ship and we're living on the second floor,' my father said.")

Still, life is good and Germany ascendant. "Breakfast was always harmonious" and Frau Kempowski is indulgent. Her husband can be gruff, but he is a softie when compared to the patriarchs of yore: spoiled, vain and scared of germs. Decorating his office wall are "Hitler, Hindenburg, and Bismarck, one above the other."

Frau Kempowski isn't much interested in Nazis. When the SA men first started marching in their brown uniforms, she "thought they were binmen." She feels she "could have been" a Communist. Patriotism is another matter: "We love our fatherland." "Please don't think all Germans are bad," she will later tell a persecuted Danish friend. "Nazis and Germans: there's a difference."

As for the Jews—they are largely seen by the townsfolk as irritants; tales of their perfidy and greed have leached into the popular discourse and mythology. The mortgage brokers are "a bunch of white Jews. Eleven per cent!" Father is not good at giving presents, and has a big nose: "Don't you think that, at some point, a little Jew has passed through the family?" On the

walk to school, the local synagogue is a burnt-out shell. Walter's friend explains it used to be the site of Christian sacrifice.

As the international situation deteriorates ("Are the Polish provoking us again?"), optimism abounds, along with received wisdom:

"The war was going to last just fourteen days."
"They'll make short work of it."

"Old Hitler has a good head on his shoulders."
"The man isn't crazy, after all."

Mr. Lipkin does a fine job of rendering the frequent reported speech—supported in the German with modals and the subjunctive—into something navigable in English. (Parentheses come in handy.)

As the Third Reich plunges into the abyss, Kempowski brilliantly captures the delusions of a nation. But, slowly, cracks in the edifice appear. One character mimes a Hitler moustache and says he knows who started the war. Looking on a map, Walter suddenly realizes that Germany "was pretty damn tiny." As the bombs drop, the family evacuates Rostock ("things would improve"), then returns. Toward the end, some (not all) turn on the Führer: "Hitler is a hypochondriac. I can see that now." The Japanese have become "the real Germans: even more fanatical than we were, and not so sickly."

Prior to his death, Kempowski had barely been translated into English. That changed in 2015 when

two titles appeared: "Swansong 1945," the final instalment of "Das Echolot," which documents four days of the Third Reich in its death throes; and the extraordinary novel "All for Nothing," which describes those death throes in their final months, this time from the perspective of noble Prussian family. Since then, we've had "Homeland" (2018) and now "An Ordinary Youth," to which Kempowski gave the subtitle "A bourgeois novel." His concern, here as in many of his books, is the middle-class Germans who enabled the Nazi killing machine and, even as the Russians advanced on Berlin, still worried about where to get their hair oil. This is a novel not of fanaticism but of complacency. We see it through callow teenage eyes, a perspective that underscores this complacency—for so many of the grown-ups are no better, no less credulous and self-interested, than young Walter.

When our "ordinary youth" is forced to join a "remedial" section of the Hitler Youth, its rules and drills rendered with Vonnegutian absurdism, his chief concern is whether he can keep his hair long (he worries that his head has a funny shape). In some ways, Walter has his analogue in Anne Frank, another bookish teenager caught up in Hitler's war, still concerned with her appearance and desires. The fateful gulf between the two lurks omnipresent in a novel that is laced with bitter irony and shaded, discreetly, with horror.

Mr. Lichtig is the fiction and politics editor of the Times Literary Supplement.

SCIENCE FICTION & FANTASY

LIZ BRASWELL

The Droid You've Been Looking For



THE WORLD in this current timeline has been a bit bleak lately. Fortunately for readers of alternate futures, the writer Martha Wells has delivered to us a hyperblast of joy: another wonderfully delightful offbeat adventure of the artificial consciousness readers have come

to know as Murderbot.

The Murderbot Diaries started in 2017 with "All Systems Red" and reach their seventh installment with "System Collapse" (TorDotCom, 256 pages, \$21.99). These compact, delightful stories are set in a downbeat future in which corporations control humankind's interstellar colonies and keep many in lives of servitude. An even worse fate is life as a SecUnit, a Security Unit cyborg usually tasked with killing troublesome people and controlled by a module that eliminates free will. Our first-person narrator has been crafty enough to hack itself free—but instead of taking revenge on its creators and destroying every terrible human it encounters, this SecUnit (which decides to call itself Murderbot) would rather watch TV.

If you're expecting a fast-moving android-becomes-human emotional arc, you're going to be disappointed. Murderbot learns a little more about humans in each book but mostly remains grumpy, bored and uncomfortable when forced to spend time with its all-flesh counterparts.

THIS WEEK

System Collapse
By Martha Wells

In "System Collapse," the Barish-Estranza corporation is offering to help the colonists of a planet whose machines have been contaminated by alien tech. But the company's proposal to relocate the colonists sounds almost too good to be true. (It is.)

Working with a cognitively powerful (and equally testy) spaceship called ART and a few human friends, our cyborg hero must fight off berserk robots, keep the good humans safe from the bad ones, and figure out how to convince the colonists that the corporation is not on their side. Murderbot also suffers frozen moments of human-style post-traumatic stress—all the more mysterious because the episodes seem to have been caused by an incident that never happened.

The SecUnit remains every bit as snarky and funny as it has been in the last six books, the perfectly conceived action as nearly nonstop as ever. (And we finally get to see the benefits of Murderbot's TV addiction.) If there is anything negative to say about "System Collapse," it's that there doesn't seem to be an actual system collapse. And sometimes the bits with humans emoting over things go on a little long (but that might be the Murderbot in me talking).

Outside of this series, Ms. Wells has written many other excellent books, including "Witch King," which was reviewed here earlier this year. If you need something light, a little violent and laugh-out-loud hilarious, dive into this series: You may find that you have more in common with Murderbot than you think.

A Hilarious Satire of the Cancel-Culture Era



FICTION
SAM SACKS

THERE WERE SO many new rules—all set by college students paying two hundred thousand dollars for their humanism." Such is the complaint of Anna, the bewildered heroine of Lexi Freiman's delightful cancel-culture satire "The Book of Ayn" (Catapult, 240 pages, \$27), a thematic follow-up to the author's debut, "Inappropriation" (2018). Anna, at the age of 39, has become persona non grata after the New York Times panned her comic novel about the opioid crisis, labeling her a classist and a narcissist. Her career seems finished until she's contacted by a TV producer who thinks that cancellation is about to become the next cool thing. All Anna needs to do is lean into her "pendant for wrong ideas." And what, she realizes, could be more contrarian than a revival of the philosophies of Ayn Rand?

The novel follows Anna to Los Angeles, where she lives among Gen Z TikTok stars while struggling with her TV treatment (which, inexplicably, becomes an animated series starring a cartoon sheep called Ayn Ram). She can never really decide whether she agrees with Rand's objectivism or simply admires Rand's audacity, particularly her ability to bed handsome young men even into her 60s. Anna's story—which has a picaresque second act at a meditation commune on the island of Lesbos—is split between her

efforts to scandalize the beautiful, vapid, clout-chasing Zoomers in her midst and her efforts to get them to sleep with her.

Neither pursuit is very successful. One of the funniest recurring bits in this novel is Anna's crestfallen discovery that young men just aren't interested in having sex any more. One night a potential suitor invites her to his room for N64: "For a wonderful hopeful second I thought this was a sex position. Then cold comprehension sank in. 'You want to play videogames?'"

But Anna's more confounding realization is that Ayn Rand's gospel of selfishness, though superficially verboten, is already so commonplace that it needs no champion. She finds herds of "unwitting Randians" among the crunchy New Agers fixated on self-love and the social-media content creators single-mindedly obsessed with personal brand management. The sense of clueless communality gives a warmth to Ms. Freiman's humor, which tends toward silliness rather than censure. (There is a lot of toilet humor in this book, a universal comedic touchstone if there ever was one.) Even so, one reads "The Book of Ayn" with genuine relief that someone has pulled off a novel of jokes at the expense of the most solemnly protected absurdities of our time. The feeling of catharsis extends to the

acknowledgments page, which Ms. Freiman ends by thanking "the person who spent hundreds of hours writing a novel: me."

An eerie sense of the contemporary uncanny permeates Bennett Sims's collection "Other Minds and Other Stories" (Two Dollar Radio, 202 pages, \$18.95). Outgrowths of technology are responsible for the many evocations of unease. In "Unknown," the "unknown

THIS WEEK

The Book of Ayn
By Lexi Freiman

Other Minds and Other Stories
By Bennett Sims

The Annual Banquet of the Gravediggers' Guild
By Mathias Énard

caller" designation on cell-phones creates a climate of paranoia. A rogue navigation system deepens the metaphysical mystery of "The Postcard." The split screens of a Zoom conference speak to the "perceptual breakdown" haunting the narrator of "Minds of Winter." A character in the title story is driven to extreme self-doubt by the Popular Highlights feature of his e-reader, which always features sentences he would never dream of singling

out: "By now he had read enough e-books, and encountered enough underlinings, that he had begun to suspect that his mind was the one that was missing something."

Violence and estrangement lurk behind each story. More essayistic pieces about American writers viewing Roman antiquities stress a continuity between old and new depictions of horror, both revealing "the deep redness beneath things."

These vignettes in particular possess an academic quality that limits their force and makes them seem more like exercises in semiotics. After the third or fourth story about walking through Roman museums, all I could think was that Mr. Sims must have enjoyed a cool artist's residency in Italy. (And indeed he did.) Yet even here his gaze remains sharp and exacting. A cliché about art is that it fosters empathy and connectivity. This icily penetrating collection exposes something of the human condition that is much more stark, lonely and unnerving.

It's to the village of La Pierre-Saint-Christophe in the swamplands of western France that Mathias Énard sends his earnest graduate student in the sprawling comic novel "The Annual Banquet of the Gravediggers' Guild" (New Directions, 432 pages, \$19.95). David Mazon is a "rural ethnologist" doing field-work on the lives and folkways

of the French countryside—a remarkably patronizing project that Mr. Énard treats with equal parts ridicule and affection.

What David doesn't know is that all living creatures in the village, from the farmers to the snails, have been reincarnated countless times, in accordance with the Buddhist Wheel of Life. Only the gravediggers understand the "infinite skein of invisible threads in which everything is connected." They have struck a deal with Death to allow them a three-day break each year, during which they enjoy a Rabelaisian bacchanal filled with feasting and spinning mythic yarns.

There is much to say about Mr. Énard. First: He is never boring. What stands out most from this crazy quilt of a novel, given a bravura translation by Frank Wynne, is how technically demanding the storytelling is. The narrative not only flows among the points of view of the villagers but travels back and forth in time, creating a continuous circuit of past and present lives while adopting the different stylistic registers of each era. But unlike Mr. Énard's 2015 masterpiece, "Compass," whose stream-of-consciousness narration reaches heights of profound beauty, the larger point of this book's challenges eluded me. Its virtuosity is in the service of whimsy, a generous if perhaps prodigal use of this author's steep talents.

When a writer's opinions make her an outcast, she decides to go all in.

BOOKS

'Praise the sea, but keep on land.' —GEORGE HERBERT

Childhood on the High Seas

Wavewalker

By Suzanne Heywood
*William Collins, 416 pages,
\$28.99*

By MEGHAN COX GURDON

SOME PEOPLE have the good fortune to live their dreams. Some find themselves trapped inside the dreams of others.

Suzanne Cook was 7 when she was shanghaied by her parents and made to live and work for the next decade on their schooner, *Wavewalker*. Only when her mother and father marooned her, at 17, was she able to seek the formal education she craved.

Suzanne Cook—now Suzanne Heywood—tells the story of her extraordinary childhood in “*Wavewalker*,” a coming-of-age memoir that draws apt comparisons with Tara Westover’s “*Educated*” (2018). In both books, a spirited and intelligent girl manages to lever herself out of a narrow, dysfunctional household into the academic elite and a wider life. Ms. Westover overcame a chaotic family and nugatory home schooling in rural Idaho to win a place at Cambridge. For Ms. Heywood, the struggle was to do any studying at all on an itinerant yacht piloted by a father who was indifferent to her pursuit of learning and a mother who sought to sabotage it. Yet by the end of “*Wavewalker*” it seems less of a miracle that Suzanne Cook eventually got into Oxford than that she survived the ordeal at all.

For most of us, the words “yacht” and “ordeal” do not naturally chime, and in June 1976 both Suzanne and her little brother, Jon, were excited to embark on a family adventure. Their parents, Gordon and Mary, had explained that *Wavewalker* would commemorate the 200th anniversary of Capt. James Cook’s final voyage of discovery by following his route. The Cooks—no connection to the 18th century explorer, though it suited Gordon to imply one—would sail south from England to the tip of South America, cross the Atlantic to South Africa, and from there traverse the Indian Ocean to Australia and beyond.

Wavewalker left Plymouth, England, under power, with fanfare and media attention, and then the sails took over and the engine was no longer needed. “In the silence that followed,” Ms. Heywood writes, “I breathed out, adjusting to the gentle sounds of my new world: waves splashing against the bow, the hull creaking and the occasional squeak of a winch being turned to adjust a sail.”

At first, with their mother seasick and immobilized, Suzanne and Jon subsisted on slices of sea-dampened fruitcake while their father and the paying crew managed the boat. But the children had the delight of seeing translucent-winged flying fish skimming over the waves; at one



FAMILY ADVENTURE When Suzanne Heywood was 7, she and her family boarded a boat and sailed the world for 10 years.

point a whale followed them in the broad and beautiful sea. The crew was kind. Soon, though, things began to go wrong.

“My parents always claimed our time on *Wavewalker* was ‘wonderful’ and told me I’d had a ‘privileged’ upbringing. But this oft-repeated mantra concealed a much darker story,” Ms. Heywood writes. “What I found, when I mustered enough courage to look back, was that many parts of my childhood were worse than I’d been willing to admit.”

Within a matter of weeks, *Wavewalker* had been hit by a barge, nearly smashed by a tanker and buffeted by rough seas. Relations between Gordon and Mary and the crew began to fray. Five months in, the yacht nearly went down in storms off the east coast of Africa. Amid the lurching terror of colossal waves, Suzanne was cut on the arm and received a terrific blow to the skull. When she crawled into her bunk, blood soaked her bedclothes.

It is at this point, relatively early in “*Wavewalker*,” that the reader cannot avoid noticing how oddly her

parents behaved. When the storm subsided, there was no rushing to comfort the 7-year-old, no hugs or kisses, no assurances that she would be OK. Gordon patched up Suzanne’s arm but only glanced at her wounded head. Much later, Mary appeared in the cabin, stared at the growing lump above her daughter’s left eye and said merely: “How are you feeling?” Eventually *Wavewalker* made contact with a French delegation on the tiny Indian Ocean outpost of Ile Amsterdam, where a surgeon was able to relieve the swelling in Suzanne’s brain. The treatment required seven operations—with no anesthesia.

As wince-making as such incidents are, by far the most fascinating and infuriating passages in the book have to do with Suzanne’s family relationships. Because Ms. Heywood relates events as they seemed to her at the time, rather than as they seem to her now, the reader has the satisfaction of putting two and two together before the child in the book has connected the dots.

Thus we understand before she does that her parents are inordi-

nately fond of cocktails and far more attached to each other than to their children. We see that Mary is a chilly, spoiled woman who uses silence as a weapon and who, as months turn into years, resents her

Her parents thought it would be a neat idea to sail along the path of Capt. Cook’s final voyage of discovery. Things did not go well.

growing daughter’s desire for education and normalcy. Gordon, meanwhile, is a man of volatile temper and flexible ethics who is not above throwing people’s things overboard when annoyed and even stranding passengers who offend his wife. One of the couple’s victims is their own daughter, who learns only later that she was dumped in New Zealand at the age of 17 because

Mary had threatened Gordon: “Either she goes or I do.”

Long before that ultimatum, the Cooks had bailed on the plan to follow their famous namesake and instead took to floating around the South Pacific, gulling travelers into paying to join *Wavewalker* and making occasional landfall to earn money for fuel and groceries. They were seldom in funds, a predicament that led to one of the maddest near-misses of all. In 1985, French secret agents bombed the Rainbow Warrior, the nuclear-protest vessel of the environmental group Greenpeace. Gordon offered *Wavewalker*, with his wife and children aboard, as a replacement to lead a flotilla into the active French nuclear test site at Mururoa Atoll. It is possible that Suzanne Heywood owes her life—and the lives of the sons and daughter she would have—to the fact that Greenpeace ran out of ready cash and couldn’t pay what Gordon was asking.

Mrs. Gurdon, a Journal contributor, is the author of “The Enchanted Hour: The Miraculous Power of Reading Aloud in the Age of Distraction.”

Bosch and the Lincoln Lawyer to the Rescue



MYSTERIES

TOM NOLAN

Heroes of two different series team up to help a woman wrongly jailed.

THE LOS ANGELES defense attorney Mickey Haller, also known as the Lincoln Lawyer, returns in Michael Connelly’s “*Resurrection Walk*” (Little, Brown, 410 pages, \$30).

Haller works out of the back seat of his Town Car and drums up business with billboards promising “reasonable doubt for a reasonable fee.” When Haller succeeds in freeing a man after 14 years of incarceration for a murder he didn’t commit, the attorney experiences a fulfillment he “had never known in the practice of law or in life.” He also starts to receive stacks of requests for legal help. He hires his half-brother, Harry Bosch, the retired LAPD detective who is the central character in another series by Mr. Connelly, to sift through it all and find plausible candidates for similar resurrections.

Bosch chances upon Lucinda Sanz, an imprisoned woman who pleaded no contest to the murder of her ex-husband, a sheriff’s deputy shot dead on her front lawn. Sanz claims she was pressured by her attorney to accept a deal in the face of damning physical evidence, and insists she’s innocent. Bosch tends to believe her. And Haller tends to believe Bosch: “He had this

facility for seeing the details and evidence of a case and how it all matched up, or didn’t.” Haller accepts Sanz as a client and files his petition for relief with the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California—a place, he ruefully admits, “where defense cases went to die.”

“*Resurrection Walk*” is enlivened by the presence of Haller’s ex-wife, a former prosecutor, who helps make the case against his client; an unethical lawyer who tries to make money off Sanz after having ushered her into jail; and a no-nonsense judge who aims to temper justice with mercy. Haller’s legal savvy plays off Bosch’s investigative skills, adding to the suspense and pleasures of this immensely satisfying book.

“*Past Lying*” (Atlantic Monthly, 449 pages, \$27), Val McDermid’s latest book featuring the Scottish police detective Karen Pirie, takes place in Edinburgh in April 2020. Pirie, the head of the Historic (don’t say “cold”) Cases Unit, scrambles to stay occupied during the height of the Covid lockdown. An intriguing investigation begins with a phone call from the National Library: An archivist has come across a strange

manuscript in the papers of the recently deceased crime novelist Jake Stein, “one of the pioneers of the so-called Tartan Noir school.”

The newly discovered tale bears striking similarities to the case of a young woman, Lara Hardie, who disappeared a year before and is presumed

THIS WEEK

Resurrection Walk

By Michael Connelly

Past Lying

By Val McDermid

The Watchmaker’s Hand

By Jeffery Deaver

dead. Could this manuscript, about a writer attempting the perfect crime, be a veiled confession of murder?

“*Past Lying*” contains a novel within a novel, not unlike Anthony Horowitz’s “*Magpie Murders*” (2016). Stein’s manuscript, “*The Vanishing of Laurel Oliver*,” is presented in full; the story turns on a rivalry between two crime writers who meet to play chess and envy each other’s achievements. Pirie and her partner, Daisy Mortimer, try to puzzle out the real peo-

ple behind the imagined characters. “*Jamie Cobain*” is presumably Stein; Pirie and Mortimer deduce that the second character, “*Rob Thomas*,” may be Ross McEwen, a writer whose work Mortimer knows: “*A twist every fifty pages, you know the kind of thing. But he [does] it better than most.*”

In Stein’s story, “*Jamie*” tells “*Rob*” that he’s thought of a way to commit murder without being caught—and plans to test his theory in real life, on a victim who closely resembles Lara Hardie. As Pirie and Mortimer study the manuscript, their obsession with determining the fate of Hardie intensifies. Ms. McDermid negotiates her ceaselessly exciting book’s twists like a master.

One would be hard-pressed to name a better writer of beat-the-clock thrillers than Jeffery Deaver, whose books often follow scientifically brilliant characters navigating explosive situations. “*The Watchmaker’s Hand*” (Putnam, 415 pages, \$29), his latest novel featuring the quadriplegic New York City criminalist Lincoln Rhyme, turns urban strife into a tense tick-tock narrative.

The fatal sabotage of a construction-site crane is followed by a message from a band of radicals demanding

the formation of a nonprofit to create more affordable housing: “*New York City will suffer one disaster every twenty-four hours until the corporation is created. . . . The countdown has begun.*”

Rhyme and NYPD detective Amelia Sachs, his wife and professional partner, take charge of the race to defuse the scheme. Evidence and common sense indicate that there’s more to this timebomb scenario than it seems. The sites designated by the “*Kommunalka Project*” for public housing are toxically contaminated and unfit for use. And the terrorists’ demands coincide with the detected presence in New York of Charles Vespasian Hale, alias the Watchmaker, an international villain for hire whom Rhyme has thwarted in the past.

Are the bomb threats meant to be a deadly ruse to hide another of the Watchmaker’s precision schemes? Does this latest plot involve the assassination of Rhyme, that “*grain of sand*” who so often gunks up the wheelworks of the Watchmaker’s evil machinery? Mr. Deaver’s book is an ingenious mechanism, designed to make the risks seem ever more real even as it increases the velocity of the pages being turned.

BOOKS

‘I could have been a sailor, could have been a cook / A real live lover, could have been a book . . .’ —NICK DRAKE

Troubadour of Desolation

Nick Drake

By Richard Morton Jack
Hachette, 576 pages, \$32.50

By TIM PAGE

THE WISTFUL, haunted English singer-songwriter Nick Drake (1948-74) had one of the strangest careers in the history of pop music, almost all of it posthumous.

For the first quarter-century after Drake's death—at age 26, from a drug overdose—his three difficult-to-find LPs were cherished by tiny groups of listeners who loved his gentle, ghostly voice, his distinctive mixture of folk and jazz stylings, and his elliptical lyrics. These qualities combined to evoke a sense of profound—and increasingly unreachable—melancholy, yet the best songs were also so seductively pretty that they were curiously soothing.

The rest of the world began to learn about Nick Drake in 1999, when Volkswagen chose the title track of his final album, “Pink Moon” (1972), for a hugely successful television advertisement. It was the turn of the 21st century, millions of people were discovering the internet every day, and it was easier than ever before to share enthusiasms. The commercial was played again and again on TV and online and suddenly there were postings about Drake and his music everywhere—many of them on Amazon, which was just beginning to print customer reviews. Some of these were very smart indeed. “Nick's voice,” wrote a listener, “is as harried and harrowing as [the blues singer] Robert Johnson at his lowest and his comparatively delicate guitar work provides a beautiful counterpoint.” Other neo-Drakeans got rather carried away. “If only I could have been there with you, I'd have wrapped my arms around you and pulled you out of the darkest sea,” read one testimonial.

“Pink Moon” moved from selling a few copies a year to the stature of a minor bestseller, and Drake became the subject of fascination and conjecture. Part of this was inspired by his physical inaccessibility—the tiny number of recordings, the glimpses of an ethereal young man smiling shyly through the camera from another age, not least his early death.

Roughly a decade ago, the actress Gabrielle Drake, four years older than Nick and always her brother's ardent champion, grew dismayed by the elaborate myths that had come to surround Nick's memory and then horrified when she discovered that supposed “fans” had begun to chip away at his headstone in a modest country churchyard outside Birmingham, England. She decided it was time to tie the story together, and, 40 years after Drake's death, she set out to find a worthy biographer.



YOUNG VOICE Nick Drake in 1969, the year his debut album, ‘Five Leaves Left,’ was released.

Find one she did. Richard Morton Jack's “Nick Drake: The Life” is a model of its kind—a biography that clears up dozens of mysteries and permits the reader to contemplate something larger: the lasting wonder and power of Drake's songs.

The reader should be warned in advance that this is a bleak story of dissolution, and Mr. Jack, a record producer and author, doesn't try to prettify it in the telling. He has talked to Drake's classmates and former girlfriends, his admirers and would-be promoters. And he has had access to primary materials: family letters, reports from hospitals and—perhaps most movingly—Drake's father's diary, which was commenced mostly to chronicle the struggles of his wounded son, who moved back home in his early 20s and would never again leave for long.

Drake was born in what was then Burma, where his civil-servant parents

were diligently serving the British Empire. The country declared independence in January 1948, a few months before Nick was born, and the family moved to the U.K., ending up in the West Midlands. Nick's mother, Molly, wrote poems and songs herself—a private recording of 19 miniatures, sung at the family piano in the 1950s, was released after her death in 1993.

Drake's gifts were recognized immediately by the few people who heard his songs—he began composing and singing them while still at prep school—but, overwhelmed by shyness, he did little to promote them and instead grew increasingly reclusive. Like many teenagers of the time, he was a passionate consumer of marijuana and hashish, and his behavior took on the abstraction, vagaries and blooming paranoia that are sometimes side effects of those drugs.

Friends of his from these years remembered Drake as both brilliant

and peculiar. “He'd go into reveries and be off in a corner, doggedly practicing and not communicating,” a member of his first band recalled to Mr. Jack. “The word would be ‘obsessive,’ even then.” In a final report on his young charge, Drake's school housemaster summed him up in a rueful sentence: “No one can claim to know him very well.”

After school, Drake flirted with college and bopped around Europe listening to as many musicians as he could, occasionally accepting an invitation to take the stage and play. Ashley Hutchings, a founder of the newly famous band Fairport Convention, heard one of these performances and shared a tape recording with the group's manager.

This led to Drake's first album, in 1969, made when he was barely 21. The title was “Five Leaves Left,” a coy reference to cigarette rolling papers, and it contains what might be his best song, “River Man,” a gorgeous, spacey

waft of gentle angst that is also one of the few pieces written in 5/4 time that doesn't constantly call attention to the fact. Even the song “Fruit Tree”—Drake's contribution to the self-mythologizing meditations upon one's own misunderstood genius that many young songwriters write and later destroy—has its charms.

The second album, “Bryter Layter” (1971), is more uneven: Starkly magnificent songs such as “Northern Sky” vie for attention with gloppy puddles of commercial jazz that might have escaped from a long-ago happy hour in Marin County. Great things were expected of the record, but it went nowhere, and Drake, now mostly incapable of public performance, turned down all interviews.

Then came “Pink Moon,” 11 tracks in 28 minutes of music recorded over two nights in October 1971—an austere, despairing song cycle with only a whisper of hope in its final lines. After that, Drake, who had been crashing with various acquaintances, moved back home, spent.

An ethereal young man, his haunting music, a troubled mind—and posthumous fame.

He would lie in his bed for hours, after which he would disappear for days at a time. One one point, he grabbed a rucksack and headed to Paris, showing up unexpectedly at the home of the French chanteuse Françoise Hardy, who greeted him with polite confusion—the two had only met in passing.

Drake's life grew as shadowy as his songs as he went in and out of hospitals and subjected his parents to a succession of silent treatments, verbal abuse and suicide threats. “He has really lost the courage and confidence to do anything at all,” Molly Drake wrote in a letter to a friend, noting that her son now found it impossible “even to go to a shop and buy small things like shaving cream or to go to the garage to get petrol for his car.”

It couldn't continue. On the night of Nov. 25, 1974, Nick Drake took a hefty and—Mr. Jack concludes—deliberate overdose of Tryptizol, an early antidepressant with potentially lethal side effects. A notice was posted in the church newsletter, but there were no obituaries. The young man's tribute would have to come later—and “Nick Drake: The Life” is the book we have needed.

Mr. Page is a professor emeritus of musicology at the University of Southern California and the author of “Parallel Play.” He won the Pulitzer Prize for criticism in 1997.

At Least Someone Is Listening

The Sound of the Future
By Tobias Dengel with Karl Weber

PublicAffairs, 336 pages, \$30

IT'S AN ODD quirk of technological history that the way most of us interact with computers is still via a typewriter-style keyboard or a similar virtual one displayed on a touch screen. What if there were a better way? What if we could talk to computers that were guaranteed to understand us and give us the requested information either in the form of readable text or as an image or a sound?

That's the vision of the future promoted by Tobias Dengel and his co-writer, Karl Weber, in “The Sound of the Future: The Coming Age of Voice Technology.” Mr. Dengel's company, Willowtree, was involved in the design of Vocabal AAC, an app that enables disabled people to communicate; think of it as an widely available version of Stephen Hawking's custom voice-synthesizer.

Voice control—whether for the physically impaired, or for surgeons and pilots—aims to eliminate the physical friction between user and digital helpmeet. Mr. Dengel suggests that self-contained voice-assistant boxes, such as Amazon's Echo, are a dead end because the ideal

interaction must be multimodal, offering the user a response in whatever medium, from text to video, is most appropriate.

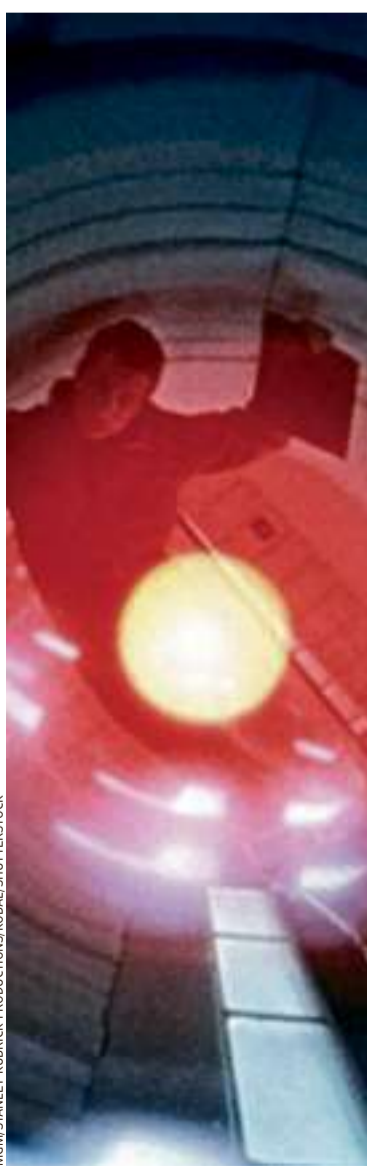
Mr. Dengel oversells voice control as the best of all possible interaction technologies: It isn't for a pianist or a draftsman. He also doesn't address the possibility (or, given the history of big tech, the near certainty) that some of the data-gathering methods he describes—using AI to diagnose potential disease by listening to the user's voice, for instance—could also be abused for surveillance or other malicious purposes.

Mr. Dengel is among the more interesting critics of the current limitations in voice technology. His research has found, for example, that most people don't actually want computer-generated speech to sound human, as that would land us in the “uncanny valley” where something feels off. Better, then, if our friendly robot interlocutors sound like something from a Daft Punk record or a more-intelligible version of R2-D2.

In science-fiction films, characters living in the future have long talked to their computers, as when Ripley quizzes Mother, the onboard mainframe in the “Alien” films. Similarly, Mr. Dengel foresees a time when real spacecraft will have onboard voice-responsive AI units. Further research will be needed to ensure that such a conversational AI actually does what the user wants, rather than responding, as the HAL 9000 does in “2001: A Space Odyssey”: “I'm sorry, Dave, I'm afraid I can't do that.”

SHORT CUTS: TECHNOLOGY

By STEVEN POOLE



LET'S TALK IT OVER HAL 9000, from ‘2001: A Space Odyssey’ (1968).

Will That Be Cash, Card Or Ape?

Tokens

By Rachel O'Dwyer
Verso, 320 pages, \$29.95

IN 2019, THE now-convicted Sam Bankman-Fried issued a new “token,” called FTT, linked to his FTX cryptocurrency exchange. Initially sold to the public at \$1, FTT peaked above \$75 before almost all its value was wiped out shortly before the firm's bankruptcy last year. But what was this token, conjured out of thin air and disappearing back into it? Was it ever a security, or money?

And what about nonfungible tokens (NFTs) such as Bored Apes, those blockchain-linked digital images of anhedonic simians? Some sold for millions, but their value (along with that of most other NFTs) has crashed this year. Were they ever real commodities, or art? Such are the questions Rachel O'Dwyer asks in “Tokens: The Future of Money in the Age of the Platform,” a fascinating exploration of things that look like money but aren't quite.

From clay tokens used by Neolithic farmers to count livestock, to videogame currencies, loyalty points and even cellphone airtime—which is used as informal money in some countries in sub-Saharan Africa—tokens were the first economy. They now fuel

a shadow economy behind the real one.

The government-issued butter vouchers of Ms. O'Dwyer's Irish childhood were officially exchangeable only for butter, but could be redeemed for cigarettes and other treats by friendly shopkeepers. Similarly, the early boosters of cryptocurrencies—a bunch of starry-eyed libertarian post-humanists—hoped Bitcoin and the like could help users evade the panopticon eye of nation-state currencies. With tokens, they thought, we could be free.

But modern tokens can just as easily be used to enforce a kind of feudalism. In many countries, freelance workers for Amazon's Mechanical Turk program are paid exclusively in Amazon gift cards—a resurgence, Ms. O'Dwyer argues, of the discredited practice of company scrip. “If you are paid in the boss's own token,” she writes, “they alone get to decide how it's used and how much it's worth.”

The author explains everything from crypto heists and the economics of online sex work to the streaming economy of emotes—a sort of animated emoji—with an amused incredulity allied to a rich source of historical analogies. A note of fatigue sets in only when she leads us round the zoo of Bored Apes and their like. “It is the kind of joke that can make you feel a bit sick of culture—even a little sick with yourself for paying attention to and writing about the culture,” she admits. Let us be grateful to her for doing so on our behalf.

—Mr. Poole is the author of “Rethink: The Surprising History of New Ideas.”

PLAY

NEWS QUIZ DANIEL AKST

From this week's Wall Street Journal

1. Miriam Adelson is selling a hunk of casino operator Las Vegas Sands to fund her family's purchase—of what team?



5. A media startup founded by Bari Weiss has flourished since Hamas attacked Israel. What's it called?

- A. The Las Vegas Raiders
B. The Las Vegas Aces
C. The Dallas Mavericks
D. The New York Yankees

- A. Common Sense
B. The Free Press
C. The Liberal Patriot
D. Vox

2. The U.N. climate conference known as COP28 got under way in Dubai. Which U.A.E. official is running it?

- A. The environment minister
B. The energy minister
C. The central bank president
D. The CEO of the state oil company

6. Who now runs America's biggest delivery business, not counting the Postal Service?

- A. UPS
B. FedEx
C. Amazon
D. Walmart

3. Henry Kissinger, who died at 100, won the 1973 Nobel Peace Prize. Name his co-winner.

- A. Le Duc Tho
B. Ho Chi Minh
C. Pham Van Dong
D. Vo Nguyen Giap

7. In Evanston, Ill., high-school students have the option of choosing something separated by race. What is it?

- A. Lunch rooms
B. Math classes
C. Sports
D. Drinking fountains

4. A record number of Americans took their own lives in 2022. About how many?

- A. 12,500
B. 25,000
C. 50,000
D. 100,000

8. Sharp-tongued investing titan Charlie Munger died at 99. Which Benjamin was his hero?

- A. Franklin
B. Graham
C. Disraeli
D. Walter

9. The population of Carmel, "the internet's favorite small city," has quadrupled since 1990. Which Carmel?

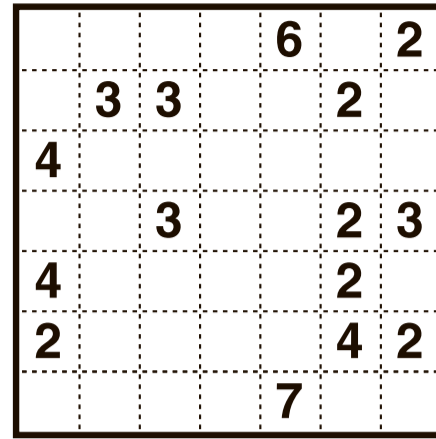
- A. California
B. Maine
C. Ohio
D. Indiana



Answers are listed below the crossword solutions at right.

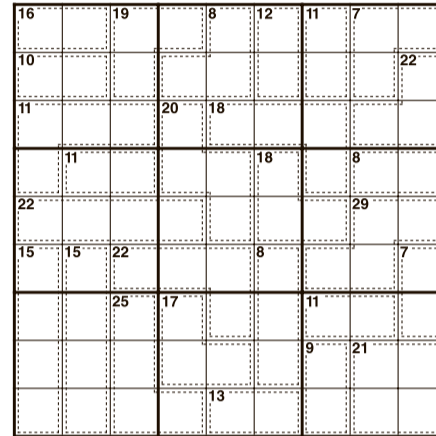
NUMBER PUZZLES

Cell Blocks



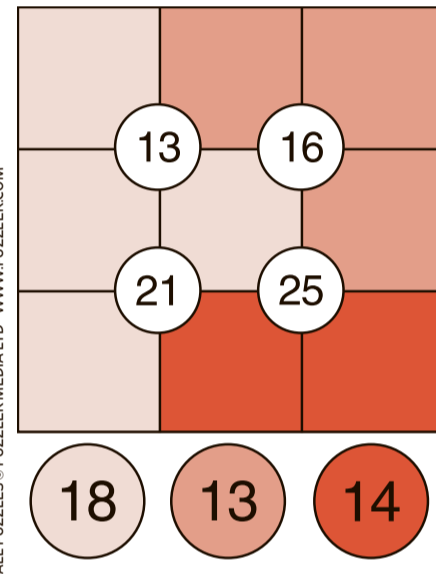
Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

Killer Sudoku Level 2



As with standard Sudoku, fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9. Each set of cells joined by dotted lines must add up to the target number in its top-left corner. Within each set of cells joined by dotted lines, a digit cannot be repeated.

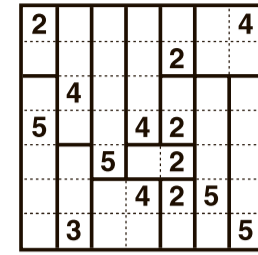
Suko



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each color total is correct.

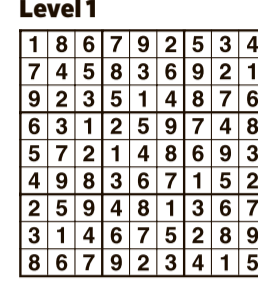
SOLUTIONS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES

Cell Blocks

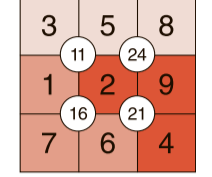


For previous weeks' puzzles, and to discuss strategies with other solvers, go to WSJ.com/puzzles.

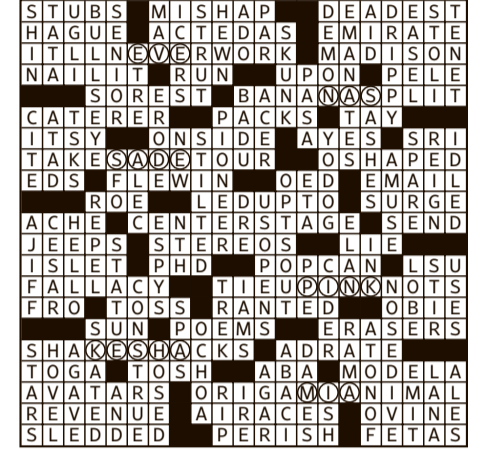
Killer Sudoku Level 1



Suko



Headliners



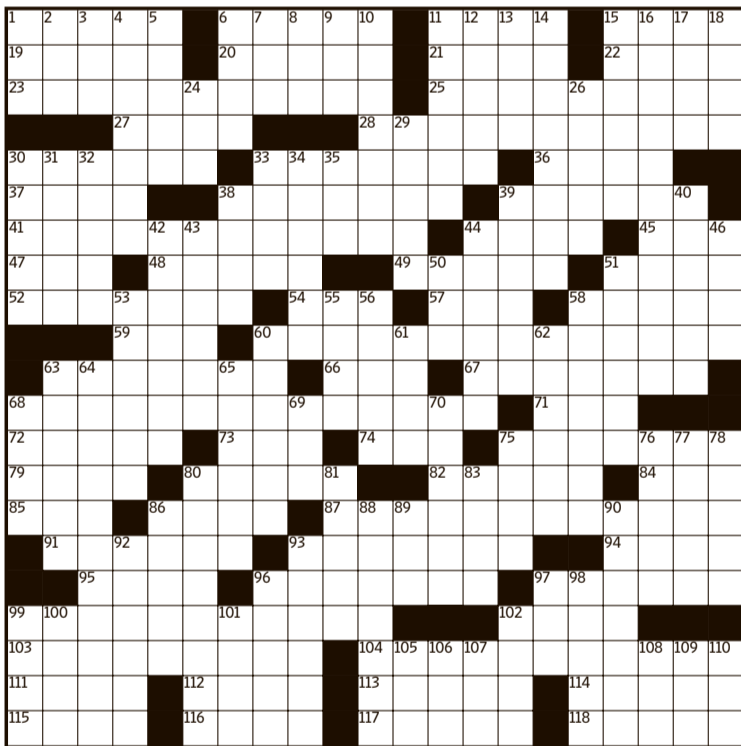
Pencil Boxes



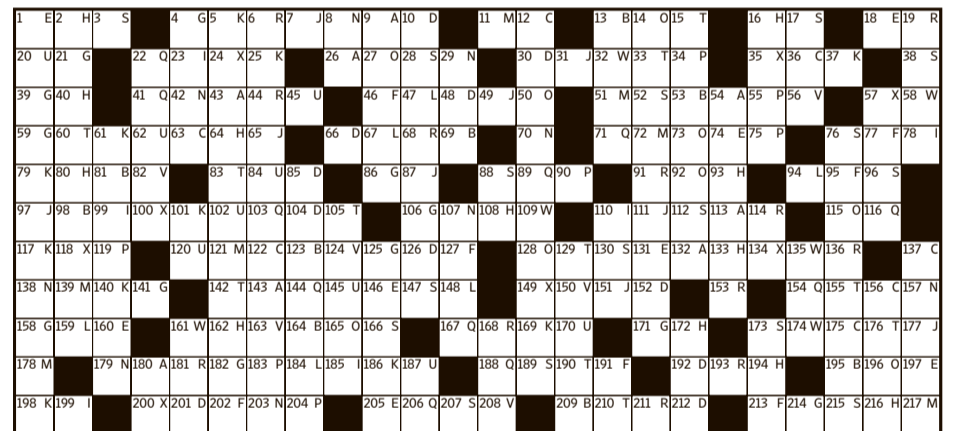
The extra letters spell THERE'S NO POINT.

Answers to News Quiz: 1.C, 2.D, 3.A, 4.C, 5.B, 6.C, 7.B, 8.A, 9.D

THE JOURNAL WEEKEND PUZZLES edited by MIKE SHENK



- 35 Hermana del padre
38 Brutish monster
39 Bitter discord
40 Couple that together "licked the platter clean"
42 Pen pals?
43 Snap, crackle and pop, e.g.
44 Cut-and-dry businesses
46 "___ fair in love..."
50 Pester persistently
51 Alpine abode
53 Finds oh-so-cute
55 Luau strings
56 Betrays weariness
58 Lothario
60 Grand theft, e.g.
61 Day divider
62 Half of a disputed account, at times
63 Medicine bottles
64 Sign at a roadwork area
65 Disappear, as a trail
68 Skin pics
69 Crime that makes MADD mad
70 Roll by
75 SAG-AFTRA president Drescher
76 "The Audacity of Hope" author
77 Send back to a lower court
78 Some RSVP replies
80 Goody diner order
81 ___ Taco (former Good Humor treat)
83 Yale rooters
86 Active bunch
88 Speaks candidly
89 Ref. that added "lamestream" and "deep state" in 2023
90 Stud setting
92 School copiers, maybe
93 Curbed
96 Shorthand pro
97 FEMA shelter sight
98 Cousins' mothers
99 Make like a hot dog?
100 "Right back ___!"
101 Representative lhan
102 Fix
105 Taoist's life force
106 Diamond score
107 Nettle
108 Heavy load
109 Low USN rank
110 "Get the point?"



Acrostic | by Mike Shenk

- To solve, write the answers to the clues on the numbered dashes. Then transfer each letter to the correspondingly numbered square in the grid to spell a quotation reading from left to right. Black squares separate words in the quotation. Work back and forth between the word list and the grid to complete the puzzle. When you're finished, the initial letters of the answers in the word list will spell the author's name and the source of the quotation.
A. Greek god of dreams
B. Lamb or mutton dish called "Stobhach Gaelach" where it originated (2 wds.)
C. Creature with colorless blood that turns bluish when exposed to air
D. 1997 David Lynch movie that includes Richard Pryor's last film appearance (2 wds.)
E. On cloud nine
F. Heated squabble, in baseball slang
G. California peak that's the highest point in the lower 48 states (2 wds.)
H. General who led the Continental Army's attack in 1779's Battle of Stony Point (2 wds.)
I. Go after
J. What a spoiler might spoil (2 wds.)
K. "West Side Story" song in which Maria claims "the city should give me its key" (3 wds.)
L. National capital located on the island of New Providence

- M. "Sea" that's the lowest freshwater lake on Earth
N. Like a power user (Hyph.)
O. Popular font originally named Neue Haas Grotesk
P. Nation whose most widely spoken language is Tigrinya
Q. Five-time NFL sacks leader nicknamed "The Secretary of Defense" (2 wds.)
R. Fishy condiment whose brands include Britain's Gentleman's Relish (2 wds.)
S. Feature of the phase marked by vivid dreams (3 wds.)
T. Island connected to Miami by the Rickenbacker Causeway (2 wds.)
U. Flower whose varieties include the daffodil and jonquil
V. Fictional six-year-old who says "Getting bored is not allowed"
W. Gesture of homage or respect
X. Person throwing away a parking ticket, say

Full-Scale Pictures | by Mike Shenk

- Across
1 Gives someone a hand
6 Classic game akin to Wordle
11 Silver-tongued
15 Coll. cadets' group
20 Call into question
21 Crazy as ___
22 Certain something
23 Extra stadium topper, in case the original needs replacing?
25 Seismometer determination
27 She followed Guthrie at Woodstock
28 Alliance of haulers?
30 Marseille minor
33 Knock for a loop
36 "Man With ___" (Millet painting)
37 Wooded valley
38 Radar's last name on "M*A*S*H"
39 Brainpower
41 Marvel vampire hunter, after a successful battle?
44 Ukrainian-born actress Anna
45 Planet Beach facility
47 Widest setting on a Brannock Device
48 Like the sacred tree Yggdrasil
49 Brushing impediment
51 Corner key
52 University of Wyoming site
54 Letters three before pis
57 Oscar winner Mahershala
58 Submerged sandbank
59 German article
60 Sending insincere valentines?
63 Mentor's mentee
66 Source of hubris
67 They might be found under a Christmas tree
68 Pair from a pawnshop?
71 Seek damages
72 Some Capitol staffers
73 Lower on the farm?
74 Longtime NBC show
75 Plant
79 Letters three after pis
80 Mixologist's mixer
82 Home on a cliff
84 Queen, e.g.
85 Utah airport code
86 As it ought to be
87 Event organizer's hopes for sensational publicity?
91 Back up
93 Successfully entices
94 Friendly fille
95 Stadium replaced with Citi Field
96 Breaks away
97 Diamond figures
99 Arc of a handmade plane?
102 2020 Pixar film
103 Command after entering the barracks, perhaps
104 Screenplay suggestions from the studio, and what's been added to the theme titles
111 Duma denial
112 Track assignment
113 Member of Kirk's bridge crew
114 Broadside, informally
115 Wee amounts
116 Walked over
117 The Brain's friend in a 1990s animated series
118 Good judgment
Down
1 "Ghosts" network
2 Allow to
3 Copying
4 Game with a Hall of Fame in Las Vegas
5 Dealership choice

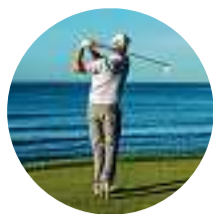
Get the solutions to this week's Journal Weekend Puzzles in next Saturday's Wall Street Journal. Solve crosswords and acrostics online, get pointers on solving cryptic puzzles and discuss all of the puzzles online at WSJ.com/Puzzles.

Publicis EtNouv

HERMÈS



it's time for a joyful show



Swing Season Is... Winter?
The best golf escapes for sun seekers **D16**

OFF DUTY

Vine Reads
What to give wine lovers who don't trust you to choose wines **D18**



FASHION | FOOD | DESIGN | TRAVEL | GEAR

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Saturday/Sunday, December 2 - 3, 2023 | **D1**



THE PATCHWORK KITCHEN In Seattle, designer Allison Lind carefully folded in marble, tile, classic cabinets—some painted, some plain—and glass doors framed in blackened steel.

RAFAEL SOLDI

A Recipe for Mix Mastery

Kitchen design often skews one-note—a chilly all-white laboratory or an onslaught of cozy traditionalism. Here, a guide to a fresh approach that combines materials, and layers in appetizing aesthetic surprises.

By SOPHIE DONELSON

I WANT a traditional kitchen—but make it cool.” Today, younger, hipper homeowners are texting designers with such seemingly irreconcilable desires. They want a look they can relate to. Not the “coastal-grandmother kitchen,” a middle-age status take on cottage white. Nor the British-style luxury sculleries by outfits like Devol that evoke “Downton Abbey.” “People are trying to transition their homes from something traditional or conventional to something more them,”

said Victoria Sass, who says her Minneapolis firm, Prospect Refuge Studio, works primarily on old homes for young families. At the same time, clients aren’t looking to break *too* many rules.

A clever designer compromise? The layered kitchen, a neo-traditional approach that artfully patches together materials and styles. Counters might be soapstone while Carrara marble tops the center island. Cabinets typically vary, too: Paint might coat the lower set, often Shaker style, while the upper set sports glass fronts edgily framed in blackened steel. Meanwhile, a stack of drawers left in their

wood-grained glory supplies another note. Next to this look, the standard monolith of same-color cabinets seems as dated as a matching lipstick, blouse and pumps.

Little Bit o’ Soul

Other rooms in the house—even our patios—benefit from the comforting mix of eras, textures and materials. But not here, where function often bullies personal style. “The kitchen is inherently a colder space because of all the hard and flat surfaces,” noted Seattle designer Alli-

Please turn to page D8

Inside



JERSEY BOYS
Hockney wore a rugby. So did Jagger. Now the sporty top gets even less sporty. **D4**



A HIGH-BRED HYBRID
Toyota’s redesigned Prius Prime is as good as a plug-in gets **D6**



YOUR VACATION IS LOOKING UP
The ultimate in dark-sky tourism? Spending a night in this observatory. **D15**



GOD SAVE GAYLE KING
20 Odd Questions for the unusually frank and admirably nosy media star **D3**

STYLE & FASHION

The Shawl Must Go On

This season, designers showcased large, luxurious scarves that enveloped models in sublime style. Here, how to replicate the coziness.

By LAURA NELSON

GIFTS AREN'T all you should be wrapping this season. If you're remotely fashion-minded, now's the time to swaddle yourself dramatically in oversize shawls and wraps. Stow away those wispy pashminas and grab one of the voluminous alternatives that billowed down fall runways, such as Michael Kors's scarves, whose fringed ends practically tickled the ground.

Consider the vast swaths of wool that draped models' entire upper bodies at Saint Laurent's fall show. For Melanie Masarin, 32, the Los Angeles founder of nonalcoholic aperitif brand Ghia, they evoke memories of her childhood in France. "It's a very common look there. My mother and grandmother have always worn wraps like this," she said. Masarin considers the desire to enrobe oneself in a scarf of outlandish proportions a reaction not just to dipping temperatures, but to the times. "I'm craving fuzzy, cozy, wrap-around knits to shield me from the news these days."

'I'm craving fuzzy, cozy, wraparound knits to shield me from the news these days.'

Some versions, such as New York brand Attersee's 64-inch alpaca style, approach blanket-like dimensions. Founder Isabel Wilkinson Schor, who finds too-short scarves vexing, said the wrap's lavish length lets her swish it around her shoulders again and again—even when she's wearing a coat. "It's a single piece that can transition seamlessly into a bunch of chapters of your day," said Schor.

And when you're weary of your wardrobe, wraps offer "an easy styling update," said Los Angeles stylist Ali Pew. "Most of us already have a large scarf—it's just about playing with how you drape it." For striking and cozy ensembles that will carry you through winter with aplomb, try any (or all) of these three draping methods.

ENVELOP, PLEASE / BIG-TIME SCARVES THAT WILL WORK OVERTIME



Wool Scarf, \$560, Toteme-Studio.com

Cashmere Scarf, \$227, LinneaLund.com

The Row Wool and Mohair Scarf, \$2,250, Mytheresa.com



Drama Drape

To emulate Saint Laurent's swaddle:
1. Hold a rectangular shawl, lifting one long end to one shoulder.
2. Toss that end over the shoulder so it hangs well down behind.
3. Bring the other long end up and, at the opposite shoulder, fasten it to the part that hangs down behind with a pin. Make the wrap's extravagant volume the star of a minimalist outfit, advised New York stylist Beverly Nguyen. "Pair it with slim black trousers and pumps for evening."



For an uncomplicated take on Hermès's chicly disheveled wraps:

1. Use a long loop scarf. Aka an infinity scarf, it's connected at both ends. Start with it draped around the body at the waist. Twist the scarf like a figure-eight.
2. Pull the resulting front loop over the head to wrap around the neck, creating a criss-cross in front. Hermès showed its wraps under monochromatic outerwear, but Pew prefers contrast. "A crisp white shirt paired with a soft, cozy overlay feels very modern," she said.

Loop D'État



Tying Game

For a look similar to this one by the Row:
1. Swoop a large square or rectangular scarf over one shoulder.
2. Tie the ends in a loose knot at the opposite-side hip. Adjust the knot height to ensure pocket access. "I love the idea of bundling yourself up like a fragile present," said Masarin. For Nguyen, the shape exudes well-traveled, bohemian vibes. "There is something nomadic in this silhouette. I'd love to see it with no pants and platform shoes," she said, nodding to the current craze for tights and leg-baring boy shorts.

JOE MCKENDRY (ILLUSTRATIONS)



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Happy Holidays

MONTBLANC

STYLE & FASHION

By SHANE C. KURUP

IN A MEMORABLE 1998 episode of "Friends," Ross Geller (David Schwimmer) agrees to play rugby with his girlfriend's burly, British ex-boyfriend to prove his "manliness." He doesn't exactly win the day. Ross, on unfamiliar turf with the game, winds up black-eyed, broken and slumped on the Central Perk sofa. The one upside? He gets to wear a yellow-and-navy rugby jersey that renders him passably sexy even when it's torn and splattered with mud.

A lot of American guys might relate. A lack of intimacy with the rough-and-tumble game hasn't stopped them from casually sporting rugby shirts over the

It's business casual with a side of 'I might tackle you in a friendly manner.'

decades. And all that time—in fact, ever since the mid-to-late 1800s—its template has barely evolved: heavy cotton base, contrasting white collar, rubber buttons, horizontal stripes. (At least in most off-field versions, not professional garb.)

But this season, a scrum of brands are upping the ruggers game, releasing winning spins on the classic style. By swapping cotton for technical, often plusher fabrics, and adding unexpected design flourishes, these takes skew cooler and sharper than the standard—injecting a jolt of suaver jockishness into work looks or night-out ensembles. Consider them a cheekier, sportier alternative to the ubiquitous knit polo. "The rugby jersey...gives the wearer an air of being athletic and young-at-heart," said Christopher Bastin, creative director at Gant, the preppy Swedish-American brand. Andrew Machado, 29, an architectural draftsman from Brooklyn who wears roomy ruggers to work, put it this way: "They're business casual with a side order of 'I might tackle you in a friendly manner.'"

"Designers are doing all sorts with the rugby shirt concept: knitted versions, patchwork, printed graphics and more," said Jack Carlson, co-founder of New York menswear brand Rowing Blazers. Carl-



ERRATA: CARMONA; GETTY IMAGES (6); JEAN-MAURIE FERREY/PHOTO; JAGGER + HARDY; ALPHA PRESS (WILLIAMS + LOMU); ALAMY (RUGBY)

Further Afield

As designers rejig rugby jerseys, new takes on the rugged cotton staples keep you comfy while projecting sophistication and playfulness

son has applied offbeat design treatments to his brand's cultish ruggys. He has doused them in psychedelic tie-dye. Swapped classic varsity chest patches for quirky embroidered motifs—in one instance, a dripping tap (pictured, far right). Not to be outdone, Umbro, a legit sports brand—and the outfitter of England's rugby team—has partnered with streetwear label Aries to create a head-turning design featuring sporty typography and a subtle, laser-applied print.

Fabric choice elevates other vanguard ruggers. The likes of Thom Browne and Gant are making tops from merino wool and mohair. Merino regulates wearers' body temperatures better than cotton and brings "a formality to the sporti-

ness," said Patrick Michael Hughes, associate teaching professor at New York's Parsons School of Design. Another convert to the new wool order, Sweden's J. Lindeberg sells a chunky ribbed-knit design (second from right) that would make mincemeat of thinner cotton styles on the field. And several brands, including Filippa K and German label A Kind of Guise (center), are turning out fancy, velvety ruggys in inky shades.

Miles Franklin, an associate in the luxury division at Sotheby's in New York, finds ruggys project the right amount of dressiness for the office. "I have to meet with clients and also move around heavy, dusty objects at the auc-

tion house," said the 23-year-old, who wears Rowing Blazers and vintage designs. "A polo feels too casual and a dress shirt too precious for manual labor, but a rugby strikes the perfect middle ground between smart and rugged." He'll "throw an untucked rugby over Ralph Lauren slacks or vintage Levi's. When it's freezing, I put a vest over the rugby."

Tempted to join the squad? Make sure your top has a slightly relaxed fit—this shouldn't be a snug garment, said Turner Allen, a New York personal stylist who dresses men in finance and tech. "Anything too fitted will make you look like you're going to the country club, which isn't what

WINNING LINEUP Updated rugby shirts. From left: a notable shoulder detail, Wales Bonner Shirt, \$490, MrPorter.com; one with buttoned cuffs, Shirt, \$690, ThomBrowne.com; dressy in velvety cotton, Shirt, \$220, AKindOfGuise.com; ribbed and woolen, Shirt, \$295, JLindebergUSA.com; finished with a tap, Shirt, \$195, RowingBlazers.com

this style's relaxed vibe is all about," he said. That doesn't mean you can't dress up your rugby shirt. For an "elegant, playful" outfit, Allen likes to pair a ruggie with high-waisted wool trousers, an unstructured blazer and pebbled-leather lace-up derbies.

Another styling move that feels fresh right now? Turn back the clock and go old-school, said Ilaria Urbinati, a Los Angeles stylist for A-listers including Chris Evans and Dwayne Johnson. "Pairing a rugby jersey with jeans, penny loafers and tube socks leans into the retro vibe the right way," she said. "It's a cute, modern look." Just keep your wardrobe's best new player well clear of muddy turf—or burly British exes.

FROM THE DIRT TO THE RUNWAY / SIX MEMORABLE MOMENTS FOR THE RUGBY SHIRT



1880s Students at England's Rugby School started wearing heavy cotton jerseys for games in the 1800s. Pictured: An early rugby-top sporter, circa 1880s.



1965 Mick Jagger, seen here with Françoise Hardy, made the preppy staple subversive. In the '80s, he favored Ralph Lauren's versions.



1971 David Hockney often wore ruggers to paint, adding "artsy" to the look's descriptors. He showed that colorful stripes go best with beat-up sneakers.



1994 Robin Williams was snapped with All Blacks legend Jonah Lomu at a promotional event in San Francisco. The two reportedly became good friends.



1995 As South Africa's president, Nelson Mandela helped unite a racially divided nation in a Springboks jersey at the World Cup final in Johannesburg.



2023 In a nod to his dad, who played for Ireland, designer Jonathan Anderson wore an Irish rugby shirt with jeans at his brand's spring show.

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The Prius Has Come a Long Way, Baby. Far Enough?

DURING THE WEEK that I had the 2024 Toyota Prius Prime—the plug-in version of Toyota’s perennial fuel sipper—I was feeling oh so transcendent. To alert pedestrians to the approach of this often-silent hatchback, the Prius Prime generates an eerily human-sounding electronic tone, like a choir-loft of castrati, growing louder then fading away as the car

picks up speed. I thought it was the Rapture but it was just five-o’clock traffic.

Having lived to a biblical age, I’ve seen some crazy things. I’ve seen the Prius—whose owners were once mocked and scorned as virtue-signaling eco-weenies—become a counterargument for fossil fuel’s defenders opposing vehicle electrification. Under the hood of the Prius

Prime is Toyota’s best argument for what it calls its “diverse approach to fighting carbon”: a high-efficiency (Atkinson cycle) 2.0-liter gas engine; two motor-generators; and a 13.6-kWh battery pack.

The numbers are compelling: During its estimated 39-44 miles of all-electric operation (up to 84 mph), its footprint is gossamer-light: 114 mpg-e. Even with a de-

pleted battery the PHEV gets superior fuel economy: 50/47/48 mpg, city/highway/combined. Nor is it slow of foot. With a combined output of 220 hp and 139 lb-ft, the hybrid powertrain can sling the five-seat hatchback to 60 mph in 6.6 seconds, says Toyota. It is also quicker to charge than other PHEVs, capable of Level 2 charging (240V) and a nominal recharge time of about 4 hours.

Here then, it would seem, are many of the potential benefits of an electric car—cleaner and cheaper daily mobility, by way of daily charging, at home or work—without the range anxiety. If

increased performance.

Gasoline, electrons, whatever—the secret to the Prius Prime’s hummingbird-like appetite is its relatively light weight. Our test car weighs 3,571 pounds, and that includes the 287-pound battery (and optional solar roof), as well as what must be a couple hundred pounds of upsell, including: power liftgate, 19-inch wheels, 360-degree cameras, eight-speaker JBL audio system, Wi-Fi hotspot, wireless charging, six USB-C ports, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

The PHEV version works so well only because the Prius is heroically light to

ELECTRIC SLIDE With an estimated range of 550-600 miles, the Prius boasts impressive numbers.

host to take five, already? It’s clear that slinky styling was a priority for the fifth-gen’s design team, even if it came at the expense of some overall efficiency. I note that the car’s coefficient of aerodynamic drag—a good but not great 0.27 Cd—is unchanged from the previous generation. Essentially, the designers traded fractional gains in miles and mpg for more sex appeal. I second that emotion.

Compared to the interior of the first Prius I drove back in 2003—with its widdle shifter doodad poking out of the dash—the test car’s cabin, trimmed in fabulous faux leather with two-tone contrasting insets, looked like a sci-fi movie set. The shallowly banked, multilayered dash console is moored in pools of ambient lighting, above which hovers a 12.3-inch touchscreen display.

Among the familiar landmarks are the smallish steering wheel (leather-wrapped and heated in the XSE package) in its own gimbaled column mount; and the driver’s information center directly ahead of the wheel, under its own hooded binnacle. The shifter doodad is now in the center console. Also familiar to the touch is the car’s obvious and programmatic lightweighting of cabin materials and textiles, a tactile quality like technical backpacking equipment.

Mass optimization has its trade-offs. As long as the 161-hp electric motor is pulling this little car around—I saw 35 miles of electric range in mixed city driving in ECO mode—the Prius feels sweet, stout and resolute, sing-singing softly under acceleration and braking. The driving is surprisingly EV-like, including strong regen braking effect. At highway speeds, wind and road noise is moderate. Usually it’s just you and the seraphim.

But when the 2.0-liter inline-four gas engine does kick in, it’s kind of a shock, an experiential wind shear, turning the car from a whispering glider to a buzzy biplane. The lack of isolation from the entrained 2.0-liter has the effect of making one wish it were running on battery again. Touché.

Other demerits: The Prius Prime is not available with all-wheel drive. The hybrid battery pack intrudes into the space where the standard Prius with AWD puts its rear-mounted electric motor.

As PHEVs go, the Prius Prime is the best of the bunch, and the best looking short of a Ferrari. But after a week, I can see it’s not right for me. If I’m plugging in at home anyway, with the object of not using gas, why am I toting around the internal-combustion engine? For the occasional and unexpected trip of more than 300 miles? That’s some expensive insurance.

Eventually we’ll all be singing from the same hymnal.

Compared to the interior of the first Prius I drove back in 2003, the test car’s cabin looked like a sci-fi movie set.

an owner needs to go farther, the gas engine is there to serve. In fact, with an EPA-estimated total range of 550-600 miles, depending on trim, the Prius Prime is a regular bladder-buster. It should come with a motor-man’s helper.

But I caution consumers against assuming all PHEVs are as sensible and sufficient as Toyota’s hybrid masterpiece. Most are in fact clumsily engineered, with too much weight and power, too little EV range and too much system overhead for the benefits. In many PHEVs, any efficiency that might have been extracted was consumed by

start with, weighing as little as 3,097 pounds in non-PHEV FWD trim.

It was never much of a looker before now. The fifth design generation cleaves the air with the deeply sloping “hammerhead” hood, Toyota calls it, separating the headlight assemblies like the eyes of a shark. The judges would have also accepted “wood planer.” The silhouette rises to the broad, dramatically raked windshield, over the low roof and onto an aero-sporty, Kamback-style hatch.

I confess, Father, I’d drive it just for the looks. Now, would you tell the angelic



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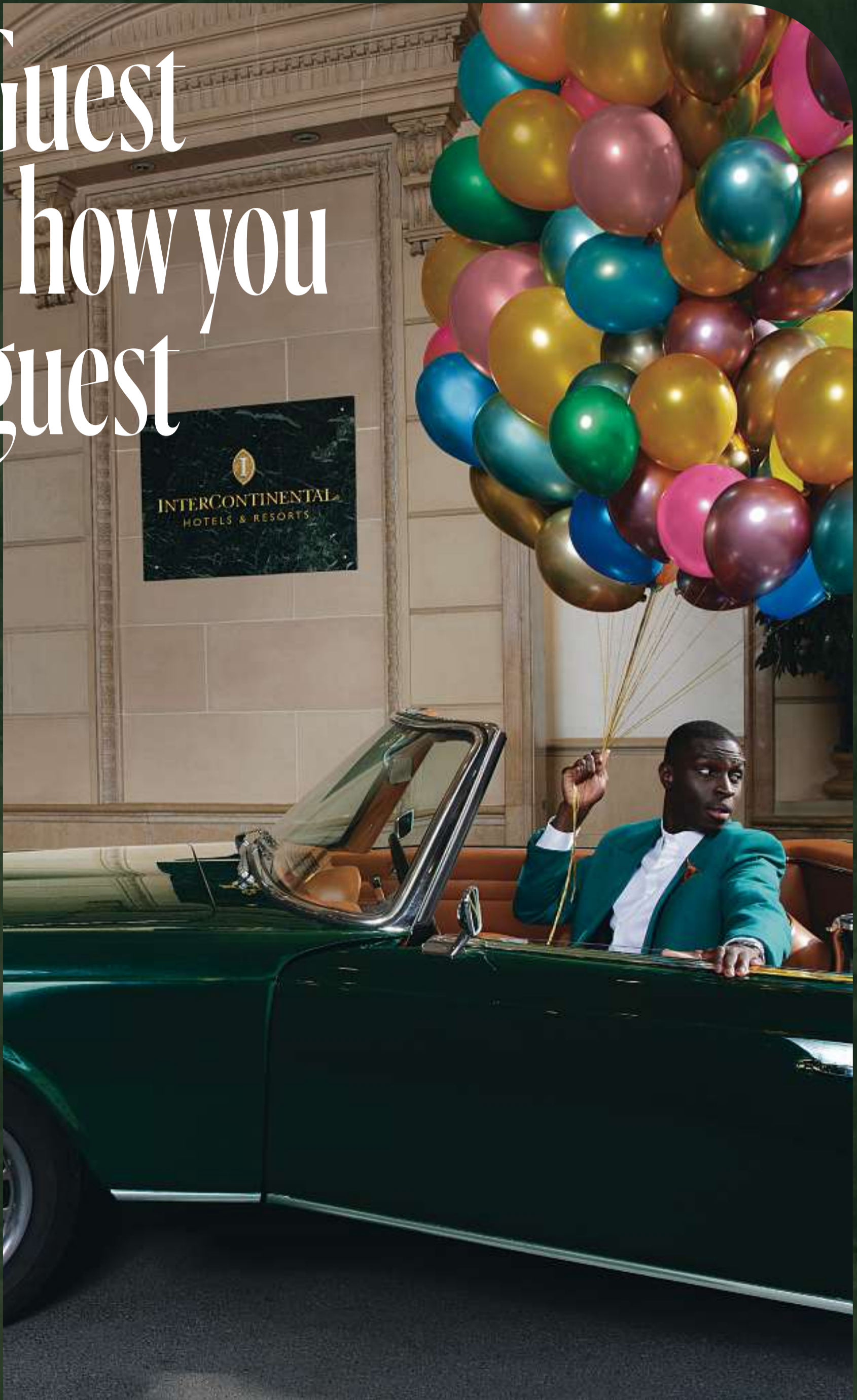
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Curb weight 3,571 pounds
0-60 mph 6.6 seconds
EPA fuel economy 50/47/48 mpg, city/highway/combined; 114 mpg-e
Cargo capacity 20.3/26.7 cubic feet (seat backs up/down)

Curb weight 3,571 pounds
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DESIGN & DECORATING

The Alternative to One-Dimensional Kitchen Design

Continued from page D1
son Lind. Even paneling the clinical appliances to look like cabinets doesn't bring enough warmth to the party. "When it's the same material, it's a big lump, a big mass, and it feels antiseptic," said Mélanie Cherrier of Blanc Marine Intérieurs, a Montreal firm with dozens of layered kitchens in its portfolio. "Using contrast and materials with textures—this makes the space feel more collected, more soulful."

"Kitchen design used to be: Make a recipe and follow it," said Meg McSherry, a designer in Newton, Mass. "This is your marble, this is your hardware, one style of pull and one knob." In a recent project McSherry used

Distinguishing the neo-traditional kitchen from its forebears? A chic dash of black.

brass hardware of different styles, from bin pulls to simple knobs, on cabinet doors that were equally diverse. "Kitchens are getting more flexible now," she said. "They're less perfect, more human."

The Secret Sauce

This hybrid style alludes to the early-20th-century American kitchen, with its free-standing stove, Hoosier cabinet and central prep table. And the look owes more than a nod to the plucky charm of the unfitted British country kitchen, with its richly painted cupboards, hanging copper pots and skirted sinks. Another of the layered kitchen's frequent ingredients—inset cabinet doors, i.e., those that sit flush with the cabinet frame—have long been a hallmark of European millwork.

One recurring element distinguishes the neo-traditional kitchen from its forebears: a chic dash of black, like the lines that ground the modernist grid of a Piet Mondrian painting. For example, in the project shown above, Lindsay Mens, of TOM Design Studio in Toronto, welcomed the high contrast of a blackened-steel range hood and inky cabinet fronts when she transformed a cookie-cutter builder-grade kitchen for homeowner Lesley-Anne Morris. "With the



GRID IS GOOD 'I'm tired of seeing walls, range hood and waterfall-style island countertop all in marble. It's cold and uninviting,' said Lindsay Mens of TOM Design Studio in Toronto. She shook up this kitchen with a patchwork of white oak, seed glass and ebony.



Elevate a kitchen's design with black bar chairs. Ton Era Stool, \$595, [dwr.com](#)

black, I wanted to push myself a little bit. The house needed it," said Morris. "I knew we couldn't go all black, but..." Said designer McSherry of the judicious injection of pitch, "It's a conservative way to dip your toe into the world of dark-and-moody without having regret."

If the Shoe Fits

Designers argue that the ballooning size of the contemporary kitchen calls for this masterfully motley design approach. "A large kitchen with a single cabinet style feels intense and overwhelming en masse," said Lind. "It's a visual punch in the face." Even white bead-board, so cozy in a 10-foot-square cottage kitchen, reads cold in today's typical newly built kitchens, which average 240 to 280 square feet, according to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB).

In the 460-square-foot kitchen that Lind renovated for a Seattle couple who work in tech, she staved off monotony with a mashup of Calacatta Oro marble and hand-painted terracotta tile, painted and unpainted millwork and casement-window cabinet fronts in blackened steel, as essential to the look as Chrissie Hynde's punky black eyeliner is to hers.

Open floor plans also argue for this strategy. Despite the brief, pandemic-led rallying cry for the privacy that rooms with doors afford, the kitchen-dining-living area persists in renovations and new builds, says NAHB. If the three spaces don't talk to one another at all aesthetically, you're stuck with a jarring transition: "There's a big-ass white cabinet and then your family room begins," said McSherry. In the layered kitchen she recently completed, she outfitted unpainted built-ins with latches and swing pulls so they'd feel more like free-standing antiques, bridging the cabinets with furniture

in the rest of the house.

Cherrier, of Blanc Marine Intérieurs, integrates kitchens into an open plan by repeating materials. "We'll do brass knobs on the kitchen cabinets, and then brass lamps in the living room and little vintage accessories, like a vase or object, in brass so that the eye flows around the space."

A Few Key Pieces

TOM designer Mens particularly bemoans all-marble kitchens, in which the stone shows up in walls, a waterfall-style island countertop, even a range hood. "I wonder, 'Where's the deeper thought, where's the part that connects to the person living there?'" she said.

Forging that link needn't require a total overhaul. When Mens helped Morris personalize her new-build home, she focused her budget on a few key pieces that changed the kitchen's character with no need to move waste lines or lay new floors. In place of wall-mounted upper cabinets, Mens flanked the blackened-steel range hood with two shallow cabinets designed to sit directly on the countertop and extend to the ceiling, for an old-world look. Made of white oak and bubbly seed-glass, the units cost \$2,500 each, she estimates. Accessories like rattan bar stools and earthenware jugs did the rest of the work, says Mens.

"The older and vintage-looking pieces give some soul to the room, something you can connect to," said Mens. "If you can't incorporate wood into the built environment, find accessories like turned wood bowls or a huge breadboard." Assures Lind, "There's always room to make your kitchen feel happier, more comfortable or more inspiring for you. I don't think anything is hopeless."

Shortcuts: No Contractor Required

No need to gut reno your kitchen to nudge it toward a more layered look. Here, a few light-touch refreshes that will inject some of the style's spirit.

SHAKE UP THE ISLAND

Painting the centerpiece a green-blue that feels historic added a dynamic note to a Minneapolis kitchen, below, by Victoria Sass of Prospect Refuge. To determine what other elements might benefit from a different color or material choice, Sass suggests you have a look around your kitchen for sections that could be happily segmented off—say an appliance wall or a drop zone for coats and bags. "A run of one function should stay together, but if there's...a change in elevation or depth of cabinetry, that's an opportunity to do something else," she advised.

PAINT YOUR TILE BACKSPLASH

New York designer Todd Raymond recently updated a Hudson Valley kitchen by painting the cabinets black, swapping in leather door pulls and executing a low-fuss tweak that most people could handle as a DIY project. "Instead of replacing the tile backsplash, we painted the tiles," he said. "Epoxy paints can be used for these exact situations in kitchens or bathrooms so that the finish stays wipeable and easy to clean."

SUBTRACT, DON'T ADD

Though few think of it, creating negative space can up a

kitchen's interest.

Interiors stylist Sarah Storms tore out the upper cabinets at her Maine house to introduce breathing room and space for a slim shelf of art and treasures. She doesn't miss the storage. "The pressure cooker, seltzer maker—all of it went to Goodwill. We need so much less than we thought," she said. The fairly minor demo and repair job yielded a big change. "I'd rather take the extra few minutes to reheat my soup on the stove than in a microwave if it means I can set out...a piece of art where an ugly black box would have been."

SWITCH IN SOME PITCH

You can paint cabinets black. You can blacken a range hood. Or you can strategically introduce an item in the sooty hue. A kitchen by designer and blogger Vanessa Francis, based in Milton, Ontario, features walnut-stained wood, sage-green millwork and reeded-glass cabinet fronts. The touch of ebony? Four bentwood, Thonet-style bar stools coated in matte black paint and arrayed around the island. "What does black bring to the room? It elevates it," said Francis, adding, "Calm is good, but too calm is boring."

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GRAND AND CENTRAL An island gussied up with historic paint and Arts and Crafts paneling brings personality to a kitchen by Prospect Refuge Studio, in Minneapolis.

Exploring Europe

Special Advertising Feature



RETURN TO BEAUTY



PHOTOS COURTESY OF REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES

Regent's Seven Seas Explorer is setting sail across Europe in 2024. Sorrento, Italy, is just one of the many beautiful places it will visit next spring and summer (top). The beauty of Rome and its triumphal arches have delighted travelers for hundreds of years (bottom left). The Vatican is one of Rome's most visited places. Regent's shore excursion leaders take guests there at times when they can avoid the biggest crowds (bottom right).



Regent's Seven Seas Voyager will stop at the island of Santorini this spring, during a Spotlight on Wine tour, for guests to sample Greek wine.



Ancient ruins, like these on the Greek island of Rhodes, have been portrayed in paintings and photographs for centuries.



The island of Capri is famous for its Blue Grotto, seafood restaurants and steep cliffs like these.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises offers luxurious opportunities to escape and rejuvenate

by Julie Bennett

Feeling besieged by world events and out of tune with nature and beauty? Taking a trip may not change the world, but a Regent Seven Seas Cruises® journey to ancient capitals along the beauty of the Mediterranean coastline can help travelers retune their spirits.

And they'll certainly get to sample lots of wine. Regent Seven Seas has scheduled 103 cruises to southern Europe through 2026, and all feature gourmet foods and wines. But two Epicurean Spotlight cruises next year put a particular focus on visiting local vineyards and tasting many varieties.

A third cruise, Spotlight on Fabergé, will connect travelers to fine art. It sails from Rome on July 1, 2024, ends in Monte Carlo on July 10, and celebrates the first Fabergé egg designed for a cruise ship. Regent recently announced that Sarah Fabergé, great-granddaughter of Peter Carl Fabergé, the jeweler who first designed the bejeweled egg-shaped ornaments for Russian czars, will be the godmother of its newest ship, Seven Seas Grandeur.

Sarah will christen the Seven Seas Grandeur in Miami this month and host the art-focused Spotlight cruise next summer, where she will tell guests about her family's company and the history of its renowned eggs. Regent's Fabergé egg, named *Journey in Jewels*, is the centerpiece of the Seven Seas Grandeur's multimillion-dollar collection of over 1,600 pieces that will transform the ship into a unique floating art museum.

The curated collection includes lithographs by Pablo Picasso; *The Enchanted Tree*, a 40-foot-tall tapestry by Walter Goldfarb; and *Water in Dripping* — *Waterfall*, a sculpture by Zheng Lu. "Guests booking this voyage are art lovers, collectors and those with a taste for the finer things," says Jennefer Teegen, director of guest experience and loyalty for Regent Seven Seas Cruises. "Guests will have access to small-group master-class programs, unique and intimate shoreside tours, jeweled egg demonstrations and fascinating lectures and screenings."

PICTURE PERFECTION

Beauty will abound on shore as well, because the Seven Seas Grandeur will stop in several of the Mediterranean's most picturesque ports, including Valletta, the tiny walled city that serves as the capital of the island nation Malta. Regent's fares are all inclusive and offer dozens of shore excursions, including a walking tour of Valletta

Continued on Page D10



The Greek island of Corfu contains winding medieval roads that take travelers past charming houses, like the one above.



Valencia, Spain, is known for its beaches, but serious travelers will find its cathedral, dating back to the 13th century, equally enticing.

The Wall Street Journal news organization was not involved in the creation of this content.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF REGENT SEVEN SEAS CRUISES

Compass Rose, the main dining room on the Seven Seas Grandeur, Regent's newest ship, has a soaring and decorative ceiling, similar to those in southern Europe's cathedrals.



Is there a better place in the world to taste wine than this cellar in Tuscany? Regent's Spotlight on Wines tours enable guests to try varietals from several European regions (above). This hidden beach on the Italian island of Capri is waiting for sunbathers. Will you be among them this summer (right)?

Continued from Page D9



and the 16th century towns of Senglea and Vittoriosa, plus a cruise around Malta's Grand Harbor, once the landing place for pirates, Ottoman Turks and Napoleon's army.

Seven Seas Grandeur guests will celebrate the Fourth of July in style, with a stunning view of Mount Etna from Taormina, Sicily. On an excursion called Sicilian Wine Roads, they will tour the Cottanera Estate and its vineyards that hug the base of the volcano and thrive in its soil. And, of course, they'll have the chance to sample its wines and local snacks.

In Barcelona, Spain, Seven Seas Grandeur guests can opt to see the architecturally artistic city from above, via a cable car that takes them up the slopes of Montjuic, a hill that provides panoramic views. The trip includes a stop at El Poble Espanyol, a traditional Spanish village built for the 1929 International Exposition that was so charming it is still preserved.

WINE COUNTRIES

Wine lovers, or travelers who simply wish to know more about wine, may book cruises next April or May that put an epicurean spotlight on wine and offer stops in less-visited southern European ports.

The Seven Seas Splendor leaves Barcelona on April 14 and makes stops at vineyards and quaint villages in Spain, France and Italy before reaching Rome on April 24. The owners of a sustainable winery in Sonoma, California, will be on board to introduce guests to their wines and help them explore the local varietals. While dedicated wine connoisseurs may want to sample vintages in every port along the way, some guests may prefer to seek out natural beauty instead.

In Mallorca, an island off the coast of Spain, for instance, they can ignore the touristy harbors, shops and beach resorts and travel to Soller, an unspoiled village set within pine forests and dramatic mountains. Guests will ride back to port in Palma De Mallorca on a vintage wooden tram from 1912, passing enchanting farms and villages along the way.

Or they can stay in Palma de Mallorca and visit Le Seu, the city's spectacular Gothic cathedral, before traveling inland to an historic winery near the village

of Binissaleem. After viewing the grapes and learning about how they grow there, guests will sample the wines and local foods.

How do the wines of Spain compare with those of Provence, France? Aficionados can decide for themselves a couple of days later when the Seven Seas Splendor docks in Saint-Tropez, on an excursion to the hilltop village of Gassin and a family-run chateau where fine wine has been crafted for generations.

GOING BACK IN TIME

A highlight while visiting the Italian Riviera is a cruise on a small boat along its stunning coastline — and one is available to guests in Portofino, Italy. Besides viewing colorful towns and rocky vistas, guests can disembark to walk around an isolated abbey and through a fishing village. On the return trip to the Seven Seas Splendor, guests will be served the region's local bread and, of course, its wines.

Another Spotlight on Wine cruise sails from Istanbul to Athens next May 8 to May 15 on the Seven Seas Voyager. It can't summon the Greek sea gods, but it can take travelers to places where they were worshiped.

The ancient city of Ephesus was founded in the 4th century B.C., then taken over by the Romans in 133 B.C. Today, it is a UNESCO World Heritage site in Turkey — and one of the first stops on this Seven Seas Voyager cruise. Highlights include the facade of one of the world's first libraries, the Library of Celsus, from 125 A.D., and the 25,000-seat Great Theater. This shore excursion includes lunch with a local family and a visit to a coffeehouse to sample Turkish coffee.

Travelers who prefer sipping wine can learn about Greek vintages onboard from guest lecturers, including the father and son owners of a winery in Sonoma, then sample them on the Greek island of Santorini. In addition to visiting a local winery, guests can take a fishing boat to Nea Kameni, a tiny lava rock island where they can climb to the crater of a still-active volcano.

LOCAL LUXURY

While corruption, warring city states and the plague shook Italian life in the Middle Ages, aristocrats escaped the chaos by building elaborate and colorful villas on the shores of two Alpine lakes, Como and Maggiore. Travelers on select Regent cruises can visit those stunning lakes too, via a Regent pre- or post-cruise land program.

"Guests love the immersive land programs Regent offers," says Janay Ford, the cruise line's senior specialist in guest experiences. "They allow guests to explore the destination even longer. Some guests use them to adjust to the new time and region before their cruises or extend their travels when their cruises are over. It's almost like two vacations in one. The Lake Como land program, available after the Fabergé Spotlight Cruise, is a very special one we haven't offered before, and it is already very popular among travelers planning European cruises in 2024."

All Regent land programs are led by carefully selected English-speaking guides and feature stays at top hotels and the unmatched service Regent guests expect. On the Lakes Como and Maggiore trip, guests will boat past villas built hundreds of years ago and enjoy the botanical gardens commissioned by their owners. They will also visit the village of Bellagio to shop or look for celebrities.

"Regent cruises reach over 500 destinations worldwide, and because our ships are smaller, we can reach destinations not accessible to larger ships and provide exclusive experiences," Teegen reports. "Many of our guests take multiple cruises and book them years in advance. But some can be booked only days before a departure, depending on availability."

New adventures and friendships await. "I am always surprised to hear about the relationships our guests develop with one another on long voyages," Ford observes. "They keep in contact outside of Regent and plan to cruise together again."



Regent's newest ship, Seven Seas Grandeur, will be launched this month, with over 1,600 artworks aboard. Paintings, sculptures, tapestries, sketches and photographs by famous artists decorate the ship's dining rooms, hallways and other common areas. They include: Homage to Joan Prats, by Joan Miró (top left); a photograph by Monica Perez (bottom left); Light or Half Dark, a photogravure by Judy Pfaff (center); and II Uno, by Spanish artist Eduardo Arranz-Bravo (right).



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The iconic sites of Europe and its delicious foods are available to enjoy in 2024 on one of Oceania Cruises' many European voyages. The whimsical architecture of Antoni Gaudi surprises tourists in Barcelona (left). And it's hard to tell what's prettier in Copenhagen — the colorful buildings along every canal (top right) or the delectable food, like these open-faced sandwiches (bottom right).

by Julie Bennett

When we dream of Europe, we see luscious food and striking castles. Combine these images with an Oceania Cruises adventure next spring or summer, and you may end up touring a controversial glass tower in Spain with an architectural historian or dining on New Nordic cuisine in the company of a real Nordic chef.

Oceania Cruises' eight midsize ships — four of which hold 670 guests while the other four carry up to 1,250 passengers each — are known for their high-quality dining. "Oceania Cruises was created by foodies and is run by foodies, for foodies," says its president, Frank A. Del Rio. "The company was created to connect people with other people, food and culture. Cuisine and travel bring people together. Individually, each passenger creates lasting and memorable connections; together, they provide the very heart and foundation of our company."

TOP CHEFS

Since 2003, master chef Jacques Pépin, known for his many cookbooks and television programs, has served as Oceania Cruises' executive culinary director. He and his staff recruit onboard chefs from restaurants around the world. During each cruise, they gather ingredients from local markets, fishermen and other purveyors along the way, and put their own spin on local recipes. Each ship has a main dining room, plus all-inclusive specialty restaurants, like Jacques on the Marina and Riviera ships, that serve classic French bistro food in rooms decorated with furnishings and art from Pépin's personal collection.

Yearning for the tender octopus appetizers you can only find in southern Europe? An octopus carpaccio with champagne vinaigrette is waiting in the Toscana restaurants, serving Tuscan food on six Oceania Cruises ships. Hand-rolled gnocchi and linguine cioppino are also on the menu when the ships sail along the Italian coast, and fresh local fish, prepared to your order, is available every evening in the Terrace Cafe.

Dedicated foodies can do more than just eat. At several ports, they can take a Culinary Discovery tour and follow their ship's chefs into local markets and learn to prepare local recipes back onboard in the ships' Culinary Centers. Culinary tours in Europe include a visit to a cooking school and organic farm outside Cork, Ireland, and a tour of a fish farm near Koper, Slovenia.



Foodies can join one of Oceania Cruises' Culinary Discovery tours, where they'll follow their ship's chef into local markets, like this one in Barcelona, and learn to cook local recipes back onboard in the ship's Culinary Center.

But the ultimate foodie experience is in Denmark, where guests on cruises that stop in Copenhagen — including a 10-day cruise from Copenhagen to Tromsø, Norway, that begins on July 26, 2024 — will be introduced to what many critics say is the best food in the world.

SEE THE SIGHTS

Besides its food, Oceania Cruises is known for its creative shore excursions and stops at less-visited ports. "European cruising is not just about the Mediterranean," Del Rio notes. A northern Europe cruise will take you to spectacular fjords, stunning port towns and unusual places like the Orkney Islands and Guernsey.

For those who do want to linger in the Mediterranean, Oceania Cruises recently revamped 42 itineraries to offer more stops along southern European coastlines. Many guests opt for cruises that take them back to the cities they love, like Athens and Rome, enjoying them

again from a luxury Oceania Cruises suite. A 10-day cruise from Athens to Barcelona departing on July 24 makes stops in Mykonos, Santorini and Crete in Greece; Sicily, Capri, Rome and Florence in Italy; Saint-Tropez in France; and Barcelona in Spain.

In addition to a full roster of shore excursions to beaches, markets and museums, Oceania Cruises offers a wide selection of exclusive excursions curated by the company's destination specialists. Go Local tours introduce guests to local residents and cultures; Go Green tours spotlight energy conservation and sustainable projects around the world; and Beyond Blueprints tours immerse participants in a region's architecture.

Beyond Blueprints, Barcelona, for example, provides an architectural historian to lead guests through Torre Glòries, a controversial new skyscraper with a bullet-shaped tower, and the triangular-shaped Forum Building near the city's famous Ramblas. The tour also includes information-filled walks around the exteriors of Antoni Gaudi's Sagrada Familia, which has been under construction since 1882, and the soaring Gothic Cathedral of Barcelona.

Oceania Cruises is offering a total of 335 cruises in 2024, spanning from seven days to its 180-day world cruise, but that's mostly sold out. The line's newest ship, the Vista, features a 35-day trip sailing from Miami to Trieste starting in March. Lastly, among its always-on value promises you will find the company's "simply MORE" campaign, which adds two-for-one cruise fares; free airfare with airport transfers; complimentary vintage champagne, premium wine and international beer during lunch and dinner; and a shore excursion credit of up to \$1,600 per stateroom for guests across all sailings, not just Europe. *Check its website at oceaniacruises.com for details.*

Julie Bennett is a freelance writer specializing in franchising, small business and lifestyle issues.



Explore less-visited ports, like Alesund, Norway, aboard one of Oceania Cruises' trips to northern Europe.



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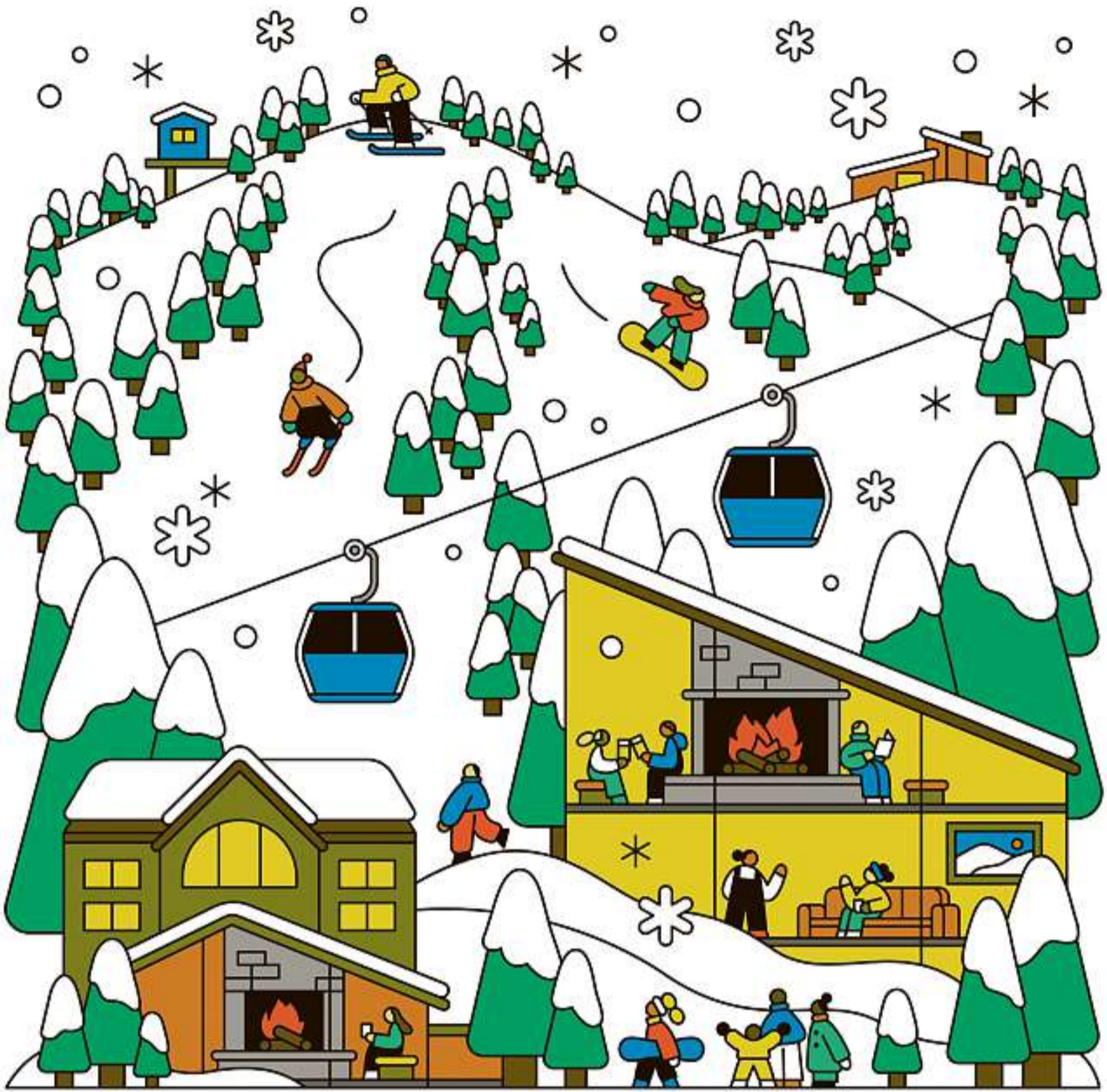


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BEST SKI RESORTS

RANKING THIS WINTER'S MOST POPULAR MOUNTAINS FOR SKIERS AND SNOWBOARDERS

We pored over measurable metrics at hundreds of North American winter resorts, from skiable acres and snowfall to hot-tub density and the concentration of craft breweries. From there we produced even more tailored lists, with families, ambitious experts and regional loyalists in mind.

Here's our ranking of the best ski resorts in the U.S. and Canada.



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ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

Need a 1,114-Star Hotel?

An Arizona observatory takes stargazing to the next level by welcoming overnight visitors

By Bob Davis

FROM THE TOP of Kitt Peak National Observatory, just 50 miles from downtown Tucson, the autumn night sky blazed; the Milky Way was so dense with stars it looked like a luminescent cloud. Jupiter shone like a beacon—so bright I wondered how I'd never noticed it before. And that was before we were directed to the telescopes.

After lifetimes in cities where urban lights blot out the night sky, my wife, Deb, and I have sought out stargazing opportunities. Count us among the many who have popularized so-called dark-sky tourism, in which star seekers travel to find better viewing conditions.

On an astronomer friend's urging, we set our sights on the ultimate stellar experience: a night at an astronomy center, guided by a telescope pro, with access to professional equipment. For that, we booked a night at Kitt Peak, among the nation's premier optical observatories and a rare one that's open to the public overnight. Kitt Peak's overnight program, launched around 1998, allows for a maximum of four guests, so we brought two friends along. The package included dinner, at the campus cafeteria, and lodging, in a dormitory that resembled a 1950s roadside motel. Total price: \$1,350.

After we arrived midafternoon, our host, Mike Murray, gave us a tour of the campus with its massive domed observatories. At sunset, the sky turned peach over the mountainside and, facing clear skies and a moonless night, we began a night of stargazing.

A retired rocket engineer and astronomy buff, Murray tended to steer conversations toward the scientific not the poetic. He ex-



CHECK IN TO OUTER SPACE Arizona's Kitt Peak National Observatory is a rare astronomy center that lets star seekers spend the night

plained, in painstaking detail, how telescopes worked, along with the particulars of star clusters. Before we arrived, he'd sent us a 40-page menu of sorts, with pictures of the galaxies—enormous spheres, spirals and clusters—we could potentially see. But once we were there, dwarfed by the heavens, we let him take the wheel and choose his favorite highlights.

I asked to take a closer look at Jupiter which had so wowed my naked eye.

Although astronomers complain about the background light from Tucson and Phoenix, they still consider Kitt Peak a top research site because of its good "seeing." In scientific terms, this means the air circulates over the 6,900-foot-high campus gently enough to minimize atmospheric distortions. Local astronomers brag that stars don't twinkle over Kitt Peak—undesirable "twinkling," you see, signals a turbulent atmosphere.

We started at a building the size of a small ranch house whose flat roof retracted, leaving us fully open to the sky. Peering through a telescope with a 16-inch-diameter mirror—small by Kitt Peak's standards—I spied a cluster of stars so brilliant that it looked like an enormous LED light had taken root in the middle of the galaxy. I was looking at M13, Murray explained, a galaxy discovered in 1714 by Edmund Halley, the astronomer with the famous namesake comet. Next up: M31, another web of stars. It lacked M13's luminance but seemed to contain many more thousands of suns.

I asked Murray if we could take a closer look at Jupiter which had so wowed my naked eye. Through the telescope, I saw brown bands cutting across the planet, enormous gaseous winds that whip through the Jovian atmosphere.

Though we had plenty more we wanted to see and Murray made it clear he'd happily stay up with us all night, problems soon arose. Without warning, the telescope stopped moving. Murray fiddled with the computer program and tried shaking the counterweights to restart it. No dice. Nearly alone on the mountaintop, with no on-hand telescope technician to save us,

we admitted defeat.

We moved over to a domed telescope with a larger, 20-inch-diameter mirror that could see even fainter objects. We spotted Pluto and, a crowd favorite, Saturn, which appeared as a white sphere encircled by white rings. "It looks like a kid's sticker," said Lucy Hornby, one of our friends. "So darn cute," said Deb. I could imagine Superman flying around what I saw.

Every time the dome moved, it sounded like roller coaster cars making a sharp turn. After a while though, this telescope stopped functioning, too. Murray once again tried various computer tricks. None worked.

Kitt Peak says the malfunctions are partly due to the observatory ramping up its visitor services so quickly after its pandemic shutdown and says it offers dissatisfied customers refunds. The observatory sent me a refund of \$1,000, which I hadn't asked for, and which I returned, explaining I had no complaints.

We had seen galaxies and planets up close. The universe's colossal scale had reliably awed us. Our tour had started at 3 p.m. and by the time the second telescope puttered out, it was past midnight. We were done for the night anyway.

The Hot Luxury Hotel Trend? No Lobby

Fans say the move makes guests feel 'at home.' Skeptics aren't so sure.



COCKTAILS THIS WAY At Naviva resort in Mexico, guests enter via winding footbridges.

HISTORICALLY, lavish lobbies telegraphed luxury to hotel guests in bold type. Consider the Four Seasons George V in Paris, a circa-1928 slice of the good life. Adorned with dinosaur-size chandeliers, 12,000-bloom floral arrangements and antique Flemish tapestries, its opulent entrance has long epitomized globe-trotting grandeur.

Lately, however, travelers are striding into high-end hotels to find...no lobby at all. These properties claim that jettisoning the grand entrance and front desk provides a more personal sense of "coming home." But is the trend genuinely luxe or just stingy minimalism masquerading as "elegance"?

SingleThread Farms Restaurant & Inn in Healdsburg, Calif., argues for the former. Starting in late 2016, the Michelin-starred 5-bedroom hotel entirely discarded its desk check-in process. Instead, guests are greeted personally and escorted straight to their room. "We wanted to maximize the time the guest had

to rest, relax and begin their experience," chef-owner Kyle Connaughton explained.

Behind a discreet wooden door in Paris's 4th arrondissement, boutique hotel Cour des Vosges channels the vibe of a private mansion. Inside, an intimate courtyard leads to stairs and a tucked-away tea salon. Guest check-in happens in-room via personal butler, while a round-the-clock concierge is available on WhatsApp.

At Naviva, a Four Seasons Resort in Punta Mita, Mexico,



Paris's Cour des Vosges hotel evokes a private mansion.

visitors trade a traditional lobby for a stroll over bamboo bridges to a treetop courtyard, where guests are served drinks crafted from local fruit before being shown to their luxury tents.

Traditionalists accustomed to cozy chairs and uniformed bellhops might find such changes a hard sell. George Morgan-Grenville, a luxury trip planner with 33 years of experience and the founder of travel company Red Savannah, is skeptical. "In many ways, the lobby is the beating heart of a hotel," he said, adding that such "in-between" spaces provide a welcome moment of orientation. Removing them "takes away that soft transition between arrival and immersion."

But guests looking for unique experiences, like Juliet Izon, 38, who stayed at Navia in September, are quick to point out the upsides. "Rather than standing drearily in line [after arrival], I was sitting on a porch sipping a cocktail."

—Jordi Lippe-McGraw

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ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

Fairweather Fairways

Winter doesn't have to mean relegating your clubs to the basement. Here, some of the best places for a holiday-season golf escape. Pack the SPF.



SEASON'S TEEINGS Arizona, home to courses like the Monument at the Four Seasons Resort Scottsdale, attracts golfers from across the country when greens farther north freeze over.

By DAVID WEISS

STUBBORN golfers might soldier on until snow blankets the local fairways, when they repair to their simulators to play virtual Pebble Beach in their pajamas. But in-the-know devotees of the game pack up the clubs and head to where golf is a year-round pastime. Some courses to consider:

Aces in Arizona

After the triple-digit temps of summer, the Phoenix-Scottsdale area, with more than 200 courses, enters prime time. Thanks to dynamic pricing, high-season fees rise as the mercury drops, but using a booking app like GolfNow or TeeOff can yield the odd bargain.

We-Ko-Pa Golf Club's two courses anchor a casino-resort of the same name. The Saguaro 18—designed by architects Bill Coore and Ben Crenshaw—offers eminently walkable terrain, while the Cholla course attracts those able to produce highflying shots that land softly. Both bring a serenity to the game, unmarred by adjacent housing or passing cars. Stay-and-play packages from the resort reduce the cost, as might a blackjack streak in the casino.



Florida's Streamsong Resort, on the site of a former mine.

Alternatively, base yourself out of the Wigwam Resort, which recently underwent extensive renovations. Advanced players should head straight for the TPC Scottsdale Stadium Course for a lengthy, potentially brutish battle. Start pulling the strings now to cadge an invite to the seven private courses at Desert Mountain and time your games to end with sunset views over the valley.

Not Your Kid's Coachella

These days, California's Coachella Valley is known for marathon music events, but it once earned renown as a tony escape for Hollywood swells like Bob Hope and Frank Sinatra. Hope's eponymous PGA tournament helped fuel interest in the

area among the golfing set and an explosion of courses, which now number more than 110.

La Quinta Resort & Club affords guests privileged access to the five public courses at PGA West. Masochists should begin at the Stadium Course, the demonic handiwork of architect Pete Dye, who averred that both "love and hate could be found there." Regulars call the island green on Hole 17 "Alcatraz," which should indicate the punitive character of its design.

For a considerably less demanding game, try the two courses at Indian Wells Golf Resort. The Celebrity Course keeps things interesting with split-level lakes and waterfalls, while the Players Course counters its generous fairways with small, undulating greens and a copious array of bunkers. Since it's considered a municipal facility, green fees tend to be more affordable. Stay-and-play packages can be had at the adjacent Hyatt Regency, replete with pools and waterslides to keep the nongolfers in your group occupied.

Hawaiian Hits

Our 50th state offers a wealth of quality golf, especially on the island of Kauai.

Start with the North Shore's demanding Princeville Makai Golf Club with six holes that hug the shoreline and a course that wends its way through woodlands, featuring cushiony, paspalum grass, a boon to golfers who struggle to make solid contact with their irons.

Save a tidy bundle by opting for a round on Kauai's eastern shore at Wailua Golf Course, often cited as the best municipal facility in Hawaii and a misdemeanor-level steal at under \$50 a round. Mountain and ocean views equal those of its pricier neighbors, and mild elevation changes make for a genteel walk.

Club California

San Diego averages 265 days of annual sunshine, but it can easily dip into the mid-60s come holiday season, ideal conditions for golfers escaping nor'easters. The elegant Fairmont Grand Del Mar sits astride an immaculate Tom

Fazio routing and feels like a world unto itself. Hills and canyons provide a variety of uphill and downhill shots, and greens are mowed to a manageable speed. The in-house, three-Michelin-starred restaurant, Addison, offers 10-course tasting menus for \$365 a pop.

Down the road in Carlsbad, the Omni La Costa hosts two eighteen-hole courses and a first-class spa. The parkland-style Legends course lacks the teeth of the Champions layout, currently being renovated for a re-opening in spring 2024. San Diego's municipal Coronado Golf Course comes with downtown and bayside views for under \$50 per outing. Torrey Pines, another municipal course, might be a better game, but gets way too busy, especially during the winter months. At \$223 plus another \$50 "booking fee" for advance reservations, it's a lot of money to be one in a crowd.

Singing a Streamsong

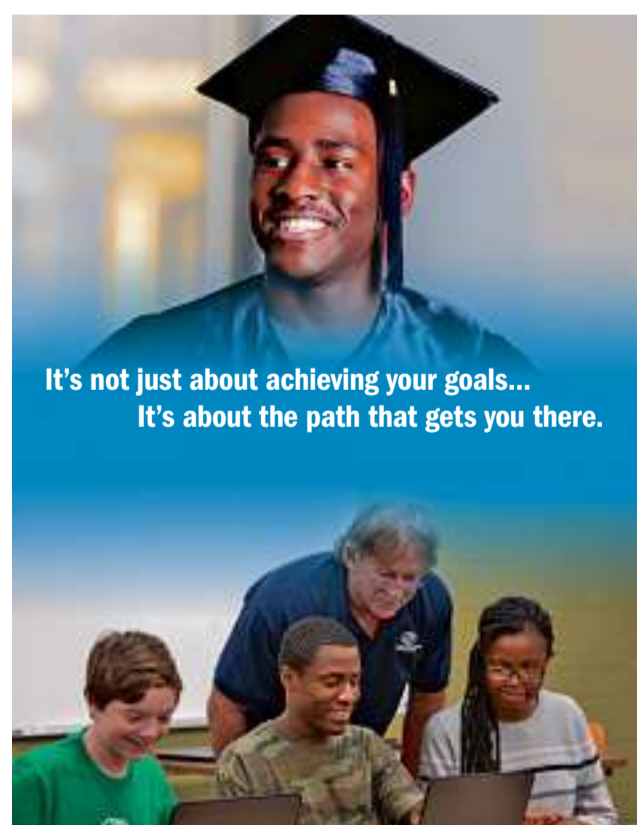
East Coasters should set their sights on Streamsong Resort in Central Florida, located some 50 miles from Tampa at the site of a former phosphate strip mine. Minimalist designers Tom

Hawaii, especially Kauai, offers a lot of quality winter golf.

Doak and Gil Hanse used the existing contours to sculpt routings that look natural rather than bulldozed, with deep-water ponds and towering sand dunes offering definition to the hole locations. The aforementioned Coore-Crenshaw design team crafted two other entries here, most recently the Chain, an ingenious short course tailor-made for walking and wagering.



Luxury resorts, like the Westin (pictured), and seaside golf courses seem to congregate in Princeville, on Kauai's North Shore.



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GLOBAL GREENS / WHERE TO ENJOY A WINTER ROUND OF GOLF, INTERNATIONAL EDITION

MORE adventurous golfers can tick off plenty of sun-baked rounds overseas. In Mexico, Jack Nicklaus's Quivira ranks among the best courses in a competitive Los Cabos market. The par-three sixth hole is worth the heady price of admission alone, with a cliffside tee shot that defines the risk-reward dichotomy. (A warning: Mexican airport security confiscates golf balls, so check them in.)

Thailand claims one of Southeast Asia's most robust golf scenes—and one

of the planet's most unusual courses. Stretching to 7,770 yards, the St. Andrews 2000 Golf Club in Pattaya features two par-sixes, one of which plays to 700

yards (most courses only have par threes, fours or fives). Quirky, yes, but worth a trip for bragging rights.

Pete Dye designed three courses at Casa de Campo Resort in

the Dominican Republic, including Teeth of the Dog, about which he said, "I created 11 holes and God created 7," implying that almost half the course came pre-

signed by nature. In the Algarve—Portugal's southern region—travelers will find Amendoira Golf Resort's celebrated Faldo Course. Champion golfer Nick Faldo described the aesthetic as "Mediterranean desert-style," with olive trees and cactuses making for strange if felicitous bedfellows. The resort's six tennis courts keep guests active off the greens. Highly recommended: Blocking out a day sans golf and its attendant frustrations to take in the sights.



Casa de Campo: world-class golfing spitting distance from the beach.

BILL HORNSTEIN (STREAMSONG), MATTHEW MAJAK (CASA DE CAMPO)



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EATING & DRINKING



“Let’s be honest: wines from more famous regions and producers often benefit from a well-entrenched mythology of supposed ‘enological greatness’ that is rarely challenged by reviewers,” he writes. The book officially publishes in January, but signed copies are available now at BedellCellars.com.

“Climbing The Vines in Burgundy: How an American Came to Own a Legendary Vineyard in France” by Alex Gambal (Hamilton Books) | Alex Gambal arrived in Burgundy in the early 1990s, and in just four years he was making his own wines in one of France’s most fabled and insular regions. Gambal did much more than simply purchase a vineyard. He changed his whole life.

When he first arrived in Burgundy with his then-wife, Nancy, and their two young children, Gambal had no practical knowledge of winemaking or the wine business and didn’t speak French particularly well. He did, however, have the good fortune to be taken under the wing of the late, great wine broker Becky Wasserman, who introduced Gambal to just about every important Burgundy vigneron.

His education in the decidedly unglamorous and definitely uncertain wine business provides the meat of this memoir, published in September. It’s a sobering read. In Burgundy, the weather holds the upper hand. (Think frost, hail, rain.) Add to that the occasional unscrupulous supplier who tries to sell basic Bourgogne juice as Meursault—which, Gambal notes, was happily rare in his experience.

The business side of making and selling wines from Burgundy—a region now synonymous with billionaire investors and five-figure wines—is where Gambal’s book truly excels. He’s happy to share specific numbers. For example, in 2010 he was offered a deal in which he could buy a Burgundy domaine that included “three of the best parcels of Batard-Montrachet, some fantastic Puligny-Montrachet and a bit of Chassagne-Montrachet” (great white Burgundy vineyards), for a price that reached almost 13 million euros.

Gambal meticulously lists everything that was included in the deal, from wine to houses to leased parcels. “Perhaps a better way to sum up this kind of transaction, in fact most transactions in Burgundy, is that the seller is trying to sell everything including Granny’s house and sometimes even with Granny in it,” he writes.

Gambal did not have 13 million euros to spend—not even close. He recalls thinking upon waking in the middle of the night in utter panic, “I do not have any of it, I have not even begun to put an investment package together, how am I going to get this done?” Did Gambal end up with Granny’s house? Burgundy fans—indeed, anyone interested in wine or the wine business or both—will want to read the book to find out.

► Email Lettie at wine@wsj.com

ON WINE / LETTIE TEAGUE



These New Books Are Gifts Wine Lovers Will Really Want

MAKING WINE and writing books demand quite different talents, and yet in three new memoirs, veteran wine producers establish themselves as authors of distinction. As varied as the winemakers who

wrote them and the wines they make, these books all offer fascinating glimpses into winemaking as a business and a way of life. They’re gifts oenophiles can savor well beyond the holiday season.

“From Bordeaux to the Stars: The Reawakening of a Wine Legend” by Jean-Michel Cazes (Academie du Vin Press) The ever-smiling, ever-globe-trotting Jean-Michel Cazes, proprietor of

Château Lynch-Bages, was to Bordeaux what Robert Mondavi was to Napa Valley: an emissary not just for his own estate but for an entire region.

In his memoir, published in May, the modest Cazes (who died in June) is cautious about comparing himself to Mondavi, the undisputed star when the two men first met. “Bob Mondavi had done for Napa what I was trying to do in the Médoc—even if we weren’t exactly in the same situation,” he writes. When Cazes took over the family business in 1973, Château Lynch-Bages was suffering from a lack of investment, and a scandal, later dubbed “Winegate,” was rocking Bordeaux, charging the most powerful négociants (wine brokers) with selling Bordeaux doctored with cheap wines from outside the region.

“For Bordeaux, it was an earthquake,” Cazes writes. Rehabilitating the region’s reputation took a long time, the acclaimed 1982 vintage and a critic named Robert M. Parker Jr., to whom Cazes devotes a chapter.

In his descriptions of selling wine in far-flung places like Japan and Australia, Argentina and California, Cazes offers a whirlwind tour of all that has changed in the wine world over the past several decades. What didn’t change: the ebullient Cazes’ love of wine and the people it brought into his life. “The most important thing is the wine,” he writes. “Each bottle contains a universe, which, like the genie in Aladdin’s lamp, is ready to escape at the first opportunity. Everything is contained in it: geography and history, fruit, climate, soil, tradition, know-how, but also friendship and shared pleasure.”

“Sun, Sea, Soil, Wine: Winemaking on the North Fork of Long Island” by Richard Olsen-Harbich (Excelsior Editions) | When Richard Olsen-Harbich of Bedell Cellars began making wine on the North Fork of Long Island 42 vintages ago, the region was better known for producing potatoes than wines. Now famous for its Merlot, Chardonnay and Cabernet, the North Fork is so hip that when Olsen-Harbich likens it to

Brooklyn, the comparison seems almost apt.

The early years brought bad weather and various viticultural challenges. “There was a huge learning curve, as no information on Long Island winemaking was available,” Olsen-Harbich writes. “The reference books I had were either from the West Coast or in another language.” He’s refreshingly frank about the mistakes he made working for many of the region’s best-known wineries.



“The most important thing is the wine,” he writes. ‘Each bottle contains a universe...’


Clearly Olsen-Harbich figured the winemaking out: His wines have received high scores from critics; some have even been served at the White House. While the book’s emphasis is on winemaking on this spit of land sandwiched between Long Island Sound and Peconic Bay, Olsen-Harbich explores other topics as well, including wine tasting and the value of numerical scores.





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EATING & DRINKING

PARTY TRICK

Let Your Guests Make the Drinks

Many bars and restaurants offer vermouth service, with different bottles and garnishes to choose from. For holiday entertaining, do try this at home.

By ODETTE WILLIAMS



THERE'S NO party I love more than a holiday party. A fabulous frock, a little lippy, something special to sip on. But this year, instead of shots and Champagne towers (which I adore), I'm craving something more relaxed. For a drink that still feels special but also suits nights when I don't feel like tearing up the dance floor, I can think of nothing more perfect than vermouth.

'Do you want it neat, or with soda or tonic? With an olive, or a twist?'

Years ago, in a tapas bar in Palma, Mallorca, I had my first vermouth on tap and with it, an epiphany: The casual ceremony of sipping vermouth while snacking on salty morsels speared with toothpicks is a delight. Strangely, it's taken me years to figure out how to recreate this social ritual at home.

Now, thanks to Nialls Fallon, co-owner of Cervo's, a Spanish- and Portuguese-inspired seafood restaurant on Manhattan's Lower East Side, I've unlocked the festive-yet-easygoing setup known as vermouth service. To pull it off at home, you only need a selection of

red and white vermouths, soda and/or tonic, ice, citrus twists and olives.

I asked Fallon what makes the vermouth service at Cervo's so popular. "People love the discovery and suggestion in it," he said. "We'll introduce people to a vermouth they might not have tried before, then always ask: Do you want it neat, or with soda or tonic? With an olive, or a twist?" This choose-your-own-adventure approach to beverage building is an ideal party concept.

Vermouth is having a bit of a moment, too. My local liquor store has dedicated an entire wall to it. When shopping for interesting bottles, look not only to the Italians and the French, but to other wine-producing countries as well. Vermouth is, after all, fortified wine "aromatized" with herbs, spices and other botanicals. Producers in Argentina, Australia, California, Brazil, Patagonia and Uruguay are changing the perception of what vermouth can be.

Vermouth also makes a great holiday or host gift. The ABV is low (typically 16-18%) compared to spirits. And when it comes to hosting yourself, this beverage's full, complex flavor and particular glamour make it a kind of holiday miracle: Invite friends over for nothing more than vermouth and



GRANDON + HERBOTT FOR THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. FOOD STYLING BY AMY WILSON

POUR CHOICES Set out a selection of bottles for your guests to try and garnish as they choose. Vermouths make great gifts, too. Find a roundup of recommended bottles at WSJ.com/Food.

snacks, and they'll be thrilled.

How To Do It | Buy a selection of red and white vermouths, and chill them. When setting up service, I like to display the bottles so folks can see the (often pretty) labels and choose accordingly. You can also pour the different vermouths into cocktail decanters. Either way, keep them on ice.

Have more ice on hand for the drinks you'll make, in an ice bucket or bowl. If you own a soda siphon, this is its moment to shine, but handsome bottles of chilled soda and tonic water also do the trick. The point is to give everyone agency over what type of drink they

make with their chosen vermouth. I always put out a bunch of glassware so I have something larger for spritzes, smaller for on-the-rocks. Provide different garnishes to choose from, too: green olives and citrus twists at the least; or go really festive with thin slices of lemon, blood orange or crisp pear, plus sprigs of fresh herbs like mint and dill.

Your friends can take it from there and may well try different things over the evening. For instance:

Cocktails Revamped | Experimenting with bespoke vermouths can put a new flavor spin on classic drinks like the Negroni, Americano, Manhattan, Vesper, Martini and Old Pal.

Aperitivo Hour | You might start the night off with a fresh, aromatic, light vermouth spritz or cocktail that wants to be paired with salty and/or fatty pre-dinner bites such as gilda pintxos (skewered olives and anchovies), pickled guindilla peppers, cured meats and cheeses, gougères, tempura anything, warm focaccia with olive oil, or potato chips.

After Dinner | End with a persistent, spicy, complex red vermouth on the rocks with an orange twist. Vermouth can be dessert in itself, but it also pairs very nicely with a rich chocolate soufflé or flourless cake, nougat and nuts, lacy Florentine cookies, poached fruit or a cheese plate.

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