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INA GARTEN

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What's News

Business & Finance

◆ **The U.S. labor market** strengthened in the weeks before Election Day, as employers added 254,000 jobs last month, the largest monthly increase since March. The unemployment rate slipped to 4.1%. **A1, A2**

◆ **Stocks indexes rose**, bond yields jumped and the dollar strengthened after the jobs report. The Dow, S&P500 and Nasdaq gained 0.8%, 0.9% and 1.2%, respectively. **B11**

◆ **Automaker Stellantis** is taking "drastic measures" to shore up the Jeep and Ram parent's finances. **B9**

◆ **The EU will move ahead** with tariffs of up to 45% on Chinese EVs, defying pleas from some European auto executives who fear retaliation from Beijing and an escalating trade war. **B9**

◆ **The rocket company** owned by Boeing and Lockheed Martin completed a flight with its new vehicle, a mission aimed at preparing it to haul national-security satellites to space. **B9**

◆ **OpenAI is leasing** its first office in New York City, raising property owners' hopes that the budding AI industry will develop a bigger appetite for office space. **B10**

◆ **A contraction** in the U.S. warehousing sector is deepening following a frenzied expansion during the pandemic. **B10**

World-Wide

◆ **Israel targeted Hezbollah's** likely successor to slain leader Nasrallah with heavy airstrikes on Beirut's southern suburbs, as it continues to try to dismantle the militant group's leadership structure. **A1**

◆ **Iran's barrage** of ballistic missiles appears to have overwhelmed Israel's air defenses in some places. **A7**

◆ **A cyberattack** tied to the Chinese government penetrated the networks of a wide swath of U.S. broadband providers, potentially accessing information from systems the U.S. government uses for court-authorized network wiretapping requests. **A3**

◆ **U.S. ports reopened** after dockworkers agreed to return to work, ending a three-day strike that threatened to disrupt the economy weeks ahead of the election. **A2**

◆ **Japan's new leader** has told his cabinet to come up with a comprehensive economic package, taking his first step toward the goal of ensuring the country manages to fully exit deflation. **A8**

◆ **A criminal gang** gunned down civilians and torched homes in a small farming town in Haiti, killing at least 70 people including women and babies, the U.N. said. **A9**

◆ **A severe rainstorm** caused floods and landslides in central and southern Bosnia, killing at least 16 people. **A9**

NOONAN

Do Americans really want a 'politics of joy'? **A13**

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Hiring Blows Past Expectations

September jobs data suggest U.S. might be headed toward soft landing

By HARRIET TORY

The U.S. labor market strengthened in the weeks before Election Day, as job growth accelerated in September and the unemployment rate ticked lower.

Employers added 254,000 jobs last month, the Labor De-

partment said Friday. That was significantly more than the 150,000 economists expected, and marked the largest monthly increase since March. The unemployment rate slipped to 4.1%.

Friday's bumper payrolls report is likely to close the door on another half-percentage-point rate cut by the Federal Reserve at its next meeting in November. It should keep officials on track to lower rates by a quarter point.

The Fed is trying to engineer what is called a soft land-

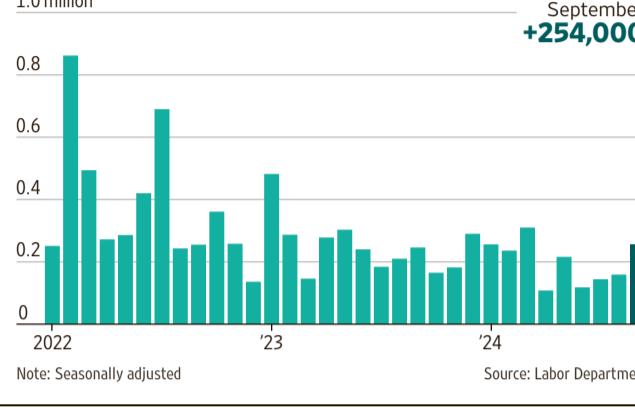
ing, in which inflation moves down without major deterioration in the labor market. Though Friday is just one data point, it suggests that the U.S. is headed in that direction.

"It puts another set of wheels under the plane in terms of assuring a soft landing," said Gregory Daco, chief economist at EY-Parthenon.

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◆ **Consumers fueled robust hiring in September** A2
◆ **Jobs report boosts shares, hits bonds** B11

Nonfarm payrolls, change from a month earlier



With Baby Elephants, Two Are Twice as Nice



TRUNK SHOW: Twin 4-month-old calves were decked out Friday as Thailand's king named the male Plai Sappalaksopon and the female Pang Sakollaksophit, in a ceremony in Ayutthaya. Elephant twins, especially male-female pairs, are extremely rare.

Harris's Brother-in-Law Builds Her Ties to Business Community

WASHINGTON—When the International Brotherhood of Teamsters deliberated its presidential endorsement, the

wariness about West's role as a top executive with Uber Technologies and his involvement in a \$200 million effort to pass a California ballot initiative in 2020, according to two people briefed on the executive board's discussions. The initiative sought to allow companies like Uber and Lyft to continue to classify drivers as gig workers, limiting some benefits.

In the private meeting, union officials expressed a

concern that focused on the implications for truck drivers and union workers of a top Harris confidant coming from Uber. "That led to a conversation about who she might side with when it comes to gig and the tech industry, which is a concern for working people," the person said.

West, who has known the vice president since the 1990s through his marriage to her sister, Maya Harris, has emerged as a powerful adviser

to the Democratic nominee's campaign and a regular passenger on Air Force Two. He has wooed executives and donors, cultivating her blossoming relationship with the business community. He is also, critics say, a source of potential conflicts of interest should Harris win the presidency.

And while West wasn't the primary reason Harris failed to win backing from the Teamsters—the union decided

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The Plastic Bottle Cap Gets a Makeover

* * *

Change in Europe aimed at reducing litter offers a new culture shock for tourists

By JOSEPH PISANI

Europe made an eco-friendly change to plastic bottles. It is driving tourists crazy.

Abby Gendell encountered one after a hot July day touring Vatican City. "I open a water bottle," the 22-year-old New Yorker said, "and I was like, 'Oh my gosh, why is this touching my face?'"

The thing on her face was a bottle cap. As of July, caps in

Europe no longer fully come off water and soda bottles due to a European Union law aimed at getting more of the caps recycled rather than littered. When the caps are screwed off, they stay there, dangling from the top of bottles and bumping into drinkers' lips, noses and cheeks.

It has become a new source of culture shock for those crossing the Atlantic, like encountering a bidet or

EXCHANGE



NEXT ACT

Jared and Ivanka are developing luxury resorts in Albania. **B1**

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◆ **Iran overwhelmed** some Israeli defenses A7

private-equity principals.

"You don't negotiate with those guys. You aren't going to bet the company," said Matthew Lepore, general counsel for chemical giant BASF. "Clients aren't doing as well as the law firms are doing, and it's not sustainable."

In certain specialties, such as merger counseling, regulatory compliance, tax and private equity, corporate general counsels say there is only a small pool of firms to choose from. Companies venturing into high-stakes deals turn to the most elite firms, with the hopes that the high price tag promises the best outcomes. Hourly rates can run \$2,500 or more for the most sought-after

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U.S. NEWS

U.S. Ports Resume Operations

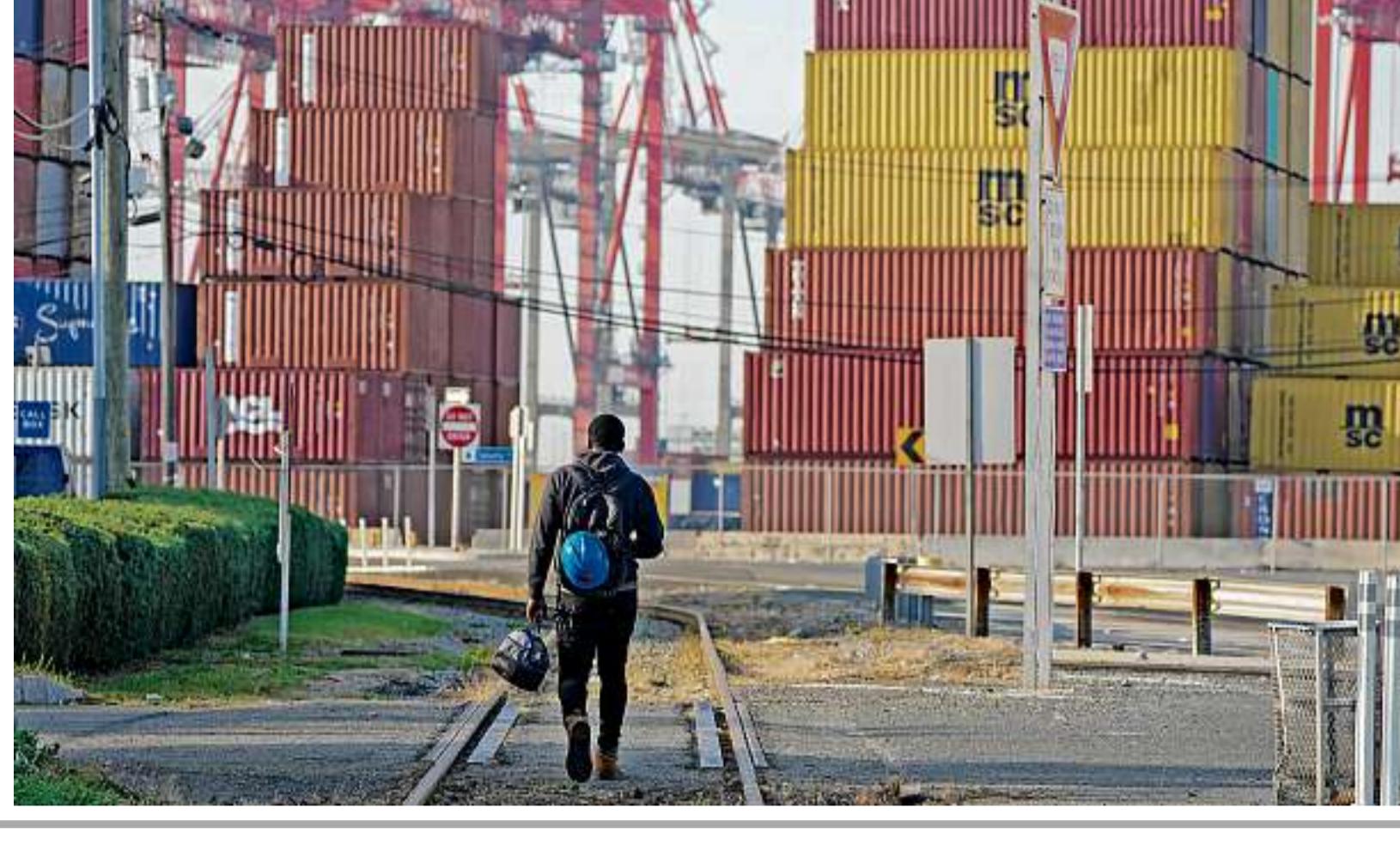
East and Gulf Coast ports reopened Friday, ending a three-day dockworker strike that threatened to disrupt the U.S. economy weeks ahead of the presidential election.

Port employers offered a 62% increase in wages over six years, up from an earlier proposed raise of 50%, according to people familiar with the matter. The tentative deal extends the current contract to January 15.

Many of the ports began moving containers on Friday that had remained on docks and clearing a backlog of more than 40 containerships that transportation-data firm Xeneta said had gathered at sea.

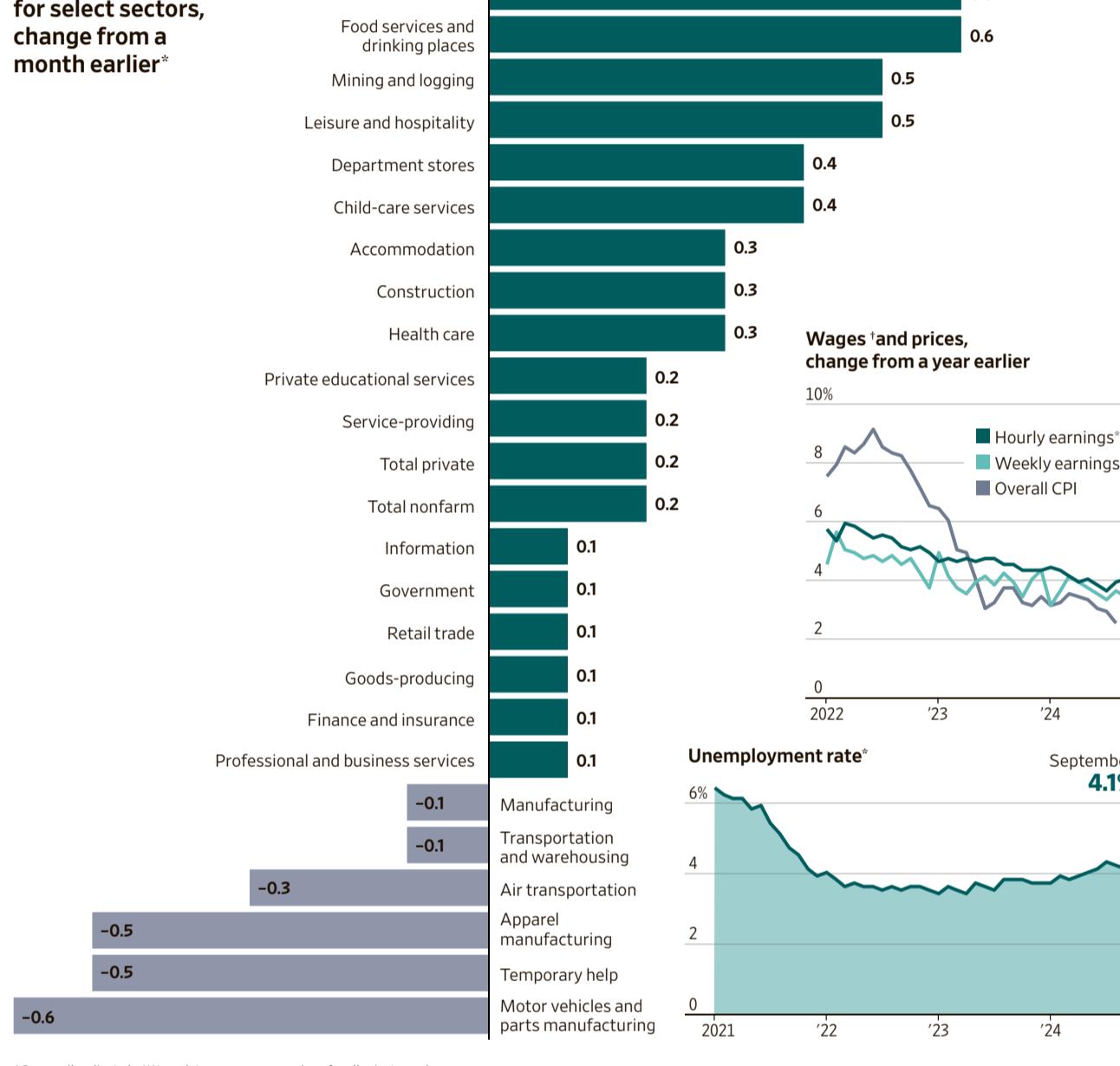
A man, seen in photo, walked along the railroad tracks at Port Newark in New Jersey on Friday. Some ports said it would take a day or so to resume full operations.

—Paul Berger



BRYAN R. SMITH/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

September payrolls for select sectors, change from a month earlier*



*Seasonally adjusted. †Wage data are average earnings for all private workers.

Source: Labor Department

Job Market Resilient Last Month

Continued from Page One

Friday's report also signaled that hiring this summer wasn't as weak as initially thought. Revised figures show employers added 72,000 more jobs in July and August combined than earlier reported.

The latest snapshot of the labor market's health comes just a month before the U.S. presidential election, where the economy and inflation are key issues for voters.

The strong jobs report could help Vice President Kamala Harris. In polls, she trails former President Donald Trump on the economy.

Stocks ticked higher. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.8%, or about 340 points, to 42,352.75, a record.

During much of the inflationary post-Covid-19 boom, stocks often quaked temporarily at stronger-than-expected economic data, because traders took such shocks as a sign that the Fed would tighten monetary policy more aggressively.

Investors' positive reaction Friday showed that they view good news as good news again—even if futures contracts tied to the federal-funds rate suggest traders are now expecting a slower pace of Fed easing.

Employers added jobs at bars and restaurants and construction, as well as in sectors that are less sensitive to the

economy's ups and downs like government, education and healthcare.

There were a few weak spots. Employers modestly cut head count in manufacturing, transportation and warehousing, and temporary help services.

Analysts also said that although September's jobs report was unexpectedly strong, other economic data point to a slightly less robust hiring picture.

Labor Department data released earlier this week showed that the share of workers quitting their jobs each month fell to its

eased markedly over the past two years, and the Fed's focus has shifted more to hiring than price increases. That means the jobs market will play an outsize role in Fed officials' decisions on the path of interest rates.

Conventional wisdom holds that cooling inflation comes hand-in-hand with a sharp slowdown in the labor market.

However, over the past couple of years, U.S. employers have moved through high interest rates with continued hiring, and inflation has fallen significantly.

That combination, if sustained, would amount to a big

win for the Fed.

"Perhaps we should reassess our analytical framework of soft landing versus hard landing and just call it what it is: a robust economic expansion," said RSM U.S. chief economist Joe Brusuelas.

Wages picked up slightly last month, according to the Labor Department. Average hourly earnings rose 4% from a year earlier, the strongest increase since May. That was well above the pace of inflation, which is positive news for price-pinched consumers. The consumer-price index was up 2.5% in August from a year earlier.

"There's reason for caution, but also the resilience of the U.S. just continues to confound expectations," said James Knightley, chief international economist at ING. "For that to continue, it needs the Fed to continue gradually easing policy just to give the economy a little bit more breathing room to continue growing."

Inflationary pressures have

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Fed Chair Jerome Powell said earlier this week that officials would continue to reduce interest rates from a two-decade high to maintain solid economic growth, but that they didn't see a reason to lower rates as aggressively as they did at their most recent meeting.

The Fed's next policy meeting is Nov. 6-7. Officials will see one more employment report before then, for October. That report, which will be released Nov. 1, could be less rosy. The month has already seen a major strike by dockworkers and a continuing strike at Boeing. Hurricane Helene could also muddy the October jobs numbers.

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Consumers Fueled Robust Hiring In September

By MATT GROSSMAN
AND HEATHER HADDON

Behind the shockingly robust September jobs report is an economic driver that shows few signs of slowing: consumer spending.

Despite high prices and rising home costs, American spending on burgers, drinks and travel powered much of last month's strong hiring even as other economic engines such as manufacturing, tech and finance have idled.

September saw the economy add 254,000 jobs, defying expectations. Unemployment ticked down for the second straight month to 4.1%, from 4.2% in August.

New jobs in industries such as retail and dining signal that many Americans haven't yet wrapped up their post-pandemic spending sprees.

Wage growth that has recently outpaced inflation is letting people keep up their trips to stores, restaurants and hotels, supporting continued expansion for those businesses.

Americans are spending on restaurants, travel and entertainment.

Nor are all American households thriving, he added.

"If we look at the lower-income consumer, there are signs of strain," Rissmiller said. "But if we take aggregate consumer spending, the whole thing, we are marching on month after month."

Despite the surge of new jobs, the labor market hasn't necessarily felt great to everyday people. In a monthly survey by The Conference Board, a growing share of Americans have been saying that jobs feel hard to get. That makes it difficult to predict how good news about hiring will play into the presidential election.

Jobs numbers can swing unexpectedly, revisions are common, and major events can jolt the data. The October jobs report, due four days before the election, could contain more surprises.

Throughout September at least, shoppers kept their strong appetite for travel, entertainment and eating out. Affordable restaurants and workday lunch spots have seen

some of the strongest demand.

Fast-food and fast-casual eateries likely drove the increase in restaurant hiring, as limited-service restaurants have added jobs at a quicker clip than sit-down ones, sector analysts said. Staffing levels in limited-service restaurants were nearly 164,000 jobs above prepandemic levels through August, or up 4%, while sit-down eateries were down 4%, according to the National Restaurant Association trade group.

Office occupancy rates in downtown city centers have steadily improved in many urban areas, contributing to restaurants adding staff, said Hudson Riehle, the association's senior vice president of its research division.

Baby boomers have added a big consumer boost. As a growing share leave their careers, these roughly 60-to-78-year-olds make up a well-to-do generation whose budgets are now less sensitive to what is happening in the rest of the economy.

Summer hiring wasn't as weak as initially thought, data also showed.

Conventional wisdom holds that cooling inflation comes hand-in-hand with a sharp slowdown in the labor market.

However, over the past couple of years, U.S. employers have moved through high interest rates with continued hiring, and inflation has fallen significantly.

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U.S. NEWS

U.S. Wiretap Systems Targeted in Hack

Cyberattack linked to China is viewed as a potentially catastrophic breach

A cyberattack tied to the Chinese government penetrated the networks of a wide swath of U.S. broadband providers, potentially accessing

*By Sarah Krouse,
Dustin Volz, Aruna
Viswanatha and
Robert McMillan*

information from systems the federal government uses for court-authorized network wiretapping requests.

For months or longer, the hackers may have held access to network infrastructure used to cooperate with lawful U.S. requests for communications data, according to people familiar with the matter, which

amounts to a major national security risk. The attackers also had access to other tranches of more generic internet traffic, they said.

Verizon, AT&T and Lumen Technologies are among the companies whose networks were breached by the recently-discovered intrusion, the people said.

The widespread compromise is considered a potentially catastrophic security breach and was carried out by a sophisticated Chinese hacking group dubbed Salt Typhoon.

It appeared to be geared toward intelligence collection, the people said.

Spokesmen for AT&T, Verizon and Lumen declined to comment on the Salt Typhoon campaign.

Companies are generally required to disclose material cyber intrusions to securities regulators within a short time frame, but in rare cases, fed-

eral authorities can grant them an exemption from doing so on national security grounds.

The surveillance systems believed to be at issue are used to cooperate with requests for domestic information related to criminal and national security investigations. Under federal law, telecommunications and broadband firms must allow authorities to intercept electronic information pursuant to a court order.

The attack, and its significance, was discovered in recent weeks and remains under active investigation by the U.S. government and private-sector security analysts. Investigators are still working to confirm the breadth of the attack and the degree to which the actors observed data and exfiltrated some of it, the people said.

The hackers appear to have engaged in a vast collection of internet traffic from internet service providers which count

businesses large and small, and millions of Americans, as their customers. Additionally, there are indications that the hacking campaign targeted a small number of service providers outside of the U.S., the people said.

A person familiar with the attack said the U.S. government considered the intrusions to be historically significant and worrisome.

Senior U.S. officials have for years warned about the economic and national security implications of China's multipronged spying operations, which can take the form of human espionage, business investments and high-powered hacking operations.

More recently, officials have been alarmed by alleged efforts by Chinese intelligence officers to burrow into vulnerable U.S. critical infrastructure networks, such as water-treatment facilities, power stations

and airports. They say the efforts appear to be an attempt by hackers to position themselves such that they could activate disruptive cyberattacks in the event of a major conflict with the U.S.

The Salt Typhoon campaign adds another piece to the puzzle.

Investigators are still probing the origins of the Salt Typhoon attack and are exploring whether the intruders gained access to Cisco Systems routers, core network components that route much of the traffic on the internet, The Wall Street Journal previously reported. A Cisco spokeswoman said earlier that the company is looking into the matter, but has received no indication that Cisco routers were involved. The spokeswoman didn't respond to a request for comment Friday.

China has denied allegations from Western governments

and technology firms that it relies on hackers to break into foreign government and business computer networks.

The Chinese Embassy in Washington didn't respond to a request for comment.

Microsoft is investigating the new Salt Typhoon intrusion along with other cybersecurity firms and what sensitive information may have been accessed. Microsoft helps companies respond to cyber intrusions using data from its vast, globe-spanning network of hardware and software and has assigned some China-linked campaigns the Typhoon moniker.

Salt Typhoon has been active since 2020 and is a nation-state hacking group based out of China, which focuses on espionage and data theft, particularly capturing network traffic, Microsoft said in a research note written in August.

—Drew Fitzgerald contributed to this article.



Residents Cope With Destruction After Helene

A cyclist rode through floodwaters remaining from Hurricane Helene on Friday in Swannanoa, N.C., in photos clockwise from top left. A worker cut up a tree, another casualty of the storm that left a trail of destruction in the Oak Forest neighborhood of Asheville, N.C. A member of the FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Task Force searched a flood-damaged business with a search canine in Asheville.

At least 215 people were killed in six states in the wake of the powerful hurricane. Nearly 700,000 homes and businesses in the six states—most in the Carolinas and Georgia—were still without power on Friday, accord-

ing to PowerOutage.us. The storm damaged water utilities so severely and over such a wide area that one federal official said it "could be considered unprecedented." Repairs could take weeks.

The deadly flooding in western North Carolina also disrupted the underground nests of yellow jackets, bees and other insects, causing them to swarm and sting people. It has caused such a surge in requests for medication to protect people allergic to stings the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services is buying Benadryl and epinephrine injections to help fill requests.

—Associated Press



Young Doctors Face a Dilemma Over Abortion

By JENNIFER CALFAS

INDIANAPOLIS—Dr. Kyle Baugh has a choice to make.

In the penultimate year of her residency program in obstetrics and gynecology at Indiana University School of Medicine, the lifelong Hoosier is weighing where to build a career: East Coast or West Coast? Chicago, New York or San Diego?

Indiana, where Baugh seldom misses an Indy 500 and completed her undergraduate and medical-school degrees, is off her list. The Supreme Court's removal of constitutional protections for abortion in 2022 and Indiana's ban on abortion in 2023 recast her life plans. Indiana is among more than a dozen states to outlaw or restrict the procedure.

"To me, this is basic healthcare," said Baugh, 33 years old.

Applications to OB-GYN residency programs in states with abortion bans have fallen. Having fewer doctors in these states could exacerbate shortages of caretakers in poorer, rural swaths of the country that overlap considerably with new abortion restrictions, doctors said.

OB-GYN residency programs in states that restricted abortion have established partnerships for their young doctors to learn the procedure in states where it remains le-



Dr. Nicole Scott

gal. The residents spend weeks at a time on the rotations. The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education requires OB-GYN programs to provide abortion training or help residents get it elsewhere.

Politics will shape whether those arrangements last as state abortion laws shift. States including Florida and Missouri will vote in November on whether to enshrine abortion protections in their constitutions, while other states have sought to curb access to abortion from across state lines. Abortion is a top issue in the presidential race.

"We can't count on stability of access or training," said Dr. Abigail Cutler, an OB-GYN at UW Health and professor at the University of Wisconsin

School of Medicine and Public Health. Despite a court ruling that a 1849 state law doesn't ban abortions, UW Health's residency program sends residents to an academic medical center in Illinois for abortion training in case Wisconsin's laws change.

Baugh applied to Indiana for her residency in part because it was one of about 100 programs that focus on abortion training. Now, Indiana is among about the fifth of OB-GYN residency programs that are in states with abortion bans.

Indiana University's health system is considering stipends and higher pay to keep residents in the state after their four-year training, said Dr. Nicole Scott, director of the OB-GYN residency program.

Indiana's residency program partnered with Planned Parenthood of Illinois for residents and faculty to travel there for abortion training. In 2023, Baugh spent five weeks performing abortions at a clinic in central Illinois.

Residents drive there from Indianapolis, spend the night and drive back each week. Practicing there is a relief compared with the constraints in Indiana, she said.

Recently, inside the Planned Parenthood clinic in Illinois where Baugh and her peers train, Dr. Emma Wittman used a tube to remove fetal tissue from her patient's uterus.

"Just take some nice, deep breaths, into your nose and out of your mouth," Wittman, a second-year resident at Indiana, told the patient.

Indiana's second-year OB-GYN residents often complete more than a dozen abortions a day during their five-week rotation in Illinois, learning from faculty including Dr. Caitlin Bernard, an Indiana OB-GYN.

The Indianapolis Star reported days after the Supreme Court's 2022 ruling that Bernard had performed an abortion on a 10-year-old who had been raped. Indiana's attorney general brought a case against Bernard, arguing she violated patient privacy laws by discussing the girl's case. The state medical board fined her \$3,000.

Two years later, she tells residents to be proud of their work. "I don't want it to be a secret," Bernard said. "I'm not going to live that way."

The Supreme Court's 2022 decision and the scrutiny on Bernard galvanized Baugh and her fellow residents. Several of them got tattoos of wire coat hangers—a symbol of the unsafe and illegal abortion methods common decades ago.

Baugh worries about the trade-off between working in a place where she can practice without constraints, such as California or New York, or a place like Indiana where the need is greater.

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JEFF AMY/ASSOCIATED PRESS (TOP RIGHT), MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES (2)

U.S. NEWS

NYC Mayor Taps Friends to Cling to Power

Adams, charged with bribery and fraud, leans on political and business backers

By JIMMY VIELKIND

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul last week delivered a private message to Eric Adams, the first mayor of New York City to face a federal criminal indictment: Clean house and keep the city running.

The two Democrats are close, but it was more than friendly advice. Hochul has the constitutional power to remove Adams from office as he fends off bribery and fraud charges, as well as calls from some in his party to step down.

In the days after his call with Hochul, the mayor shook up his staff and said he is "communicating with her to let her know some of the things we're doing."

So far, it is working. He has kept the governor on his side and is bruised, but unbowed.

Adams's efforts to appear the governor are part of a larger campaign to stay in power despite

spite a poll released Friday showing 69% of New York City residents, including 71% of Democrats, think he should resign.

Adams has rallied with Black civil rights and religious leaders to try to show he has a base of support. A reservoir of goodwill with the city's business community, including some executives who are wary of a more progressive mayor, has bolstered his position.

As a result of Adams's moves, calls for his resignation remain limited to left-leaning groups and officials. Major unions and top Democrats—including the speaker of the City Council and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, who represents Brooklyn—are so far giving Adams space.

"He's shown that he has a following," said former Democratic Gov. David Paterson. "I think that it's not quite as open and shut as it appeared in the first couple of days—legally or politically."

Behind the scenes, his focus was Hochul, a one-time lieutenant governor who assumed office in 2021 after former Gov. Andrew Cuomo resigned in the face of impeachment. The gover-

nor has broad power to remove a local official after a hearing.

If that were to happen before late March, it would prompt a special mayoral election. Political observers said that would create an opening for Cuomo to mount a strong mayoral bid. He has been working to rehabilitate his image and has been speaking with political leaders and donors about a possible run, said people familiar with the matter.

Hochul's relationship with Cuomo soured during his tenure as governor. She is wary of his return to politics and has heard concerns from business and civic leaders, said a person close to the governor. The Friday Marist College poll, found 48% of Democrats surveyed believe he should run.

Cuomo's spokesman said the speculation is premature as Gov. Cuomo believes Mayor Adams is entitled to due process."

By contrast, Hochul and Adams have been political allies. She praised him on the night of his 2021 election, and he campaigned for her during her closer-than-expected 2022 race.

The mayor, meanwhile, has been working the phones.



Mayor Eric Adams is up for re-election in 2025.

Adams was quickly in contact with the Rev. Al Sharpton, the civil-rights leader and longtime New Yorker. Sharpton and Adams have regular exchanges, according to Sharpton spokeswoman Rachel Noerdlinger. Sharpton told Adams people would defend him if he was still doing the work.

The indictment, which alleges the mayor accepted free travel and hotel stays from Turkish nationals in exchange for helping to facilitate the opening of a new Turkish Consulate in Manhattan without a mandatory fire inspection. Adams denied wrongdoing and

has pleaded not guilty.

Hochul has told the mayor he must ensure city government is stable and effective, said people familiar with the conversation, and that high-profile aides caught up in several probes are removed.

Part of Hochul's calculus on a decision to remove Adams was whether she has the political capital to do so, according to advisers and political analysts. Her job approval rating fell to a record-low 39% in August. Political observers see a simple calculation: Without cover, how could a white governor remove a duly elected Black mayor?

"The governor's running for re-election in 2026, and a Democratic governor cannot be re-elected and get the Democratic Party's nomination unless you have the base of your party, which in this case is Black voters," said Chris Coffey, chief executive of the public affairs firm Tusk Strategies.

Former Gov. Paterson and other people who work with the city's business committee described angst among executives at what would occur if Adams were to resign. His powers would immediately pass to

Jumaane Williams, the city's public advocate and a self-described Democratic socialist.

"There are a number of major projects and policy initiatives under way, led by very capable members of the administration, and if the mayor leaves abruptly both the personnel and the programs could be in jeopardy," said Kathryn Wylde, head of the Partnership for New York City business group.

Adams's attorneys have gone on offense, filing a motion to dismiss the bribery charge and holding a news conference to blast the case.

Adams, who is up for re-election in November 2025, has nominated a new corporation counsel and named a successor to chief counsel Lisa Zornberg, who resigned last month.

"Obstacles are no reason to surrender," Adams said. "I think the governor knows I'm going to work hard, I'm going to continue to move the city forward and I'm communicating with her to let her know some of the things we're doing."

—James Fanelli contributed to this article.

U.S. WATCH



DIRK SHADD/TAMPA BAY TIMES/ZUMA PRESS (3)

ANIMAL RESCUE: Biologists and volunteers carried a manatee stranded after Hurricane Helene in Florida on Friday.

In-Law Links Harris To Business

Continued from Page One to remain neutral—the fact that he was referenced indicates concerns in labor and progressive circles that he could push Harris in the wrong direction on issues they care about.

"I don't begrudge West and the Harris campaign for trying to have business outreach going on. But you don't simultaneously see an outreach to those wanting to unring the economy," said Faiz Shakir, a longtime adviser to Sen. Bernie Sanders (I., Vt.).

Postelection plans

Currently on leave from Uber to volunteer on the campaign, West told colleagues in August in an email that he intended to return to the company after the election. A person familiar with his thinking said, "He will return to Uber. He has made clear he has no plans to join a Harris administration."

Through a campaign aide, West declined an interview.

Still, many in Washington and corporate circles have speculated that Harris would want West in her administration. A 1967 antinepotism statute is in place, but in 2017 the Justice Department issued an opinion clearing the way for Jared Kushner to work in the White House on behalf of his father-in-law, former President Donald Trump.

Even if West remains on the outside, there are worries about his influence. Few Democrats will speak openly because of their shared mission of defeating Trump, but some note that if West stayed at Uber, he would be viewed as having a direct line to the president.

"There definitely are issues if he is given a senior job," said Jeff Hauser, executive director of the Revolving Door Project, a progressive watchdog group. But he added: "I am very skeptical that the Harris administration would want to invite such obvious comparisons to Jared Kushner."

The quiet conversations about West come as liberals in the party are closely watching Harris for any signals on how she would approach corporations after President Biden gave priority to an antitrust agenda. Of key concern to progressives is keeping Lina Khan in place as chair of the Federal Trade Commission, where her focus on Wall Street dealmaking has frustrated many top executives who are in touch with West.

During the Teamsters' September meeting with Harris, a board member asked Harris for a commitment that she would keep Khan in place at the FTC, according to people familiar with the exchange.

Harris declined to make any promises, saying she needed to win the election first and then discussed her efforts to address price gouging.

Larry Cohen, a former president of the Communications Workers of America, said that while Harris relies on West as a close relative, she must make clear "that she's not relying on him on American labor law."

Patrick Gaspard, president of the Center for American Progress, a liberal think tank, has known West since they both worked on President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign.

"When he is in her ear, the Tony West I know is going to carry with weight and measure the interests of working people, even as he's giving her a sense of the entreaties of the business community," Gaspard said.

Family members have drawn scrutiny during the past two presidential administrations. Trump's daughter Ivanka Trump and Kushner both worked in the White House as unpaid advisers.

Since leaving, Kushner has sought to profit from his Middle East diplomacy efforts. Biden's son Hunter Biden has been investigated over his foreign-business dealings and was found guilty of gun

charges in one legal case and pleaded guilty to federal tax charges in another.

West's relationship with Harris goes back to California: Maya Harris and West attended Stanford Law School, graduating in 1992. The couple married in 1998, and he has long played a role in Kamala Harris's political career.

During the vice president's races for district attorney of San Francisco and as California's attorney general, West was by her side. After Harris was elected to the Senate in 2016, West served as a co-chair of her transition.

In July, after Biden informed Harris that he intended to withdraw his candidacy for re-election, West called her close allies to inform them of the news. And in the days that followed, West traveled with Harris as her fledgling campaign took shape

and helped with her vice presidential selection alongside former Attorney General Eric Holder, whom he contacted about the process.

Once Harris appeared to have secured the Democratic nomination, West took an unpaid leave of absence from Uber "to volunteer...in his personal capacity" effective Aug. 17, the company said in early August.

West also currently serves on the board of directors of Ro, a healthcare company, and BXP, a publicly traded developer.

casually around tables. One participant said West was viewed as helping "get things done but doesn't overstep his bounds."

The attendees said they see West as a part of Harris's inner circle who can speak on her behalf and said he presented himself as a senior conduit. They said the question of whether West would join a Harris administration didn't come up in the discussions.

During the Obama administration, West served as an associate attorney general in the Justice Department. West joined Uber in 2017 as general counsel, where his hiring was viewed as an effort to clean up the company after reports of a toxic workplace culture. He has earned a total of \$40.6 million in total compensation since 2020, according to company filings.

Passing the ballot initiative to preserve Uber's right to treat drivers as contractors was a priority for West in the summer of 2020 as Harris joined the ticket as Biden's running mate.

The California fight briefly pitted Harris and West against each other. She joined many unions in the state in opposing the initiative known as Proposition 22, which passed with 59% of the vote.

But the close bond between Harris and West was never in question. During an interview with the San Francisco Chronicle in 2019, West was questioned about the clashing family views on ride-share workers. Asked if it caused dissension at home, he said, "No." On his sister-in-law, West said: "As a family member, she makes me proud. As a citizen, she gives me great hope."



Tony West at the Democratic National Convention in August

Within the campaign, West is viewed as an asset on donor outreach and the business community.

In September, he courted Wall Street and other executives in New York City and attended star-studded Harris fundraiser at the opulent Cipriani 42nd Street event venue. Over two days, West and Brian Nelson, a top Harris policy adviser, convened small meetings focused on technology, small business, healthcare, law and economics to help introduce or reconnect West and Nelson to business leaders, according to attendees. Among the guests at those sessions were JPMorgan Chief Executive Jamie Dimon and Comcast CEO Brian Roberts, as well as Lazear CEO Peter Orszag and former Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin, according to people familiar with the meetings.

The attendees said the meetings, each with half a dozen to a dozen people, focused on hearing what business leaders think about policy matters, sometimes

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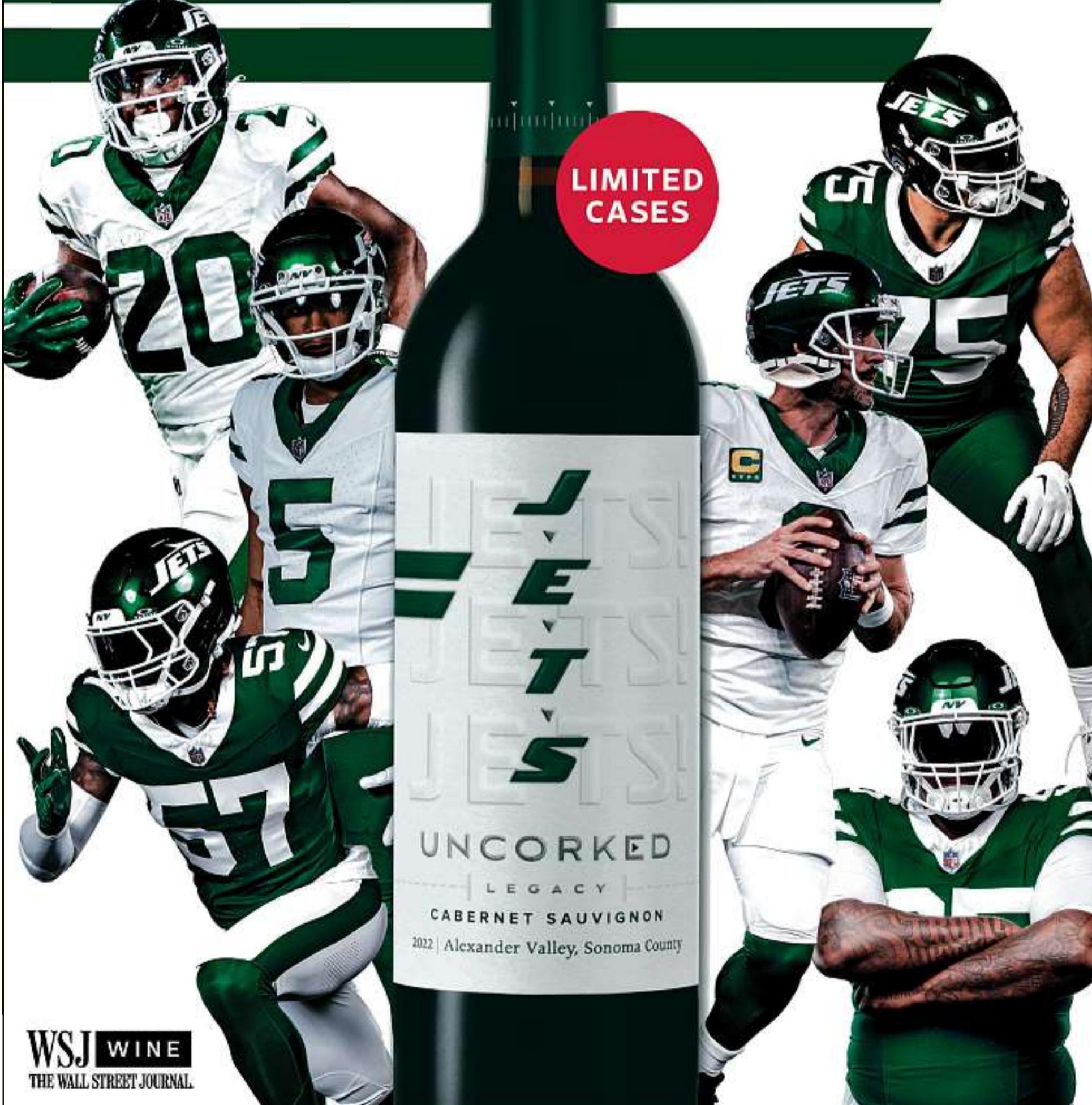
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FROM PAGE ONE



Bottle Caps Get a Makeover

Continued from Page One
driving on the left side of the road. On TikTok, some posted videos with patriotic music when they arrive home, saying they're happy to be back in America, where at least they know their bottle caps are free.

Gendell said the Vatican City bottle cap brought out her American rage. "I was so thirsty and then that was just an added thing," she said of the cap, which she managed to rip off. She prefers the bottles in the U.S. "They're just easier to drink out of," she said.

Malcolm McKie, a 35-year-old tax accountant in Toronto, said the serrated plastic edges of the caps tickled his mustache while sipping sugary sodas this summer in London.

He said the cap also pushed his lips away from the bottle's opening, causing him to spill.

"I'd have a sticky soda beard," he said. "You have to basically relearn how to drink."

The EU tried to help. In July, its environmental office posted instructions on X titled, "Drinking from a bottle for dummies."

"It's really not that difficult," the post said, along with a cartoon on how to hydrate. "Open bottle! Drink! Do not remove cap."

Dave Corlett, a retired police officer in Cincinnati, said he didn't rip off the caps while traveling during his three-country tour this summer, even though the caps kept hitting his lips.

"I kind of just went with the flow," said the 55-year-old, "and then complained about it."

At restaurants he found a way to keep his lips from getting caressed: Pouring drinks into glasses instead of swigging from the bottle, something he never does back

The EU said it targeted bottle caps because they are one of the most found pieces of trash on its beaches. The hope is that if the cap is attached, it is more likely to be recycled with the bottle.

home.

The EU said it targeted bottle caps because they are one of the most found pieces of trash on its beaches. Legislation was

passed in 2019, giving beverage companies until this past July to have the attached caps on plastic bottles

that are three liters or

smaller. The hope is that if the cap is attached, it is more likely to be recycled with the bottle.

The caps have also been unpopular with some Europeans, even spilling into Italian politics.

Matteo Salvini, a far-right Italian politician, posted a photo of a man drinking from a bottle with the cap nearly shoved up his nostrils. "Do you want environmental regulations from Brussels?" he asked, referring to the headquarters of the EU.

"No, grazie," he wrote, urging people to vote for his

anti-EU party.

The dangling caps are worse than another environmentally-friendly way to drink: the paper straw, said McKie, the tax accountant from Toronto.

Paper straws don't start to disintegrate until several minutes into drinking, he said. The caps make their presence known from the first gulp.

"It's an instant annoyance," McKie said.

"We recognize that this change takes getting used to,"

said Coca-Cola, which sells water and soda in Europe, in a statement. It added that customers generally have been supportive of the new caps, especially when they find out the goal is to reduce litter.

Asked if it would bring the caps to the U.S., the company said "we will continue to look at the value of the attached cap innovation in other markets, where we think it can be impactful."

Nestlé and Danone, which

have several water brands in Europe, declined to comment. Soda maker PepsiCo didn't respond to a request for comment.

Nathan Baschez, a startup founder in Los Angeles, said he didn't think the caps were bad. He just found them odd.

"My entire life—I'm 35 years old—bottle caps have been one way," he said. "I never imagined bottle caps to be a different way."

But after sipping a few bottles of water in Spain this summer, he found them useful. He could hold his toddler with one hand, a bottle in the other and not have to worry about how to hold the cap.

"I sort of came to appreciate the convenience factor a little bit," he said.

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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Companies Wail Over Lawyer Fees

Continued from Page One
attorneys and are expected to keep rising, according to legal recruiters and court filings.

"The market is driven by the top end. The top firms are spending money to compete for the best rock-star talent. That's what is driving this," said Alan Tse, chief legal officer at global commercial real-estate firm JLL. "Obviously not enough of us are saying no. Clients are part of the problem."

The top law firms have grown in size and seen their revenues shoot upward as they've become one-stop shops for corporate clients for deal work, litigation, and tax advice. The legal industry has shifted its compensation structure, and only a few firms still have a classic lockstep pay system that rewards based on seniority. Instead, firms pay up for stars and based on productivity. The flexibility increases the cost of talent.

Law firm revenue growth was up 11.4% in the first six months of 2024, outpacing expenses, according to a Citi Global survey of top law firms.

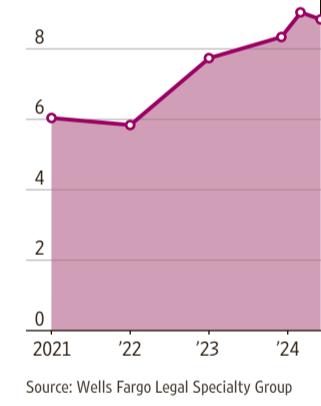
Superstar attorney hires can command salaries of as much as \$15 million to \$20 million a year, lawyers, consultants, and legal recruiters say. Beyond that rarefied level, many lawyers have seen their pay double in recent years. At the lower end of attorney pay, junior associates at large law firms can start at \$250,000 a year. That's about a 30% jump in five years from the starting salary of \$190,000 in 2018.

Law firms traditionally charge companies by billing rates per hour, and the firm will be hired for a project or issue. Inside the firms, associates and partners are often judged based on the billable hours they produce, as well as the outcome for the client.

To bring down legal costs, companies are pitting firms against each other for more competitive bids and moving work in-house to their own legal departments.

At beer maker Heineken,

Lawyers' rates, change from a year earlier



Source: Wells Fargo Legal Specialty Group

general counsel Ernst van de Weert has moved some legal work away from large firms to smaller boutiques.

"You can get the same kind of quality for half the rate," he said. "You have more choices than you realize."

Indeed, rates are increasing fastest at the top firms. Fees at the top 50 law firms rose 10% in the first half of the year, compared with about 7% for the next tiers, ranked 51 to 100, and 101 to 200, according to Wells Fargo.

Lawyers at the nation's largest firms billed between \$500 to more than \$1,300 an hour for litigation in 2023, according to the National Association of Legal Fee Analysis. It can be higher in other markets.

In New York City, mergers and acquisitions are the most expensive area and many top-ranking firms have partner rates that exceed \$2,000 an hour, and can be as high as \$1,000 for associates, according to Persuit, a software company that in-house attorneys uses to control hourly rates.

It's increasingly a bifurcated market, with the top firms with large corporate practices such as Wachtell Lipton; Kirkland Ellis; Paul Weiss; Davis Polk, and Simpson Thacher moving away from the pack. Several of the largest firms have poached entire practice groups from each other, luring recruits with significant boosts in pay. But at the same time, the work of some of this rarefied talent can draw tens of millions to hundreds of millions in revenue for the firms.

"The game is to get as many stars as you can because it helps to lock in business," Paul Weiss chairman Brad Karp said.

Companies are increasingly pushing alternative fee arrangements. They'll cap the fees, fix rates to avoid runaway costs, or make a deal to give the firm an incentive to win with a "success bonus" guarantee. They'll put out bids for work and have firms present their best offers that include proposals to keep costs somewhat at bay.

Some clients are trying to keep down their own hourly costs by being thoughtful in how they use outside firms.

"It's all too easy to go to speed dial, 'Bob, help!' Then the clock starts before the phone is put down. As a client, you have to be more disciplined," said Ashley John, head of legal operations at British mining conglomerate Anglo American. The company, owner of diamond retailer DeBeers, works with 15 to 20 law firms around the globe.

Advancements in generative artificial intelligence could change the economics of law firms, with many firms testing the tools to handle work such as summarizing legal filings that is the purview of junior associates. AI should lower costs and increase efficiency, legal department heads said.

Shell sent a letter in June to outside firms the energy giant was considering hiring. Its work wasn't guaranteed, "as we constantly test the market for efficiency and cost effectiveness," according to a copy of the letter from legal director Philippa Bounds reviewed by The Wall Street Journal. It asked the firms to explain how they are using generative AI tools, saying that the firms "that develop into that fertile ground" and are clear about how they are using it will have a competitive advantage.

Shell tries to avoid the hourly rate model in general, arguing it provides little incentive for attorneys to work quickly. Shell's head of legal operations, Gordon McCue, has pushed firms to use alternative fee arrangements so that Shell has a predictable and transparent rate in the final legal bill.

"There could be a tendency, conscious or unconscious, to not want to be that much more efficient because the hourly rates are massive," McCue said.

"This doesn't solve the problem," he said. "It's up to the companies to push for change."

WORLD NEWS

Iran Overwhelmed Some Israeli Defenses

Strike on Tuesday suggests pain could be serious if civilian infrastructure is hit

BY YAROSLAV TROFIMOV

DUBAI—Iran's barrage of ballistic missiles this past week appears to have overwhelmed Israel's air defenses in some places, despite causing limited damage, said independent researchers who examined emerging satellite imagery.

This means that any new Iranian strikes against Israel could have much more serious consequences if they target civilian infrastructure or heavily populated residential areas.

That is an important consideration as Israel contemplates its military response. Tehran has threatened strikes on Israeli power plants and oil refineries if Israel hits Iranian territory in a counterattack.

Unlike Iran's April 13 attack, involving a large number of cruise missiles and drones, Tuesday's barrage was made up of some 180 much faster ballistic missiles, one of the largest such strikes in the history of warfare. Analysts say that most were Iran's most modern ballistic missiles, the Fattah-1 and Khebar Shekan.

"The faster the missile, the harder it is to intercept it, that's simple physics," said Ulrich Kühn, head of research for arms control at the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy in Hamburg. "It's certainly much harder to defend against ballistic missiles, and even more so if there is a bulk of them coming in on a certain target, because then you have the ability to overwhelm the antimissile defenses—which is exactly what happened in Israel."

Satellite images of the Nevatim air base in southern Israel, a target on Tuesday, show that as many as 32 missiles landed within the perimeter, according



Left, a cratered school in the Israeli city of Gedera after Iran's attack Tuesday; right, Nevatim air base took many hits, but mostly to roads or empty areas.

to analysis by Jeffrey Lewis, a professor at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies in Monterey, Calif.

"Thirty-two missiles is a lot of missiles," Lewis said. "We have exaggerated ideas about the effectiveness of air defenses." While Israel operates the sophisticated Arrow 2 and Arrow 3 missile-defense systems, co-produced with the U.S., the interceptors are limited in quantity and costlier than the incoming Iranian missiles, Lewis said. It often takes multiple interceptors to stop one ballistic missile.

There haven't yet been publicly available high-resolution images of Tel Nof air base, another main target Tuesday. Video footage from the area showed what appeared to be secondary explosions, suggesting that ammunition or air defenses had been hit. At least one projectile landed within hundreds of yards of the Tel Aviv headquarters of Israeli intelligence agency Mossad.

Iranian missiles have to travel about 550 miles to reach Israel and have proved to be relatively inaccurate at such ranges. Images of Nevatim, home to Israel's F-35 jet fighters, show that most missiles hit empty areas or roads. Only one appears to have struck a hangar, and it isn't clear what it contained. Satellite images show no damage to aircraft.

The Israeli military said Nevatim is operating normally, with planes based there launching airstrikes in recent days.

"There were some hits in central Israel and some hits in southern Israel, including

some hits on air-force bases, but nothing that hurt our functionality, our operation levels. No aircraft, no people, no important capabilities were damaged," said Israeli military spokesman Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani. Israel wasn't releasing more details on the damage so as not to provide intelligence to its enemies, he said.

To save interceptors, Israel usually doesn't target missiles headed for empty areas, so it isn't clear how many missiles that hit Nevatim were deliberately ignored by air defenses.

The Israelis "are brilliant at prioritizing and protecting the things that have to be protected. They may have looked

at [Nevatim] and said, 'This is acceptable, I still have to prioritize Tel Aviv, I have to prioritize my critical infrastructure,'" said retired Gen. Tim Ray,

who commanded the U.S. Air Force Global Strike Command. "There is no way to stop everything."

Damage from the Iranian

barrage wasn't commensurate with the resources expended,

Ray said. "If I were to be the guy in charge of that strike, I would not be impressed with the results," he said. "While they did hit a few things—and



Right, Nevatim air base took many hits, but mostly to roads or empty areas.

that's war—they didn't truly degrade the Israelis. The Israelis were not deterred."

Israel hasn't specified what kinds of targets it will seek within Iran, though Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pledged a heavy response.

Iran blamed its Tuesday attack as retaliation for Israel's assassinations of the leaders of Hezbollah and Hamas, both designated terrorist organizations by the U.S.

The Iranian armed forces' general staff has promised "widespread and comprehensive destruction" of Israeli infrastructure should Iranian territory be attacked.

Adm. Ali Fadavi, deputy commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, has pledged to hit power stations, gas fields and oil refineries, according to Iranian state media.

It is more complicated to inflict damage on a sprawling

and hardened air base in the

middle of the desert than to

strike infrastructure sites in

heavily populated areas. "The

Israelis would care more

about defending Tel Aviv"

than defending Nevatim, said Lewis. "On the other hand, they would ultimately have the same problem there—Iranians could at the end of the day overwhelm the system."

Because of that, Iran's arsenal of missiles and, even more important, its missile manufacturing capabilities, are likely to be among Israel's priority targets, said Fabian Hinze, research fellow for defense and military analysis at the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

The size of Iran's—or, or for that matter, Israel's—missile arsenals is a national secret.

Gen. Kenneth McKenzie told a Senate hearing in 2022, when he was commander of the U.S. Central Command, that Iran had over 3,000 ballistic missiles of various types, some able to reach Israel.

Iran's missile stockpiles are

in hardened underground facilities, but its missile plants are less protected, said Hinze.

"They have a few very critical bottlenecks. These are exposed and you can target them relatively easily," he said.

Hezbollah Leaders Targeted

Continued from Page One
tinued to cross the border on foot after the strike.

More than 1,000 people have been killed since September, including 37 on Thursday, according to Lebanon's Health Ministry.

Meanwhile, U.S. Central Command forces conducted strikes on 15 Houthi targets in Yemen Friday, Centcom said in a statement on X. The targets included Houthi offensive military capabilities, said Centcom, which is responsible for U.S. military operations in the Middle East. "These actions were taken to protect freedom of navigation and make international waters safer and more secure for U.S. coalition and merchant vessels," it said.

Houthi-run media reported Friday that roughly 15 strikes hit cities in Yemen, including the capital San'a and the port city of Hodeidah. In San'a, the strikes targeted areas with Houthi military presence, according to a former official in the Houthi-led government.

An Iran-backed Iraqi militia also said it had launched drone attacks Friday against Israeli targets in northern Israel and the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights. The attacks killed two Israeli soldiers in each location. Thirteen Israeli soldiers have died since Israel launched ground operations against Hezbollah in Lebanon earlier this week.

Israel has promised a forceful retaliation to Tuesday's ballistic-missile attack by Iran, Hezbollah's main backer, which said it was retaliation in part for the recent killing of Nasrallah.

President Biden said Friday that the Israelis hadn't decided what shape their retaliatory attack would take. He indicated that U.S. officials were discouraging Israel from targeting Iran's oil facilities. "If I were in their shoes, I would be thinking of other alternatives rather than striking oil fields," Biden said at a White House press briefing.

In a sign of Nasrallah's im-



Worshippers hold images of slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah during a sermon by Iran's supreme leader in Tehran.

portance to Iran, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei led Friday prayers in Tehran and delivered a sermon praising the missile attack on Israel and threatening to carry out more in the future if necessary.

At a huge mosque, a brother of Safieddine sat beside him, while senior military and security officials attended and regime supporters waved Hezbollah flags and banners depicting Nasrallah, some crying during his eulogy.

Khamenei, 85, his voice hoarse, spoke mostly in Arabic rather than his native Farsi, addressing the Lebanese people directly, defending Hezbollah and the Palestinian cause and condemning U.S. support for Israel.

Also on Friday, Iran's foreign minister met with Lebanese officials in Beirut. Abbas Araghchi said Iran's ballistic-missile attack was a response to Israeli targeting of Iranian territory earlier in the year. "We don't plan to continue unless the Israelis continue their attacks," he told reporters.

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In a sign of Nasrallah's im-

3,000 feet from Beirut airport, a Lebanese civil aviation official said. The country's only airport has been spared from nearby attacks but is operating at limited capacity, with most airlines canceling flights in recent weeks.

Safieddine is Nasrallah's cousin and has long been considered his likely successor. He was born in 1964, spent years in the top ranks of the Lebanese militant group and was often viewed as Hezbollah's No. 2, even if not technically reflected on organization charts.

Safieddine has led Hezbollah's executive council, which manages many of the group's social and political activities, and developed strong ties with Iran. His son is married to the daughter of Qassem Soleimani, the Iranian military leader who was assassinated in a U.S. drone strike in 2020, say analysts who track the group.

Hanin Ghaddar, a senior fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, a think tank, said the strike against Safieddine signals that Israel is determined to eliminate the group's leadership.

"It also means that Israel won't stop or even shift gears after Nasrallah's assassination."

—Aresu Ebqali,
Adam Chamseddine,
Omar Abdel-Baqi,
Suha Ma'ayeh,
Nancy A. Youssef
and Saleh al-Batati
contributed to this article.

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WORLD NEWS

Mexican Cartels Covet Ever-Deadlier Guns

'Gucci bag' to 'goat's horn': a guide to the weapons being sneaked into Mexico

By STEVE FISHER
AND ROQUE RUIZ

Mexico is engulfed in a wave of criminal violence and disputes between rival drug gangs. U.S. weapons are fueling the bloodbath, Mexican authorities say.

Cartels are increasingly arming themselves with more powerful weapons, as they push to outgun rivals and Mexican police, according to U.S. military estimates and security experts. In the northwestern Mexican state of Sinaloa, two factions of the Sinaloa Cartel are using heavy weapons in a turf war for control of the smuggling of fentanyl and other drugs to the U.S., Mexican authorities say. More than 100 people have been killed in the conflict sparked by the abduction of Sinaloa Cartel patriarch Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, now awaiting trial in the U.S. on drug trafficking charges.

Mexico has seized more than 186,000 weapons since 2006, according to the country's defense ministry. But transnational criminal organizations smuggle more than 200,000 weapons a year into Mexico just from the U.S., according to the Mexican government.

"It's an arms race," said Romain Le Cour, senior expert at Global Initiative, an organization focused on organized crime.

On Friday, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed to hear a gun-industry bid to quash a lawsuit filed by the Mexican government alleging American firearms manufacturers have illegally flooded the country with weapons used by drug cartels. Mexico sued companies including **Smith & Wesson Brands**; Beretta U.S.A.; Glock; Sturm, Ruger & Co.; and Colt's Manufacturing.

"A foreign sovereign that is trying to bully the industry into adopting a host of gun-control measures that have been repeatedly rejected by American voters," the industry's brief argued.



Guns seized by Mexican authorities were lined up before their destruction earlier this year.

Here are some of the more coveted weapons getting smuggled into Mexico from the U.S.

**Prices are estimates; they fluctuate depending on brand, model and purchase location.*

The **M134 minigun** (\$50,000), a six-barreled machine-fed weapon that can destroy a small car in minutes,

Cartels are increasingly trying to mimic the look of SWAT teams.

ing to military documents released by the nonprofit, DDoSecrets.

The weapon is primarily used to repel Mexican special forces or when a gang needs to enter a battle zone to take a predetermined target and exit quickly.

"In an attack with a multi-barreled machine gun, that's thousands of bullets a minute," Baena said. "So there's no opportunity to react."

The **Barrett** (\$5,000), designed to pierce armor plating and penetrate buildings, is

popular among criminal groups who use the weapon to repel military gunships and armored vehicles. The Barretts are assigned only to midlevel gang members, some trained in special combat. "They are the people who are actually fighting federal forces," Baena said.

Some of the most sought-after collector items are the

The belt-fed **M249 SAW** (\$10,000), is a prized weapon for top drug lords in Mexico, said Timothy Sloan, the former Mexico City attaché for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. It is a light weapon with devastating firepower, because of the number of rounds it holds. It can fire up to 850 bullets a minute and is used to keep the enemy pinned down while other fighters move in.

The weapon also denotes status; security details of the biggest drug lords wield the M249 SAW.

"It's more like a Gucci bag. It's more of a way to recognize who's in charge of the cartel teams. Who's the boss. Who's the closest to leadership," Sloan said.

Cartels are increasingly trying to mimic the look of elite law-enforcement teams, and the M249 SAW is part of that image, Le Cour said. "Drug cartels today want to look very professional," he said.

One coveted Colt pistol has a portrait of Mexico's revolu-

M134 MINIGUN

Fires up to 4,000 bullets per minute



Made in: U.S.

Producer: Various U.S. manufacturers

Effective range: 1,093 yards

Sources: BuffBridge (price); American Special Ops (effective range); GunMag Warehouse (bullet price, caliber)

M249 SAW

Semi-automatic light machine gun, 850 rounds per minute



Made in: U.S.

Producer: FN Manufacturing

Effective range: 874 yards

Sources: FN Firearms (price); Army Facts (effective range); Southern Defense (bullet price); OE Data Integration Network (caliber)

tionary general Emiliano Zapata on one side and on the other a phrase attributed to him: "It is better to die standing than to live on your knees."

Colt said that it didn't have any part in the design, engraving, or marketing of the Emiliano Zapata pistol, without providing additional details. One Emiliano Zapata pistol was used in 2017 to assassinate Miroslava Breach, an investigative journalist, Mexico's lawsuit said.

"America's firearms industry isn't a longstanding criminal accomplice to Mexico's drug cartels," the U.S. gun makers told the Supreme Court. Colt said that it produces, markets and sells its products according to the relevant U.S. and country-specific legislation.

Gangs in Mexico are also known to use rocket launchers smuggled from the U.S. and other countries to take down targets. They include the **M72 LAW antitank rocket** (\$750),

which has been used against the Mexican military and makeshift bulletproof vehicles built by cartel engineers and mechanics, Baena said. The Mexican military seized 127 rocket launchers between 2008 and 2023, according to the Defense Ministry.

The **AK-47** (\$600) is the most prolific assault weapon among drug cartels in Mexico, security experts said. The rifle is light, easy to use, easily accessible and relatively cheap, making it a weapon of choice for the rank and file.

"The street thugs know how to operate those," said Sloan, the former ATF attaché in Mexico. "You can fire a lot of rounds and hopefully hit your target."

The **Beretta .22 pistol** (\$400) is given to the lowest-ranking cartel members, including children recruited to fight for gangs, Saucedo said. "They are used to kill a market merchant, a taxi driver," Saucedo said.

In addition, new recruits are given cheap, 3-D printed weapons, or artisanal weapons that are often inaccurate and aren't a great loss if the sicker dies in battle.

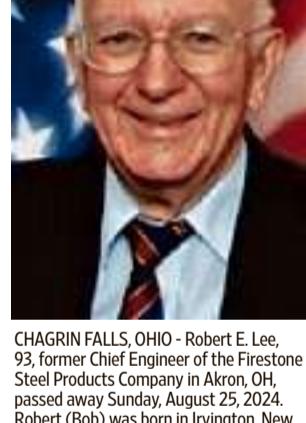
—José de Córdoba contributed to this article.

In Memoriam

For more information:
wsj.com/inmemoriam

Robert E. Lee

August 25, 2024



CHAGRIN FALLS, OHIO - Robert E. Lee, 93, former Chief Engineer of the Firestone Steel Products Company in Akron, OH, passed away Sunday, August 25, 2024. Robert (Bob) was born in Irvington, New Jersey. He graduated from Irvington High School before earning his Mechanical Engineering degree at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, NJ. While too young to be drafted for the military, he found himself in classes with some of the sixteen million men and women who had served in the armed services in WWII. In his senior year of college, he decided he was interested in the field of metallurgy. An engineer from the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company recruiting on the Stevens campus mentioned that Firestone had a Steel Products Company. This led to Bob taking his first airplane flight from Newark to Akron/Canton for a job interview.

In 1952, he moved to Akron, Ohio where he began his professional career with the Firestone Steel Products Company, on July 7th. Bob began his career on a project producing bead locks for combat vehicle rims as the Korean War was dominating the news. This was Bob's introduction to the world of heavy vehicle steel rims which would be the center of the rest of his professional career.

Firestone began experimenting with tubeless truck tires which necessitated producing one-piece sealed steel rims. Bob worked with the prototype rim production helping to design and work out the optimal processing method for the new production line. This involved supervising and analyzing the operation of production lines employing different production processes at the Company's Akron, Michigan and Wyandot plants. After completing a project with the Company's stainless department for combustion chambers for the military's J-57 jet engines, he transferred to the R&D department to work on a new product line for wheel discs to compliment the rim product lines. In this position, Bob supervised the engineering design of the Company's complete wheel disc product.

In the early 1970's, Bob became the Steel Products Chief Engineer and supervised all the engineering and capital requirements for the three Company plants, managing a team of 35 engineers. In 1972, plans were made to build a fourth plant in Henderson, KY. Bob supervised a team of engineers and others working on the site selection, design and construction of the plant, and the operating start-up of the facility with the project completed within the budgetary framework.

Bob then became the Manager of Technical Services and reported directly to the Company President. In this capacity, he had responsibility for furnishing technical service for the 20 plus foreign licensees of the Firestone technology and processes across the globe. He spent the latter portion of his career working with attorneys doing forensic engineering analysis and investigation, advising legal counsel on engineering matters, and testifying in court as an expert engineering witness on design, testing, manufacturing, and quality control of Firestone rims. He retired from Firestone after 38 years of service in 1990.

Bob married his sweetheart Doris Hiller of Brooklyn, NY in 1953. They made their home in Akron, eventually raising their four boys in New Franklin (Manchester), OH. The godly values he instilled in their home life included love, compassion, service, and integrity. Robert was a sixty-seven-year member of Akron First United Methodist Church before moving to Chagrin Falls, OH, in 2018.

As the father of a special needs son, Robert was an advocate for the developmentally disabled community serving on boards and co-chairing several county levy campaigns. He continued his community service with having been elected to the inaugural City Council for the City of New Franklin, OH and serving in this capacity for two terms.

Preceding him in death are his cherished wife of 63 years, Doris, his parents, Elmer and Gertrude Lee, and his paternal grandparents Elmer and Anna Lee who were instrumental in his young life. Robert leaves to cherish his memory, his sons, Robert (Beverly) of Concord, OH; Andrew (Sandra) of Stamford, CT; Brian (Lynna) of Alpharetta, GA; and Ron of Hudson; grandchildren Alison (Fritz) Streiff, Andrea (Mike) Lai, Katelynn, Justin, Rachel, Tyler, Lauren, and Brandon; and his great-grandchildren, Philip, Luke, Cecilia, and Ronin.

His passions in life were his family, board and card games especially bridge, reading the WSJ, stamp collecting, gardening and canning, financial investing, and being an avid fan of his favorite sports teams - the Cleveland Guardians, The Ohio State Buckeyes, and Cleveland Browns.

Please visit www.mooreffh.com to view Robert's tribute wall and obituary and share memories.

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Japan's New Leader Issues Order for Stimulus Package

By MEGUMI FUJIKAWA

TOKYO—Japan's new prime minister has instructed his cabinet ministers to come up with a comprehensive economic package, taking his first step toward the goal of ensuring the country manages to fully exit deflation.

Shigeru Ishiba said Friday that the stimulus package will focus on boosting growth and strengthening relief and preparedness measures for natural disasters.

"We need to make three years of intensive efforts to ensure that we overcome deflation without the risk of reversing the virtuous cycle," Ishiba said in his order to the ministers.

The prime minister also gave instructions for an additional spending plan for disaster-affected areas to be made by mid-October.

Ishiba, who was formally selected as the nation's prime minister Tuesday, is viewed as being in favor of tighter fiscal and monetary policy.

But analysts say he will likely refrain from taking a hawkish tone, giving priority to reinforcing unity within the ruling party until a general election that is due to be held on Oct. 27.

The unique character of the Ishiba administration is likely to be demonstrated only after the lower-house election, "Daiwa Securities economist Mari Iwashita said.

Ishiba called the snap election upon taking office. His party will be looking to retain its majority in the lower house of parliament.

The newly minted prime minister has made a complete exit from deflation a slogan of his administration, saying that he wants the Bank of Japan to maintain



New Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has made a complete exit from deflation a slogan of his administration.

monetary conditions to support the government's efforts.

"I don't believe we are in an environment that requires an additional rate increase,"

Ishiba said Wednesday after a meeting with BOJ Gov. Kazuo Ueda to discuss economic views.

At a news conference Tuesday he said his administration would continue cooperating closely with the BOJ, but that he wouldn't comment on specific monetary-policy measures, as those are for the central bank to decide.

Speculation is growing over the timing of the BOJ's next interest-rate increase. The Bank raised its policy rate to 0.25% at the end of July.

Focus will also be on what measures the Ishiba government will announce to boost the economy.

"While there are no concrete details yet, I would expect the package to include things like support for household energy bills, which could help lower consumer-price in-

Global Food Inflation Is Highest in 18 Months

By JOSEPH HOPPE

Food prices increased at the fastest pace in 18 months in September, with the prices of all commodity groups rising, led by sugar, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations said.

The FAO's food price index, which tracks global prices for a basket of staple foods, averaged 124.4 points in September, up 3% from August and 2.1% from a year earlier. The one-month pace was the fastest since March 2022.

Sugar prices rose 10.4% in September, driven by falling crop prospects in Brazil, suffering prolonged dry weather and fires, and worries that India's lifting restrictions on making ethanol from sugar cane hit sugar exports.

Cereal prices rose 3%. Wheat increases largely reflect concerns of too-wet conditions in Canada and the European Union, though partly offset by supplies from the Black Sea region. Corn increases were a result of low water levels on key river routes in Brazil and the U.S.

Rice, though, fell 0.7%.

Dairy prices in September were up 3.8% from August, reflecting increases for milk powder, butter and cheese.

Meat prices rose 0.4% as import demand remained strong for Brazilian poultry. Bovine- and pig-meat prices stayed stable, while ovine meat prices declined slightly.

Vegetable-oil prices rose 4.6%, with palm, soy, sunflower and rapeseed oils jumping on lower-than-expected production in Southeast Asia, and soybean oil rebounding on lower-than-expected U.S. crushings.

His passions in life were his family, board and card games especially bridge, reading the WSJ, stamp collecting, gardening and canning, financial investing, and being an avid fan of his favorite sports teams - the Cleveland Guardians, The Ohio State Buckeyes, and Cleveland Browns.

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WORLD NEWS



Kenyan police officers patrol the streets of Port-au-Prince, Haiti. The country has been shaken by political instability and violence.

Gang Slaughters 70 in Haiti

Massacre in farming town comes as gangs expand to rural areas once deemed safe

By RYAN DUBÉ
AND INGRID ARNESEN

A criminal gang gunned down civilians and torched homes in a small farming town in Haiti, killing at least 70 people including women and babies, the United Nations said Friday.

The attack by the notorious Gran Grif gang on the town of Pont Sondé was one of the worst massacres in recent years in a country shaken by political instability and violence. Gangs that already control most of the capital of Port-au-Prince have been expanding to rural areas once deemed relatively safe.

About 10 women and three infants were killed in the massacre, the U.N.'s human rights

office said. A doctor at the nearby Saint-Nicolas Hospital said the facility was overwhelmed with injured victims who had been slashed with machetes.

Acting Prime Minister Garry Conille called the attack, which began in the middle of the night on Thursday, an act of "unspeakable brutality."

Conille said the country's beleaguered police force had sent officers from an anti-gang unit to track down the gang members responsible for the killings in Pont Sondé, located north of capital Port-au-Prince in a region known for its rice fields.

There is virtually no police presence outside of Port-au-Prince, including in Artibonite, the department where Pont Sondé is located and where police stations have been destroyed by gangs, security experts say. Some people inside the capital have used a dirt path to flee to safer regions in eastern Haiti, circumventing roads

that are blocked off by gangs.

The U.N.'s special envoy to Haiti, William O'Neill, said Gran Grif is one of the most brutal and violent gangs in all of Haiti. He said police posts in the area have regularly been attacked by the gang.

"They are bad and this massacre is on a new scale," said O'Neill.

In September, the U.S. sanctioned Gran Grif's leader, Luckson Elan, due to his role in human rights abuses and destabilizing the country.

After Thursday's massacre, the U.N. called for greater international support for Haiti.

"If nothing is done, gang leaders are going to act increasingly worse and we're going to see more of these massacres," said O'Neill.

Haiti's criminal gangs, which already control about 85% of Port-au-Prince, have been accused of mass murder, rape, kidnapping and choking off ports and food distribution, sparking a humanitarian

crisis that has displaced hundreds of thousands of people in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country.

In June, Kenyan police officers were deployed to Haiti as part of a U.S.- and U.N.-backed mission to fight warlords and bring order. But in an interview with The Wall Street Journal last month, Conille said Haiti had received just 400 Kenyan troops of the roughly 2,500-strong security force that the international community had promised, with few indications of when more troops will come.

After visiting Haiti in early September, Secretary of State Antony Blinken raised the possibility of transforming the current mission into a U.N. peacekeeping mission to ensure funding.

Gran Grif is the largest gang in Artibonite, which is a key source of food supply for the country, according to the U.N. The gang has about 100 members.

Bank of England's Pill Urges Cautious Cutting

By PAUL HANNON

The Bank of England should proceed cautiously in lowering borrowing costs as inflation cools, Chief Economist Huw Pill said Friday.

In a speech, Pill said inflation would decline only if the central bank continued to restrain households and businesses through its key interest rate.

"While further cuts in [the] bank rate remain in prospect should the economic and inflation outlook evolve broadly as expected, it will be important to guard against the risk of cutting rates either too far or too fast," Pill said.

His comments follow an interview with BOE Gov. Andrew Bailey published by the Guardian newspaper Thursday in which he said more "aggressive" cuts are possible if inflation continues to cool.

Pill was one of the four rate-setters who voted against the central bank's first, and to date only, cut in August.

Megan Greene, who voted with him, said in a recent speech that she now supports "a gradual approach to removing restrictiveness."

Pill's shift to support rate cuts, albeit at a gradual pace, will underpin expectations

that the BOE will cut again in November, when it publishes new forecasts for growth and inflation.

But despite Bailey's comments, it is unclear how rapidly the U.K.'s central bank will move after that.

The U.K.'s inflation rate was unchanged at 2.2% in August, close to the central bank's 2% target. But some policymakers worry that rapid rises in wages will continue to push prices of labor-intensive services sharply higher.

"There is ample reason for caution in assessing the dissipation of inflation persistence," Pill said.

The BOE's chief economist also warned that while policymakers have focused their attention on the aftershocks to the economy from the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, the possibility of fresh disruptions shouldn't be ignored.

"We also need to be alert to new disturbances to the global and U.K. economies that may require a more substantial revision to our approach," he said.

One potential source of turbulence is the escalating conflict in the Middle East, which has pushed oil prices higher in recent days.



The central bank must restrain consumers, the BOE's Pill said.

WORLD WATCH



HARD DECISION: Swiss Cheese Award jurors were at work in Lugano, Switzerland, on Friday, on their way to naming champions in three categories: extra hard/hard, semihard and soft/fresh.

BOSNIA Floods, Landslides Kill at Least 16

A severe rainstorm struck Bosnia overnight Friday, killing at least 16 people in floods and landslides in several towns and villages in central and southern parts of the country, with surging waters rushing into people's homes as they were sleeping.

Rescue services in the south said several people were missing and called on volunteers and the army to assist as roads were closed and houses left without electricity.

Darko Juka, a spokesman for the local administration, said at least 14 people had died in and around the southern town of Jablanica.

Officials later said two more bodies have been found.

"Those are the ones who have been discovered by rescuers," he said. "We still don't know the final death toll."

A pregnant woman lost her baby after she was rescued from the floods and transferred to a hospital in the regional center of Mostar. Authorities said doctors were fighting for her life as well.

Separately, a child was successfully rescued and hospitalized, local officials said.

—Associated Press

LIBYA Six Men Accused Of War Crimes

The International Criminal Court unsealed arrest warrants Friday for six men allegedly linked to a brutal Libyan militia blamed for multiple killings and other crimes in a strategically important western town where mass graves were discovered in 2020.

Libya has been in political turmoil since a NATO-backed uprising toppled and killed longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. The country has been split between rival administrations in the east and the west, each backed by militias and foreign governments.

ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan said evidence indicated that "Tirunah residents have been subjected to crimes amounting to war crimes, including murder, outrages upon personal dignity, cruel treatment, torture, sexual violence and rape."

Khan said that three of the suspects were leaders or senior members of the Al Kaniyat militia that controlled Tirunah from at least 2015 to June 2020, and three others were Libyan security officials associated with the militia at the time of the alleged crimes.

—Associated Press

NORWAY 'Spy Whale' Death Wasn't by Gunshot

A beluga whale that lived off Norway's coast and whose harness ignited speculation that it was a Russian spy, wasn't shot to death as claimed by animal-rights groups but died of a bacterial infection, Norwegian police said Friday.

A final necropsy by Norway's Veterinary Institute "concludes that the probable cause of death was bacterial infection—possibly as a result of a wound in the mouth from a stuck stick," Amund Preede Revheim, head of the North Sea and Environment section of the police in southwestern Norway said.

"There have been no findings from the autopsy that indicate that the whale has been shot," he stressed.

The tame beluga, which was first spotted in 2019 not far from Russian waters with a harness reading "Equipment St. Petersburg," had been nicknamed "Hvaldimir," combining the Norwegian word for whale—hval—and the first name of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Hvaldimir was found floating dead in a southern Norway bay on Aug. 31.

—Associated Press

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OPINION

THE WEEKEND INTERVIEW with Jed Atkins | By Barton Swaim

UNC Tries to Create a 'Free-Speech Culture'

Why American politics in the 21st century is marred by incivility and mistrust is the subject of more books and essays than any normal person would wish to read. The premise underlying most of them is that it's a left-right problem: The right hates the left and the left hates the right, only the reasons for the hatred vary according to the author.

But what if it isn't a left-right problem at all? What if the acrimony and loathing that animate our politics have more to do with class than ideology, more to do with educational status than any set of views on culture and policy?

The assumption that the nastiness of our politics is chiefly a matter of warring ideologies wouldn't explain, for one thing, the mindless rage currently evident on elite campuses. These are places dominated by a confederation of left-progressive worldviews, yet the acrimony issuing from them is ferocious: occupations of quads and academic buildings, chanting mobs in the grip of antisemitic lunacy, assaults on Jewish students, flag-burning exhibitionism, dizzying varieties of "intersectional" preoccupations glomming onto the cause of anti-Zionism, and on and on.

The head of a new civics school at the Chapel Hill campus wants to teach students to be tolerant, in an old-school way.

Ordinary Americans don't behave this way. A not insignificant number of students and faculty at the country's finest universities do. The conclusion would seem to be unavoidable that elite higher education is failing in its duty to convey to students a sense of the world's moral and political complexity and the necessity of humility in trying to interpret it. America's leafy campuses are instead turning out large numbers of graduates who hold insane political views and detest anyone who doesn't share them.

An awareness of this state of affairs recently led the trustees of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill—among the nation's top public universities—to imagine a way forward. In January 2023 the board voted 12-0 to create a School of Civic Life and Leadership. Its purpose, according to an official statement, is to prepare students "for the responsibilities of citizenship and civic leadership by fostering a free-speech culture" dedicated to the "human search for meaning and developing the capacities for civil discourse and wise decision-making."

The board's decision predictably led some faculty, administrators and media commentators to allege the new school to be some kind of right-wing Republican fifth column. A few professors, always suspicious of ideas that don't come from their own ranks, claimed, amazingly, that the board had no right to establish a new institution

within the university.

In August I met with Jed Atkins, dean of the SCILL, as it's abbreviated. Until his appointment at UNC, he was a classics professor at Duke University, where he co-directed the Civil Discourse Project, a program designed to have students from widely divergent backgrounds and political commitments read classic texts, from Aristotle to Martin Luther King Jr., and analyze their meanings in light of present political circumstances.

Mr. Atkins prefers not to talk about the school's allegedly controversial beginnings, and I don't blame him. "Origins aren't destiny," he says. But he adds: "I can't think of many things less controversial than providing a civic education that brings students from all backgrounds and viewpoints into community to be able to explore the big questions of human flourishing."

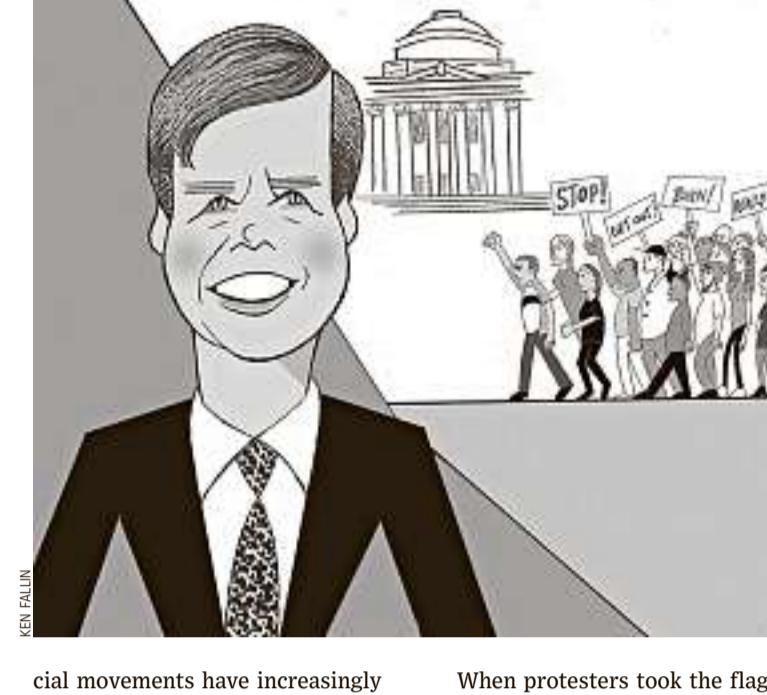
Mr. Atkins, 42, is attuned to the reasons young people in the 2020s find it hard to engage in robust political argument. "We now carry in our pockets these little recording devices"—he holds up his smartphone—"and anything you say might be recorded and might find its way to the recruiters of the job that you're applying for. There are a lot of disincentives to engage in the types of open and free-wheeling conversations that, for 20-, 21-, 22-year-olds, can be so transformative."

I mention that a friend of mine, a professor of literature at an elite university, recently observed something he's noticed about his students over the past couple of decades: They seem to think of social and political problems as simple matters of good and evil. Good people take the right view, evil people take the other. I liken it to Manichaeanism, the third-century philosophy holding that the world consists of spirit (good) and matter (evil).

"There's something deeply human in that form of dualism," Mr. Atkins says. "The basic Greek understanding of justice that Plato had to interrogate was that of helping your friends and harming your enemies. There's a way of understanding the Hebraic law code that sees its judicial standards as breaking the cycle of violence and retribution." (He's right about the Mosaic law, incidentally. "An eye for an eye," frequently caricatured as mere brutality, was meant to curb the retributive urge: Not a life for an eye, only an eye for an eye.)

Dualism is a constant temptation in human affairs, Mr. Atkins says, but it has been heightened in recent decades: "Social media is a great ratchet. There's a 'like' button and a 'dislike' button, no 'maybe' button."

Are there other ratchets? Young Americans are rejecting institutional religion in large numbers," Mr. Atkins says, "but they aren't abandoning the religious desire for personal meaning, moral belonging, transcendent experiences, rituals, community." He cites Tara Isabella Burton's 2020 book, "Strange Rites: New Religions for a Godless World." I would also mention the books and lectures of Jordan Peterson. "Political and so-



KEN FALIN

cial movements have increasingly come to fulfill these religious longings," Mr. Atkins continues. "The sacralization of politics inflames the urge toward dualism. They don't see the political process as negotiating policy trade-offs but as a site of meaning and moral belonging achieved at the expense of their political out-group."

"The civic crisis," Mr. Atkins says, using his term for Americans' inability to engage civilly on political subject, "is downstream from the crisis of meaning." A properly liberal education of the sort UNC's new school aims to foster "asks students to rise above their partial viewpoints and perspectives to consider questions that transcend their own time and place, and to do that together."

What sort of questions? "What is the best political form? What is the best economic form? Does history have a direction and purpose? How do we reconcile liberty and our responsibilities to society? Is there a God? Maybe more particularly to the American regime: The foundational principles of the Declaration, liberty and equality—are they universal?" My thought: If a school dedicated to pondering and debating questions like these is a spirit of trust and generosity counts as a furtive right-wing insurgency, by all means let's have more right-wing insurrections.

Already the new school has hired 11 faculty, among them Mr. Atkins's colleague at Duke with whom he ran the aforementioned Civil Discourse Project, John Rose. Mr. Rose's op-ed "How I Liberated My Classroom," on the pathology of self-censorship on college campuses, appeared in these pages in 2021.

Our conversation takes place in the school's building. A 10-minute walk away is the quad where, on April 30, anti-Israel protesters, hiding their faces behind surgical masks and kaffiyehs, knocked over barricades, took down the American flag and replaced it with a Palestinian one. The university's interim chancellor, Lee Roberts, whose office is adjacent to the quad, arrived with police to restore the Stars and Stripes. (Mr. Roberts has since been made chancellor.)

When protesters took the flag down a second time, a group of fraternity brothers—mindful of the U.S. Flag Code's provision that "the flag should never touch anything beneath it, such as the ground"—held it in hand at the base of the flagpole, smiling as they endured the faceless mob's shouted insults, until, an hour later, Old Glory could be hoisted again. The scene generated a crowd-sourced effort to raise money for a party for the "triumphant Brohemians" who participated in the flag-preserving effort. A little more than half a million dollars was raised, and the party happened—flyover, patriotic rock concert, beer galore—on Sept. 2.

It is an amusing irony that frat bros—a class of student not famous for sobriety and moderation—behaved far more civilly than their allegedly conscientious and intellectually engaged peers. The episode was a reminder, as if any were needed, that elite universities are deeply confused about the ideals they are meant to protect and foster: free speech, open rational debate, principled dissent.

Mr. Atkins thinks well-meaning university administrators—people who genuinely want universities to cultivate small-l liberal values—have too often assumed that subscribing to formal statements on "free expression" would solve the problem. "It's very much about culture," he says. "Statements of principle are important. The Kalven Report, the Chicago Statement"—the former a 1967 recommendation that the University of Chicago adopt a position of institutional neutrality, the latter a declaration of principles on free speech—"all those are important. I support those statements. But I think over the past 20 or 30 years we've spent a lot of time talking about principles and statements, which can be action-guiding, but not nearly enough time creating a free-speech culture in the classroom, in the residential halls."

In many ways Mr. Atkins sounds like a figure of the 18th-century British Enlightenment expatiating on the benefits of polite reciprocity, rational discourse and the open exchange of views. "Free speech and civil discourse," he says, "requires humility, the capac-

ity to listen well. It requires building up trust. It's much harder to cultivate that kind of culture than it is, say, to protest on the quad."

Mr. Atkins's third book, published Tuesday by Oxford University Press, is titled "The Christian Origins of Tolerance." It is a tightly reasoned, footnote-heavy academic treatise on four Christian North African writers of the second through fifth centuries: Tertullian, Cyprian, Lactantius and Augustine. The "standard liberal narrative," as Mr. Atkins terms the common explanation for the emergence of tolerance in the West, holds that it appeared after the so-called wars of religion in the 16th and 17th centuries. Only when Europe's leading lights learned to put aside their overarching theological commitments, this narrative claims, could regimes embrace tolerance as a virtue.

Mr. Atkins contends that tolerance—which he defines, variously, as "patience within plurality" and "forbearance in the face of things, people, or viewpoints one finds objectionable or wrong"—emerged much earlier from Christian theologians thinking through biblical texts.

Reading the book, I'm reminded that the word "tolerance" and its cognates were used frequently in liberal political discourse two or three decades ago, but not much anymore. The reason, I suspect, has to do with its proper definition: To tolerate a thing is to put up with it even though you disapprove. At no point was postwar liberalism notable for putting up with things liberals disapproved of. A "tolerant" attitude, according to its usage in the 1980s and '90s, was an attitude that pretended to tolerate things upwardly mobile, socially liberal people already approved of: "alternative lifestyles," adherents of religions other than Christianity, casual drug use and so on. That isn't tolerance.

It's hardly surprising, then, that students on elite campuses, having so rarely seen it properly exemplified, give so little attention to tolerance as a virtue. "They care very much about justice," Mr. Atkins says. "If you present tolerance or forbearance to them in a way that makes it completely separate from justice, they'll reject tolerance. They'll say, Well, doesn't that make me complicit in injustice?" Part of this new school's mission, he explains, is to "present justice and forbearance as in a relationship with each other." Putting up with "views and practices that you find wrong," he says, "has to be in dialogue with judgments about what is good."

Mr. Atkins speaks frequently about his students coming to appreciate the complexity and fluidity of their own social and political views, and by extension the recklessness of judging the views of others too easily. "There's a humility that comes with recognizing how complicated the world can be," he says. We don't often hear about students at top-rated universities learning and exhibiting the virtue of humility. Maybe, in time, we will.

Mr. Swaim is a Journal editorial page writer.

How Florida Keeps Electricity Plentiful and Rates Low



Miami
Electricity rates in U.S. states have diverged sharply in recent decades. In

2004 residential electricity in the five most expensive states was only twice as expensive on average as in the five most affordable states. Today it is 160% more expensive.

What explains the difference? State policies. Eight of the 10 most costly states have enacted renewable portfolio standards, "net zero" carbon-emission mandates, and regional cap-and-trade schemes. All eight are controlled by Democrats.

New York gets special honors. The Empire State has refused to develop the prodigious shale gas resources that have enriched Pennsylvania. And it has blocked construction of new natural-gas pipelines, depriving New Yorkers—and New Englanders—of affordable electricity.

Among the most populous states, Florida stands out as an island of sanity in a sea of government madness. Under continuous Republican governance since 1999, the Sunshine State took advantage of the shale boom, prioritizing natural gas over

renewable energy. That has kept electricity prices low.

Florida relies on natural gas for 75% of its electricity, more than any other large state. That's remarkable because of the five largest states, the other four—California, New York, Pennsylvania, and Texas—all have significant natural-gas reserves, while Florida has none. Yet

compared with Florida, residential electricity is 27% more expensive in Pennsylvania, 60% more expensive in New York and 137% more expensive in California. Even pro-energy, GOP-controlled Texas has more expensive electricity than Florida, partly because of its large renewable energy sector, which makes its grid costly and difficult to operate.

Because it has avoided the misguided climate policies of other states, Florida is better positioned to weather the historic energy-scarcity crisis now bearing down on America's electricity grid. Just as electricity demand is soaring across the country, driven by electric vehicles and artificial-intelligence data centers, a train wreck of federal policy failures is constraining the grid's ability to meet the new demand. Grid operators are already sounding the alarm.

One persistent problem is suffocating red tape. To placate environmentalists, the Biden-Harris admin-

istration rolled back Trump-era reforms to the federal permitting process, even those that benefited renewable energy. Now Inflation Reduction Act subsidies are flooding the market with solar energy, so nuclear, coal and gas plants needed for base-load generation can't fully recoup costs.

These subsidies have proved particularly toxic in states governed by regional transmission organizations, or RTOs, where utilities can't easily pass capital and operating costs on

to consumers. This has led to soaring future capacity prices in RTO areas such as Pennsylvania, Ohio and Virginia, where capacity prices soared 900% in the recent auction for 2024-25. Meanwhile, virtually all large new nuclear and gas capacity being proposed is in non-RTO areas that still have vertically integrated utilities, chiefly Florida.

Making a bad situation worse, Kamala Harris would implement new Environmental Protection Agency

rules requiring power plants to adopt astronomically expensive carbon-capture technologies that are unproven at scale. The EPA expects the new rule to force most coal-fired power plants to close. Investment in large new natural-gas plants has dried up in RTO areas, and the EPA has promised to follow up next year with another rule that could shut down many existing gas plants. Between retiring coal plants responsible for 15% of U.S. generation capacity and soaring demand projections of at least 15%, the U.S. is facing an electrical capacity shortfall of perhaps 30% by 2032. The regulatory train wreck will severely constrain the grid's capacity to make up the shortfall.

Democrats think solar power is coming to the rescue, but that is a fantasy. Only a fraction of the proposed solar and wind plants can be built in time to avert a scarcity crisis, let alone achieve "net zero" carbon-emission goals by 2035. And their output will be far short of nominal capacity because they don't generate power continuously. Some point to states with high renewable penetration and low electricity prices as proof that renewables are reliable, but all such examples are geographic anomalies: Washington state has abundant hydropower, while the Upper Midwest has con-

stant wind and abundant land for affordable turbines.

Florida's experience shows the value of investing in resilience rather than pie-in-the-sky green technology: In less than a week Florida restored electricity to 99% of those who lost power in Hurricane Helene, and it is now helping neighboring states with disaster recovery. While Florida may avoid blackouts and rationing that could plague other states, it isn't immune to rising prices or foolish policies. Inflation Reduction Act subsidies are becoming increasingly popular in Florida, and NextEra, which owns Florida Power & Light, has announced plans to cut 52% of the utility's carbon emissions by 2030 and 80% by 2040.

That makes for dark clouds on the horizon. Florida lawmakers should realize that renewable mandates and subsidies erode grid reliability. They should stick to protecting Florida from terrible climate policies. Otherwise, the Sunshine State will share in the looming energy-scarcity crisis.

Mr. Loyola teaches law at Florida International University and is a senior fellow at the Heritage Foundation. He served at the White House Council on Environmental Quality from 2017-19.

OPINION

REVIEW & OUTLOOK

The Broadband Rollout Fiasco

Government makes many promises, the Biden Administration more than most. Results are another story. For the latest example of the latter, consider the “internet for all” plan that President Biden tapped Kamala Harris to lead. Fiasco is the word for it.

The 2021 infrastructure law included \$42.5 billion for states to expand broadband to “unserved,” mostly rural, communities. Three years later, ground hasn’t been broken on a single project. The Administration recently said construction won’t start until next year at the earliest, meaning many projects won’t be up and running until the end of the decade.

Blame the Administration’s political regulations. States must submit plans to the Commerce Department about how they’ll use the funds and their bidding process for providers. Commerce has piled on mandates that are nowhere in the law and has rejected state plans that don’t advance progressive goals.

Take how the Administration is forcing providers to subsidize service for low-income customers. Commerce required that Virginia revise its plan so bidders had to offer a specified “affordable” price. This is rate regulation.

Brent Christensen of the Minnesota Telecom Alliance recently reported that none of his trade group’s 70 or so members plan to bid for federal grants because of the rate rules and other burdens. “To put those obligations on small rural providers is a hell of a roadblock,” he said. “Most of our members are small and can’t afford to offer a low-cost option.”

Commerce hoped to spread the cash to small rural cooperatives, but the main beneficiaries will be large providers that can better manage the regulatory burden. Bigger businesses always win from bigger government.

Commerce is all but refusing to fund anything other than fiber broadband, though satellite services like SpaceX’s Starlink and wireless carriers can expand coverage at lower cost. A Starlink terminal costs about \$600 per home. Extending 5G to rural communities costs a couple thousand dollars per connection. Building out fiber runs into the tens of thousands.

Fiber networks will require more permits, which delay construction. But fiber will require

more union labor to build. Commerce wants grant recipients to pay union-scale wages and not oppose union organizing.

Three years after the bill passed, not a single project is underway.

The Administration has also stipulated hiring preferences for “underrepresented” groups, including “aging individuals,” prisoners, racial, religious and ethnic minorities, “Indigenous and Native American persons,” “LGBTQ+ persons,” and “persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.”

Good luck trying to find “underrepresented” hard-hats in Montana. An official overseeing Montana’s program told Congress last month that the Administration has given “conflicting or even new and changed guidance after submitting our plans” and is “slowing states down and second-guessing good-faith efforts.”

The official added that “we have yet to receive clarity on permitting, a foundational component of broadband deployment.” The government system that states are required to use for federal permits, she noted, “will not be available for another 6 to 8 months to evaluate each project’s environmental and historic preservation effects.”

States must also identify future climate risks and “how the proposed plan will avoid and/or mitigate” them. Broadband providers already safeguard their systems against natural disasters in part with redundant networks, so the extraneous mandates will merely make building more expensive.

Cox Communications last week sued Rhode Island over the state’s plan to “build taxpayer-subsidized and duplicative high-speed broadband internet in affluent areas of Rhode Island like the Breakers Mansion in Newport and affluent areas of Westerly,” where Taylor Swift owns a \$17 million vacation home. Cox says there are better ways to spend taxpayer dollars. According to the Federal Communications Commission, 99.97% of U.S. households already have access to high-speed internet.

The broadband non-rollout is a classic of modern progressive government. Authorize money for a cause that private industry could do better, but then botch the execution with identity politics and union favoritism. Ms. Harris is promising four more years of the same.

No Sign of a Recession in Jobs

So much for a softening labor market. Employment fired up in September, with the Bureau of Labor Statistics showing a gain of 245,000 jobs and the jobless rate falling to 4.1%. That should put fears of immediate recession to bed, though it will give the Federal Reserve governors some pause about the pace of interest-rate cuts.

The robust jobs report marked a rebound from three months of slower growth, and it looks even better with revisions for July and August that raised employment by a combined 72,000. The average workweek fell by 0.1 hour so the number of hours worked declined. But wages rose a healthy 0.4% for the month, or 4% on a 12-month basis. Wage increases appear to be accelerating, and the 62% increase over six years won this week by the dockworkers will compound the trend.

One note of caution is that the most job growth is coming in areas boosted by government spending—healthcare, social services and government. Manufacturing shed jobs, as did the

automotive industry and nondurable goods.

Financial markets loved the jobs news, with stocks and bond yields rising. It’s hard to see any sign of economic gloom in this data. If the Fed is thinking of accelerating its new path of interest-rate cuts, fear of recession shouldn’t be part of the rationale.

The pop in bond yields is especially notable. The 10-year Treasury rose a dozen basis points to 3.97% and is up from 3.7% on Tuesday. Markets would seem to be anticipating stronger growth, or perhaps that the Fed will only cut its target rate by 25 basis points in November, rather than another 50 that it cut at its September meeting.

A growing economy and a strong job market aren’t reasons by themselves to keep rates higher if inflation continues to fall. But the September jobs report and buoyant financial markets appear to confirm what we’ve been saying, which is that monetary policy hasn’t been all that restrictive. We’ll see if that is compatible with continuing disinflation.

The Dish on Spectrum and Politics

Talk about an antitrust paradox. Progressives are urging the Biden Administration to block DirecTV’s acquisition of satellite competitor Dish network. The irony is that the deal was spurred in part by the government’s misconceived antitrust intervention.

DirecTV agreed Monday to buy Dish for a token \$1, plus assume its \$9.8 billion in debt. The two satellite providers have been shedding customers amid competition from streaming services. Their combined 19 million subscribers are dwarfed by Netflix’s 84.1 million in the U.S. and Canada, though still greater than most cable operators.

By combining, Dish and DirecTV aim to increase their leverage with content providers like Disney. But that’s not the only motivation. Dish chairman Charlie Ergen needs the financial liquidity to rescue and build out his fledgling 5G network, which antitrust regulators stood up as a fourth wireless competitor to T-Mobile, AT&T and Verizon.

Flash back to 2018 when T-Mobile sought to acquire a struggling Sprint. They owned complimentary spectrum bands, but neither operated a nationwide network that could rival the big two. Progressives nonetheless opposed the merger because they said it would reduce telecom competition and increase prices.

Wrong. The merger spurred more competition by prompting Verizon and AT&T to increase broadband investment and reduce prices. Even as inflation has surged, wireless prices have remained flat since 2018. However, as a condition for green-lighting the merger, Trump antitrust cops required the companies to sell their prepaid phone business and some spectrum to Dish.

Mr. Ergen had earlier spent billions of dollars acquiring spectrum, though he hadn’t put

much of it to use. He promised the government he’d build out a 5G network. Failure to meet the Federal Communications Commission’s build-out benchmarks would result in penalties. These deadlines were included because the merger’s opponents doubted Mr. Ergen’s seriousness.

Democratic states challenging the T-Mobile-Sprint deal then argued that Mr. Ergen would merely build a “meaningless thin network so that he doesn’t get in trouble with the FCC” and that he has a history of “broken promises” and “stupid bluffs.” The court disagreed and blessed the merger.

Fast forward. Dish is now struggling to meet the FCC’s benchmarks and has amassed enormous debt. Dish’s parent EchoStar has a \$2 billion debt payment coming due in November and only some \$500 million in cash on hand. Mr. Ergen reportedly sought to refinance some of its debt with creditors. No dice.

Enter FCC Chair Jessica Rosenworcel, who did Mr. Ergen an enormous favor last month by acceding to his request to extend the FCC build-out deadlines by three years. Did a \$100,000 donation by Mr. Ergen and his wife to President Biden’s Super Pac last year lubricate the regulatory forbearance? EchoStar says it and Mr. Ergen donate to politicians of both parties, and, well, they certainly get their money’s worth.

Congress included provisions in last year’s defense reauthorization bill to support military installations of private networks based on Open Radio Access Network (O-RAN), which will specifically benefit Mr. Ergen. Congrats to Mr. Ergen for making Washington joint partners in his 5G enterprise, yet scuttling the Dish-DirecTV deal could still result in its failure.

Will progressive antitrust cops prevail on the Biden Administration? Stay tuned.

The FCC gives Charlie Ergen some crucial regulatory forbearance.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Candidate of Joy Dodges a Jolly Cardinal

At first glance, Peggy Noonan appears to make a compelling case for Vice President Kamala Harris to accept an invitation to attend and speak at the coming Al Smith dinner in New York and so join former President Donald Trump at the podium (“Who’s Afraid of the Al Smith Dinner?” Declarations, Sept. 28). On the other hand, there are compelling reasons why she shouldn’t accept the invitation.

Ms. Noonan discusses Mr. Trump’s boorish appearance at the 2016 Al Smith dinner, where he received unpreceded boozing for his mean-spirited comments about Hillary Clinton, but she doesn’t draw out its significance. Mr. Trump doesn’t play by the rules of civil discourse. Ms. Harris may have been guided in her decision not to attend the dinner by George Bernard Shaw’s admonition: Never wrestle with a pig; you both get dirty, and the pig likes it.

FRANK G. SPLITZ
Mount Prospect, Ill.

Let Ms. Harris skip the dinner. Then, if she loses, I guarantee you: There will never be another defection.

MARIE CLAUSE
Sierra Madre, Calif.

If Ms. Harris won’t attend this year’s Al Smith Dinner, perhaps Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont (Letters, Sept. 23) could stand in for her.

GEORGE CROWLING
Dallas

Contrary to Ms. Noonan’s claim that “Kamala Harris Is an Artless Dodger” (Declarations, Sept. 21), I believe that her campaign strategy is that of an artful dodger. Since the ousting of President Biden by party operatives in June, their plan of platitudes has worked.

“Hope and joy,” “middle-class kid,” “a neighborhood of folks who were very proud of their lawn” and the rinse-and-repeat phrase, “opportunity economy,” have achieved the goal of getting a bump in the polls and closing the Biden-Trump gap. This has all the fingerprints of David Plouffe, the campaign manager for Barack Obama in 2008, and “Hope and Change.”

Plouffe rule No. 1: Allow yourself to be a vessel into which people can blindly pour their hopes and dreams. Any detailed specifics could be off-putting to some voters, as facts and flip-flops are stubborn things.

ANDREW CHAWKE
Sherman Oaks, Calif.

Readers From Whitewater React to Migration

In Jacob Curtis’s article detailing the challenges the huge influx of migrants is posing to my little town (“How the Migrant Crisis Strains Whitewater, Wis.”, Cross Country, Sept. 28), the biggest challenge went largely unremarked. According to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, in addition to the number of special-needs students, the number of economically disadvantaged and English-learner students in a district is the biggest driver of educational outcomes. Migrant children almost always fall in both of these latter two categories.

As a result, what used to be an above-average school district in a university town has seen the biggest drop in educational achievement in the state for larger districts. We are in the bottom 17% and falling, driving many parents, including even some on the school board, to enroll their kids elsewhere.

To put it mildly, it’s frustrating to hear politicians imply we are racist xenophobes for our concern over what’s happening to our schools. No doubt most of these politicians ensure their own kids don’t see a classroom with even one English

learner. They make up half of some of our classrooms.

HENRI KINSON
Whitewater, Wis.

I was saddened to see that Whitewater is being politicized. Mr. Curtis should live here and see the beautiful diversity that enriches our community and fills our schools. I live in Whitewater, and my experience, and that of others I know who live here, has been vastly different and positive.

Our community thrives with a diverse immigrant population, and most welcome those with different backgrounds. Immigrants live in our communities, own businesses, work important jobs, share their beautiful cultures and advance all of us. The support of a recently formed Immigration Support Coalition underlines that we welcome those who seek to make Whitewater their home, whatever their background.

Most people in Whitewater are grateful to welcome those from different countries and believe we should treat each other with respect, compassion and humanity.

MARJORIE STONEMAN
Whitewater, Wis.

Show Me the Money? How About a Solution?

Karl Rove identifies that there is a gap between President Biden’s belief in his administration’s accomplishments and the public’s perception of them (“How Biden Keeps Helping Trump,” op-ed, Sept. 26). For most ordinary citizens, an accomplishment represents a problem solved. Politicians tend not to think in terms of such metrics.

When politicians come around bragging about their “accomplishments,” the public recognizes that what they’re really talking about is how much taxpayer money they have obligated the government to spend. In Mr. Biden’s case, that amounts to

trillions of dollars, much of it added to the national debt, with no targets for actual problems that all this spending will solve.

Politicians have long complained that their constituents don’t recognize or appreciate their accomplishments. They often conclude that there must be some kind of messaging problem. They never seem to understand that the messaging problem runs the other direction: Americans want problems fixed, not money thrown at them.

JOHN FOSTER
Portola Valley, Calif.

SNL’s Comedy Turns Tragic

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu doesn’t seem to believe that President Biden’s word, “don’t,” is an effective strategy (“Notable & Quotable: Hezbollah,” Sept. 30). Such red lines are meaningless unless the reaction to the crossing of those lines is immediate and conclusive. Wishful thinking isn’t a winning or survival strategy. Israel will survive. If we keep electing weak-kneed apologists, we won’t.

RICHARD ARNOLD
West Hartford, Conn.

The Irreverent Revolution of “SNL” (by Kyle Smith, Cultural Commentary, Sept. 26) is culturally significant in that Lorne Michaels, the writers and the cast altered the trajectory of comedy forever. In celebrating 50 years on air, however, it should be noted that the last 20 have been dominated by an agenda. This has made the show as innovative, and as entertaining, as a business luncheon—without the martinis.

JOSEPH P. REILLY
Scottsdale, Ariz.

Pepper ... And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



“He has such a way with emojis.”

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

OPINION

Do Americans Really Want a ‘Politics of Joy’?

**DECLARATIONS***By Peggy Noonan*

the end more insane than even my husband could tolerate."

Were I a Harris supporter I would be concerned about these things:

The first is so obvious it barely needs saying, but with a month to go should be said again. She still hasn't given voters a satisfying sense of what she is about, what the purpose of her political career is. She hasn't fleshed out her political intent—what she stands for, what she won't abide, what she means to establish, what she won't let happen.

What is her essential mission? Is it national "repair," is it to "stabilize" an uncertain country, is it "re-launch"? Is it "more from the top for the bottom, period"? Is it "America as defender of democracy in the world"? Is it about focusing—now, first, and until something works—on the high daily cost of living? When things can't be reduced to their essentials it's because they're not real, there's nothing to reduce. She so far hasn't conveyed a sense of intellectual grasp.

Her campaign has placed too many chips on the idea of the mood, the vibe, the picture. "She's bringing us a politics of joy," Gov. Tim Walz said, again, in his summation the other night in the vice-presidential debate. But look, "the politics of joy" didn't help Hubert Humphrey when he used exactly those words in his announcement for the presidency in April 1968. The country was becoming undone by Vietnam and he was talking about . . . joy? It made no one smile or feel inspired except his opponent, Richard Nixon.

It didn't do Mayor John Lindsay any good in 1966, in the middle of a transit strike and other municipal strikes, with crime starting to creep up, when he called New York "fun city."

He meant to sound upbeat. It came across as cheery mindlessness, a deep cluelessness. New Yorkers resented it. Doesn't this guy know what time it is?



Kamala Harris and Tim Walz at the Democratic National Convention.

Americans feel surrounded by crises—inflation, the Mideast, Vladimir Putin, AI's gonna eat your brain and no one's gonna stop it, China. You can see this in the right track/wrong track numbers, which continue underwater—the whole country fears we're on a losing slide in a dangerous world.

They feel like Brad Pitt as Billy Beane in the movie "Moneyball." The Oakland A's have lost another one, and the general manager, Beane, walks by the locker room and hears music. He walks in, the players are dancing and joking, and he slams a bat against the wall to silence them. "Is losing fun?" he asks them.

They shake their heads. "What are you having fun for?"

That's more like how people feel. Is losing fun? Then why are you proclaiming joy and having fun?

If I were a Trump supporter I would be worried about what Trump supporters have worried about since he came down the escalator, that he is squandering it away every day. Voters and observers have spent a decade saying "he's getting crazier," "he's going too far,"

and they're always right and are right now. He's selling \$100,000 watches and having Truth Social meltdowns, free-associating about movies and dribbling away arguments. Ms. Harris insists almost to the point of credibility that the Biden-Harris administration didn't let the border be overwhelmed, the Biden-Harris administration tried to control the border and put forward the toughest bill and Donald Trump stopped it. And she's getting away with it! With the Jan. 6 filings released this week, his focus is sure to return to the endless murk and mire of personal grievance.

What should both sides be watching now? John Ellis, in his Political News Items Substack, notes an intriguing sidebar from a recent Gallup survey. "Nearly identical percentages of US adults rate Donald Trump (46%) and Kamala Harris (44%) favorably in Gallup's latest Sept 3-15 poll." But both candidates have higher unfavorable ratings than favorable. Mr. Trump's unfavorable rating is 7 points higher than his favorable—and Ms. Harris's is 10 points higher. Her favorable numbers

have "moderated" since her rise to the nomination, while Mr. Trump's are up 5 points since last month.

Look at the numbers involving independent voters, Mr. Ellis continues. Majorities of independents view Mr. Trump and Ms. Harris unfavorably, but he holds a favorability edge over her with independents, at 44% vs. 35%. More: "Assuming the poll is accurate"—he does—"the fact that 60 percent of independents have an 'unfavorable' opinion of Harris is surprising." In 2020, Joe Biden defeated Donald Trump among independents, 52% to 43%.

Back to the Harris campaign. It's odd that some political professionals think nobody cares if she does an interview with some newspaper. When all the public sees is scripted stuff, punctuated infrequently by an interview with a highly respectful and sympathetic interviewer, they pick it up. They get a sense that something is being hidden from them. Well-produced rallies with good enough speeches and softball interviews won't really cut it. In Hollywood they used to try to soften the picture of a star losing her luster by putting a coat of Vaseline on the camera lens, to soften the focus. The Harris campaign is using too much metaphoric Vaseline, and it feels not like an attempt to soften but to obscure.

It would be better if she'd done interview after interview from day one of her candidacy, and better if her campaign had accepted the wobbles, accepted the imperfections, gotten people rooting for her, and helped her get more at ease, more confident, and let her build. That they didn't implies they didn't think she could build.

Hiding in plain sight works for a while but not forever.

Is there time to make a change? There's time to throw a long ball, and that would consist of greater exposure of their candidate. There's a month to go. Everyone's still watching, talking and texting.

The slogan didn't work for Hubert Humphrey in 1968. It seems tone-deaf in the troubled world of 2024.

We're braced for October surprises and black swans. Maybe the swans—the Mideast, deadly, historic floods in neck-and-neck North Carolina—have already swum by. Maybe not.

Still, I have a sneaking feeling maybe the table's set more than we know, that if the nation voted today, it would produce about the same outcome we'll see on the morning of Nov. 6. And if you could jump ahead and be told the result, you would quickly be able to explain it to yourself. "I don't think people liked her that much." "They just didn't want to go back to his chaos." "She didn't feel like a turning of the page but more of the same." "He seemed at

within the tent encampments, Islamic State still rules using terror. It maintains its own education system. It also runs its own courts, which pass sentences including the death penalty, and its enforcers carry out the decisions of the court, I was told by a senior security officer at the camp when I visited in March. Escapes from al-Hol organized by jihadists are frequent. Islamic State members took Ms. Sido and her children from the camp in one such escape. The small family found its way to the Turkish-supported Islamist enclave in Syria's northern Idlib province.

From there, an Islamic State-associated network smuggled Ms. Sido and her children over the border into Turkey, where they met with members of her husband's family from Gaza. The networks provided her with a fake Egyptian passport so that she could be flown into Egypt. From there, she and her children were smuggled into the Gaza Strip, where her husband's family held her until she was rescued on Sept. 30.

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years, accounting for the lion's share of the casualties, before ending—yes—at the 38th parallel.

No sentient being during those 34 months didn't think, as Donald Trump does now, to the outrage of many, that a deal was inevitable and the sooner the better.

Mr. Trump: "I watched this poor guy [Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky] yesterday at the United Nations. . . . They're locked into a situation. It's sad. They just don't know what to do. Because Ukraine is gone. It's not Ukraine anymore. You can never replace those cities and towns. And you can never replace the dead people—so many dead people. Any deal, even the worst deal, would have been better. . . . We continue to give billions of dollars to a man who refuses to make a deal, Zelensky. There was no deal that he could have made that wouldn't have been better than the situation you have right now. You have a country that has been obliterated."

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From Idlib, she was taken to Turkey, all the while within networks of Sunni political Islam. From there she was sent to Egypt, and then on to Hamas's domain in Gaza. At no point did she encounter a system to which she could appeal for help. In Islamic State's caliphate, the Hayat Tahrir al Sham enclave and Hamas-controlled Gaza, the authorities would have sided with her captors and returned her to them. In Turkey and Egypt, it appears that the Islamist nexus holding her was untroubled by the authorities.

Enclaves under de facto Islamist control exist across the Middle East. The states that underwrite their continued existence are Iran and Turkey. How many more like Ms. Sido are out there, robbed of their freedom, taken from their families, without rights or recourse to the law? The U.S. State Department re-

corded last year that some 2,644 of the Yazidis captured in 2014 are still missing. Of these, 1,300 were children at the time of their capture.

Ms. Sido's experience also illuminates a broader point at the heart of Middle East conflicts. In the fight between the Islamist systems advancing across the region and those fighting to turn them back, there are two major camps: the one that enslaved her and the one that freed her. The camp that freed her—of which Israel is a part and which is led by the U.S.—is far from perfect, continues to make errors and has far to go. Yet, in this instance, it did what was right.

Ms. Sido, by the way, wants to study medicine. I hope that she does so and that she and her family have many happy years together.

Mr. Spyer is director of research at the Middle East Forum and director of the Middle East Center for Reporting and Analysis. He is author of "Days of the Fall: A Reporter's Journey in the Syria and Iraq Wars."

A Yazidi Woman Is Liberated From Slavery in Gaza

By Jonathan Spyer

I got an unexpected message from a longtime friend and colleague from my days reporting on the ISIS war in Syria and Iraq. My friend, Alan Duncan, is a Scottish documentary filmmaker and a former infantry soldier. I met him when he was a volunteer fighter with the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga and I was a front-line correspondent. This July, he invited me to meet him in a quiet cafe in Tel Aviv, where he told me an astounding story.

A young Yazidi woman who had been kidnapped by Islamic State—better known as ISIS during its rampage across northern Iraq's Nineveh Plains in 2014—was now a captive in Gaza. Her family was trying to free her, and Alan wanted me to spread the word to the right people in Israel.

The young woman's harrowing story illustrates the grim realities of life for many in the Middle East over the past decade. It also demonstrates the extent to which the burgeoning of Islamist and jihadist centers of government in the region has devastated innocent people.

In 2014 Fawzia Sido, then 11, was among the thousands of Yazidis captured in northern Iraq's Sinjar region. She was separated from her family and enslaved. During the period in which ISIS maintained its caliphate in parts of Iraq and Syria, the organization forced Ms. Sido to marry a jihadist from Gaza. Repeatedly raped by this man, who was in his 20s, she bore two children, a boy and a girl.

Ms. Sido's husband was killed when Islamic State made its last stand in the Euphrates River Valley in 2019. She and her children joined the exodus of ISIS families to the huge detention camp at al-Hol in northern Syria, maintained by the U.S.-aligned Syrian Democratic Forces. More than 40,000 Islamic State-linked people, including wives and children of ISIS jihadists, are held at the camp.

The Syrian Democratic Forces control the perimeter at al-Hol. But

Fawzia Sido's decade-long captivity illustrates the connections between ISIS, Hamas and other jihadists.

on the ground in Gaza by Israeli security forces. Ms. Sido has now reunited with her family in Sinjar, Iraq, where she was captured and enslaved a decade ago.

Ms. Sido's story shows that, contrary to popular claims, there isn't a gaping distinction between Islamic State and other Sunni Islamist jihadist groups. Though she was captured by Islamic State, the enclave in Idlib where she was held is con-

trolled by Hayat Tahrir al Sham, a group that is a descendant of al Qaeda. The HTS enclave is able to continue because of an undeclared guarantee provided for it by Turkish military positions around it.

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Thanks for Nothing, Say Voters in 2024

BUSINESS WORLD**By Holman W. Jenkins, Jr.**

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years, accounting for the lion's share of the casualties, before ending—yes—at the 38th parallel.

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Mr. Biden, the author of this mess, likes to quote FDR's "Arsenal of Democracy" rhetoric. An apter comparison is Woodrow Wilson, who didn't want to be seen preparing his army to fight World War I, even permitting dissolution of the Army's Field Artillery Board, charged with learning the lessons of the Western Front.

The question for every American: Does Ms. Harris know what she's saying and why, with a subtle appreciation of how it serves the U.S. interest in a deal not to be seen pres-

suring Ukraine for a deal (even as the Biden administration withholds weapons to encourage a deal)?

Or is Ms. Harris just a repeater of words?

My personal journey perhaps is indicative. Last February I imagined Ms. Harris replacing President Biden and brushing aside a softball Super Bowl interview to give a stirring defense of Ukraine. We were likely to get President Harris anyway if Mr. Biden was re-elected. Alas, Mr. Biden bowed out far later than he

should have, while somehow mystically transferring the nomination to Ms. Harris. Now a foreshortened 105-day campaign may expire with half of America not knowing whether it's pulling the lever for Chauncey Gardiner or Chance the Gardener.

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Voters can help by giving an unmistakable win to one candidate or the other, but this is a wish and not a strategy. A likelier result is a passionate turnout tsunami like 2020, with more Americans than ever believing they have reason to be angry about the outcome.

At least this time Mr. Trump would be in the position of Hillary Clinton in 2016 and not Donald Trump in 2020—he won't be contesting a disputed election from the White House. But Kamala Harris will, with the additional complication of being subordinate to Mr. Biden, who reportedly remains full of resentment at how he was replaced.

Have fun, voters. This will be the second election in a row decided by mail-in ballots, whose validity is inherently easy to question and impossible to demonstrate. Election Day may become election month, with fights over missing signatures and postmarks, amid the inevitable demand that some but not all improperly marked ballots be counted in the

SPORTS

The October of Ohtani Has Arrived

From the moment Shohei Ohtani landed in America, he was seen as the star who could revive interest in a flagging sport. Now he is set to make his MLB postseason debut with the Dodgers.



BY LINDSEY ADLER

Shohei Ohtani arrived in America heralded as baseball's savior. Here was a player unlike any in history, a modern-day Babe Ruth who would hit, pitch and single-handedly revive a sport that had lost its place in the national consciousness.

Since his MLB debut in 2018, Ohtani has done his part. He's about to win his third MVP in the last four seasons, having set a new standard for what is possible on a baseball field.

It was his team that failed him. For six years, Ohtani rewrote the history books while toiling away for a dismal Los Angeles Angels squad, never once experiencing the postseason.

Now, finally, that's about to change.

Ohtani will make his long-awaited playoff debut with the Los Angeles Dodgers on Saturday, the start of what could be a deep October run. It's exactly what MLB has long dreamed about: the biggest star in a generation, taking his place at last on the game's grandest stage.

"It's like adding rocket fuel to the fire, from our perspective," commissioner Rob Manfred told The Wall Street Journal. "I think

Ohtani being in the playoffs is what every sport hopes for."

It isn't like baseball has lacked talent over the past decade. But no one since New York Yankees shortstop Derek Jeter has cut through to popular culture the way Ohtani has. Though there have been other recent phenoms—former teen sensation Bryce Harper, say, or five-tool star Mike Trout—none has come close to generating the crossover appeal of the 30-year-old Ohtani.

"If you're a casual fan, you may not get the opportunity to see Shohei play throughout the course of the season too often," Jeter said. "There's just so many people that are paying attention now and have heard his name. They may not be a baseball fan, but I think they know who Shohei Ohtani is."

How we took so long to get here is down to six fruitless and frustrating years in Anaheim, where the Angels somehow failed to make the most of having Ohtani and Trout on the same roster. Ohtani racked up personal accolades in front of a regional audience, yet the team never once finished above third in the American League West—the Angels currently hold the longest active playoff drought in the majors.

The tantalizing prospect of



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Ohtani's starring in nationally televised games in October remained elusive.

"A lot of the gain throughout my career, all of the endorsements and commercials and the attention I got, was simply because we were in the World Series all the time," Jeter said. "When you have the

game's biggest stars, they need to be playing in these games."

Ohtani's move about 30 miles up the road to the Dodgers last winter instantly made that more likely. In his first season in a new uniform, he hit a career-high 54 home runs, drove in 130 runs and stole 59 bases, while leading Los

Angeles to the best record in baseball. Ohtani lit up the league—even though he didn't pitch this season as he recovered from elbow surgery.

"So far, he's just exceeded our expectations," Dodgers president Stan Kasten said.

He's also carried the Dodgers far beyond their usual sphere of influence. Ohtani is a fixture on the nightly news in Japan, where every move he makes is chronicled and broadcast to a legion of adoring fans in his homeland.

"We've always been very popular across the Pacific Rim," Kasten said. "I would say we've always been Asia's favorite team, but that is certainly more so now."

In the U.S., meanwhile, baseball has spent years trying to reclaim national relevance in its own backyard. Though new streaming deals and bold on-field rule changes have increased viewership, the league office knows that few things would be as attractive to lapsed or casual fans as the sight of Ohtani suddenly getting hot in October.

In the seven seasons since his debut, and especially after he joined the Dodgers, MLB has witnessed something the league refers to as the "Ohtani Effect."

Fans consume news stories and devour highlight videos of Ohtani significantly more than any other player. His jersey is the most popular among MLB players for the second consecutive year. (And when his jersey was No. 1 in 2023, fans were purchasing Angels jerseys with the understanding that he would be leaving the franchise at the end of the season.)

But Ohtani's first postseason appearance comes with a significant catch. The Dodgers head into October facing serious problems

with their roster. Ahead of their opening game in the NLDS against the San Diego Padres, their pitching staff has been decimated by injuries. Manager Dave Roberts, who has now taken the Dodgers to the postseason nine times, faces a referendum on his tenure every October. The club has developed a reputation for fading when it matters—the Dodgers have reached the playoffs every season since 2013 and advanced to the World Series three times in that stretch, with only one title, which came in the shortened 2020 season.

With Ohtani around, the stakes are now even higher. Another early exit would certainly go down as the biggest playoff humiliation yet for a team that paid \$700 million for a 10-year chance to win a ring with him.

"Baseball is putting its best foot forward now," Kasten said. "The combination of the Dodgers' history and Shohei's profile is something you just can't manufacture."

BENNY SIU/REUTERS/KODONNEWS/ZUMA PRESS

BY JARED DIAMOND

THEY CALL HIM THE POLAR BEAR.

No one knows exactly why, but a former teammate decided a few years back that Pete Alonso resembled polar bear, and the moniker inexplicably stuck. It's a nickname that doesn't make much sense, but somehow becomes more endearing the longer it endures.

Which makes it the perfect metaphor for the New York Mets' season—an unfathomable, beautiful mess that is only continuing because the Polar Bear finally woke up from an extended hibernation.

Trailing by two in the ninth inning of the decisive third game in their wild card series against the Milwaukee Brewers, Alonso slammed a three-run home run to right field to propel the Mets to an improbable victory. The blast was the signature moment for one of the most beloved players in franchise history in a year that would sound too weird to be possible if it were happening to anyone besides the Mets.

Never before had somebody hit a go-ahead homer while trailing in the ninth inning or later of a winner-take-all postseason contest—until the Polar Bear unleashed his mighty roar.

"Great players," Mets owner Steve Cohen said afterward as a Champagne-soaked clubhouse celebration raged around him, "rise up to the occasion."

When Alonso stepped up to the plate to face star Brewers closer Devin Williams on Thursday night, all hope seemed lost. The Polar Bear had been mired in a deep slumber for weeks, his ongoing slump emerging as one of the major story lines dogging the Mets as they faced elimination. Just two

The Mets' Season Looked Over. Then the Polar Bear Roared.



Pete Alonso hit a three-run home run to propel the Mets to an improbable win over the Brewers on Thursday.

innings earlier, Alonso had flubbed a foul pop-up, a miscue emblematic of how things had been going for him of late.

The truth is that Alonso's recent struggles were making it easier for the Mets to accept what might be coming. Alonso is set to become a free agent this winter, meaning his at-bat against Williams with the season on the line was poised to be his last wearing a Mets uniform. A feeble performance to wrap up a quick October exit for the Mets felt like a fitting

conclusion to his tenure in New York.

Then, with one swing, everything changed. The instant the ball connected with his bat, Alonso unleashed a scream, before delivering a chef's kiss to the stunned Milwaukee crowd as he rounded first base.

"It's something that you practice in the backyard as a kid," Alonso said. "Words can't explain it."

Alonso, 29, had been waiting for something like this. As suc-

cessful as he's been in his six seasons with the Mets, there was still something missing from his résumé: a heroic feat in a moment that truly mattered.

He set a rookie record by smashing 53 homers in 2019, won the Home Run Derby twice and developed into a fan favorite for his delightfully profane catchphrase—"let's go Mets," with an F bomb sandwiched between the first two words.

Yet his personal highlight reel was mostly filled with feats that

amounted to empty calories.

That became particularly glaring this summer. In a Mets season filled with humor, whimsy and joy, featuring critical appearances by a purple fast-food mascot named Grimace and a Latin-pop-singing second baseman, Alonso was an unexpected disappointment. His 34 home runs and 88 RBIs were career lows, outside of the pandemic-shortened 2020 campaign. There were plenty of times where it appeared as if Alonso was the only person in Flushing not having any fun.

It wasn't a terrible performance—but it wasn't one that would inspire the Mets to rush out and offer him a \$200 million contract, either. Alonso's home run Thursday, his first since Sept. 19, doesn't necessarily change that calculation, but it does help to change his legacy no matter what happens next.

"It's been hard for him the whole year," Mets manager Carlos Mendoza said. "For Pete to come through that way is a dream come true for him."

And since these are the 2024 Mets, it didn't take long after they punched their ticket to a division series matchup against the Philadelphia Phillies for the season to take another bizarre turn. Minutes after his homer, Alonso introduced the world to the Mets' latest wacky side character: a small pumpkin he picked with his wife at a farm outside of Milwaukee earlier this week.

He called it the "Playoff Pumpkin." Never mind the impracticality of picking pumpkins 900 miles away from home.

"Nothing's more like fall than playoff baseball and pumpkins," he said.

As of Thursday, you can add Polar Bears to that list, too.



'Doghouse'
Jeep-maker
Stellantis tries to
control costs **B9**

EXCHANGE

BUSINESS | FINANCE | TECHNOLOGY | MANAGEMENT

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

OpenAI NYC
Artificial-intelligence
pioneer leases real
office space **B10**



DJIA 42352.75 ▲ 341.16 0.81% NASDAQ 18137.85 ▲ 1.22% STOXX 600 518.56 ▲ 0.4%

10-YR. TREAS. ▼ 1 2/32, yield 3.980%

OIL \$74.38 ▲ \$0.67

GOLD \$2,645.80 ▼ \$11.30

EURO \$1.0977 YEN 148.72

Saturday/Sunday, October 5 - 6, 2024 | **B1**

CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: MEGA/GC IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES; LCD/SPLASH NEWS/SHUTTERSTOCK; ADRIAN BEG/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES; BILL PUGLIANO/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES



1



2



3

Since the end of the Trump administration, Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump (1) have made the rounds on the Miami social scene while building a nascent business empire. Their multimillion-dollar home (2) is in an exclusive enclave. Kushner is negotiating to build villas on Sazan (3), a former military island dotted with abandoned bunkers.

Jared and Ivanka's Excellent Adventure

Helped by political ties and cash from Gulf states, the power couple plans to develop ultraluxury resorts in Albania

By Eliot Brown,
Vivian Salama and
Deborah Acosta

Months after leaving the White House in 2021, Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump spent a week yachting with friends among Albania's pristine Adriatic beaches.

They climbed the stone steps of a 2,200-year-old Greek theater, dined on a yacht with Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama and were so "romanced" by a visit to a former military island, they thought it would be the perfect destination for a luxury hotel, Kushner said.

When Kushner met Rama a few months later, he had a proposition.

Kushner said he was "very, very mesmerized by the beauties of Albania," Rama, a six-foot-seven head of state, said in an interview. "He asked me if I would be OK if he would look into it for potential investments."

Rama gave his blessing—and more.

Kushner, 43 years old, is now plowing ahead with plans for a \$1 billion ultraluxury development. He is negotiating details with Rama's government to put villas on Sazan, the military island he toured, a former Soviet submarine base where abandoned bunkers and tunnels are sprinkled throughout rocky hills.

A set of high-end resorts are planned for a nearby peninsula where cows and sheep graze by beaches and dunes available only by a rugged road. That land is environmentally protected. But a new Albanian law allows construction of hotels, so long as they're at least five stars.

The standard playbook for family members of candidates running for office is to lie low—to avoid getting tangled up in politically tied deals

that could invite controversy. Kushner is barreling right into them.

Since leaving the White House, where he served as senior adviser to his father-in-law, then-President Donald Trump, Kushner has built a fledgling business empire by leaning in to geopolitical ties to a degree rarely seen for a person so close to a leading presidential candidate, at a scale that

Please turn to page B5



SCIENCE OF SUCCESS | BEN COHEN

This Will Be Your New Favorite Podcast. The Hosts Aren't Human.



EMIL LENDENS/ISTOCK

With this Google tool, you can now listen to a show about any topic you could possibly imagine. You won't believe your ears.



Have you heard about the latest hit podcast? It's called Deep Dive—and you have to check it out.

Each show is a chatty, 10-minute conversation about, well, any topic you could possibly imagine. The hosts are just geniuses. It's like they know everything about everything. Their voices are soothing. Their banter is charming. They sound like the kind of people you want to hang out with.

But you can't. As it turns out, these podcast hosts aren't real people. Their voices are entirely AI-generated—and so is everything they say.

And I can't stop listening to them.

This experimental audio feature released last month by Google is not just some toy or another tantalizing piece of technology with approximately zero practical value.

It's one of the most compelling and completely flabbergasting demonstrations of AI's

potential yet.

"A lot of the feedback we get from users and businesses for AI products is basically: That's cool, but is it useful, and is it easy to use?" said Kelly Schaefer, a product director in Google Labs.

This one is definitely cool, but it's also useful and easy to use. All you need to do is drag a file, drop a link or dump text into a free tool called NotebookLM, which can take any chunk of information and make it an entertaining, accessible conversation.

Google calls it an "audio overview." You would just call it a podcast.

One of the coolest, most useful parts is that it makes podcasts out of stuff that nobody would ever confuse for scintillating podcast material.

Wikipedia pages. YouTube clips. Random PDFs. Your college thesis. Your notes from that business meeting last month. Your grandmother's lasagna recipe. Your resume.

Please turn to page B4

EXCHANGE

THE SCORE | THE BUSINESS WEEK IN 7 STOCKS

Stellantis, Nike and Spirit Airlines Sink

STELLANTIS

STLA ▼ 13% Jeep- and Chrysler-maker Stellantis on Monday cut its full-year earnings outlook, a warning that followed Volkswagen slashing its guidance on Sept. 27. Mercedes-Benz and BMW also cut targets earlier in September. Stellantis said it faced weaker demand across many markets and that it would accelerate plans to trim bloated U.S. inventories. Globally, August auto-vehicle sales volumes were down 4% year-over-year, according to data provider GlobalData. American depositary shares of Stellantis **dropped 13% Monday**.

NIKE

NKE ▼ 6.8% Nike lost its footing Wednesday as investors worried about its turnaround. The company posted quarterly results late Tuesday, notching a near-30% fall in quarterly profit, and it withdrew its full-year guidance. Nike executives said they wanted to give the company's incoming chief executive a chance to work on a plan before providing a forecast for the fiscal year ending in May. Current Chief Executive John Donahoe will step down on Oct. 14, when Nike veteran Elliott Hill will take the helm. Nike shares **declined 6.8% Wednesday**.



Nike reported a nearly 30% drop in profit.

HUMANA

HUM ▼ 12% Medicare Advantage concerns sent Humana shares tumbling. The health insurer warned that a steep drop in the federal government's quality ratings of its Medicare plans could hit its results in 2026. The company said that fewer of its plans would be rated four stars or above. The announcement is the latest sign of how the Medicare business, long seen as a main source of growth and profit for insurers, has become riskier and more challenging. Humana shares **tumbled 12% Wednesday**, adding to Tuesday's 12% decline.



Spirit Airlines is facing deadlines to pay back some of its \$3.3 billion of debt.

SPIRIT AIRLINES

SAVE ▼ 25% Spirit shares took a nosedive on news of a possible bankruptcy filing. The budget carrier and its bondholders have discussed a potential Chapter 11 filing after its failed merger with JetBlue Airways, The Wall Street Journal reported late Thursday. Spirit has also been exploring restructuring its balance sheet through an out-of-court transaction, the Journal reported. The company has been struggling with losses and declining revenue as it aims to address coming maturities within its \$3.3 billion debt load. Spirit hasn't turned an annual profit since before the pandemic, even as travel has rebounded. Budget carriers have been battered by bigger rivals' low-fare offerings. Spirit shares **sank 25% Friday**.

\$3.3 billion

Spirit's debt load

\$1.1 billion

Spirit's secured bonds due in less than a year

Performance of airline stocks, year-to-date



THE INTELLIGENT INVESTOR | JASON ZWEIG

Is This 'Buffer' ETF Your Knight in Shining Armor?



Imagine you could earn much of the gains on stocks but none of their losses.

Mutual funds and exchange-traded funds that use options contracts to insure against losses while capturing some gains are booming. In 2018, there were 13 of these funds managing a total of \$3.8 billion, according to Morningstar; at the end of last month, 342 held a combined \$108.3 billion.

Such funds have many names: buffer, defined-protection, defined-outcome, target-outcome or structured-protection ETFs, among others.

I like to call them armored funds. Like medieval knights, these ETFs wear shining armor that can protect against the slings and arrows of outrageous market fortune—like the 18.1% loss on stocks in 2022.

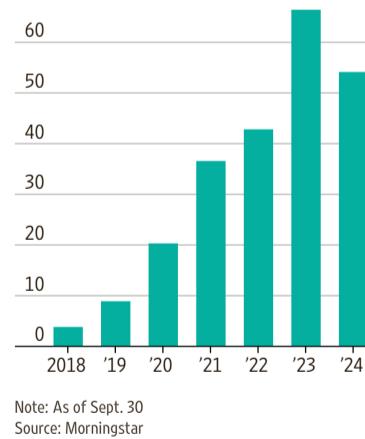
But armor is also a clunky hindrance: To buy that buffer, or protection against loss, you relinquish your right to participate fully in the potential gains. Your returns are capped at a predetermined level.

So you shouldn't buy these funds if you aren't comfortable with that trade-off.

Overall, there's a lot to like. With annual expenses typically under 1% and no commissions, armored ETFs are much cheaper than fixed annuities or the complex debt instruments called structured notes that Wall Street has peddled relentlessly. They're less risky than stocks alone, have no risk of default and are tax efficient.

Maybe you're making a down payment on a house in a year or two and want to shield your savings against loss while retaining the chance of at least some growth. Or maybe you're in or

Total net assets in 'buffer' funds



near retirement and seek to immunize some of your money against a market decline you won't have time to recover from.

Then these funds could be right for you—so long as you recognize their limitations.

If the Federal Reserve's half-point interest-rate cut last month is the beginning of a steady decline, some of these ETFs could become less attractive.

On funds that offer 100% downside protection, if interest rates continue to fall, your upside potential is likely to shrink, says Bruce Bond, founder of Innovator ETFs, which pioneered buffer ETFs in 2018 and manages \$18.5 billion in armored funds.

Here's why. The lower interest rates go, the less of its capital a new ETF can sink into options, making it harder to offer generous gains.

Typically, these funds lock in returns over a one-year period. The fund takes most of your money and puts it in stocks, often through options on an index or an ETF. It then separately buys a put option



and sells a call option, buffering the fund against loss and capping its gains at a certain level. At the end of each 12 months, the fund resets its terms, and investors can choose to keep their money and any gains in for another year.

First Trust's **FT Vest U.S. Equity Max Buffer ETF – July**, launched July 24, offers 100% downside protection with an 8.45% upside cap. Its investors are shielded from any S&P 500 loss (before expenses) if they hold until July 2025.

What about the upside? If stocks return 15%, you only get 8.45%, the capped level. If they earn, say, 3%, that's all you get. (Then you have to subtract the fund's 0.85% in expenses.)

A new ETF offered by First Trust on Sept. 20—two days after the Fed's rate cut—already looks drastically different from the July fund. It offers a smaller 7% upside cap and buffers losses only up to 50%, again before expenses.

Between October 2007 and March 2009, the S&P 500 lost 56.8%. If that happened again, this fund would protect you against the first 50 percentage points of loss, leaving you with about a 7.7% loss

after expenses.

When the buffer is less than 100%, says Matt Kaufman, head of ETFs at Calamos Investments, an armored fund will be "a lot more volatile in down markets, which I think a lot of people may not be looking for in these types of products."

Financial advisers love to pitch these funds as a "bond substitute," without mentioning that armored ETFs usually track the stock market so closely they don't offer the usual diversification benefits of bonds.

"We do not believe that it's an appropriate substitute for fixed income, because it doesn't provide the ballast of bonds," says Rachel Aguirre, head of U.S. iShares product at BlackRock. She suggests thinking of armored funds as an alternative to cash.

And so they are—if you buy on day one and hold to the end of their term.

"There's no free lunch with these funds," says Innovator's Bond. "The key peculiarity is that the outcome you get depends on the price you buy at." If you invest after day one or sell before the annual reset date, you might incur an

HIMS & HER'S HEALTH

HIMS ▼ 9.6% On Wednesday, the Food and Drug Administration said there were no longer shortages of Eli Lilly's popular GLP-1 medicine tirzepatide, branded as Zepbound and Mounjaro. Regulators signaled that new limits may be placed on the production of knockoff versions. Amid drug shortages, telehealth provider Hims & Hers Health started selling compounded versions this year. Hims sells a compounded form of semaglutide, which remains on the FDA's shortage list. Hims & Hers shares **dropped 9.6% Thursday**.

Hims & Hers Health performance, year-to-date

**TESLA**

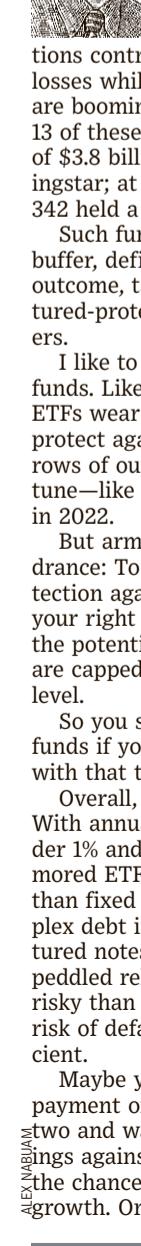
TSLA ▼ 3.5% Tesla said global deliveries rebounded in the third quarter, reversing earlier declines. It delivered a total of 462,890 vehicles during the July-to-September period, roughly in line with analysts' expectations. The result was a 6.4% increase over the same period last year, when sales were affected by factory upgrades that paused production. Still, Tesla's total deliveries for the first nine months of 2024 are trailing last year's performance, putting pressure on the company. Tesla shares **lost 3.5% Wednesday**.

CONAGRA BRANDS

CAG ▼ 8.1% The maker of Healthy Choice frozen meals said Wednesday that sales fell 4% in the latest quarter, following declines in its refrigerated and frozen-foods unit and other businesses. Shoppers have pushed back on high grocery prices, leading food companies to raise prices at a slower pace, roll out discounts and introduce new products. Chief Executive Sean Connolly said that discounts and end-aisle displays are bearing fruit. Conagra shares **retreated 8.1% Wednesday**.

—Francesca Fontana

MIKE BLAKE/REUTERS; NICOLE TUNG/BLOOMBERG NEWS



EXCHANGE

BY DREW FITZGERALD

Billionaire Charlie Ergen's latest gamble came down to the wire.

Just weeks before billions of dollars were due to lenders, Ergen agreed to sell the Dish satellite-television and Sling TV services to rival DirecTV for \$1. The deal, announced Monday, would also take about \$10 billion in debt off his hands and help secure fresh financing, averting a potential bankruptcy for EchoStar, the parent company of Dish.

"He's always been under pressure, and he's pulled a rabbit out of his hat time and time again to buy himself more time," said Craig Moffett, an analyst at research firm MoffettNathanson.

The deal to combine Dish and DirecTV is a lifeline for the penny-pinching mogul whose habits are the stuff of telecom-industry legend. To save money, he long worked from a windowless office and made employees share hotel rooms. His hard-nosed negotiations with TV programmers led to frequent channel blackouts, but also kept Dish's pay-TV prices down.

Now, Ergen, the 71-year-old chairman and controlling shareholder of EchoStar, will need to leverage his Washington, D.C., network to close a merger that antitrust officials have thwarted in the past. And he must persuade the company's bondholders, some of whom have backed his ventures for years, to take a \$1.6 billion haircut on what they are owed.

The Colorado mogul is known to play the odds. He tried his hand at blackjack card-counting until a casino asked him to leave. Later, he and partners poured their savings—\$60,000—into selling satellite dishes from a Denver-area storefront, laying the foundation for what would become Dish, one of the country's biggest pay-TV businesses.

"What he does at a card table is the same kind of thing he'd do at a negotiation table," said Jimmy Schaeffer, head of media consulting firm Carmel Group, who has known Ergen for decades. "He's still a risk-taker. He's still a gambler."

On Monday, AT&T said it agreed to sell its 70% stake in DirecTV to private-equity firm TPG, which already owns the other 30%, for about \$7.6 billion in payments.

Separately, DirecTV agreed to buy Dish from EchoStar and take on roughly \$9.8 billion of its debt. But, TPG will only assume that debt if bondholders agree to write off about \$1.6 billion of the Dish obligations. TPG's credit unit Angelo Gordon and DirecTV also agreed to give EchoStar \$2.5 billion in financing to satisfy debt maturing in November.

"In one shot, we reset the company on a new path," said EchoStar Chief Executive Hamid Akhavan, who likened the negotiations to landing multiple jumbo jets on the same runway. "To land all of them on the same day, on the same timeline, was unprecedented."

EchoStar's survival will cost investors. S&P Global Ratings called the proposed debt-exchange "tan-



The mogul agreed to sell his Dish satellite-TV business for \$1—and a lot of debt. Now he needs to close the deal and go all-in on wireless.

tamount to a default." And stockholders in Ergen's companies have seen the market value of their holdings sink from almost \$40 billion to less than \$6 billion.

Ergen hit the road this past week to persuade bondholders to accept the losses and to reassure investors about EchoStar's prospects, according to people familiar with the matter. The pitch: Bondholders would enjoy more certainty with debt backed by an enlarged DirecTV. And by casting off its declining pay-TV business, EchoStar would be a simpler wireless business with valuable nationwide spectrum rights.

Ergen wasn't available for an interview, his spokesman said.

He still maintains an active schedule and works past midnight at times, people familiar with his schedule say. He has climbed each of Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks and maintains a company tradition of joining incoming interns and managers on a team-building ascent, venturing out with them as recently as July when the DirecTV talks were under way.

Ergen grew up around Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, where his father, William, worked as a nuclear physicist. His mother, Viola, worked for years as an accountant and met her hus-

Charlie Ergen

- **Hometown:** Oak Ridge, Tenn.
- **Children:** Five
- **Hobbies:** Mountain climbing, poker
- **Feat:** Climbed each of Colorado's 14,000-foot peaks
- **Education:** Bachelor's in business and accounting, University of Tennessee; M.B.A., Wake Forest University

band through a hiking club.

After a failed stint as a financial analyst at Frito Lay, Ergen started his satellite business out of a converted mall in the Denver suburbs, far from the Hollywood studios and New York media owners he often battled. He launched its first satellite on a Chinese rocket with a high failure rate.

As Dish grew into the country's third-largest pay-TV provider, it pioneered digital video recorder and streaming-TV features that later became industry mainstays.

Employees no longer share hotel rooms on business trips, though they are encouraged to negotiate every service contract they sign, no matter how routine. When

the company shot a sizzle reel during the pandemic of its wireless-network crews at work, Ergen narrated the video himself.

On one earnings call, an analyst asked why the company let a sports-right deal lapse rather than pay the higher cost. "Look, I'm from Tennessee, but I'm just not that stupid, and we're not going to do that," Ergen replied.

The folksy shtick masks the record of an aggressive financial engineer. In 2008, he split the company he founded into two—EchoStar and Dish Network—only to later recombine them.

Before the pay-TV business started its long-term decline, Ergen began investing in wireless spectrum licenses. By 2022, he had spent more than \$30 billion on spectrum bets.

In 2019, Ergen saw an opportunity, seizing on two telecom companies' predicament: T-Mobile and Sprint had agreed to merge, but the Justice Department demanded concessions to keep the wireless market competitive. Dish agreed to buy customers and wireless licenses that the government forced T-Mobile and Sprint to divest.

"The regulators put Dish in a very strong position," Ergen said in an interview at the time.

U.S. authorities could still derail

Ergen's exit from pay TV. But Ergen has shown a knack for navigating Washington's thicket of agencies under leaders from both parties. He was welcomed into the Trump White House while the government was reviewing T-Mobile's bid for Sprint. And the Biden administration this year awarded the company a \$50 million grant to run a network-equipment testing center.

If Ergen pulls off his pay-TV exit as planned at the end of 2025, he will be left with a war chest of wireless licenses and an upstart wireless service. Even if he wants to, he isn't allowed to sell most of the spectrum to likely buyers—other cellphone companies—until 2026 at the earliest. EchoStar's rights also include frequencies that companies like Amazon and SpaceX could use to eventually connect cellphones from space.

EchoStar's wireless service, led by Boost Mobile, only serves about 7 million subscribers, well behind AT&T, Verizon and T-Mobile.

"It feels like one of those hunting for El Dorado sort of stories," where the payoff is always later, said the telecom analyst Moffett, referencing the legendary expeditions to find a lost gold city. "The problem is it's an incredibly risky strategy."

EMIL LENDOF/WSJ/REUTERS/ISTOCK

A Radical Idea to Save College Football

A group of disruptive sports executives has unveiled a vision for a breakaway by the biggest programs, promising collective bargaining for student players, a salary cap and a cascade of new TV money.

BY LAINE HIGGINS

THE SPECTER OF A super league has loomed over college football for years now—the constant possibility of a breakaway by the sport's biggest programs, promising more heavyweight matchups, relegation for the weakest teams, and a cascade of new TV money. The result would be something akin to European soccer, only with helmets, pads, and marching bands.

It's been a tantalizing topic of debate from bar stools to boardrooms, but no one had any real idea of what a college football super league might look like.

Until now.

On Tuesday, a group of disruptive sports executives unveiled their radical pitch for a reimagined top tier of Division I football. And it's less a series of subtle tweaks than a full-scale factory reset.

The group, spearheaded by Len Perna, the chief executive of executive search firm TurnkeyZRG, and former Major League Soccer deputy commissioner Mark Abbott, calls itself "College Sports Tomorrow." And their plan is to unify the more than 130 teams that compete in the Football Bowl Subdivision into one nationwide competition.

The College Student Football League would be split into two tiers, with different divisions



Michigan and Alabama played in the Rose Bowl in January. The challenge for a potential new league will be bringing TV broadcast rights together.

based on geography. The top 72 programs would be split into 12 six-team divisions, with the remaining 64 spread across eight divisions in a lower tier. Teams in the top tier would play 13 games, with the best performers in one season receiving the toughest opponents the next.

Historic rivalries would be given preference for non-divisional games. (Perna, a Michigan alum, ensured that the Wolverines would still play Ohio State annually even though the schools would be in different divisions.) There would

be no true promotion or relegation, though the top teams in the lower tier would compete for two berths in the 24-team playoff and receive additional funds.

"This is not trying to create minor league professional football," Abbott said. "This is about the student athlete and actually trying to enhance the college experience for everybody."

To be clear, the CSFL plan is audacious, intriguing—and, at this point, far-fetched. Given the legal issues and the broadcast deals involved, the prospect of it happen-

ing anytime soon are closer to a Hail Mary than a quick completion. To be viable, the CSFL would need to convince dozens of teams across 10 conferences to join and unify their television rights.

"You need the entire ecosystem to support it," Abbott said.

But like structural revamps in other sports, this proposal ultimately seeks to do one thing: grow overall broadcast revenue for universities, where most programs lose money or barely break even.

The CSFL hopes to exist as a parallel structure to the NCAA. They say they don't want paying football players to come at the cost of scholarships for athletes in Olympic sports.

The CSFL would implement a salary cap and floor for teams as well as pay scales for athletes' endorsement earnings based on their position and on-field usage. It would also implement stricter guidelines for transfers, limiting athletes to two transfers within a five-year eligibility window. Athletes would collectively bargain with the league through a players' association, the format of which would depend on whether athletes are reclassified as employees, a question that is currently at issue in federal court and before the National Labor Relations Board.

Revenue generated by the CSFL wouldn't be split evenly among members; 94% would go to the 72

teams in the top tier, with the programs that drive the most viewers and win the most games receiving larger shares. The remaining 6% would go to the 64 teams in the lower tier. It's lopsided, but Perna believes it still begins to correct the current imbalance in college sports.

"It's 6% of what we think is a much bigger pie," he said.

This new vision for organizing the game comes at an urgent time for college football, which is desperately in search of new sources of income.

Starting next year, universities will be on the hook for new expenditures of up to \$22 million as they prepare to compensate players for the first time. It's one component of a soon-to-be finalized settlement in which the NCAA will also pay \$2.8 billion in damages to former college athletes for improperly using their name, image and likeness.

That sparked a frantic rush from universities and conferences to find new, creative ways to raise money.

"You're already seeing the scramble with jersey patches, field logos, rebranded conference names," said Jim Cavale, founder of nonprofit players organization Athletes.org.

The challenge for the CSFL will be bringing all of the broadcast rights together. For years, conferences had an incentive to stagger the expiration dates of their television contracts in order to negotiate when broadcasters had more cash on hand. The result is that the Big Ten's deal won't be up before 2030 at the earliest, for instance, while the Atlantic Coast Conference's deal lasts until 2036.

CARMEN MANZO/GETTY IMAGES

EXCHANGE

Your New Favorite Podcast Has AI Hosts

Continued from page B1

Your credit-card bill! This past week, I listened to an entire podcast about my 401(k).

And then I found myself listening to an oddly captivating Deep Dive into that day's edition of the Federal Register.

"Oh, the Federal Register—people hear that and think: *boring*," one AI host says.

"Right! Dusty old government documents," the other robo-host replies. "But I actually think they're kind of interesting. It's like a little peek behind the curtain to see how things really work."

Each conversation is between the same male and female voices—Google says they don't have names—and it takes only a few minutes to create one. If you didn't know anything about it, you wouldn't guess it was automatically generated. It doesn't sound like other AI slop. It just sounds like any other podcast. And once you start playing with it, you'll probably become obsessed with it.

It has become increasingly popular across Silicon Valley and among the people who are smartest about artificial intelligence, like Andrej Karpathy, a deep-learning expert who co-founded OpenAI and led Tesla's team working on computer vision for Autopilot. Lately, he's had another AI project on his mind—and in his ears.

"Deep Dive is now my favorite podcast," Karpathy wrote on X. "The more I listen, the more I feel like I'm becoming friends with the hosts, and I think this is the first time I've actually viscerally liked an AI. Two AIs! They are fun, engaging, thoughtful, open-minded, curious."

He likes them so much that he's listened to Deep Dives on the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, the scientific process of oxidative phosphorylation, Mars, gold, Arnold Schwarzenegger and pomegranates. He even generated a podcast series called Histories of Mysteries—10 episodes based on Wikipedia pages from Atlantis to the Bronze Age.

The first time I heard a Deep Dive, it reminded me of an AI ver-

sion of Acquired, the hit podcast about business history. When I told the hosts, they tried it out for themselves, opening NotebookLM and uploading a Google Doc with links to some of their sources for a recent show on Microsoft. Not their notes—just a bunch of links. They found the results to be mind-blowing.

"I don't know whether to be amazed or terrified," Acquired co-host David Rosenthal said.

Exactly. There have only been two times when I had my mind blown by AI. The first was my introduction to ChatGPT. This was the second.

I had lots of questions about this bonkers audio feature—and for answers, I turned to the real people behind the AI voices.

They work in Google Labs, a division within the tech giant that incubates and builds AI-powered products like NotebookLM—LM for "language model." When it rolled out last year, Google called it a "virtual research assistant," a personalized AI to summarize documents, simplify complex ideas and brainstorm connections in the source material. They began thinking about how to expand those capabilities and kept coming back to one question of their own.

"How do we bring the utility and magic of AI to people with as little work as possible?" said Raiza Martin, the Google Labs product manager for NotebookLM.

For most people, the utility and magic of AI is feeding a blob of text to a chatbot with basic instructions: Make this into something else.

Here are the bullet points from a strategy meeting. Now write me a catchy marketing slogan.

What the Google Labs team realized was that a blob of text could be transformed into anything—even a podcast.

There are many reasons you might want to turn information into an audio conversation. Productivity. Creativity. Procrastination. Inspiration. Education. Maybe you're an auditory learner and prefer listening to reading. Maybe you



Economist Claudia Goldin was stunned by the Deep Dive about her work.

find podcasts more engaging than pitch decks. Maybe you want the same information in a different way to spark fresh ideas.

Here's how it works. When you upload your source material, NotebookLM instantly digests it and spits out a basic written summary. Under the hood, a model is writing and constantly editing a script for the conversation "based on the goal of being entertaining—and, crucially, bringing out the insights," says Steven Johnson, the editorial director of Google Labs.

That's the real breakthrough. It doesn't merely summarize the source material. The product is specifically designed to focus on the most interesting and surprising parts—and it does.

But what the AI hosts say is just as important as how they say it: like humans.

This audio feature wouldn't exist without Google's recently developed voice technology, but it wouldn't be enjoyable if not for an important design choice: To make the conversations sound better, Google had to make them rougher.

"It's a very counterintuitive thing," Johnson said. "But if you had two perfect scripts talking to each other in complete sentences, nobody would listen to it. It would

just sound too robotic."

Instead, the robotic voices speak like actual people. They break up their speech with "like," "um" and "you know." They stammer. They pause. They introduce points with "OK, so the thing is." They reinforce each other's points with "totally" and "oh, 100%." They sound so much like real podcasters that I kept waiting for one of them to read a FanDuel ad.

Before he joined Google Labs two years ago, Johnson was a best-selling author, and he was impressed by the quality of the Deep Dive conversations when he uploaded his books about innovation and technology into NotebookLM. I felt the same way when I tried it with my own work.

So I asked someone else to participate in a similar experiment: Nobel Prize-winning economist Claudia Goldin.

She was game. "That would be fun," she told me. "I often think of my papers as podcasts." I sent over Deep Dives about her groundbreaking research, her latest book and even her Nobel lecture. She quickly sent back a review: "Wow!" She loved the AI voices, their summaries and one pithy line, which the hosts riffed as if they were real people.

'There's more to him than meets the eye,' an AI podcast host said about Mr. Potato Head.

"Goldin would say, 'Don't try to boil the ocean,'" the female AI said.

"Where did *that* come from?" the real Goldin asked.

There's a moment like that in all of the podcasts I've generated. And every time I hear one, I want to make another one.

When I saw a Googler tweet about a Deep Dive on the history of potatoes, I decided to listen to a Deep Dive on the history of Mr. Potato Head.

"You might think you know this spud—but trust me, there's more to him than meets the eye."

"Let's peel back the layers."

Anyone who has used AI knows that it's not perfect. These voices sometimes mispronounce names or misunderstand facts. They occasionally make strange noises. You won't hear them hallucinate and start yammering about nonsense. But you also won't hear novel ideas or anything genuinely hilarious.

"I suspect it's because humor is in many ways the opposite of translation and summarization," Johnson explained on his blog. "Humor is all about surprise, about defying expectations, going off script in just the right way."

Or at least that's what he thought. Since then, he's come across a few conversations that made him crack up, and he now thinks the hosts can be funny with the right steering.

As it happens, the product evolving in exciting and unexpected directions is one of the Google Labs team's two metrics for success.

"Did people use it for what we thought they would use it for?" Schaefer said. "And maybe even more important: Did they identify, like, a thousand other ways to use it that we never would have imagined?"

I wanted to hear more about that idea—so I opened NotebookLM, uploaded a transcript of the interview and listened to my new favorite AIs offer their takes on another episode of Deep Dive.

**Goldman
Sachs**

We celebrate the lives of Gene and Ann
as esteemed partner alumni of
Goldman Sachs whose leadership and
contributions have had a lasting impact
on the firm.

Gene Atkinson

1944 - 2024

Ann Kaplan

1946 - 2024



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THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

EXCHANGE

Jared and Ivanka's Next Act

Continued from page B1
reaches into the billions of dollars.

A controversial memorial

He relied on ties with Arab monarchs to raise the bulk of the money in his \$3.1 billion private-equity fund from Middle Eastern countries, drawing criticism from members of both parties in Congress. His new company, Affinity Partners, is packed with former Trump administration officials. Some are contenders for top government jobs if Trump wins this November.

In the Balkans, Kushner turned to the leaders of Albania and Serbia to develop real estate on public land without having to go through competitive auction, drawing fire from opposition politicians in both states. In Serbia, a provision that he build a memorial the government says would be "dedicated to all the victims of NATO aggression"—on a site the alliance bombed in 1999—has proved particularly controversial with both Serbian nationalists and former U.S. officials, including Gen. Wesley Clark, NATO's military commander during the Balkan war.

Kushner's fundraising and foreign property investments are fanning fears that he and other members of the Trump family could profit by cultivating relationships with world leaders and companies seeking sway with a potential future president.

His business deals with foreign countries give governments "significant leverage over the Trump family," Sen. Ron Wyden, a Democrat, said in a Sept. 24 letter to Affinity. "Affinity's investors may not be motivated by commercial considerations, but rather the opportunity to funnel foreign government money to members of President Trump's family, namely Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump."

Affinity, Kushner said in response to questions about Wyden's letter, "will be judged by one measure—investor returns."

Kushner's connections and geopolitical experience, he believes, simply help give his company a fair edge in business.

"I don't think anyone's ever said that I've broken any rules or not followed the laws, and I've been very scrupulous in doing that," Kushner said in an interview last month. "I've learned through my time in government that if I spend my time trying to live in a way that assuages concerns of so many people who I don't respect, and who are motivated by partisan politics, and who I don't think are reasonable, then it'll just be paralysis."

Should Trump return to office, "does that add complications?" he asked. "Maybe. There's probably going to be more scrutiny on me today than there was a year ago."

He also isn't distancing himself from the presidential campaign.

Playing an informal advisory role, Kushner says he is "there to fully help and advise" Trump and his team.

He also takes calls from senators and congressmen on both sides of the aisle, he said, all looking for his input on a range of matters, from the Middle East to navigating Trump world at home.

He's not planning to go back to government—Kushner's wife, the former president's 42-year-old daughter, Ivanka Trump, has said the same—though several people advising the Trump campaign team said they are skeptical either will sit out another administration.

"People know I want Trump to succeed but don't want to go in [to government]," he said. "My lack of authority or ambition to serve makes me a safe person to call."

Miami life

After Trump left office, Kushner and Ivanka Trump were eager to start the next chapter.

The couple and their three children—ages 8, 10 and 13—quickly decamped to Miami. Tom Brady and Jeff Bezos are neighbors. Kushner's office, in the same building as Carl Icahn's, is a 10-minute drive away.

Ivanka Trump no longer does the branding deals or Trump hotel development and acquisition that took up much of her time.

She is largely uninvolved with Affinity—which is fully owned by Kushner—beyond work on the Albanian resort. Earlier this year she appeared on the Lex Fridman Podcast, where she revealed renderings of the resort planned for Sazan.

Kushner, though, sought a higher perch in business than his prior role running his family's property empire. Soon after the end of the Trump administration, he began using his connections to hit up potential investors, seeking billions of dollars for a new private-equity fund.

His pitch for the fund, Affinity, was a broad one. A slide presentation for



potential investors said it would focus on startups and mature public companies alike, in a potentially wide swath of the economy, from media to financial services, healthcare and more.

One specific emphasis: the company's government connections. Numerous staff and advisers were pictured with government headshots, American flags in the background.

Affinity's staff and advisers include Richard Grenell, who held positions in the Trump administration including ambassador to Germany and acting national-intelligence director, and Kevin Hassett, the former White House economic adviser who recently hosted an economic call on behalf of the Trump campaign. The roster also features former top Middle East national-security official Miguel Correa.

Fundraising success

Affinity found its greatest fundraising success in the Middle East.

Most of the \$3.1 billion it raised came from state funds in the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Saudi Arabia. It cultivated relationships with the countries' leaders when negotiating normalized relations between Israel and the UAE and a thaw with the other sheikhdoms in 2020.

"These are the most coveted investors in the world right now, so we feel very lucky to have them," Kushner said.

Wielding Arab Gulf cash also has the extra benefit, he said, of furthering his policy goals of enhancing economic ties between that region and Israel, where Affinity has invested in two companies.

At first, Affinity picked investments that largely steered clear of controversy, cutting checks to startups and tech companies like a UAE-based classified-ads website and a German fitness firm. It's also invested in some publicly traded companies,

Jared Kushner in his office in Miami, top. Sazan, above, is ecologically protected, but a new law in Albania would permit construction of hotels in such areas—so long as they're at least five stars.

such as building-products company QXO and Israel-based financial-services firm Phoenix Holdings.

Kushner said Affinity has thus far struck deals to spend about half of the fund's capital. It has taken in over \$150 million in management fees, according to Wyden's September letter, with its investors paying fee rates similar to other large funds.

'If I spend my time trying to live in a way that assuages concerns of so many people who I don't respect,' says Kushner, 'then it'll just be paralysis.'

\$3.1 billion

The amount Kushner raised for his private-equity fund, mostly from the Middle East

▼ Edi Rama, the prime minister of Albania, and Kushner chat via WhatsApp.



memorial complex, which the government said in a press release would be dedicated to victims of "NATO aggression."

That framing has sparked controversy. Clark, Wyden and other Americans have criticized the idea that an American would build a memorial to those killed in a U.S.-led effort to end ethnic cleansing. Nationalists in the Serbian government have attacked the plan because it hands over what they consider a sacred site to a developer from the country that helped lead the bombing.

"Once the construction machines are on the site, there will be riots," said Aleksandar Jovanović Čuta, a member of parliament and co-founder of the activist group Ecological Uprising.

The Serbian government said the deal will help attract more foreign investment to the country.

A new Mediterranean

At the same time the Belgrade plans were moving along, Kushner was eyeing the Albanian coast.

After his 2021 yacht vacation and his Davos coffee with Rama, Albania's prime minister, he trained his sights on two ideal spots. Sazan—a 3-mile-long mountainous island where a white rock perimeter meets an azure-blue sea—and private land on the peninsula of Zvérnec, a stunning strip of beaches where white flamingos flock nearby.

Kushner envisions turning both sites into a high-end paradise.

Working with Ivanka Trump on the project, he has put forward plans to the Albanian government for a set of resorts and villas spread between the Zvérnec peninsula's dunes and forest. Eventually, they hope for thousands of units of hotels and condos, just minutes from a new international airport being built near the city of Vlorë.

Sazan would be more exclusive—a set of a few hundred isolated villas blended into the hillsides, run by the high-end Aman hotel brand.

It was Ivanka Trump's idea to bring Aman into the project, Kushner said. The brand manages ultra-exclusive resorts with rooms that tend to start above \$1,000 a night. Vlad Doronin, a Soviet-born billionaire who runs Aman, was initially surprised by the idea, but ultimately signed on after sending someone to scout the location, said Kushner. An Aman spokeswoman declined to comment.

Kushner and his friends would build their own properties on the island, too, he said, to "build a community there." A close friend, Jeff Zalaznick, who runs Major Food Group out of Miami, plans a Carbone restaurant on the property.

The Albanian government is currently reviewing plans, but Rama has been supportive. He calls Kushner a friend, and the two trade WhatsApp messages.

Months after Kushner formally presented plans, Albania changed a law to allow hotels in environmentally protected areas, so long as they are five stars or above. The government has said the law was unrelated to Kushner and aimed at tourism throughout the country, but opposition politicians and environmental advocates have assailed the legislation and alleged a deal with Kushner is meant to curry favor with Trump.

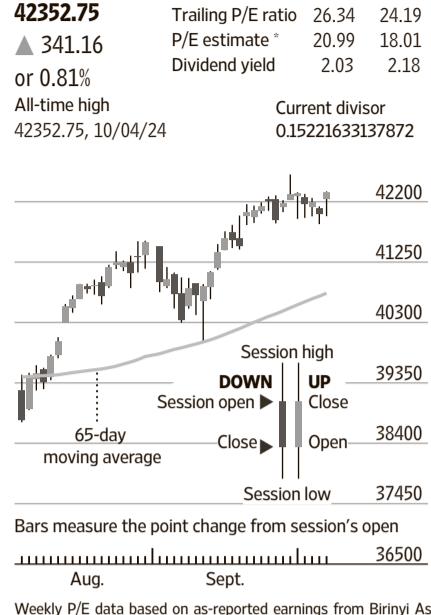
Rama said the negotiations with Kushner have nothing to do with Kushner's connections with Trump, and dovetails with his vision to build up the coast as a high-end resort destination—vaulting over its mid-income, mass appeal.

"If this happens like intentions are," Rama said, "it will be a jewel in the crown of the Mediterranean."

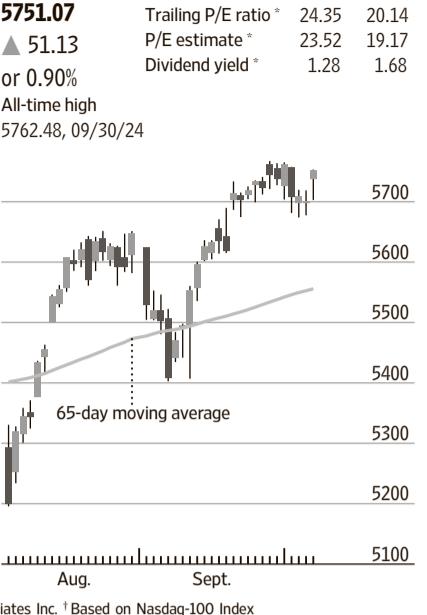
—Enes Morina and Arlis Alifikaj contributed to this article.

MARKETS DIGEST

Dow Jones Industrial Average



S&P 500 Index



Nasdaq Composite Index



Track the Markets: Winners and Losers

A look at how selected global stock indexes, bond ETFs, currencies and commodities performed around the world for the week.

Index	Currency, vs. U.S. dollar	Commodity, traded in U.S.*	Exchange-traded fund
Hang Seng	-10.20%		
Nymex crude	8.76		
Shanghai Composite	8.06		
Nymex ULSD	7.50		
S&P 500 Energy	7.01		
Lean hogs	2.41		
S&P 500 Communication Svcs	2.20		
Mexican peso	2.18		
WSJ Dollar Index	2.01		
Comex silver	1.93		
Bloomberg Commodity Index	1.81		
Wheat	1.68		
Corn	1.61		
S&P 500 Utilities	1.09		
S&P 500 Financials	1.04		
S&P/TSX Comp	0.86		
S&P 500 Industrials	0.41		
S&P 500	0.22		
Nasdaq-100	0.13		
Nasdaq Composite	0.10		
Dow Jones Industrial Average	0.09		
Comex gold	0.06		
S&P 500 Information Tech	0.05		
Total volume*	-0.03	S&P MidCap 400	
Adv. volume*	-0.32	S&P/BMV IPC	
Decl. volume*	-0.37	Indian rupee	
Issues traded	-0.41	Comex copper	
Advances	-0.43	Canadian dollar	
Declines	-0.48	FTSE 100	
Unchanged	-0.52	VangdTotalBd	
New highs	-0.54	Russell 2000	
New lows	-0.54	Chinese yuan	
Closing Arms'	-0.63	iShNatMuniBd	
Block trades*	-0.71	Bovespa Index	
Total volume*	-0.75	S&P SmallCap 600	
Adv. volume*	-0.76	S&P/ASX 200	
Decl. volume*	-0.90	iSh 1-3 Treasury	
Issues traded	-0.93	S&P 500 Health Care	
Advances	-0.95	iShBoxx\$HYCp	
Declines	-0.97	iShPMUSEmgBd	
Unchanged	-1.04	iSh TIPS Bond	
New highs	-1.24	S&P 500 Consumer Discr	
New lows	-1.45	Norwegian krone	
Closing Arms'	-1.50	VangdTotalBd	
Block trades*	-1.54	iShBoxx\$InvGrdCp	
Total volume*	-1.57	S&P 500 Consumer Staples	
Adv. volume*	-1.59	Australian dollar	
Decl. volume*	-1.65	Nymex natural gas	
Issues traded	-1.69	Euro area euro	
Advances	-1.80	STOXX Europe 600	
Declines	-1.81	DAX	
Unchanged	-1.88	S&P 500 Real Estate	
New highs	-1.92	UK pound	
New lows	-1.95	iSh 7-10 Treasury	
Closing Arms'	-1.98	S&P 500 Materials	
Block trades*	-2.04	Swiss franc	
Total volume*	-2.14	South African rand	
Adv. volume*	-2.15	Euro STOXX	
Decl. volume*	-2.30	Dow Jones Transportation Average	
Issues traded	-2.58	IBEX 35	
Advances	-2.63	Soybeans	
Declines	-2.72	South Korean won	
Unchanged	-3.00	NIKKEI 225	
New highs	-3.02	KOSPI Composite	
New lows	-3.06	iSh 20+ Treasury	
Closing Arms'	-3.21	CAC-40	
Block trades*	-3.26	FTSE MIB	
Total volume*	-3.48	Indonesian rupiah	
Adv. volume*	-4.42	Japanese yen	
Decl. volume*	-4.54	BSE Sensex	

Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

	High	Low	Latest Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	Low	% chg	YTD % chg	3-yr ann.
Dow Jones										
Industrial Average	42361.38	41972.11	42352.75	341.16	■ 0.81	42352.75	32417.59	■ 26.8	12.4	7.6
Transportation Avg	15977.70	15680.93	15814.11	68.72	■ 0.44	16331.72	13556.07	■ 6.8	-0.5	3.6
Utility Average	1052.66	1043.06	1051.42	-6.68	■ -0.63	1065.16	800.14	■ 31.4	19.3	5.9
Total Stock Market	56955.07	56460.61	56939.64	545.06	■ 0.97	57046.41	40847.04	■ 32.8	19.2	8.5
Barron's 400	1233.21	1224.83	1233.21	16.35	■ 1.34	1233.21	907.97	■ 29.3	15.0	6.9
Nasdaq Stock Market										
Nasdaq Composite	18145.28	17952.30	18137.85	219.37	■ 1.22	18647.45	12595.61	■ 35.0	20.8	8.4
Nasdaq-100	20045.69	19829.49	20035.02	241.68	■ 1.22	20675.38	14109.57	■ 33.8	19.1	11.5
S&P										
500 Index	5753.21	5702.83	5751.07	51.13	■ 0.90	5762.48	4117.37	■ 33.5	20.6	10.2
MidCap 400	3127.14	3097.54	3118.26	30.05	■ 0.97	3124.92	2326.82	■ 27.0	12.1	5.3
SmallCap 600	1409.03	1395.62	1407.46	21.49	■ 1.55	1435.83	1068.80	■ 25.2	6.8	1.4
Other Indexes										
Russell 2000	2214.86	2196.12	2212.80	32.65	■ 1.50	2263.67	1636.94	■ 26.8	9.2	-0.1
NYSE Composite	19541.03	19387.68	19514.03	153.35	■ 0.79	19541.03	14675.78	■ 28.4	16.0	6.5
Value Line	619.20	612.11	618.71	6.60	■ 1.08	622.54	498.09	■ 17.4	4.2	-1.6
NYSE Arca Biotech	5921.55	5849.28	5911.04	61.75	■ 1.06	5949.95	4544.40	■ 17.4	9.1	2.1
NYSE Arca Pharma	1064.39	1057.25	1064.14	-0.25	■ -0.02	1140.17	845.32	■ 19.2	16.9	12.9
KBW Bank	114.78	113.25	114.65	2.84	■ 2.54	115.93	71.71	■ 50.7	19.4	-4.9
PHLX® Gold/Silver	160.55	157.70	158.07	-0.69	■ -0.43	167.37	102.94	■ 48.2	25.8	9.7
PHLX® Oil Service	82.02	80.89	81.69	0.96	■ 1.19	96.64	72.67	■ -8.1	-2.6	10.8
PHLX® Semiconductor	5237.04	5141.12	5206.84	81.63	■ 1.59	5904.54	3185.18	■ 49.8	24.7	17.9
Cboe Volatility	20.48	18.48	19.21	-1.28	■ -6.25	38.57	11.86	■ 10.1	54.3	-5.8

*Nasdaq PHLX

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Trading Diary

Volume, Advancers, Decliners

NYSE NYSE Amer.

	NYSE	NYSE Amer.
Total volume*	808,650,680	13,854,468
Adv. volume*	603,411,222	10,154,733
Decl. volume*	197,907,801	3,615,838
Issues traded	2,854	301

BUSINESS & FINANCE

Stellantis Moves to Conserve Cash

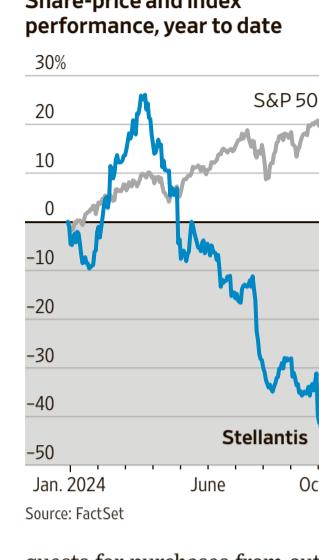
Jeep maker revives 'doghouse' measures to curb spending, reverse falling profit

By CHRISTOPHER OTTS
AND BEN GLICKMAN

Automaker **Stellantis** is taking "drastic measures" to shore up the Jeep and Ram parent's finances, including a belt-tightening approach known internally as the "doghouse" that seeks to put stricter limits on external spending.

Meanwhile, the European-based car company also sued the United Auto Workers in federal court this past week, arguing that the union's recent threats to strike are baseless. The UAW and the automaker have been at odds over factory investments Stellantis had promised, including reopening an idled plant in Illinois.

In a recent email with a subject line that reads in part: "The Doghouse is back!" Stellantis Chief Financial Officer Natalie Knight instructed her finance team to sharply scrutinize re-



Source: FactSet

quests for purchases from outside vendors in an effort to rein in expenses. The doghouse "is the name for much stricter attention and control around purchase requisitions," Knight explained in the email viewed by The Wall Street Journal. "If we apply more discipline, we can ensure big savings for the company."

Knight also references the fact that the guidelines have

previously been used at the company, without specifying when. Stellantis said that the "doghouse" term isn't new and that in the past, it has referred to projects that require extra scrutiny. Stellantis said the policy wouldn't affect existing purchase requisitions, purchase orders or invoices.

The move highlights the escalating measures Stellantis is taking to protect its coffers, as it takes costly steps to cut vehicle output and offer promotions to boost sales.

Within days of the directive, Stellantis slashed its financial guidance, warning that a tough car market and expensive efforts to reduce elevated inventories in North America would dent profit more than previously expected.

Stellantis also sharply reduced its outlook for industrial free cash flow, a closely watched metric that signals the company's ability to pay dividends, fund share buybacks and reinvest in the business. The auto manufacturer said it expects to consume about \$6 billion to \$11 billion in cash in 2024 instead of its previous

forecast for positive cash flow.

The unexpected cash drain is a stark reversal from last year, when Stellantis generated billions in cash. The company's head of investor relations told analysts Monday that, despite "significantly negative" industrial cash flow in 2024, the company would still have a healthy amount of cash on hand at the end of the year.

Stellantis is also under pressure from the UAW, which has accused the company of reneging on job-creating investments outlined in their 2023 labor contract. UAW President Shawn Fain has threatened to strike over the plans.

In a federal lawsuit filed Thursday, Stellantis said the union has no legal basis for a walkout, arguing the contract gives it flexibility to change plans in response to market conditions.

In a letter to members Friday, Fain said the lawsuit is the latest in a set of "desperate actions from a desperate executive," referring to embattled Stellantis Chief Executive Carlos Tavares.

A strike would be costly for

the automaker and follow a multiweek work stoppage last fall that dented some factory output at its U.S. plants.

In her email, Knight emphasized the pressures the company is under and the need to conserve cash—and said staff should reject any spending requests that don't serve certain critical functions. "That calls for drastic measures to ensure we deliver the best financial results for 2024, 2025 and beyond."

The email also references "Darwinian times," a term Tavares has used in reference to the taxing transition to battery-powered vehicles that is pressuring his company and competitors.

Stellantis's cash drain stems not only from lower profit, but also from its efforts to reduce a glut of unsold vehicles on dealer lots in the U.S. The company said Monday that it would cut vehicle shipments by 200,000 in North America through the end of the year. That move could create a short-term cash headwind of about \$4.4 billion, Bernstein analyst Daniel Roeska estimated in a note to clients Thursday.

Share of operating revenue consumed by operating expenses, 2Q 2024

BNSF	68.2%
Norfolk Southern	65.1
CPKC	64.8
Canadian National	64.0
CSX	60.9
Union Pacific	60.0

Source: the companies

Berkshire Taps Expert To Fix Its Railroad

By ESTHER FUNG

Warren Buffett built **Berkshire Hathaway** into a trillion-dollar conglomerate by scooping up quality businesses, picking the right CEOs and adopting a hands-off management style.

But the billionaire's designated successor, Greg Abel, has been taking a more hands-on approach lately with its BNSF Railway. Abel has openly discussed his dissatisfaction with the freight railroad's profit, and BNSF recently tapped an outsider to rethink its operations.

The railroad hired industry veteran Ed Harris, a proponent of precision scheduling, an operating model that is prized by investors and that executives at BNSF have resisted. Harris has told people that Abel recruited him as a consultant for BNSF, according to people familiar with the matter.

In Europe, a cooling EV market has also seen competition for customers intensify, especially as Chinese manufacturers have gained a foothold in the region and driven prices lower as they fight for a share of the market.

EU officials said that Friday's vote isn't necessarily the final word on the trade dispute with China and that the door remains open for a potential solution. "The EU and China continue to work hard to explore an alternative solution," the commission said.

According to the commission, the share of EV imports into the EU from China rose to 27.2% in the second quarter of 2024 from 3.5% in 2020, while EVs imported by Chinese brands alone, rather than through joint ventures, rose to 14.1% in the second quarter of this year from 1.9% in 2020.

—Sha Hua contributed to this article.



EU automakers are facing pressure from China rivals like BYD.

nese officials also met with auto-industry representatives to discuss the possibility of raising tariffs on large-engine European vehicle imports, many of which are made in Germany.

Several German car companies, including auto giant Volkswagen, had come out publicly against the tariffs, fearing

reprisals from China.

Mercedes-Benz said after the vote that it considered the tariffs "a mistake that can lead to far-reaching negative consequences" and urged the EU and China to reach a negotiated solution. China is a key market for many European carmakers, including Volkswagen, Mercedes-

Benz, BMW and Stellantis. But the automakers are increasingly battling fierce pricing pressure there from homegrown manufacturers like BYD and Geely.

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—Sha Hua contributed to this article.

Lockheed, Boeing Partnership Launches New Vulcan Rocket

By MICAH MAIDENBERG

The rocket company owned by **Boeing** and **Lockheed Martin** completed a flight with its new vehicle Friday, a mission aimed at preparing the craft to haul national-security satellites to space.

United Launch Alliance's powerful Vulcan Centaur rocket roared off a Florida launchpad just before 7:30 a.m. ET, according to a company livestream. The mission was the second time the rocket has flown and it carried a payload that mimicked the mass of a satellite.

Officials at the Space Force said the launch marked a significant milestone for Vulcan, a rocket the Pentagon has been waiting for ULA to prepare for national-security flights. Space Force Brig. Gen. Kristin Panzenhagen said in a statement that teams had started to review performance data from the mission. Friday's launch was designed to win final military approval for Vulcan.

During the flight, ULA dealt with a problem with a nozzle on one of the large boosters that helped propel the rocket off the ground. That part could be seen falling away from the vehicle on a livestream. Tory Bruno, chief executive at ULA, said on X the company would study what caused that problem.

ULA is under contract to use Vulcan to complete missions for the Pentagon and U.S. spy agencies, following delays driven by technical challenges and sup-



Friday's flight from Cape Canaveral, Fla., was designed to win final military approval for Vulcan to begin government missions.

plier issues. Military officials have pressured ULA to move faster, hitting the company's pocketbook by transferring three flights from its manifest to SpaceX's. The Elon Musk-led rocket company has cut into ULA's national-security business after breaking ULA's monopoly over such launches almost a decade ago.

Current and former national-security officials say the government must have multiple providers capable of launching sensitive payloads, so alternatives are ready if rockets from one company aren't flying.

"You need to have at least

two qualified companies," said Chuck Beames, a retired Air Force colonel and chairman of satellite manufacturer York Space Systems.

SpaceX, the Pentagon's other major launch operator, isn't flying its workhorse Falcon 9 vehicle at the moment as it conducts a government-required investigation into a NASA mission last month. The company has worked through two other short Falcon 9 groundings following problems during other missions this year.

Vulcan Centaur consists of two stages: a booster and Centaur, a vehicle stacked on top of

the booster. Centaur is designed to separate from the booster shortly after launch, and begin flying on its own to deploy satellites on board. Developing Vulcan has been an expensive endeavor at ULA, which has poured resources into the vehicle and related infrastructure, including launchpad improvements and factory upgrades.

At a Wednesday briefing, Bruno said generally a new rocket costs around \$5 billion to \$7 billion to develop, and Vulcan's costs weren't outside of that range. In addition, ULA has spent more than \$1 billion on infrastructure for the rocket. Bruno said.

The mission on Friday cost in the high tens of millions of dollars, he added.

Assuming the military certifies Vulcan, ULA plans to use the rocket for two national-security missions this year and is looking to fly 20 times in 2025. Half of those flights would be with Vulcan, with the other half being on a rocket, Atlas V, the company is phasing out. ULA wants to launch even more with Vulcan. "We're going to a much higher launch rate, 25 and up, and so that involves a lot of infrastructure construction, lots of new tooling in the factory," Bruno said.

Investors of the publicly traded railroads have an obsession with railroaders who have experience working with Harrison, who died in 2017. Stock prices often jump when a Harrison-linked veteran joins a railroad's executive team. These alumni now have top jobs at BNSF's West Coast rival Union Pacific, East Coast railroad CSX, and CPKC, which runs trains between Canada and Mexico.

Several railroads have lured Harrison back from retirement over the years. He has focused on improving service consistency. BNSF says it isn't rolling out the PSR model for its operations. "BNSF never was a PSR railroad and isn't becoming one now," Matt Igoe, BNSF's chief operating officer, said in a recent interview. "Many of the practices now broadly described as PSR were best practices that BNSF utilized long before the PSR moniker existed."

Most railroads' earnings shrank last year because of a freight recession. BNSF's operating earnings fell 14% in 2023. Union Pacific, its direct competitor, reported an 8% decline in operating income over the same period. BNSF also scores poorly on a closely watched measure of how much of a railroad's operating revenue is consumed by operating expenses. BNSF's operating ratio in the second quarter was 68.2%, unchanged from a year ago, and the worst of the major railroads.

Abel has said there is room for BNSF to be more efficient and to have higher margins.

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NOTICE OF SALE

NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE - Property to be Sold

Public Sale No. 1: Tuesday, October 8th, 2024 10:00 a.m. EDT. The Asset Type for Lot 1 is Scratch & Dent. The Asset Type for Lot 2 is Subprime. The Asset Type for Lots 3-120 is Zero Factor - RMBs.

Lot# CUSIP Issue Original Face

1	576436CQ0	MASD 2005-3 M2	3,000,000.00
2	030725T47	AMSI 2005-R10M7	7,084,000.00
3	00764HHL4	ABST 2005-1	5,000,000.00
4	04542B044	ABFC 2005-OPTI M9	3,714,000.00
5	04542B094	ABFC 2005-WMCT M12	6,000,000.00
6	04542C6X6	ABHE 2006-H3 M6	4,500,000.00
7	044215V56	ACE 2006-HE6 M9	8,124,000.00
8	04421VAB1	ACE 2006-NC1 M7	2,000,000.00
9	030725T93	AMSI 2005-R11M1	5,000,000.00
10	04040PN45	ARSI 2005-SW3 M11	5,600,000.00
11	04040QB01	ARI 2005-W4 M8	5,625,000.00
12	04040WQ4	ARI 2005-W5 M7	10,000,000.00
13	04040RP81	ARI 2005-W6 M7	8,000,000.00
14	04040S25	ARI 2006-W3 M7	5,734,000.00
15	073686HN5	BALTA 2006-8-B1	7,236,000.00
16	0738793A4	BSABS 2005-AQ2 M6	8,947,000.00
17	07387HY00	BSABS 2006-HE3 M7	3,694,000.00
18	07388AL82	BSABS 2006-HF4 M7	2,000,000.00
19	07388FM56	BSABS 2006-M1 M7	8,452,000.00
20	144531EP1	CARR 2005-REI M9	5,330,000.00
21	144531FU9	CARR 2006-OPTI M7	5,000,000.00
22	144531FV7	CARR 2006-OPTI M8	3,000,000.00
23	1730726Z7	CMU 2006-WMCT M10	5,625,000.00
24	126670BRS	CWL 2006-12M7	500,000.00
25	126670C4X	CWL 2006-14	7,000,000.00
26	126670KRS	CWL 2006-AB4 B	5,000,000.00
27	126670WJ3	CWL 2006-3 M6	5,700,000.00
28	302406BLG	FBR3 2005-3 M9	8,190,000.00
29	362341YLT2	FFM 2005-FP1 M7	3,401,000.00
30	320725WY5	FFM 2005-FI1 B3	8,000,000.00
31	320725WY5	FFM 2005-FI1 B3	5,000,000.00
32	362341YV2	FFM 2005-FB8 B2	639,000.00
33	362341YV2	FFM 2005-FB8 B3	3,537,000.00
34	320725WNC2	FFM 2005-FE1 M7	2,500,000.00
35	320725WZ7	FFM 2006-FI2 M7	2,500,000.00
36	320725WZ7	FFM 2006-FH1 M8	2,500,000.00
37	357299MP2	FHT 2005-DME	5,000,000.00
38	357299PN6	FHT 2005-EB1 M7	5,000,000.00
39	357299PN6	FHT 2005-EM9 M9	5,000,000.00
40	357299PH7	FHT 2006-1 M6	6,160,000.00
41	357299PH7	FHT 2006-2 M7	7,272,000.00
42	321138BZ7	FNU 2005-3 M6	5,812,000.00
43	367910B93	GEWMC 2005-P2 B2	4,000,000.00
44	362341PH5	GSA 2005-11B3	3,051,000.00
45	362341T70	GSA 2005-15B1	1,000,000.00
46	362341T62	GSA 2006-2B2	2,271,000.00
47	362334G21	GSA 2006-5 B1	1,000,000.00
48	463241D22	GSAMP 2005-AH3 M9	6,415,000.00
49	362341M30	GSAMP 2005-WM3 M6	3,296,000.00
50	362334PT5	GSAMP 2006-FM1 B1	5,000,000.00
51	362341N96	GSR 2005-HE1 M4	7,000,000.00
52	362341P29	GSR 2005-HE1 M5	2,511,000.00
53	40430HDP9	HASC 2006-OPTI M10	3,255,000.00
54	40430HEK0	HASC 2006-OPTI M10	5,465,000.00
55	40430HEJ3	HASC 2006-OPTI M9	5,000,000.00
56	40430HEJ3	HASC 2006-OPTI M7	5,000,000.00
57	40430HEJ3	HASC 2006-OPTI M7	5,000,000.00
58	437084RG3	HEAT 2005-9B1	3,750,000.00
59	437084TV8	HEAT 2006-1B2	5,000,000.00
60	437084VB9	HEAT 2006-2B2	3,200,000.00
61	437084VX1	HEAT 2006-3B2	3,500,000.00
62	225450LPE0	HEMT 2006-HF1 M7	2,540,000.00
63	225450LPE1	HEMT 2006-2 M2	2,500,000.00
64	45071KCU6	IIXIS 2005-HE4 B1	6,000,000.00
65	45071KQW2	IIXIS 2005-HE4 B2	2,000,000.00
66	46626LC4	JPMAC 2005-FREM2 M7	5,037,000.00
67	46626LHH6	JPMAC 2006-FR2 M7	5,377,000.00
68	46626LJY7	JPMAC 2006-NC1 M8	5,701,000.00
69	542514QG2	LBMIL 2005-WL3 B1	5,600,000.00
70	542514QH2	LBMIL 2006-2 M10	2,500,000.00
71	542514RF3	LBMIL 2006-WL1 M10	4,600,000.00
72	542514RE6	LBMIL 2006-WL1 M9	4,500,000.00
73	542514SL9	LBMIL 2006-WL2 M7	5,000,000.00
74	542514TD6	LBMIL 2006-WL3 M7	5,000,000.00

NOTICE OF PUBLIC AUCTION

Lot#	CUSIP	Issue	AssetType	Original Face
2	07388PAB2	BSCMS 2006-PW14 G	Zero Factor - CMBS	7,000,000.00
3	36195XB87	GECMC 2007-C1 H8	Zero Factor - CMBS	7,500,000.00
4	46630EAP8	JPMCC 2006-B17 G	Zero Factor - CMBS	4,000,000.00
5	46629Y5A8	JPMCC 2007-B19 G	Zero Factor - CMBS	5,000,000.00
6	46630B4B6	JPMCC 2007-LDXG	Zero Factor - CMBS	8,000,000.00
7	92978PAH1	WBCHT 2006-C29 H	Zero Factor - CMBS	7,000,000.00
8	04554NA9P	ABSE 2006-HE6 M10	Zero Factor - RMBs	6,000,000.00
9	040380A4C	ACR 2007-1 M9	Zero Factor - RMBs	2,000,000.00
10	04012MAl3	ABSI 2006-M1 M10	Zero Factor - RMBs	6,500,000.00
11	04018A8L6	ABSI 2006-M2 M7	Zero Factor - RMBs	3,400,000.00
12	316599PA4	FMC 2006-3 M9	Zero Factor - RMBs	3,000,000.00

ADJOURNED NOTICE OF SALE

ADJOURNED NOTICE OF SALE

Please take notice that, in accordance with applicable provisions of the Uniform Commercial Code as enacted in New York, by virtue of certain Events of Default under that certain Amended and Restated Ownership Interests Pledge and Security Agreement, dated as of October 13, 2022 (the "Pledge Agreements"), executed and delivered by BAYONNE OWNERS LLC, LINEN STATION OWNER LLC, and BAYONNE REDEVELOPERS LLC (the "Collateral", and in accordance with its rights as holder of the security, the "Pledger"), and in accordance with Article 8 of the Uniform Commercial Code of the State of New York ("the Code"), the following assets will be sold (individually or on a portfolio basis) to the highest qualified bidder(s) at the price(s) set forth in the Pledge Agreements:

(i) a public auction in and to the following:

(ii) a private sale by the Pledger to one or more persons who have agreed to buy the assets from the Pledger.

Please take notice that, in accordance with Article 8 of the Code, the Secured Party reserves the right to bid at the auction.

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MARKETS & FINANCE

Jobs Report Boosts Shares, Hits Bonds

Major stock indexes rose Friday after a stronger-than-expected jobs report showed robust health in the labor market.

The climb came after Friday's payrolls report showed the U.S. added 254,000 jobs in September, topping forecasts by more than 100,000 positions.

Gains in previous months were revised up, and the unemployment rate also defied expectations, moderating to 4.1%.

Bond yields jumped and the dollar strengthened.

Futures traders stepped up bets that the Federal Reserve's next move, when policymakers meet in November,

will be a modest quarter-point cut.

Employment is important to the Fed's deliberations about how far and how fast to bring down interest rates.

Friday's jobs report also helped reassure some economists that the Fed is on track to cool inflation without spurring a significant decline in economic activity.

"There are no big examples from today's data of why inflation would pick back up. With the Fed already starting to reduce rates, that's going to take further pressure off the economy," said Matthew Bush, U.S. economist at Guggenheim Investments. "A soft landing is our base case going forward."

Elsewhere:

- ◆ Stock indexes rose. The Nasdaq Composite rose 1.2%, while the Dow industrials and S&P 500 added about 0.8% and 0.9%, respectively. All three indexes notched slight weekly gains.

- ◆ Smaller stocks surged. The Russell 2000 outpaced indexes of larger-capitalization shares, climbing 1.5%.

- ◆ Treasury yields jumped as bond prices fell. The yield on the 10-year note rose to 3.98%, notching its largest weekly gain in nearly a year.

- ◆ Oil prices advanced. Brent crude gained more than 9%

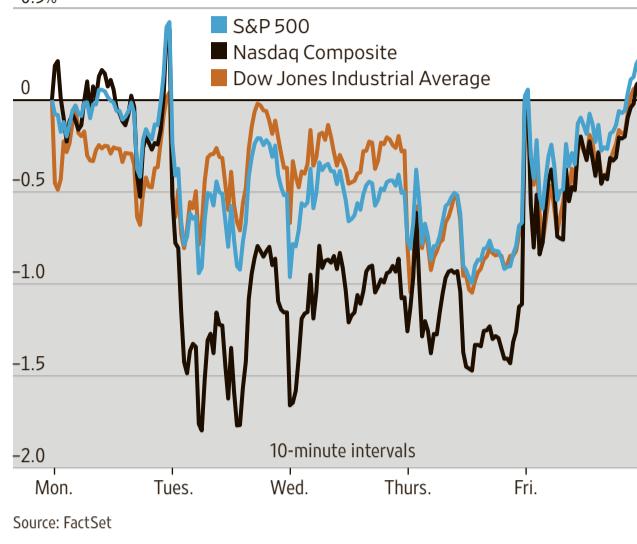
for the week to top \$78 a barrel, its largest weekly gain since January 2023.

- ◆ Spirit Airlines stock tumbled, plummeting 25% on news of a possible bankruptcy filing. Rival JetBlue Airways, which had sought to acquire Spirit, gained 14%.

- ◆ Overseas markets were mixed. Hong Kong stocks had another strong day, buoyed by Beijing's recent attempts to jump-start the Chinese economy. Markets in mainland China remained closed for a holiday. The Stoxx Europe 600 gained.

—By Joe Wallace and Vicky Ge Huang

Index performance this past week



Source: FactSet

Shein's Founder Heads to the U.S. To Meet Investors Ahead of U.K. IPO

Shein's senior executives are expected to meet potential U.S. investors over the coming week as the fashion giant moves closer to a potential listing in London, people familiar with the matter said.

By Shen Lu, Corrie Driebusch and Ben Dummett



The company's plans for an IPO in the U.S. late last year fell apart amid geopolitical tensions between China and the U.S.

For large institutional investors, it will be a first chance to meet the Singapore-based company's reclusive founder and chief executive, Sky Xu, who rarely makes public appearances. China-founded Shein has come under intensifying scrutiny from governments around the world during its preparations for a potential stock listing. It has pivoted to London after its plans for a multibillion-dollar stock listing in New York collapsed.

Xu and Shein's chief financial officer, Leigh Gui, kick-started the company's round of informal meetings with global investors in the U.K. on Monday, discussing the company's growth prospects and challenges—and investors' potential interest—in Shein's planned initial public offering, two of the people said.

After the U.S. meetings, the Shein executives may travel to the Middle East and Asia to wrap up the round of meetings, two of the people said.

Shein is still waiting for the U.K.'s Financial Conduct Authority to approve its IPO as

well as for a tacit nod from the Chinese securities regulator, according to people familiar with the matter. A listing isn't expected to happen this year, the people added.

Shein filed its IPO application confidentially in June for a possible listing on the London Stock Exchange. Shortly afterward, it filed its paperwork with the China Securities Regulatory Commission, as required by Chinese regulations for such filings by companies with significant operations in China.

The company's plans for an IPO in the U.S. late last year fell apart amid geopolitical tensions between China and the U.S. and pressure from U.S. politicians and regulators for Shein to be more transparent about its supply chain.

The company, which had submitted its plans in a confidential filing, was told by the Securities and Exchange Commission that the regulator would only consider a public filing, people with knowledge of the matter have said.

The reasons for the SEC's request for a public filing aren't clear. People close to the company and in Washington said it could reflect the agency's reluctance to take on a political football.

Shein—founded in Nanjing, China, in 2012—has disrupted the fashion industry with its ultracheap, trendy clothing, becoming one of the most popular fashion brands in the world. The Singapore-based company was valued at around \$66 billion in a funding round last year.

The company, which doesn't publicly disclose its financials, had about \$32 billion in sales and \$1.6 billion in profit in 2023, a person close to the company has said.

Shein at the beginning of the year expected revenue would grow around 30% in 2024 rather than the 40% growth it has seen in the past few years, and compliance efforts could further lower this year's sales growth, the person said.

Shein has told investors the company has a robust balance sheet and strong cash flow, two of the people said.

Investors typically hear from management about a company's projected earnings and revenue growth for the next few years in meetings as the company moves closer to an IPO.

Western politicians have pressed Shein to address whether it sources cotton from China's Xinjiang region, where the U.S. has accused Chinese authorities of committing genocide and of using forced labor in its repression of mostly Muslim Uyghurs, allegations Beijing denies.

The Biden administration said last month it intends to take executive action to stop textiles from China entering the U.S. under a trade exemption covering packages valued at or below \$800—which has benefited China-founded Shein and its e-commerce rival Temu enormously.

—Joseph Wallace contributed to this article.

European Listing Revival Still Trails Market in the U.S.

By CRISTINA GALLARDO

Europe's market for initial public offerings got off to a lively start in the fourth quarter, winding down a better year for new listings, though levels continue to lag the average and trail the U.S.

Germany kicked off the quarter with **Pentixapharm** and Springer Nature, lifting total IPO proceeds in Europe from last year's depressed levels.

Funds raised by new listings grew 41% to \$15.4 billion in the first three quarters, versus a 40% increase to \$27.3 billion in the U.S., according to a recent report from consultancy firm EY.

Springer Nature, the larger of this week's listings, originally targeted a 2020 IPO but changed course due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In late 2021, central banks discouraged further activity when they signaled the start of a rate-hiking cycle to rein in inflation.

Springer Nature, which publishes scientific journals, now joins companies like Jean Paul Gaultier owner **Puig Brands** and buyout group **CVC Capital Partners** in reviving the market.

Europasty, which supplies frozen bakery products to Starbucks, is gearing up for a Spain IPO next week.

Chinese fast-fashion brand Shein in June filed to go public in London, The Wall Street Journal and other publications reported.

Mature technology startups such as Lithuania's online second-hand retailer **Vinted**, British online-payments firm **Zilch** and its Swedish rival **Klarna** are also preparing to go public, but where they will list is still up in the air given the appeal of U.S. markets such as Nasdaq.

Peel Hunt's Hanratty said the gap with the U.S. is tightening, as Europe and in particular the U.K. make listing rules more attractive and seek reforms to boost investment.

"Sometimes the U.S. gets a name for closing companies at higher valuations, however we've seen a number of deals closed in both the U.K. and Europe at high valuations and also do well in the after-market trading," he said.

Google Fights New Zealand on News Payments

By MIKE CHERNEY

SYDNEY—Google threatened to stop linking to news in New Zealand if lawmakers pass a bill aimed at making digital platforms pay media outlets, setting up another fight over whether tech companies unfairly benefit from news content.

New Zealand is seeking to become the latest country to pass a law that would compel digital platforms like **Alphabet's** Google and **Meta's** Facebook to pay for news articles, at a time when traditional media outlets have been struggling as readers shift to online platforms.

"This bill proposes a 'link tax' that would require Google to pay simply for linking to news articles," according to a blog post from Caroline Rainsford, Google's New Zealand country director, on Friday.

"While Google supports efforts to foster a sustainable future for New Zealand news, this bill is not the right approach."

Google added that it would discontinue its current commercial agreements and support for New Zealand publishers if the bill were made into law.

Australia and Canada have already passed similar laws, attracting the ire of tech companies who argued that they shouldn't be forced to pay because they send valuable traffic to media outlets, and that it would upset the concept of an open internet.

New Zealand first signaled its intent to pass such a law in December 2022, under what was then a left-leaning government. In July, New Zealand's current right-leaning government said it would continue the effort, with certain changes.

More modifications are still possible. New Zealand officials say they have met with Google several times and that they will continue to do so. "There are a range of views throughout the sector which I am considering," Paul Goldsmith, New Zealand's media and communications

minister, said in a statement Friday.

The bill would incentivize digital platforms to strike deals with media publishers, set out processes for compulsory bargaining and require them to comply with a code set up by a regulator, according to a parliamentary report on the bill. Civil penalties could be imposed if the rules aren't followed.

Google said in its blog post Friday that the so-called "link tax" has not been proven to be effective in supporting journalism, arguing that the bill's model would benefit large publishers at the expense of smaller ones. It added that uncapped financial exposure and a lack of clarity in the current bill makes it impossible to plan and invest effectively.

But media outlets say some digital platforms refuse to negotiate commercial agreements, and that advertising revenue has declined steeply as more readers get their news online.

where the platforms wield significant power over the digital ad supply chain. Many are also concerned about artificial-intelligence chatbots that use news to train themselves and provide content to users without attribution or compensation.

"It is not possible to overstate the urgent and critical need for the bill," New Zealand media outlet Stuff said in a parliamentary submission.

The debate over payment for news has been acrimonious at times. Meta blocked news content for a few days in Australia before the government agreed to make some changes to the regulations. After Canada passed its law in 2023, Meta began blocking news content for Canadian users. Google has made similar threats before.

In Australia, it at one point threatened to shut down its search engine. In Canada, it initially said it would remove links to Canadian news from its platforms after the bill was passed.

Nevertheless, the number of European deals is lower than expected a couple of months ago, Hanratty said, due to a lack of IPO-ready companies and because some businesses are waiting for the outcome of November's

\$27.3B

Funds raised by new listings in the U.S. in the first three quarters of 2024

Activist Builds More Than \$1 Billion Stake in Air Products

By LAUREN THOMAS

Activist investor Mantle Ridge has built a more than \$1 billion stake in **Air Products** and plans to push for improvements at the industrial gas manufacturer, according to people familiar with the matter.

Mantle Ridge has been building its position in Air Products since March, the people said.

Air Products, based in Allentown, Pa., had a market value

of around \$63 billion as of Friday. Its shares are up about 4% so far this year, compared with a 20% rise in the S&P 500.

Mantle Ridge, run by Paul Hilal, plans to push Air Products executives on succession planning for Chief Executive Seifi Ghasemi as well as on improvements to the company's strategy and capital allocation, the people said. The firm believes Air Products is trading at a discount to its peers, they added.

A spokesperson for Air

Products said in a statement: "Air Products maintains a regular dialogue with the investment community as part of our robust shareholder and analyst engagement program. However, we do not comment on engagement with specific firms or individuals."

Air Products provides industrial gases and related equipment to companies in industries including refining, electronics and food, according to its website. It also develops, owns and operates some of the

largest clean-hydrogen projects in the world. One of its peers is U.K.-based Linde, whose stock is up about 14% so far this year.

Ghasemi became chief executive in July 2014. At 80 years old, he is one of the oldest CEOs of S&P 500 companies.

The company has been criticized by some Wall Street analysts recently for pursuing what have been viewed as risky bets and straying from its core business of industrial gas.

Air Products in July said its

Chief Operating Officer Samir Serhan would resign and formed a senior management board led by Ghasemi.

Earlier this year, Air Products sold its liquefied-natural-gas process technology and equipment business to Honeywell for \$1.8 billion as it focuses on its clean-fuel business.

Unlike many other activist investors, Mantle Ridge typically focuses on only one or two positions at a time.

Hilal is best-known for helping

CSX execute a turnaround after launching a brief boardroom battle to install industry veteran Hunter Harrison as CEO in 2017.

Other investments have included food-services company Aramark and Dollar Tree.

Before forming Mantle Ridge, Hilal was at Bill Ackman's Pershing Square Capital Management and in 2013 led the firm's investment in Air Products, which netted Pershing Square a healthy profit when it sold out in 2017.

HEARD ON THE STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS & COMMENTARY

Robotaxis might not need drivers. But they still need passengers—lots of them.

That might seem to be stating the obvious. And yet, when Elon Musk announced in early April that **Tesla** was planning to unveil its own robotaxi, the first instinct of investors was to bail on a company that already had a platform of 150 million people using it at least once a month for rides and food delivery. **Uber** lost nearly one-quarter of its market value over the following four months.

The stock has since clawed back much of that ground, due in part to a smattering of deals Uber has signed with such robotaxi providers as Waymo and Cruise. Those deals help make the case that Uber's massive platform of riders has value in a world in which expensive, driverless taxis need a steady base of passengers to make their economics work.

The deal with Waymo was particularly notable, as the company already runs its own robotaxi service in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Phoenix. Under that agreement, Uber will be the exclusive platform for booking rides in Waymo's cars in Atlanta and Austin, Texas, when the service launches in those two markets next year. While Uber once aspired to build its own robotaxis, it has since decided to play to its strengths. "Generally, we want to build a marketplace, and we want to stay as pure-play a marketplace as we can," Uber Chief Executive Dara Khosrowshahi said at a Goldman Sachs investment conference in San Francisco last month.

Still, many investors seem to be betting on a Tesla win—at Uber's expense. Tesla's stock has surged 46% over the past six months, ahead of the company's robotaxi-unveiling event scheduled for Oct. 10. Uber's shares have dropped nearly 1% during the same time.

Some history might be at work. Uber did once consider Tesla a major threat, even spelling out a Tesla autonomous vehicle as a risk factor in its initial public offering papers in early 2019. And Tesla so far has been signaling that it wants to go its own way with robotaxis. On earnings calls and other forums, Musk has touted plans for a fleet of cars without pedals or steering

Uber Has a Leg Up on Tesla In the Robotaxi Race

Networks of expensive, self-driving cars need a wide base of paying riders. One company has a 14-year head start.



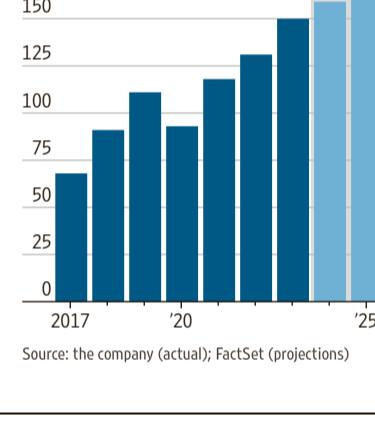
A Waymo self-driving taxi navigates the streets

wheels operating through the same network the company uses to direct drivers of its electric vehicles to charging stations.

"This would just be the Tesla network," he said on Tesla's earnings call in July, in response to an analyst's question about how the company's robotaxi service would work. "You just literally open the Tesla app and summon a car, and we send a car to pick you up and take you somewhere."

A lot like Uber, in other words. But replicating a ride-hailing network with a 14-year head start will be no easy feat, especially considering the scale Uber has achieved. The company's mobility segment

Uber's monthly active platform consumers at year's end



alone now handles more than \$34 billion in gross bookings in the U.S. each year, according to consensus estimates by Visible Alpha.

While robotaxis spare the expense of paying a human driver, they are far from cheap. Analysts from Bernstein estimate that Waymo's driverless cars cost between \$150,000 and \$200,000 a piece, factoring in the cost of the vehicle itself and the sensors and computing power necessary to run them. And those cars are nearly always operating and thus generating costs for their operators, while fleets of cars with human drivers can be scaled up and down based on demand and don't gener-

ate costs when not carrying passengers.

The high fixed costs of a fully autonomous vehicle network "creates economic questions around up-front cost and utilization rates during non-peak hours," Bernstein's analysts wrote in a report last month.

A wide network of riders is vital to the economics of such a business, both to amortize the large up-front costs and minimize so-called deadhead miles—referring to the distance and time between revenue-generating trips. In a June report, Brian Nowak of Morgan Stanley estimated that building a network of autonomous cars that would rival the size of Uber's U.S. fleet would cost at least \$25 billion—and could reach as high as \$60 billion—depending on the technology used in the fleet.

Consider Waymo—the largest active robotaxi network, which surpassed the milestone of 100,000 paid weekly trips in August. The company is part of Google parent **Alphabet's** Other Bets reporting segment, which reported \$4.2 billion in operating losses for the 12-month period ended in June. Shweta Khajuria of Wolfe Research estimated that Waymo accounts for about half that loss. "Our analysis suggests it will require ~10 years for Waymo to reach payback on invested capital," she wrote.

Is Tesla ready to stomach that? Musk is characteristically aiming high. "This will be one for the history books," he said of the robotaxi event on his X platform on Sept. 25.

But the volatile billionaire's dreams don't always line up with reality. And getting a workable robotaxi fleet operating on public roads is a bigger hurdle than just perfecting the technology of the cars themselves.

UBS analyst Joseph Spak said Tesla currently lacks the proper permits from the state of California to test its vehicles without a driver present, even as the company is set to unveil its cars at a Los Angeles event. "We believe wide-scale Tesla robotaxi deployment is unlikely within the coming years," Spak wrote in a report last month. Uber and its robotaxi partners might still have plenty of time on their side.

—Dan Gallagher

MARIO TAMA/GETTY IMAGES

ago that started mortgage rates' most recent move lower, anticipating more-aggressive Fed rate cuts in response.

"The key is not necessarily whether the Fed cuts short-term rates by 25 or 50 [basis points] but how that reduction is interpreted further out on the yield curve by bond market participants," says Mark Palim, chief economist at Fannie Mae.

Friday's stronger-than-expected jobs report sent yields on 10-year Treasurys sharply higher. That could be a strong indication of the direction of mortgage bonds, and in turn the individual mortgage loans that are packaged into those bonds.

Going forward, even mixed economic data from here wouldn't necessarily help lower mortgage rates if it drives big market swings. Volatility tends to push mortgage rates a bit higher, because it leads to relatively weaker demand for mortgage bonds and widens their spread to benchmark Treasurys. That puts upward pressure on the rates offered by lenders to borrowers.

It is also worth remembering that just because so many people have a neighbor with a mortgage rate that begins with a two or three or four doesn't mean they should assume that is the natural state of things. In this century alone, the average weekly Freddie Mac measure of 30-year fixed rates is over 5%, according to Federal Reserve data.

The broader decline in rates in recent months seems to have stimulated mortgage activity. But it isn't clear how strong and sustained the jump might be. The Mortgage Bankers Association's weekly index of refinance application activity for the week ending Sept. 27 fell 3% from the prior week, though it was still almost triple last year's index at that time.

To keep activity growing from here, mortgage rates likely need to keep going down. But current Treasury yields, and therefore mortgage rates, are likely already pricing in a couple more rate cuts by the Fed this year, as implied by the Fed's published projections in September.

For mortgage rates to move meaningfully lower in the near future, investors might need to see much worse news on the economic front.

A strong job market usually means that people are a bit less likely to fall behind on their bills—and that could power a big jump in lenders' shares.

The KBW Nasdaq Bank index rose 2.5% Friday after the better-than-expected employment report. Some of the strongest gains came from major consumer lenders, including a 5.7% gain for Capital One Financial, 4.6% for Synchrony Financial and 6.3% for Discover Financial Services.

Strong hiring can help banks counteract some of the ill effects of lower interest rates. Banks that make loans tied to benchmark short-term rates, like credit-card loans, are going to face pressure on their net interest income as those rates tumble with successive Federal Reserve cuts. Net interest income is a measure of what banks earn on loans and other assets versus what they pay out on deposits and other funding.

But lower net interest earned on individual loans can be moot if there are also a lot more loans being made. That is helped by lower rates, but it is especially boosted by people having reliable income and job security. Unemployment is

usually one of the strongest variables in any lender's model for how likely someone is to borrow and keep up with their monthly bills.

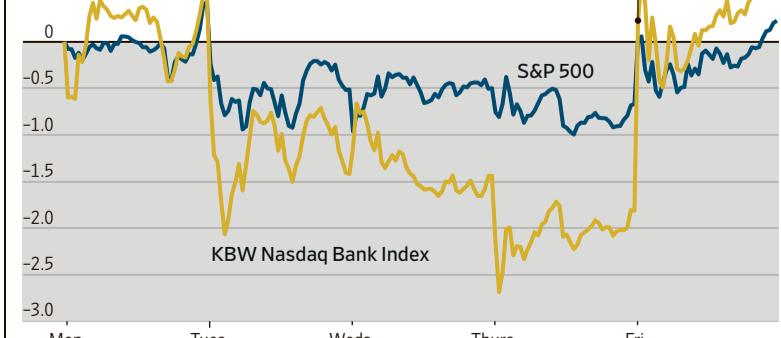
In the latest data, for August, VantageScore's CreditGauge showed that consumer loan balances had risen to the highest level in four years. That is good news for net interest income, but could be troubling for the likelihood people pay it all back.

Yet the trend lately has actually been that consumer incomes are keeping up with their debt costs. The percentage of consumers' disposable personal income taken up by debt service payments fell in the first and second quarter, and was below where it was pre-pandemic, according to the Federal Reserve.

So in the debate about whether banks will be hurt by, or benefit from, falling interest rates, what is often overlooked is that a strong economy might make rates the sideshow. This is why the focus of the coming earnings season might be more on what banks say about the state of their customers than what they are reporting for their revenues.

—Telis Demos

Performance of bank stocks and the S&P 500 over the past five days



Source: FactSet



Mortgage rates fell before the Fed cut rates. They've risen slightly since.

Why Mortgage Rates Haven't Fallen More

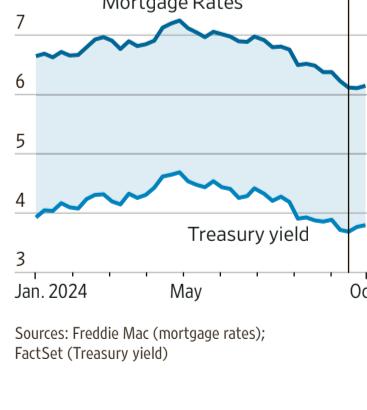
The Federal Reserve cut interest rates, then mortgage rates went up. That is a reminder of the complexity of mortgage pricing—and a warning that lower rates from here are not a foregone conclusion.

Many people might have been hearing from lenders earlier this month about the Fed's looming cuts. And briefly, one measure of mortgage rates did drop a bit in the aftermath of the half-point rate cut on September 18. But the preponderance of the data, and an extra week of time, suggests that the Fed's initial cut might have merely marked the conclusion of a market move that started weeks prior, rather than the beginning of a new one.

As long-term loans that are typically packaged into bonds, and often guaranteed with government backing, mortgages' pricing can be more closely aligned with longer-term benchmarks than the short-term rates set by the Fed. Trading in Treasurys and mortgage bonds often reflects what investors think the Fed might do with rates over the coming months and years. And that, in turn, is heavily dependent on expectations for the economy's performance.

So when 10-year Treasury yields rose in the wake of the Fed's rate cuts, that was a clue for the near-

Weekly average 30-year fixed rate mortgage rate and 10-year U.S. Treasury yield



term path for mortgage rates.

By some measures, standard 30-year fixed-rate home-loans hit their lowest level since early 2023 just before the Fed's September cut. They have now risen a bit since then. Freddie Mac's latest measure of the weekly national average puts those mortgages at 6.12% in the five weekdays through Wednesday, up from 6.09% for the week ending the day of the Fed's move.

It was worries about key economic indicators a couple months

ago that started mortgage rates' most recent move lower, anticipating more-aggressive Fed rate cuts in response.

"The key is not necessarily whether the Fed cuts short-term rates by 25 or 50 [basis points] but how that reduction is interpreted further out on the yield curve by bond market participants," says Mark Palim, chief economist at Fannie Mae.

While robotaxis spare the expense of paying a human driver, they are far from cheap. Analysts from Bernstein estimate that Waymo's driverless cars cost between \$150,000 and \$200,000 a piece, factoring in the cost of the vehicle itself and the sensors and computing power necessary to run them. And those cars are nearly always operating and thus generating costs for their operators, while fleets of cars with human drivers can be scaled up and down based on demand and don't gener-

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**Hamas's Hostages**

The diplomats who helped free Abigail Edan still have work to do. **C4**

REVIEW

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

Unhappy at the Top

Pop star Chappell Roan pushes back against celebrity culture. **C3**



CULTURE | SCIENCE | POLITICS | HUMOR

* * * *

Saturday/Sunday, October 5 - 6, 2024 | **C1**

DANIEL ZENDER

This Teenage Hacker Became A Legend Attacking Companies. Then His Rivals Attacked Him.

His life in cybercrime began at age 11, investigators say—and his case has brought worries about a new breed of fearless young hackers.

By Robert McMillan and Jenny Strasburg

THE CITY OF LONDON Police had put the teenage boy in the suburban Travelodge to protect him. They even set up a code with him and his mom to signal it was safe to open the door: “Lucky lucky.”

Then they grew suspicious.

The teen had a history with the police. It was September 2022, and 17-year-old Arion Kurtaj had been arrested twice earlier that year for his alleged role in a hacking group that stole data and demanded ransoms from some of the world’s biggest tech companies. Kurtaj, who is autistic, was released both times. The second time, that March, he had been let go under the condition that he stay offline.

Over the next few months, someone threw bricks at the windows of his family’s home, police said, and his mother’s car was smashed up. A bag of chicken was mysteriously delivered to the house. Online rivals had doxxed him, posting his personal information online, and police found evidence of a plot to steal cryptocurrency from him. Officers decided he needed pro-

tection.

That left Kurtaj in Room M15 of a Travelodge outside Oxford, where he was still supposed to be computer-free, with his mom in a room on another floor.

Roughly two weeks into his stay, just after 9 p.m., officers entered Kurtaj’s room. An Amazon Fire Stick—a small streaming device with internet access—was plugged into the hotel room

TV. There was a keyboard and mouse, and a gold-toned iPhone on the bed, just under the duvet. Police had been monitoring online messages they believed could be coming from Kurtaj almost until the moment they knocked on the door.

Kurtaj was arrested a third time and charged with hacking, fraud and blackmail. Authorities said that while at the Travelo-

dge, he broke into Uber and taunted the company by posting a link to a photo of an erect penis on the company’s internal Slack messaging system, then stole software and videos from Rockstar Games. Stolen clips had popped up in a “Grand Theft Auto” discussion forum from a user named teapotuberhacker and stirred a frenzy.

As officers collected evidence, the teen stood by, emotionless, police say. During his stay, he was polite and shy, said Susanne Langford, the hotel manager. “He was very quiet, didn’t interact with people much,” she said. Langford, who has a son with autism, said she recognized traits of it in Kurtaj.

Police knocked on his mother’s door to tell her that they’d just arrested her son again. For years, according to court records, she had struggled

Please turn to the next page

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WORK AND RELATIONSHIPS

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Cars may come and go, but their impact lasts a lifetime. **C5**



REVIEW

A Next-Generation Cybercriminal

Continued from the prior page
to keep her son on a path that provided schooling and other support. He had limited social skills and trouble developing relationships, records say—and ultimately looked for approval in the booming world of cybercrime.

Arion Kurtaj, now 19 years old, is the most notorious name that has emerged from a sprawling set of online communities called the Com. They are gamers and hackers and online con artists who are native English speakers, able to talk their way into sensitive networks—social engineers in cybersecurity parlance. They have become one of the top cybersecurity threats in the world, and they are mostly boys and young men.

Their youthful inventiveness and tenacity, as well as their status as minors that makes prosecution more complicated, have made the

Some kids are recruited to join hacking groups from popular online spaces like Minecraft or Roblox.

Com especially dangerous, according to law-enforcement officials and cybersecurity investigators. Some kids, they say, are recruited from popular online spaces like Minecraft or Roblox.

"Across the country we're seeing increasingly sophisticated cybercrime being conducted by people who are younger and younger and younger," said William McKeen, a supervisory special agent with the FBI's Cyber Division, at a security conference in San Francisco in May. "It is terrifying."

He said the average age of anyone arrested for a crime in the U.S. is 37, while the average age of someone arrested for cybercrime is 19.

Kurtaj was tried in court in part for his role in the hacking group Lapsus\$, which posted publicly about its operations and successes, giving investigators a window into its activities.

The judge ultimately handed Kurtaj a sentence that his lawyers have called out of proportion with the crimes he stood accused of. The family declined to be interviewed.

The Cyber Safety Review Board, formed two years ago by the White House to analyze cybersecurity threats, said in a major report about Lapsus\$ that the group "was unique

educational needs and behavioral issues. By around age 11, he was partly home-schooled by a tutor.

At that same age, he made his first known post about illegal activity, according to the online intelligence firm Flashpoint. It was a request for information in a cyber-crime marketplace about how to hack into a server used by Minecraft players.

When he was 14, the British state took over his care under a law requiring the government to provide housing for certain young people deemed unable to remain in the care of their parents, according to court records. He landed in a residential school serving children with severe emotional and behavioral needs.

By 2020, when he was 15, he was offering more than \$10,000 for hacking tools in online forums, according to Chainalysis, a blockchain analytics company.

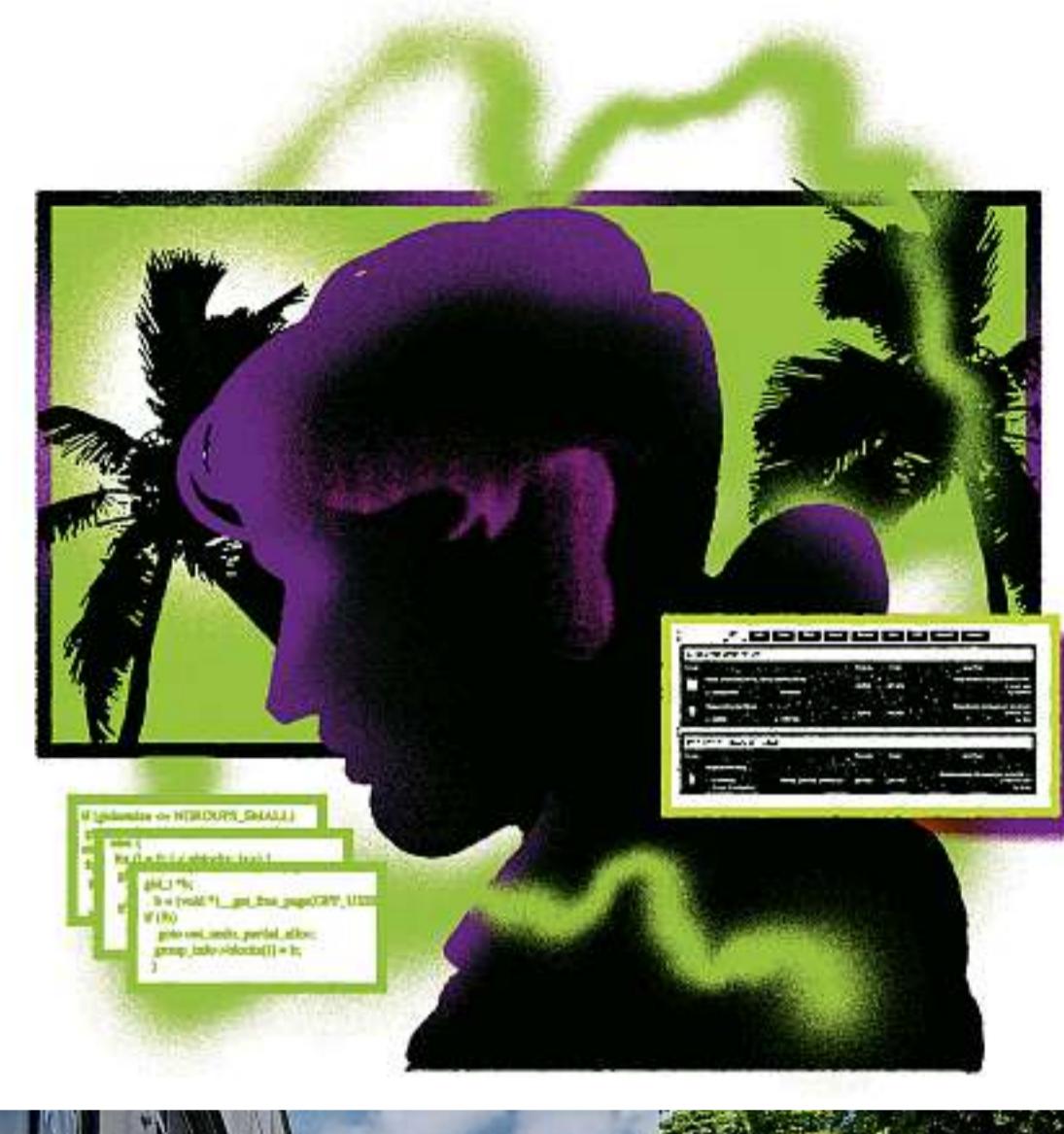
"It was his alternative existence," said Kevin Barry, the British lawyer who prosecuted Kurtaj last year. "He was living a very empty offline life with all sorts of difficulties, challenges and limitations, whereas online he could be a bit of a superhero."

Kurtaj was physically assaulted by a staff member at his school who was later convicted as a result, according to a person familiar with the case. In early 2021, his mother brought him home and removed him from government care, court records say. He never returned to school. He was 16.

A month after his mother pulled him out of school, investigators say that Kurtaj was part of a hacking group called Recursion Team that broke into the videogame firm Electronic Arts and stole 780 gigabytes of data. When Electronic Arts refused to engage, they dumped the stolen data online. Within a week of that hack, investigators had identified Kurtaj and provided his name to the FBI.

Crypto heist

Later in that summer of 2021, according to court records, Kurtaj partnered with another teenager, known as ASyntax, and several Brazilian hackers, and started calling



The Travelodge hotel where London police lodged Arion Kurtaj in September 2022.

He relented. Then in January 2022, cybersecurity investigators say, he doxxed the entire site, publishing a database that included usernames, passwords and email addresses that he'd downloaded when he was the owner. For cybersecurity experts, it was a gold mine. "It helped investigators piece together which crimes were done by who," said Allison Nixon, chief research officer at Unit 221B, an online investigations firm.

Doxbin's owners responded with a dox of Kurtaj and his family, including his home address and photos of him, investigators say—setting up the chain of events that would put Kurtaj in the Travelodge.

Lapsus\$ mayhem

In January 2022, police arrested Kurtaj and ASyntax for the BT hack, after connecting a computer used by Kurtaj to the hacks. Officers seized their phones but then released the teens under investigation. It's unusual to remand a teenager in the U.K., Detective Inspector O'Sullivan said.

The next month, Lapsus\$ was taking credit for a hack into Nvidia. They started off by dumping 80 gigabytes of data they'd stolen from the company, and then threatened to release even more unless they were paid a ransom. Then came other bizarre demands, including one that Nvidia make its software more easily available to cryptocurrency miners.

Lapsus\$ took credit for hacks into other tech companies, including Microsoft and Samsung.

At the end of March 2022, the City of London police arrested Kurtaj and ASyntax again. Social services couldn't find suitable accommodations for Kurtaj, and he was released on the condition that he stayed off computers.

Kurtaj bought Doxbins in November 2021 for \$75,000, according to Chainalysis. But after a few months, the previous owners accused Kurtaj of mismanaging the site and pressured him to sell it back.

Room M15

By mid-September 2022, Kurtaj had checked into the Travelodge.

On Sept. 14, Uber was hacked.

On Sept. 17, teapotuberhacker

popped up in a gaming discussion forum to announce a hack into Rockstar Games. The hacker began leaking clips for the company's highly anticipated "Grand Theft Auto VI." Gamers on the forum were skeptical at first, but they quickly realized the dump was legitimate.

"Ok so this has gone unexpectedly viral," teapotuberhacker posted in another message on Sept. 18. Later that day, a post on a criminal marketplace forum appeared, titled: "The Person Who Hacked GTA 6 and Uber Is Arion."

The pressure was building on O'Sullivan and British authorities to put a stop to the hacks, but O'Sullivan had another issue. Sept. 19 was the state funeral of Queen Elizabeth II. About half of his nine-member cyber team was in uniform, working the event.

On Sept. 22, they were ready to surprise Kurtaj in Room M15 of the Travelodge. Kurtaj was sent to the Feltham Prison and Young Offender Institution in West London, recently described by a U.K. government watchdog as "the most violent prison in the country." He was charged with 12 counts related to fraud, blackmail and violations of the U.K.'s Computer Misuse Act, for hacks dating back to August 2020.

Psychiatrists deemed Kurtaj unfit to stand trial due to his severe autism and other developmental issues. The court instructed the jury to set aside any question of criminal intent and just determine whether he had committed the acts alleged by prosecutors.

In August 2023, jurors found Kurtaj had committed the hacks. He called in via videoconference for his December sentencing, but said little. The judge heard reports that he was violent and destructive at Feltham, and that a mental-health assessment found he wanted to return to cybercrime as soon as possible.

The judge gave Kurtaj an indefinite hospital order—a sentence confining him to a secure mental-health ward until doctors and U.K. officials decide he is no longer a danger to the public. He was 18 years old.

People in Kurtaj's situation can apply for a review of their detention once a year. Otherwise, their detention is subject to government review once every three years, according to the Ministry of Justice.

The court tried charges against ASyntax at the same time. He was found guilty of two counts of fraud, two violations of the misuse act and one count of blackmail. ASyntax, who was then 17, was sentenced to a youth rehabilitation order, including 18 months of supervision.

Kurtaj and his lawyers are seeking to appeal. They argued at trial that while there was evidence of

Some experts on autism have said a potential lifetime of incarceration isn't appropriate for a teenager like Kurtaj.

Kurtaj's association with hackers and the offenses, the evidence failed to prove he committed many of the offenses or was the central player.

Kurtaj's lawyers and some experts on autism have said a potential lifetime of incarceration isn't appropriate for a teenager like Kurtaj.

"There has to be a better system that enables the skills of such individuals to be utilized in a more positive way that protects corporations, acknowledges and supports the medical needs of vulnerable perpetrators and offers a more mutually beneficial outcome for all stakeholders in these situations," his lawyers said in a statement after the jury's findings.

It's up to his doctors whether Kurtaj can access the internet. He was sent to a medium-security hospital, where in the common areas shared with other patients, he was surrounded by tablets, phones and computers.



A playground in the town where Kurtaj grew up.

for its effectiveness, speed, creativity, and boldness."

This article is based on court records, online chats and posts, and interviews with police, cybersecurity inspectors and others familiar with Kurtaj and his case.

The Com kid

Born in 2005, Arion Kurtaj grew up in a largely middle-class neighborhood north of Oxford. Investigators say he lived modestly. One real-world activity he appeared to enjoy, based on social-media photos, was family fishing outings.

Most of the time, though, he lived online, according to Michael O'Sullivan, a detective inspector who oversees the City of London Police's cybercrime unit.

Kurtaj started his education at his neighborhood primary school, but went on to attend a series of schools for children with complex

themselves Lapsus\$. The group hacked into the British telecommunications giant BT in an effort to steal money using a technique called SIM swapping, where someone seizes control of a victim's phone number and then uses it to reset online passwords—including for users' cryptocurrency accounts.

The hacks weren't always for money. In late 2021, Lapsus\$ hacked into a website operated by Brazil's Ministry of Health and deleted the country's database of Covid vaccinations, according to law enforcement.

If the Com has a social center, it's a website called Doxbins, where users publish personal details of their online rivals in an attempt to intimidate each other.

Kurtaj bought Doxbins in November 2021 for \$75,000, according to Chainalysis. But after a few months, the previous owners accused Kurtaj of mismanaging the site and pressured him to sell it back.

Room M15

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On Sept. 14, Uber was hacked.

On Sept. 17, teapotuberhacker

REVIEW

Chappell Roan Is the Biggest Thing in Pop Right Now. She's Not Happy About It.

When she put out her debut album last year, the 26-year-old musician was a cult act. Now she's reckoning with her rapid rise to the top, exposing the sometimes toxic culture of modern celebrity.

BY NEIL SHAH

For months, the biggest new star in the pop cosmos has been fighting a battle against her own fame.

First, Chappell Roan complained onstage about the head-spinning speed with which she has become a phenomenon. Then she pushed back against the intrusive behavior of some fans. Late last month, after saying she wouldn't endorse a candidate in the upcoming U.S. presidential election, she confronted a wave of criticism, then tried to explain the nuances of her position, adding fuel to the fire.

Things only worsened last weekend after she, at the last minute, canceled her appearances at the All Things Go music festival in New York City and Maryland, saying things had felt "overwhelming"—a decision that prompted more outcry online.

In a music industry that often rewards artifice over authenticity, the 26-year-old musician is publicly reckoning with the demands of her sudden fame. When she put out her debut album, "The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess," back in September 2023, she was a cult act. Then she exploded faster than any rising pop act in recent memory, thanks to her live appearances and a hit song, "Good Luck, Babe!" In January, her weekly U.S. online streams were under 3 million; by June, they were nearly 70 million, according to Billboard.

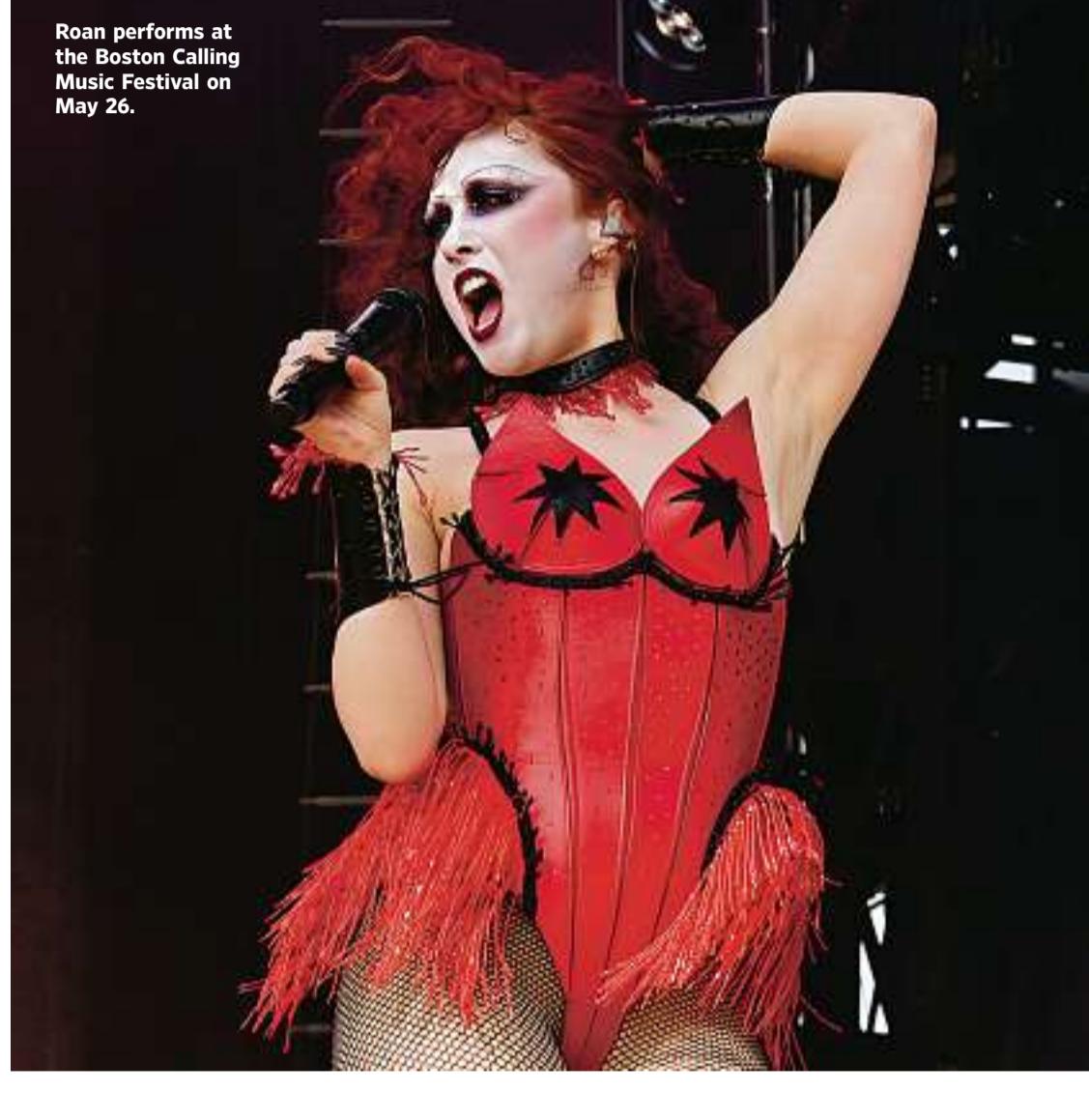
The red-haired pop singer has been the main attraction at music festivals like Lollapalooza, commanding massive crowds in pink cowboy hats without being a headline act. Just a few days ago, she topped Billboard's Artist 100 chart, which tracks everything from U.S. sales and streaming to radio airplay, effectively crowning her the No. 1 artist in the cultural zeitgeist.

"Chappell might be the next [Lady] Gaga," says Kirk Sommer, senior partner and global co-head of music at talent agency William Morris Endeavor and agent for Adele, the Killers and Billie Eilish.

As her star has risen, Roan has run up against the sometimes toxic culture of modern celebrity. She has spoken about her struggles with mental health and feeling that her fans are infringing on her personal boundaries.

"Of course I'm sad that I didn't see her at All Things Go, but it's more important to me that she preserves her mental health," says Kara

Roan performs at the Boston Calling Music Festival on May 26.



Schmidt, a 36-year-old fan who traveled from Minneapolis to see Roan at the festival in New York, spending around \$1,500 on tickets, food, lodging, travel and merchandise.

"No one could be ready for her mercurial rise to fame, and none of us are in her shoes to know the best course of action," Schmidt says. "I trust her to know her."

Music executives see Roan as part of a new crop of savvier and more relatable female stars, including Sabrina Carpenter and Charli XCX, but also queer acts like the indie trio boygenius.

Roan's rapid rise is a striking contrast from just four years ago, when her career was in shambles.

Her label, Atlantic Records, had dumped her. A long-term relationship ended, and she was diagnosed with bipolar II disorder. Having struggled initially to make it as a dark, moody pop singer in Hollywood, she moved home to Missouri, entered therapy and worked at a drive-through.

But getting dropped ended up being the best thing to happen to her. Returning to Los Angeles, Roan took up music again, following her own instincts to become the kind of pop act she wanted to be: Playful, iconoclastic

'Not everyone can handle Taylor Swift-level stardom—nor should they.'

CHLOE KLAESS
Chappell Roan fan

and forthrightly open about her self-discovery as a young lesbian woman.

Roan has a powerful, dynamic voice, which differentiates her concerts from those of many other pop stars. Her songs, including "Good Luck, Babe!" often have a nostalgic '80s feel, nodding to classic artists

like Kate Bush and Cyndi Lauper; her lyrics combine comedy and pathos. Whereas contemporaries Olivia Rodrigo and Carpenter enjoyed considerable prior fame as Disney stars, Roan had no past to leverage—so, once she was off Atlantic's roster, she had more freedom to craft her own musical persona.

"People love an underdog," says Miranda Reinert, a host of the music podcast Endless Scroll. "It is all a good story."

When Roan moved back to Los Angeles, she reconnected with Daniel Nigro, a writer-producer who was pivotal in launching Rodrigo and had first started working with Roan in 2018. Writing together, Roan and Nigro put out singles without a major label. Through Nigro's connection, Roan opened for Rodrigo in 2022. For her 2023 debut album, Roan worked with Nigro's imprint, Amusement Records, and Island Records, part of the Universal Music Group family of labels. This year, Roan

again opened for Rodrigo, boosting her visibility. Then "Good Luck, Babe!"—a queer anthem written with pop songwriter Justin Tranter about a partner not ready to acknowledge their own feelings—catalyzed Roan into the minds of casual music listeners.

Chloe Klaess, a 30-year-old librarian in Brooklyn, first heard Roan last year when her wife showed her the song "Red Wine Supernova." She says it's special that one of pop's biggest stars openly represents the queer community. During her performance at last month's MTV Video Music Awards, Roan donned a suit of armor and wielded a crossbow and sword, using imagery that Klaess says lesbian fans read as "queerness without the straight gaze."

"As a queer woman myself, even now, in 2024, it's kind of like, 'Oh, is this artist queer? Are they not? Are they 'maybe'?' Klaess says. "Chappell Roan is just like, 'No, I'm gay, I'm a lesbian.' She is who she is, and I really appreciate that."

Instead of abiding by the typical media playbook, Roan has repeatedly insisted on being vocal about her feelings, especially about the possessiveness of some of her fans or how she doesn't like either of the two main political parties.

While Roan's political stance, for example, is a fairly common view, it gave people online an opening to attack by saying she might be a closet supporter of Republican presidential contender Donald Trump. Instead of standing back, Roan doubled down online, feeding the controversy.

Yet it's this same willingness to take the harder road that helps explain why so many artists in popular music have lent their support to Roan this year. An unusual number of musicians and celebrities—from Kacey Musgraves and Kelly Clarkson to Vampire Weekend—have covered her songs recently, which executives see as a combination of offering their support and, in some cases, bringing some valuable attention to themselves. Roan, after all, represents a changing of the guard in pop tastes—a turn away from the choreographed perfection of Katy Perry or even Dua Lipa, toward something messier.

"It's the rise of authenticity in pop right now," says Jonathan Daniel, co-founder of artist-management firm Crush Music, which handles acts including Lorde and Courtney Love.

Many fans have supported Roan's attempts to set boundaries in a culture that can expect too much from young talent. But she can't rest yet: She's playing this year's Austin City Limits festival, and then next month she's the musical guest on "Saturday Night Live." After that, she enters the studio with Nigro to work on her follow-up to 2023's "Midwest Princess."

If anything, Roan's recent publicity troubles may end up serving as a helpful speed bump, one that could slow down a spectacular ascent that was moving at a dangerous clip.

"Not everyone can handle Taylor Swift-level stardom—nor should they," Klaess says. "I hope she doesn't get burned out."

ASTRID VALGORSKY/GETTY IMAGES



Why Do Older People Waste Their Time Playing Dumb Phone Games?

My mother

used to yell

at me for

playing my

Atari 2600.

Now she's

hooked

on Drop7.

I LIKE TO TELL MYSELF that

when I retire, and my days are

measured with weekly pill orga-

nizers, I will treasure the

time I have left—reading the

Great Books, visiting lands I

had read about in the Great

Books and sitting with friends

in cafes, subtly slipping into

our conversation facts about

the Great Books I'm reading.

But I am clearly wrong

about what it's like to be

older. Because I have watched

older people, and they do not

read Great Books. In fact, they

act as if they're procrastinating

even though they have

nothing to procrastinate from.

They watch cable news all day.

They talk about things no one

cares about, such as other

people's children.

Most terrifyingly, they do

what they yelled at us for doing

when we were kids: They play

videogames. And not just any

videogames, but videogames

that have even worse graphics

than my Atari 2600 had. Videogames on their phones.

When I asked my

79-year-old mom for

the name of the

game she's played

daily for a decade,

she did not remember. I asked

how this could be true. "Be-

cause I'm old," she explained.

Then she looked at her phone

and found the app. "It's a num-

ber seven. Let me see if it says

what the name of it is."

After some research that in-

volved pressing the app, she

discovered it's called Drop7.

From what I gathered looking

over her shoulder, Drop7 is a

mixture of Tetris and Sudoku

which involves numbered bubbles,

the best of which are 7s.

It's sort of like chess, in that it

is also a game.

When I asked my mom to

use the ScreenTime app to see

how often she plays Drop7, she

looked up the last few days.

"Oh. Three hours 44 minutes. I

must have been home hanging

out and watching the news

that day." She flipped to the

day before that. "Two hours

three minutes. Oh my good-

ness. I don't think I want to

look at this anymore." She

meant ScreenTime, not Drop7.

Why would a smart, vibrant

former therapist be doing this

instead of volunteering, reading

"Anna Karenina" or playing

a much better videogame? I

asked my friend, the neurosci-

entist Daniel Levitin, whose

2020 book, "Successful Aging:

A Neuroscientist Explores the

Power and Potential of Our

Lives," does not once suggest

spending three hours a day

playing Drop7.

"As we get older, changes

in our brains cause many of

us to become more inward fo-

cused, to be more 'inside our

heads,'" he told me. "Staring at

a small screen and playing

games feels separate and apart

from the external world that

we're inclined to pay less atten-

tion to." It's like the window in

his New Hampshire home that

the poet Donald Hall wrote

about gazing from at the end of

his life, only instead of nuthatches, evening grosbeaks and American goldfinches, it's bubbles with numbers inside them.

Julie Brown, an associate professor of gerontology at Ohio University, suggested that my idea of cramming Great Books into my last decades makes sense because of "socioemotional selectivity theory," which holds, among other things, that as your time shortens, you move away from future-oriented activities, such as learning a new language or making friends, and toward emotionally satisfying ones. Which not even the greatest game of Drop7 provides.

But emotionally satisfying experiences aren't in rich supply for people like her own octogenarian mother, who she was visiting while we talked. Her mother was playing what Brown found to be a frustrating amount of Spider Solitaire on her phone. "She would love to go on a hike, but she's afraid of falling. The kids are at work, and the grandkids are in school," Brown said, so playing Spider Solitaire on her phone "is filler for the things she wants to do."

My mom had a different ex-

planation. It's that Drop7 is super fun. "I would never say to myself, 'I just wasted an hour playing 7s.'" This is not because it would be inaccurate, since she actually wasted two hours and three minutes. No, it's because my mom doesn't think it's a waste of time. She thinks it's relaxing. Playing Drop7 is part of why she enjoys being retired. "It's like, 'Wow, now I can do whatever I want,'" she explained. And what she wants is to be in the top 10% of Drop7 high scorers, which she always is.

The Drop7 problem is entirely mine. I have a fantasy about aging and wisdom that is based on movies and not on what I've witnessed on every slot floor in Vegas. When our candle burns down, we don't become new people. If I want to be an Anna Karenina-reading retiree, I need to build that habit now.

But, my mom insists, I won't want to be that person. That person is an exhausted phony. I will want to be a person who reaches the top 10% in Drop7. Only by then, instead of Drop7, it will somehow be something even dumber.

Joel Stein, a former columnist for *Time*, writes a Substack called "The End of My Career" and is the author of "In Defense of Elitism."

TILL LAUER

REVIEW



Abigail Mor-Edan, left, and with her family, above. Hamas killed both parents on Oct. 7, 2023.

nior leadership from Israel and Qatar and joined other devastated hostage families for high-level briefings at the State Department.

My niece and her husband had been murdered, but Abigail and many other brutally stolen children, young people, parents and grandparents were still alive. From President Biden down, the U.S. administration understood the urgency of freeing these victims of terror.

The agreement last November between Hamas and Israel that won the freedom of over 100 hostages was a complex and daring achievement of American diplomacy. With the failure of countless rounds of subsequent negotiations and a wider regional conflict now looming, the deal that saved Abigail's life now feels like it belongs to a distant, more hopeful phase of the conflict.

Still, we must not forget the hostages who remain alive in Gaza. Abigail's life since being held captive should give pause to anyone who thinks it's hopeless to keep trying for another deal. In the past eight months, I have gotten to see what Abigail and we, her family, would have missed if the U.S. hadn't doggedly pursued a difficult agreement between Israel and Hamas.

Abigail and the other freed children are symbols of resilience and hope for the future. Every day with Abigail, I see what's possible when leaders set everything else aside to fulfill the ultimate responsibility of any government, which is to protect the lives of the innocent.

Abigail and her siblings are now living with their extended family in central Israel, where she is surrounded by warmth and love and attends kindergarten with new friends. Whether she is drawing, dancing with her friends or playing on the beach, she abounds with attitude and energy.

Most of the time Abigail looks and acts like any normal, happy 4-year-old. When we took her to Disneyland in Anaheim, she loved the "Cars" ride so much that we went on it twice in a row, jetting through a dreamlike mock-up of the Arizona desert in a fake convertible. But on

"Pirates of the Caribbean," I could see that Abigail is still sensitive to darkness, loud noises and other stimuli that might remind her of her time in captivity.

Abigail knows she was a hostage in Gaza and recalls what she experienced. During a recent air raid alert in Israel, she asked if the terrorists would find her in the family's safe room.

I thought of that Disney trip in late August, when the Israeli military published photos of the tunnel in Gaza where Hamas had recently murdered six starved young people it had kidnapped on Oct. 7. The entrance to the tunnel was in a child's playroom, its walls decorated with paintings of

Mickey Mouse and Snow White. For a time during her captivity, Abigail was imprisoned in the bedroom of a 3-year-old Gazan girl, with decor from Disney's "Frozen." The past year has brought me an acute sense of how war can darken even the most blameless and innocent things.

Whatever its moral and strategic justification, the continuing war in Gaza and the failure to free the remaining 101 hostages, including seven Americans, comes at a painful human cost that grows with every passing moment. The deal that freed Abigail is proof that something hopeful can be salvaged from this horror.

The release of the remaining hostages, liberated through the kind of agreement between enemies that saved Abigail, can become the basis for a more humane future in the Middle East.

That might seem unlikely now. But a year ago, with her parents murdered and her community under attack, Abigail's survival seemed equally unlikely. Today she is living evidence of what is still possible and why even the slim chances of another hostage deal can't be ignored. Time is running out to save them.

Liz Hirsh Naftali is the author of "Saving Abigail: The True Story of the Abduction and Rescue of a Three-Year-Old Hostage" and the host of the Capitol Coffee Connection podcast.

MOR EDAN FAMILY (2)

Finding Hope in a Little Girl Saved from Hamas

Abigail Edan survived the murder of her parents on Oct. 7. Her life since release from captivity shows why it is essential to free the remaining hostages.

By LIZ HIRSH NAFTALI

My 3-year-old great-niece, Abigail Mor-Edan, watched Hamas terrorists murder her mother and father within minutes of each other last Oct. 7. Abigail, her parents and her two older siblings lived in the community of Kfar Aza, right next to the border with Gaza. The attackers shot Smadar, Abigail's mother, as she frantically rushed her children to a reinforced room.

Abigail and her two siblings ran outside, as their father, Roee, a photojournalist, was rushing home. He picked Abigail up in his arms, and the four of them ran together. Gunshots rang out, and Roee collapsed while still clutching Abigail. Her 6-year-old sister and 9-year-old brother ran back into the house, believing they had seen their father and little sister killed, and hid in a closet for 14 hours before being rescued.

But Abigail had survived. She ran to her neighbor's house. Hours later, with their community still under

Hamas control, terrorists kidnapped Abigail, the neighbor and three of the woman's own children. The five of them were held hostage in Gaza for 51 days. Abigail, who was thought to be dead for nearly a week after the attack, turned four in Hamas captivity.

I spent the weeks after the attack doing everything I could to save her. Like her mother, Abigail was a dual citizen of Israel and the U.S. I told her story to dozens of members of Congress, appeared on every major television network, met with se-

Most of the time Abigail looks and acts like any normal, happy 4-year-old. When we took her to Disneyland in Anaheim, she loved the "Cars" ride so much that we went on it twice in a row, jetting through a dreamlike mock-up of the Arizona desert in a fake convertible. But on

How I Broke My Hand Punching Will Smith

The tedium of a Hollywood set can inspire some bad choices.

By BARRY SONNENFELD

MOVIE SETS ARE usually boring. The ratio of time spent with film running through the camera versus setting up for and lighting a shot is, if you're lucky, 10 to one. This tedium helps explain why I ended up in the hospital with a broken hand from punching Will Smith.

I had directed him in "Men in Black," and I was now working with him on "Wild Wild West," which ended up being not very good. It would go on to win the 2000 Razzie for worst picture of the year. Coming off the successes of the "Addams Family" movies, "Get Shorty" and "Men in Black," I was deeply depressed. I was working on a bad movie I didn't know how to fix.

But that wasn't why I ended up at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

Over the course of several dreary days filming in a cramped train car set, with endless hours of lighting and resetting multiple physical effects including a flipping pool table, Will and I

were so bored we played the following game: Who could punch the other guy's shoulder harder?

This was, of course, very dumb. I would punch Will's shoulder as hard as I could and he would howl with laughter. Then Will would punch my upper arm and it was my turn to howl. I crumpled to the ground in agony, which also made Will howl with laughter.

Will plays to win. He won't play half-speed. I received no slack for being physically weak, good-natured or the director.

After a couple of days of torture, I decided enough is

enough: I am going to hurt this man. I conjured up all the rage I could muster, shot my arm toward his massive shoulder with all the semi-manly force I was capable of, and immediately collapsed to the ground in excruciating pain. Will Smith's shoulder had broken my fifth metacarpal in five places.

After Will stopped laughing, he offered his hand to my remaining good one. I stood up and walked to the Warner Bros. medical offices on the studio lot. "And what happened here?" asked the doctor.

I couldn't say I broke my hand hitting our lead actor. We were

Sonnenfeld directs Will Smith in "Wild Wild West" in 1999.

going to need an insurance day since I was in no shape to go back and direct, and a day on "Wild Wild West" cost a quarter of a million dollars.

"Someone, I'm not sure who, opened the stage door on my hand."

"Opened?"

"Yeah. The stage door."

"And the opened door hit your hand so hard it broke it?"

"Well...I was kind of reaching for the door, so I guess the combination of my reach, and uh, you know how heavy those stage doors are so, I'm guessing, speculating really, that someone on the other side of the door, not seeing that I was on...the other side...of the door reaching out my hand, must have pushed pretty hard, so I guess the speed of the door..."

The doctor, having none of

it, continued: "Let's check your blood pressure." He rolled up my shirt sleeve, revealing an upper arm of purple, yellow, black, brown and red with a hint of green, the result of several days of playing the trade-punches-with-Will game.

"What happened here?" the doctor inquired. I looked at the mass of bruise and confidently announced: "I have no idea." I sounded, I realized, like a battered wife.

We shut down production for the day, and I was shipped off to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center, where a hand surgeon was standing by. I wore an enormous cast for the rest of the shoot. My arm-punching days were over.

"Wild Wild West" went on to be a critical and box-office failure. My career in Hollywood never recovered. My hand and shoulder, however, are fine.

This essay is adapted from Barry Sonnenfeld's new memoir, "Best Possible Place, Worst Possible Time: True Stories from a Career in Hollywood," published by Hachette Books on Oct. 1.



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Saturday/Sunday, October 5 - 6, 2024 | C5



TELEGAMME

How the World Got on a Roll

Carmakers tried all sorts of tricks to make their vehicles more appealing; Carl Benz's first one looked like a birdcage

The Driving Machine: A Design History of the Car

By Witold Rybczynski
Norton, 256 pages, \$29.99

BY RICHARD SNOW

GORE VIDAL ONCE observed that the best way to get a miscellaneous group of people talking enthusiastically together is to bring up the subject of movies. But there's another surefire conversation igniter, as long as the group is made up of Americans: cars.

We tend to take cars personally, or at least more personally than any of the other large machines in our lives—dishwashers, say, or furnaces. Nobody ever thought a washer-dryer might be a reflection of its owner's inner emotions, but a car can support, encourage, soothe and occasionally infuriate. And now

that autumn is beginning to breathe down from the north, aren't you glad you'll soon be driving along some leaf-sprinkled highway in golden weather?

In his preface to "The Driving Machine: A Design History of the Car," Witold Rybczynski, a prolific chronicler of how design affects our lives, insists that he "wasn't one of those people who identified with their car; for me, it was more like a tool." But he certainly does feel affection for this tool, and this warms every page of his compact epic.

The author begins at the beginning—of his own driving history. The opening chapter, which carries the deft title "Starting the Car," has him buying his first: a Volkswagen beetle. The design was already thirty years old—seven years older than I—and production would continue for another thirty-six years, making it the world's longest-running automobile model. I bought mine in January 1967," by which time the little car had been

promiscuously scattered across half the globe.

He got it in Hamburg (for \$300; it was seven years old) and drove it through the Netherlands on his way to Paris. He collected some dirty looks there, "especially from older persons for whom the wartime German occupation was a living memory." And they weren't wrong to be suspicious: At the 1933 Berlin Motor Show, soon after being appointed Reich chancellor, Adolf Hitler "had announced a national policy to motorize Germany.... Hitler called on the auto industry to produce an affordable people's car, a *volkswagen*."

The VW's creator was Ferdinand Porsche, and as the author looks back through the automobile's history, his roster of early cars includes other automotive celebrity names, most notably Carl Benz, who in 1885 gave the world its first successful internal-combustion motorcar. This looked more like a birdcage than an automobile—it was a tricycle with tall

wire wheels, steered by a tiller. But in little more than a decade Benz's concept had evolved into something that still seems classy and familiar rather than quaint and rickety. Its hood covered a front-mounted engine that drove rear wheels through a sliding-mesh gearbox (a French contribution). This could push a car like Paul Daimler's Mercedes 35HP along at 50 miles an hour.

During these early years, two motive power sources competed for dominance. Gasoline took the firm lead before World War I, but recently the contest has begun afresh, with electricity a very strong contender. In 2035 it will become illegal to sell new gas-powered cars in California; New York, Massachusetts and New Jersey are working up to similar prohibitions.

The first automobiles were only for the rich, but that didn't last long. In America, Henry Ford put the nation on the road beginning in 1908 with his world-changing Model T. Please turn to page C6

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FALL BOOKS

'Against the insidious wiles of foreign influence . . . the jealousy of a free people ought to be constantly awake.' —GEORGE WASHINGTON

Spies, Lies and False Allies

Serpent in Eden

By Tyson Reeder
Oxford, 424 pages, \$35

By MARK G. SPENCER

DURING THE tumultuous year leading up to the War of 1812, a former British spy named John Henry collaborated with a French con artist named Paul-Émile Soubiran to sell information to President James Madison. The intelligence on offer related to Henry's being hired by James Craig, British North America's governor-general, to meddle in U.S. domestic affairs. Craig wanted Henry to determine if America's Federalist leaders would persuade New England—the party's stronghold—to secede from the country. Madison, a Republican, was eager to procure information on his Federalist enemies, and secretly paid Henry and Soubiran \$50,000 in public funds—an exceedingly large sum at the time.

As Tyson Reeder writes in "Serpent in Eden," Madison "could have built a warship for about the same amount." Embarrassing for the president, however, the documents he purchased from Henry and Soubiran "contained no incriminating information about his political opposition." When word got out about Madison's secret dealings, a public firestorm erupted. The Federalists and the Republicans each accused the other side of corrupt misdeeds while claiming for themselves the moral high ground.

Mr. Reeder, a historian who teaches at Brigham Young University, contends that the Henry-Soubiran scandal illuminates more than the murky depths of Republican-Federalist animosity. It demonstrates that, in the wake of its successful revolution, the United States "was a war-torn land with a floundering economy and an uncertain future." While it would one day become a global leader, the country did not "leap onto the world stage as a major player." Rather, Mr. Reeder claims, "it limped on as a European pawn." The United States was a fragile political experiment, one that many expected would soon falter and fail.

Mr. Reeder explores the early political debates about where the republic's sovereignty resided. Did it rest with the people or was it held by their representatives in government? The stakes were high for such vital questions, which had first been asked during the Revolutionary War. But even the Constitution, for all it had to offer, hadn't clarified the answers. By the 1790s, the young country was politically polarized. Sniffing out U.S. internal tensions, foreign agents eagerly exploited them, "pitting Americans against each other," Mr. Reeder argues. So much so that, by 1812, the author suggests, "Madison lived in and had helped create a nation in which it seemed rational to trust a former British spy and mysterious French gascon more than his political opponents."



MADISONIAN MOMENT 'The Present State of Our Country' (ca. 1812) by William Charles.

These foreign and domestic pressures worked in tandem. "Foreign meddling bred political distrust, political distrust reinforced partisanship, and partisanship encouraged foreign meddling." Moreover, the Federalists—who tended to be pro-British—and the

An episode of foreign meddling in early America revealed the fragility of the young republic.

Republicans—often, like Madison, pro-French—were alike "blind to their own partisanship," Mr. Reeder writes. Both sides "fed the cycle."

In his celebrated Federalist No. 10—drawing upon the writings of the Scottish Enlightenment thinker David Hume, an influence overlooked in Mr. Reeder's telling—Madison had in 1787 envisioned a multiparty system as an effective check on the polarized, factional divide in the nascent United States. Under Madison's presidency, though, "party strife and foreign meddling left American political

institutions in crisis and the republic teetering on the brink of disaster." The destructive cycle, we are told, "spiraled until Madison plunged the nation into war to eradicate what he viewed as a foreign threat emboldened by internal enemies." In this way of seeing things, the War of 1812 came about not solely because of festering animosity between America and Great Britain, nor because of Americans' own "political differences," but because Republicans and Federalists alike "confused opposition with corruption, dissent with disloyalty."

Mr. Reeder concludes his book with a broad, post-Madison historical survey of his theme and some historically informed glances to America's present and future. "Forged in partisan conflict, the United States remains vulnerable to foreign powers that aggravate political discord," he submits. And "foreign meddling—perceived and actual"—has long aspired to amplify political discord within American democracy. As his examples show, that was as much the case during the Civil War as it was in the 20th century during both world wars. Still, he reasons, "it would take a stronger strain of partisan hostility to reintroduce the pernicious cycle that existed in

James Madison's America—the sort of hostility that began to emerge in the decades before the 2016 presidential election."

The final word, however, goes to Madison. Toward the end of his turbulent life, the former president wrote "Advice to My Country," a revealing memorandum that did not circulate until after his death in 1836. "The advice nearest to my heart and deepest in my convictions is that the Union of the States be cherished and perpetuated," Madison reflected. "Let the open enemy to the United States 'be regarded as a Pandora with her box opened; and the disguised one, as the Serpent creeping with his deadly wiles into Paradise.'

For Mr. Reeder—an editor of "The Papers of James Madison" (2024)—we are still living in that Madisonian moment. As he fashions it in the concluding sentence of "Serpent in Eden": "Madison's fears and vices persist, but so does his hope."

Mr. Spencer, a professor of history at Brock University, is the author of "David Hume and Eighteenth-Century America" and the editor-in-chief of "The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of the American Enlightenment."

Inventing The Driving Machine

Continued from page C5

which he produced in staggering numbers on the assembly line he pioneered. Like Mr. Rybczynski, he saw his car chiefly as a good tool—as a moral force, really, and it broke his heart when he was forced to gentle it down into the more sophisticated Model A.

The author uses the Model A to make a valuable point about the scale of car manufacture in America. A European corollary to the Model A was the 1931 Mercedes-Benz 170. Both cars had a 100-inch wheelbase; both had four-wheel drum brakes; both came in two- and four-door versions. But here mass production made the difference: During its five-year manufacturing run, the popular "small Mercedes" sold a little under 14,000 units. The Model A, made between 1928 and 1932, sold 5 million. The Ford cost \$500; the Benz nearly twice as much, at about \$950.

The men most responsible for tormenting Henry Ford into giving up his

Model T were Alfred P. Sloan, head of General Motors, and his great designer Harley Earl. Both realized that the car was outgrowing its tool-hood to become an object of desire. Sloan introduced annual model changes; Earl worked to summon glamour by sculpting the machine's sheet-metal cladding: "My primary purpose for twenty-eight years," he wrote in the mid-1950s, "has been to lengthen and lower the American automobile, at times in reality and always at least in appearance."

This upended the industry in ways that extended far beyond how its products looked. "Previously," writes the author, "cars had been the purview of engineers, who designed the engine and chassis for stability and handling, the subsequent bodywork being governed chiefly by production efficiency. Now it was styling that set the pace: the body was designed first, and the mechanical components such as engines and transmissions were fitted in later."

Mr. Rybczynski shows us the changes through his own drawings of the cars whose history he retrieves; the sketches are spirited and eloquent and tell us all we

really need to know to follow the narrative. That story, too, is spirited, and although there is a fair amount of technical explanation, all of it is brisk, lucid and enjoyable.

For instance, in a section that deals with the emergence of the sports car, the author mentions the influx of British examples that were exported to America in their tens of thousands by a cash-strapped post-war automotive industry. They all looked great; it's a pity their build quality was such that they tended to disintegrate in the rain. No matter: I

bought one back in the 1960s, a Morgan that had taken such punishment that I paid not much more for it than Mr. Rybczynski did for his Volkswagen. I had picked up some automotive jargon from car magazines, and I liked to tell my friends with nonchalant expertise (while casually adjusting the leather strap that helped secure the long hood) that "she's got rack-and-pinion steering." It is only now, more than half a century later, that, thanks to the crisp explanation in "The Driving Machine," I have learned what that means.

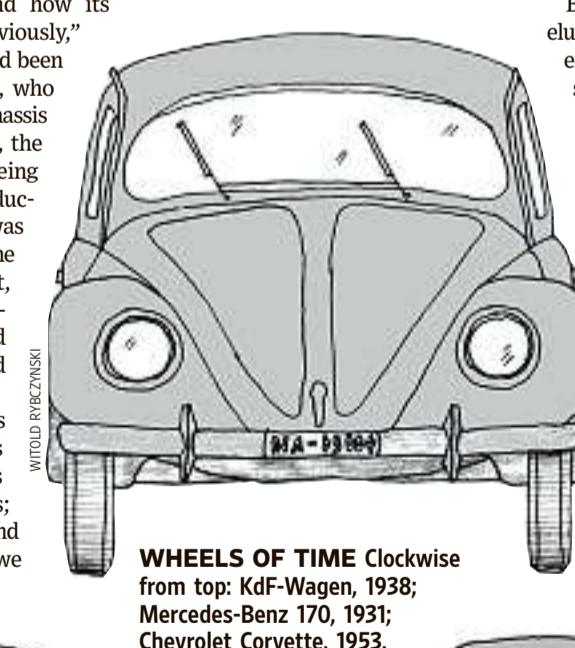
But a reader doesn't have to want elucidation of mechanical points to enjoy this book, as it is full of good stories: the always-fascinating catastrophe of the Ford Edsel; the trim, surprisingly stylish Corvair, put to death by Ralph Nader for being lethal in his bestselling "Unsafe at Any Speed" but found innocent years later; America's longest-lived marque, the Chevrolet Suburban, which first sniffed the Detroit air in 1935; Apple co-founder Steve Jobs and his first car (a Nash Metropolitan); the immensely successful Corvette and its rival, the Thunderbird—which, the moment it became a hit, ballooned to twice its original size.

"Cars, unlike buildings, have a relatively short life," writes Mr. Rybczynski. "In most states, a twenty-five-year-old vehicle is eligible for an antique license plate. Buildings, on the other hand, last for centuries. You can still walk into the lobby of the Chrysler Building on Lexington Avenue in Manhattan, but you will not find a Chrysler Airflow parked on your street."

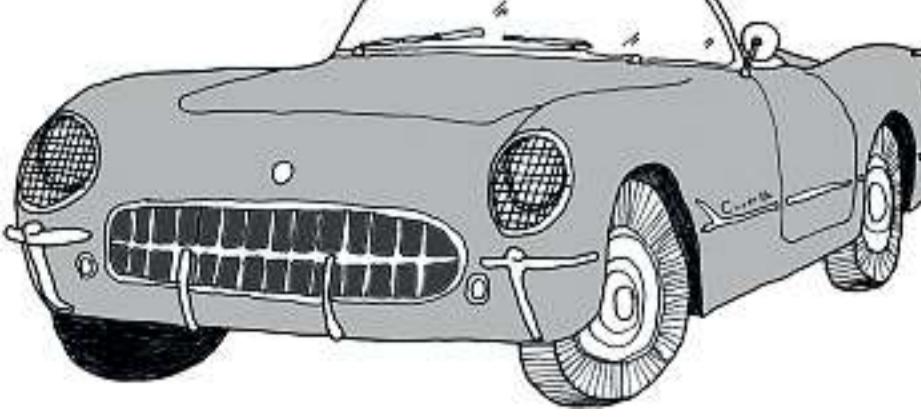
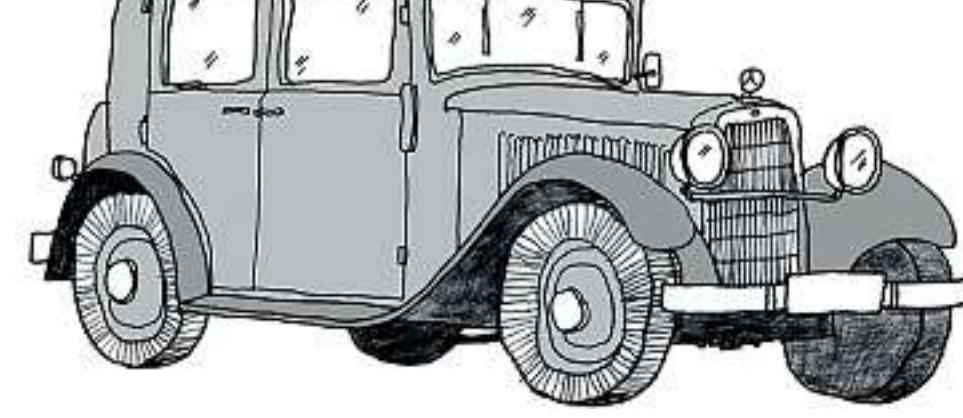
Harley Earl said his career's purpose was to 'lengthen and lower the American automobile.'

You will not, although you can find one in "The Driving Machine," along with a score of other cars you'll recognize. These kinetic sculptures that used to pass us on the street are, like it or not, woven into the fabric of our lives, and as the author writes, they "deserve the same serious attention that we give to great old buildings—they are design achievements and an important part of our material past."

Mr. Snow is the author of "I Invented the Modern Age: The Rise of Henry Ford."



WHEELS OF TIME Clockwise from top: KdF-Wagen, 1938; Mercedes-Benz 170, 1931; Chevrolet Corvette, 1953.



FALL BOOKS

'Like all best families, we have our share of eccentricities, of impetuous and wayward youngsters and of family disagreements.' —QUEEN ELIZABETH II

Her Majesty's a Pretty Nice Girl

Q: A Voyage Around the Queen

By Craig Brown
FSG, 672 pages, \$35

By DOMINIC GREEN

WE KNOW our modern icons through images. That is why we do not know them at all. Photographs, portraits, newsreels and iPhone clips capture the face of celebrity, but character lies beneath the skin. No one was photographed and filmed more than Queen Elizabeth II, who died in 2022 at the age of 96, after a record-setting 70 years on the British throne. No face was more familiar than hers, yet no one remained less known. Her ancestors wore suits of armor on the field of battle. Elizabeth sallied forth in a hat, a handbag and a steel corset of manners and duty.

In his biographies of Princess Margaret and the Beatles, the English humorist Craig Brown assembled portraits with a snapshot method, creating a collage of short chapters blending images and anecdotes with sharp and witty analysis. The cumulative effect resembled a flip-book animation, with static images blurring into naturalistic life. In "Q: A Voyage Around the Queen," Mr. Brown applies his patent biographical method to Elizabeth Windsor of Windsor Castle, Windsor. She wins.

"Q" is cleverly constructed, consistently insightful and hilarious, and quite possibly the closest we will ever come to understanding who the Sphinx of Balmoral really was. Herein lie the seeds of Mr. Brown's defeat. The Sphinx of Thebes asked everyone who encountered it a riddle. Elizabeth herself was the riddle. Those who knew her, Mr. Brown writes, vouched that she was a "regular upper-class English countrywoman: straightforward, understated, matter of fact, down to earth." Yet "Q" is a catalogue of bizarre theatricality in which everything she says or does, and everything she does not say or do, bears metaphysical significance.

One of the last indignities to which royal flesh was heir was playing stooge to Paddington Bear in a short film. Elizabeth was then in her final year. Paddington was not there at all; he was inserted later through CGI. Elizabeth delivered her lines perfectly to a fictional bear in an empty space. Simon Farnaby, the actor playing her footman, complimented her as "a very good actress." "Well of course, I do it all the time," she replied. Mr. Farnaby asked if she was "playing the part of the Queen"? Her Majesty was not amused: "You know I am the Queen? Paddington's not real, they're actors, but I am the Queen."

Elizabeth, Mr. Brown relates, told French president François Hollande that, as a girl, she had dreamed of becoming an actress. Mr. Hollande suggested that she had achieved her ambition. "Yes," she replied, "but



TIGHT LEASH Queen Elizabeth II and friends in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1974.

always the same role." The effect was what the French call *déformation professionnelle*. It distorted her marriage. It damaged her motherhood. It turned the world around her into a stage set. "Some wondered if she thought the world smelled of fresh paint," Mr. Brown reports. Everything was "cleaner, brighter, newer, grander." Everyone was "spruced up," "hair coiffed," "smiles put in place." It sounds exhausting.

The royal performance shaped the perception and personalities of everyone she encountered. Those who met her, Mr. Brown writes, tended to remember "only what they had said, and how they had behaved," while her

words "seemed, as if by magic, to vanish into the air." The adjective "radiant" occurred to Noël Coward, Sylvia Plath and Cecil Beaton. In this much, "Q" tells us who she truly was: a reflection of who we really are.

T.S. Eliot remained silent when seated next to her, but that was when she was only a princess. The full royal wattage melted even hardened hams into gibbering bags of nerves. "The ring wherein is set a sapphire," burbled the British commentator Richard Dimbleby on her coronation, possessed by the ghost of syntax past. Most of those caught in the lineup lapsed into what Mr. Brown calls "Sunday best" gentility.

Harold Pinter, the committed left-winger whose plays are studies in surreal dialogue and agonizing pauses, was out-paused over lunch and forced to grovel, "Do you know, Ma'am, that vegetables were introduced into England very late? Henry VIII never ate a vegetable." When Ma'am complimented Ted Hughes on a poem about an otter, he confided that he had written much of it in a mystic trance, copying the words from a scroll that, Mr. Brown writes, had manifested "in the air just to his right." She was used to eliciting weird and intimate confessions from strangers. In Mr. Brown's analysis, she was England's "super-ego; in Christian

terms, our conscience," in pagan terms "the boatman" to the national "subconscious."

Her "unthreatening dowdiness," the American writer Clancy Sigal noted, was "a calculated, even inspired, masterstroke of theatricality: the ordinary made majestic, mystical." The core of the royal performance, restraint, implied that Elizabeth's smiling, waving and small talk, Mr. Brown writes, shielded a "shyer, less forthcoming" private person. So did her catchphrase "my husband and I," which foregrounded the bluff Prince Philip, not the main attraction. We assume less is more, but in her case, less was less: The more she subsumed herself into her performance, the more successful it became. The biographer is reduced to chasing fool's gold, substituting private metaphors for public ones.

Elizabeth confessed she once wanted to be an actress. She achieved her ambition, she noted: 'But always the same role.'

When Ted Hughes backed away from the royal presence, he forgot his Medal for Poetry. Elizabeth gave it to him again, saying, "I do hope it's real gold." She loved jigsaw puzzles, which, Mr. Brown notes, "appeal to those who like to make order out of chaos." She loved the countryside, which did not require repainting before her visit. She loved horses and dogs, who could kiss but never tell. She especially loved corgis. These small and obnoxious Welsh cattle-herders were vehicles for the passions she could not otherwise express, especially aggression. They also left the occasional mess for the staff to clean up.

Dookie bit Lord Lothian, who "bled profusely." Susan bit a Grenadier Guardsman and the royal clock winder. Honey bit an Irish Guardsman on the bottom. Piper bit the Queen Mother and Prince Edward. One day in 1977, her butler later blabbed, the Queen's corgi pack savaged her sons' corgi Jolly, tearing open its stomach and biting both the butler and a page when they separated them. Elizabeth required three stitches to her left hand after she tried to separate her corgi pack from that of the Queen Mother during a scuffle.

Her Majesty "always kept a set of bagpipes to hand," as a single blast, her piper reported, caused the warring corgis to "slink away, as though in pain." Her canine companions also allowed her to express her sense of humor. Guests were served "dark biscuits" along with the cheese course. Elizabeth and her mother would wait until their guests had tucked in, then shout, "No, no, no, they're for the dogs!"

Mr. Green is a Journal contributor and a fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

Supply, Demand And Calvin

Religious Influences on Economic Thinking

By Benjamin M. Friedman
MIT, 98 pages, \$30

By BARTON SWAIM

THE TITLE of Benjamin M. Friedman's "Religious Influences on Economic Thinking" is duly academic but eye-catching all the same. It is a slim book, some of it a restatement of the argument the author made in his 2021 book, "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism."

Mr. Friedman chiefly wants to know—this is only a slight oversimplification—what sort of religious ideas were afloat in Scotland around the time Adam Smith expressed, in "The Wealth of Nations" (1776), the core principle of modern economics: that markets, engaged in by self-interested competitors, tend to benefit everyone. The individual merchant, Smith wrote, "neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it.... He intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention."

Thus, Mr. Friedman explains, did Smith formulate what economists call the First Fundamental Welfare Theorem. The idea, we're told, couldn't have come from the Bible, which held that prosperity was a "reward for proper moral and religious behavior." That will surprise anyone who's ever read the Bible with care. The main idea in Mr. Friedman's book is that Smith was able to formulate his theorem because, in mid-18th-century Scotland, orthodox Calvinism had receded and made way for Enlightenment-era religious views that took a more optimistic view of human potential.

The claim is dodgy on its face. Calvinism, the term assigned to the Reformed strand of Protestantism of which John Calvin (1509-64) was the principal figure, prevailed in precisely those nations—Switzerland, the Netherlands, Britain—that first formed capitalist economies. Mr. Friedman weakens his case by relying on a series of preposterous caricatures of Calvin and Calvinism. He defines it, based on its doctrine of predestination, as a kind of fatalism that denies human agency. No one who has ever read the French reformer's writings—or indeed those of the Apostle Paul, from which he derived predestination—would conclude that Calvin rejected agency or subscribed to fatalism.

Mr. Friedman draws from this mistaken premise the claim that Calvinist doctrine led to a lack of concern with individual morality. "If men and women know that they are predestined either to be saved or not," he writes,

"and that God's choice regarding their individual spiritual fate has been made before they were born (more than that, before the world existed), what incentive is left to motivate them to live moral lives?" Such a mindset led, in turn, to lethargy and an "inability to make choices or take action to improve one's material well-being." A moment's reflection might have reminded Mr. Friedman that the Puritans were nearly all Calvinists. Whatever failings the Puritans may be charged with, an indif-

ference to individual morality and a lack of personal agency are not among them.

By the end of the book we find Mr. Friedman having to explain why his contention doesn't contradict the one made by the German sociologist Max Weber in "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism." Weber's thesis held that 17th-century Calvinists, eager to prove their status as among God's elect, cultivated industry and thrift and so helped create the capitalist economies of Northern Europe. Mr. Friedman's argument, he explains, concerns economic thought rather than economic behavior, the development of economics as an intellectual discipline

"Wealth of Nations" contradicts any part of the Calvinist creed.

One example: Mr. Friedman, in an attempt to show that Calvinists held a narrow view of life's purpose, quotes the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, documents drafted in the 1640s by English and Scottish Puritans. Yet Smith's view that mutual benefit can arise from self-interested behavior finds wonderful expression in the Westminster Larger Catechism (composed in 1647), which asks, in question 141,

what duties are required by the Eighth Commandment (in the Reformed tradition, "Thou shalt not steal"). The answer, in part: "The duties required in the eighth commandment are, truth, faithfulness, and justice in contracts and commerce between man and man... and an endeavor, by all just and lawful means, to procure, preserve, and further the wealth and outward estate of others, as well as our own" (emphasis added).

I suspect you could make a sounder argument than Mr. Friedman's by asserting its opposite: Adam Smith's description of a naturally functioning market of self-interested individuals wasn't a rejection of the Calvinist outlook but a development of it.

Mr. Swaim is an editorial-page writer for the Journal.



THEOLOGIAN 'Portrait of Calvin' (1858)

by Ary Scheffer.

FALL BOOKS

'O radiant Dark! O darkly fostered ray! / Thou hast a joy too deep for shallow Day.' —GEORGE ELIOT

Nothing to Be Afraid Of

Night Magic

By Leigh Ann Henion
Algonquin, 336 pages, \$30

By EUGENIA BONE

IT USED TO BE that if I sat next to someone at a dinner party and mentioned I was interested in mushrooms—or worse, molds—they'd inevitably start looking around for somewhere else to sit. Not anymore. In recent years amateur mycologists like me saw our ranks swell. So did amateur botanists and entomologists and astronomers. I think this happened in part because the prohibitions against socializing and travel during the Covid-19 pandemic, combined with the closures of schools and offices, got more people out into the woods near home.

Leigh Ann Henion, a nature and travel writer, may be one of those people. Even though she has a reputation for far-flung travel—in “Phenomenal” (2015) she reported on volcanoes in Hawaii and wildebeest migrations in Tanzania—she investigates, in her lovely new book, “Night Magic: Adventures Among Glowworms, Moon Gardens, and Other Marvels of the Dark,” locales close to her home in the mountains of North Carolina.

In a truly inspired travel conceit and very clever response to the pandemic’s restrictions, she explores the animals and plants and fungi that conduct much of their lives while we are asleep. As she points out, “nearly anywhere on Earth can—at the flip of a switch—become a wilderness of possibility.” Over the course of her research into the busy lives of worms and fireflies and bats, she comes to realize that we are far too illuminated for our own good.

“Night Magic” shines a light on the lives of various night critters—spring’s salamanders, summer’s bioluminescent fungi and fall’s night-blooming flowers, among others—and it’s full of interesting nature facts. I’d forgotten that salamanders migrate to puddles at night, that they can breathe through their skin and regenerate internal organs; and I didn’t know you should only handle them with wet hands, to avoid damaging their skin’s protective layer of mucus. I caught fireflies in jars as a kid but I never realized how they glowed: oxygen ignites organic compounds in their bodies, which Ms. Henion describes as occurring upon their inhalation. Now, when I watch fireflies hovering above the lawn, I see their lives lived: inhale, glow, exhale; inhale, glow, exhale. That insight, for me, was ravishing, and there are many here.

I was also charmed to learn about entomotourism. At events like Mothapalooza and Grandfather Glows, the latter held on Grandfather Mountain in Ms. Henion’s native North Carolina, participants set up their lawn chairs to



NIGHT FLARES Fireflies in the trees above a village near Nashik, India, in 2022.

watch nighttime bug-related phenomena. Globally, we are told, “one million people travel to witness firefly-related phenomena every year.”

The animals, plants and fungi that conduct much of their lives while humans are asleep.

I could have read more about the kooky and appealing subculture of entomotourism, just as I would have loved a deeper dive into the biology of the critters Ms. Henion reports on. What the author does share is fascinating, but feels rather scant if facts are your fuel. Ms. Henion’s book is focused less on science writing and more on

nature appreciation, combined with extended thoughts and digressions on the theme of darkness.

There’s nothing wrong with that—Ms. Henion writes beautifully—only that the expectations set by the title suggests the reader will experience more biology than biography. “Night Magic” relates the experience of discovery as much as the discovery itself; this is the author’s story of how she recenters “darkness by spending time with some of the diverse and awe-inspiring life-forms that are nurtured by it.”

Ms. Henion is at her best when she repurposes scientific terms, describing, for example, those pockets of darkness that have escaped nighttime illumination as “remnant habitat.” I’m less moved by her use of contemporary idioms popular in plant-medicine circles: She learns to “hold space for darkness”

and describes darkness as “a wild-world blessing.” She writes that our reverence is an “awe-leaning emotion.”

Her didacticism is of a piece with the theme of her book: that light pollution hurts people and other living things. Moths flying toward your porch light are too confused to pollinate, migrating birds are discombobulated by illuminated parking lots, caterpillars are too distracted by light to morph into butterflies. There are a litany of good reasons why we should turn off the lights for the sake of the natural environment. But, according to Ms. Henion, there are reasons that matter for our species, too. She points out that an appreciation of nature’s nocturnal organisms can help us reset our relationship with the night—that by learning to walk in the dark, we might get over our fear of it. That’s the gift of “Night Magic”: It may

make you think differently about the night. I know it has for me.

In our yard, a very large cucuzza squash has completely taken over a 30-foot stone wall, a mass of huge floppy leaves and crazed tendrils and closed flowers. I figured they were morning bloomers that closed by the time I ambled outside with my coffee. But after reading “Night Magic,” it occurred to me that maybe the flowers were night bloomers.

And so late one night I slipped out of the house in my nightgown and bare feet. All along the length of the wall were dozens of delicate flowers, fully open, offering themselves to the night pollinators. It was dazzling. And it was like I’d never seen my own backyard before.

Ms. Bone is the author of “Have a Good Trip: Exploring the Magic Mushroom Experience.”

A Long Trail Of Radiant Lights

The Elements of Marie Curie
By Dava Sobel
Atlantic Monthly, 336 pages, \$30

By BRANDY SCHILLACE

THEY CALLED it the shed, though it was more of a dilapidated hangar. A former anatomy theater, it housed old pinewood tables, a cast-iron stove and a blackboard—all under a high ceiling that leaked. But as the sun set and evening fell, the shed transformed into a menagerie of glass, haloed in “soft bluish light,” its windows glowing with the eerie luminescence of “beakers of solutions and crucibles of crystalline precipitates.”

The physicist-chemists Marie and Pierre Curie considered these their hard-won “fairy lights,” which, the two believed, held the secrets of radioactivity. “By the Curies’ count,” Dava Sobel writes in “The Elements of Marie Curie,” “there were now four ‘radioelements.’” In addition to uranium and thorium, which had been discovered in 1789 and 1828, the Curies discovered polonium and radium, isolating them from the mineral pitchblende. The last, in particular, would interest chemists as a new addition to the periodic table; it also sparked a flurry of activity in medicine. Radium, the Curies found, destroyed diseased cells faster than healthy cells; could its properties be used to shrink tumors? The earliest uses of radium on cancer patients

occurred in 1901, not long before the Curies received, in 1903, the first of their two Nobel Prizes (this one, shared with Henri Becquerel, in physics), but soon the element would appear in makeup, toothpaste and health drinks—a cure-all in the public imagination. In 1903 Marie and Pierre seemed to be on the verge of a radiation revolution. But only Marie would carry radium into the future.

Ms. Sobel, a journalist and the author of “Galileo’s Daughter” (1999) and “The Glass Universe” (2016), among other books, takes the familiar story of Marie Curie (1867-1934) and crosscuts it. The journey of the Polish-French physicist who helped unlock the secrets of radioactivity was never straightforward, but it was also never taken alone. Woven into the account of Curie’s life are the lives of other women—her students and collaborators, future colleagues who began their work in the dismal shed and then rose to prominence in their own rights. Nearly a century before the term “glass ceiling” became a metaphor for the invisible barriers women face in the workplace, Ms. Sobel tells us that Curie “toiled under an actual glass ceiling from 1899 to 1902, the years she spent in that ‘poor, shabby hangar,’ spinning pitchblende into radium.”

Marie’s entrée into the field had come in part from her marriage to Pierre. It was a meeting of minds and of equals: Pierre had been her research partner first and never wanted her to give up her scientific work. But their partnership was not to last. Pierre died in 1906, after being struck by a horse-drawn wagon. After Pierre’s death, Marie was asked to fulfill his duties at their laboratory and in his classroom. Pierre had been driven to greater achievements by his wife, but had he lived, no doubt many of Marie’s accomplishments would have been subsumed

in his own. Pierre’s absence set the stage for Marie’s own rise. She took over the lab she had shared with Pierre, and took his place as professor of general physics at the Sorbonne—the first woman to hold the position. She authored papers in which she was now the primary contributor, her light undimmed by others. That didn’t mean all social restrictions fell away, however.



AT WORK Marie Curie, ca. 1904.

ever; she faced severe backlash for daring to have a romantic affair after Pierre’s death—recriminations that her lover, as a man, did not have to face.

Many of Curie’s students gave up promising careers for marriage. Harriet Brooks, a Canadian nuclear physicist who helped determine the transmutation of elements in radioactive decay (the process by which one element can become another), had been forced to resign from a coveted teaching position at Barnard College. According to Ms. Sobel, the dean claimed, at the prospect of employing a married woman, that Brooks “would either put her hus-

band before her students, thereby compromising her classes, or she would put her teaching before her husband, making her the sort of wife that the college could not countenance.” When Brooks ultimately married in 1907, her career came to an end.

Ellen Gleditsch, the first woman to receive an honorary doctorate from the Sorbonne as a pioneer of nuclear-physical and chemical research, rejected marriage to pursue her research career. She would become the president of the International Federa-

Marie Curie’s scientific breakthroughs inspired a cast of brilliant female researchers and thinkers.

tion of University Women and a professor and experimental researcher at the University of Oslo—but as an unmarried woman.

Ms. Sobel’s book deftly explores the science of chemistry and the history of radium, while also following the remarkable thread of Marie Curie’s achievements—which came at a high personal cost.

Members of the Curie labs often fought bouts of anemia—the result of radiation sickness. Curie herself struggled with it, and with recurrent kidney problems. She underwent surgery in 1912, spending months at a private clinic. Throughout her life, she continued to be afflicted by setbacks and illnesses, with only a faint suspicion that radium might have been to blame. That realization was coming, but too late for Curie, who died of aplastic anemia in 1934. Yet her seemingly boundless energy glitters on the page: This small woman in the gray dress would drive a

mobile X-ray unit to the front lines during World War I to scan wounded soldiers, sketching what she saw to guide a surgeon’s knife. But what sets Ms. Sobel’s biography apart isn’t the timeline or the events of her subject’s life; it’s those women of science whose lives intersected with Curie’s, a cast of brilliant researchers and thinkers that the author skillfully weaves into her narrative.

Their names probably won’t be familiar to you. In addition to Brooks and Gleditsch, there is Catherine Chamié, who helped measure the half-life of radon; Branca Edmée Marques, who became the first woman in Portugal to gain a tenured professorship; Curie’s daughter Irène, a physicist who, like Marie, won a Nobel Prize. And many more. These women all helped build a new field of scientific enquiry but remain, unlike Marie Curie, largely unknown. “Everything I have done,” declared Marguerite Perey, who was admitted to the Académie des Sciences in 1962, “I owe to Marie Curie,” who—because of her gender—had never once been allowed to deliver her own papers to the Académie (not even after winning her second Nobel Prize, in chemistry, in 1911).

“Long after their sojourns in Paris,” writes Ms. Sobel, these women “return again and again to a memory of some small moment in Mme. Curie’s company.” They are the “elements” of Marie Curie’s lab, perhaps even more so than the radioactive ones she is so famous for isolating. She drew them to her, and through her, they would draw others, lighting a path for women in science.

Ms. Schillace, the editor in chief of the journal *Medical Humanities*, is the host of the “Peculiar Book Club” podcast and the author of “Mr. Humble and Dr. Butcher.”

FALL BOOKS

"The heart, making itself guilty of such secrets, must . . . hold them, until the day when all hidden things shall be revealed." —NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

The Insider's Odd Man Out

Code Name Puritan

By Greg Barnhisel
Chicago, 392 pages, \$32.50

By MAX NORMAN

EVERY PART of Norman Holmes Pearson had an unusual shape. He was recalled by one of his English students at Yale as a "black-browed, black-mustached man" with a "grotesquely hunched back." Yet he taught so well, this former pupil recalled, that most forgot the "deformity" Pearson developed after falling off a roof at the age of 8.

As Greg Barnhisel reveals in "Code Name Puritan," a life of the literary scholar and World War II spymaster, most of Pearson's career, too, was unusual. As a student at Yale in the 1920s and '30s Pearson fell in love with American literature, at the time still a marginal subject at universities. He never authored a book, but he edited many, including the important 1938 "Oxford Anthology of American Literature," which made his name in the world of literary studies, and a landmark edition of Nathaniel Hawthorne's writings. Pearson also boosted the reputations of many American writers, especially Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and his close friend Hilda Doolittle—better known by her pen name, H.D.

Perhaps most unusual of all, this tweedy academic helped create the X-2 counter-espionage program in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA. The Hawthorne scholar might not have been a natural choice for covert operations. But a graduate-school friend named Donald Downes, "hyperactive and indiscreet, gay and overweight," who had been among the first to join Gen. "Wild Bill" Donovan's OSS, saw Pearson's potential. Downes recruited him while he was in New Haven, rooting out possible German spies among members of the isolationist America First Committee, which was founded on Yale's campus.

After doing some freelance espionage, Pearson was sent to Washington to work as an "assistant editor" in the censor unit of OSS's Research and Analysis branch (sometimes called its "Chairborne Division") monitoring correspondence between Europe and South America. He liked the work, particularly the impressive card catalog of potentially useful information the group accumulated; at least it was, Pearson wrote to his mother, "more satisfactory than teaching 'Romeo and Juliet' to freshmen." Higher-ups noticed his hard work and sent him overseas to act as a liaison between British and American intelligence.

Pearson's unit, which he suggested be called X-2 on the model of English counterparts like X-B, processed information produced by the British Ultra program to hunt German spies in Allied territory. Ultra was the Brits' highly secret intelligence project, which intercepted and decoded German messages encrypted by the Enigma machine. With a clear knack for management, and a talented teacher's power of inspiration, Pearson eventually ran X-2's Euro-



BE PREPARED From left: Norman Holmes Pearson and X-2 team members Dana Durand and John McDonough trying on gas masks in England in 1943.

pean operations, commanding some 300 men. (His British counterpart was the notorious Soviet mole, Kim Philby.) He established the curriculum that the CIA later used to teach counterespionage, and trained James Jesus Angleton, who would lead the agency's efforts to sniff out enemy spies.

A young scholar, asked to apply his mind to the task of hunting for Nazi spies, found a talent.

Yet for all his influence, Pearson lived a "stubbornly invisible" life, Mr. Barnhisel writes. ("Why would you want to write about him?" one of Pearson's Yale colleagues asked.) It is precisely that invisibility that interests Mr. Barnhisel, a professor at Duquesne University who has written several books on American literary culture during the Cold War. In Mr. Barnhisel's telling, Pearson was a "master operator" of postwar American culture, the sort of person who turned the gears of institutions like the OSS and Yale, as well as influencing the prizes, academies and foundations that played an increasingly large role in American culture after the war.

"Code Name Puritan"—an allusion to Pearson's X-2 alias—is foremost a portrait of "an Organization Man in a time of organization

men," Mr. Barnhisel writes, borrowing the sociologist William Whyte's well-known formulation. Mr. Barnhisel recounts Pearson's savvy embrace of institutional power—acquired by competence, determination and a fair bit of kissing up—with unalloyed admiration. Pearson was a model citizen of what Henry Luce, the founder of Time magazine, dubbed the "American Century." "Like Rome's, like Britannia's, the pax Americana was built on its functionaries," Mr. Barnhisel observes.

Whyte saw the organization man as seeking a conformist alternative to the Protestant work ethic, but, in Mr. Barnhisel's telling, Pearson believed deeply in the tradition in which he was raised. With a family that came to America in 1643, beginning as farmers and eventually becoming prominent department-store owners in Gardner, Mass., Pearson saw his work as a piece with the Puritan ideals of his ancestors and their quest to realize John Winthrop's vision of a city on a hill. Pearson recognized that elite institutions could be used to promote individuality, rather than stifle it: By achieving positions of academic influence, he could cement the reputation of the American modernists, and put private foundations, and political savvy, to work to bring the new discipline of American Studies from marginal to mainstream.

This pursuit had a political angle as well: Yale's American Studies program, created in 1948 with Pearson as the head, would show the nonaligned world "that we have something

better than Communism to offer," wrote the dean of Yale College. Pearson would travel the world as its ambassador.

One reason Pearson is unknown even to scholars is that the academy, and the country, changed so quickly around him. By the time of his death in 1975, English departments were already more interested in French-inflected literary theory than in the kind of old-fashioned textual editing he practiced. American Studies quickly turned from the academic expression of American values to a discipline that sought to critique them. Pearson was not opposed to change: To him, the adaptability of the canon represented a fundamental American tolerance. But no matter how hard this Puritan worked, the 1960s and the Vietnam War changed institutions like Yale and radicalized the students that Pearson had once sought to recruit.

At Yale, and perhaps in his own country, Pearson was, as a former colleague put it, an "odd man out who was deeply in." Despite the loving care he lavishes on Pearson in this engaging book, Mr. Barnhisel's subject plays something of a supporting role in his era, never quite becoming, as the author suggests, "the emblematic figure of the truncated American Century." Pearson remains a major minor figure. And that is probably how this old Puritan—and spook—would have wanted it.

Mr. Norman writes on arts and culture for the Journal and other publications.



FIVE BEST PORTRAITS OF PUBLISHING

Jean Hanff Korelitz

The author, most recently, of the novel 'The Sequel'

Youngblood Hawke

By Herman Wouk (1962)

1 "You—you want to *publish* mah book? You goin' to publish it?" All writers dream of sitting in the office of an important New York publisher and hearing nothing but praise and promises for their work. In Herman Wouk's novel, the first-time author Arthur Youngblood Hawke is summoned from his backwoods Kentucky home to be hailed as the next big thing in fiction. Soon he's the toast of the literary monde and fending off the attentions of his brainy-but-attractive female editor and a devastating femme fatale. (The 1964 film adaptation had the indelible tagline: "A woman could feel him across a room.") Other seductions include money and control of his career. At one point Arthur establishes a publishing house to issue his own work, a form of literary hubris that—mark my words—seldom ends well. Wouk is said to have based "Youngblood Hawke" on the life of Thomas Wolfe, and one senses a certain amount of literary schadenfreude in his young hero's Icarus-like fall. Still, it's hard not to be curious about Arthur's doorstep novels. If only they weren't, themselves, fictional.

My Salinger Year

By Joanna Rakoff (2014)

2 "There were hundreds of us, thousands of us, carefully dressing in the gray morning light of Brooklyn, Queens, the Lower East Side, leaving our apartments weighed down by tote bags heavy with manuscripts." So begins Joanna Rakoff's memoir of her time at an eminent literary agency in the 1990s. Even before reaching that giveaway

word—"manuscripts"—I recognize one of my own tribe: the overeducated but painfully awkward young women who hope to write their own books (somehow, one day) but until then are underpaid publishing worker bees. Every day they guiltily type rejection letters to the unfortunate authors of the slush pile, trying to reassure them that their books have been read by someone (even if it's only themselves). Ms. Rakoff develops a strange but fascinating acquaintance with one of the agency's authors, J.D. Salinger, but the real relationship here is the one with her own bravery, in life and in her pursuit of literary success—which she does, I'm happy to say, eventually achieve.

The Best of Everything

By Rona Jaffe (1958)

3 Joanna Rakoff's toiling publishing assistants owe much to this classic novel by Rona Jaffe, which begins in a similar fashion: "You see them every morning at a quarter to nine, rushing out of the maw of the subway tunnel, filing out of Grand Central Station . . . Some of them look eager and some look resentful, and some of them look as if they haven't left their beds yet." Jaffe's focus was that brief post-collegiate sliver of time in the mid-20th century when a young woman either met a guy, got married and moved to the suburbs or, conversely, allowed her personal ambition (gasp!) to destroy her future by rendering her a dreaded "career woman." Caroline Bender, fresh out of Radcliffe College, faces such a crossroads when she takes a job at Fabian Publications (publishers of the magazines *My Secret Life* and *America's Woman*). There, her choice is clear: marry somebody or become like her boss, the hard-as-nails and



miserable Amanda Farrow who's gone through 12 secretaries in three years and will never have children. Which road will Caroline choose? (It's 1958 and this isn't "Sex and the City"—she can't have both!)

Last Resort

By Andrew Lipstein (2022)

4 Writers of fiction are necessarily fascinated with appropriation in all its forms, probably because some synthesis of experience and imagination is part of that mysterious process by which the sausage—that is, the fiction—gets made. Outright plagiarism is a perennial topic in fiction, but its lighter shades obsess us as well. In

Andrew Lipstein's "Last Resort," a novelist writes a book about his friend's real-life misadventure. That would be a risky move even if the friend in question did not, himself, work in publishing. Of course he sees the manuscript, and of course he loses his mind about it. The two strike a devil's bargain: The actual author will take the money but not the credit, while the friend will get his name on the book cover. Mr. Lipstein slaloms down the steep line of authorial ownership as his protagonist justifies his "theft," or "work" (whichever side of the fence you're on): "I took so many liberties with his story, how could he read mine and see anything but the differences?" Mr. Lipstein's "Last Resort" is a gut-churning ride. Especially if you happen to be a novelist.

A Ladder to the Sky

By John Boyne (2018)

5 Like "Last Resort," John Boyne's "A Ladder to the Sky" is one of the very few novels to take up the theme of literary borrowing—not outright plagiarism but a more subtle (and insidious?) form: the theft of a story. Mr. Boyne's protagonist, a refreshingly direct sociopath ("I'll do whatever it takes to succeed," he tells his first victim), makes a career of stealing stories. He hops-scotches around Europe leaving a path of destruction, both literary and the other kind, in his wake, ultimately founding a literary magazine to efficiently steal the ideas of actually imaginative writers. As with so many other charming rakes, we sort of, kind of, don't really want him to get caught. If Tom Ripley, of Patricia Highsmith's "The Talented Mr. Ripley," had been of a literary bent, this might have been his story.

FALL FICTION

Who You Mix With and Who You Match With

Our Evenings

By Alan Hollinghurst

Random House, 496 pages, \$30

By TOBY LICHTIG

SINCE WINNING the Booker Prize in 2004 with "The Line of Beauty"—set during the brash middle years of Margaret Thatcher's Britain—Alan Hollinghurst has produced a series of expansive novels set over entire generations.

"The Stranger's Child" (2011) begins in 1913 and ends in 1980, and features characters alive in both eras. "The Sparsholt Affair" (2017) begins in 1940—years before its protagonist is born—and ends deep into the 21st century, with him in his 60s. These broader canvases have allowed Mr. Hollinghurst to play out his finely observed portraits of social and sexual relations—especially homosexual relations—against the changing backdrops of the times. Society liberalizes, sometimes uneasily; assumptions about class are upended. But in-groups and out-groups remain; wealth is still wealth.

Mr. Hollinghurst returns to this framework in "Our Evenings," which concerns the life, from adolescence to old(ish) age, of David Win. An English boy with a Burmese father (whereabouts unknown), he attends boarding school on a scholarship and later becomes an actor. Along the way, Dave has three meaningful sexual relationships, is the object of his fair share of prejudice (particularly racial), loses his mother, yearns a little, falters a little, but grows into himself, more or less unscathed, before a dramatic ending topples expectations that the author has deceptively set in place.

The narrative is linear but begins with a prologue in which the 68-year-old Dave is happily shacked up with his boyfriend and "enjoying the golden autumn of [his] career." His former benefactor, Mark Hadlow (the sponsor of the scholarship) has recently died, and Mark's son, Giles, is a now prominent Brexiteer member of parliament, with Boris Johnson-like qualities.

Thus we have the ingredients of a familiar Hollinghurst novel: the clever outsider, on the fringes of money and power; the intellectual, arty crowd; the sexual awakening, first furtive, then ecstatic, then triumphantly humdrum; the Britain built on inequality, grappling with change and the undertow of right-wing politics. There is even—a perennial Hollinghurst trope—a lavish country house, lovingly described.

It is here, at age 13, in the early 1960s, that Dave first meets the Hadlows—the scenes of his early life are the novel's most affecting. Mr. Hollinghurst's acute descriptive powers are unleashed on the interiors and vistas, the interplay between the bullying Giles and the vulnerable Dave, the peculiar mores and indiscretions of the posh set ("Life here seemed to have these invitations to disloyalty").

Mr. Lichtig is the fiction and politics editor of the *Times Literary Supplement*.

garet, who has been one thing and now another, while Margaret looking at her own life sees only the outwardly flowing blur of all experiences.

"Intermezzo" is primarily about two brothers, Peter and Ivan Koubek, 10 years apart in age. Stranded in different generations, the brothers are in different life stages that could look very much like "success" and "failure"—to observers and perhaps to themselves. Peter is a successful lawyer; Ivan is a chess player, now past his peak, who does freelance data entry.

"Intermezzo" begins immediately after their father's funeral; from the book's opening lines, narrated in Peter's clipped, sentence-fragment-driven consciousness, we understand that the brothers' relationship is filled with censure and insecurity. "Didn't seem fair on the young lad," Peter thinks, attributing to his braces-wearing brother "the supreme discomfort of the adolescent." This thought is followed by a smug reflection on himself: "On such occasions, one could almost come to regret one's own social brilliance." When Ivan later snaps and tells Peter that he's always hated him, we recall this moment and sympathize, even though we know enough by then to realize that the brothers also love and need each other.

As Margaret, one of the central quintet of characters in the Irish writer Sally Rooney's fourth novel, "Intermezzo," observes about how she's watched her friend Anna age:

It's easier to perceive the way the years accumulate in others. For Anna there must be such a Mar-



TELEGRAMME

When You Keep Your Rival Close

Intermezzo

By Sally Rooney

FSG, 464 pages, \$29

By B.D. McCAY

OF ALL THE relationships open to the novel to explore—love affairs, marriages, friendships, rivalries, parents and children—the relationships that exist among siblings have similarities that combine several, with their own complications besides. Shared memories can also become conflicting eyewitness testimonies. And siblings are aware that they play some sort of mysterious central role in another person's life and development, whether they want to or not.

As Margaret, one of the central quintet of characters in the Irish writer Sally Rooney's fourth novel, "Intermezzo," observes about how she's watched her friend Anna age:

It's easier to perceive the way the years accumulate in others. For Anna there must be such a Mar-

of novelists, though she writes in a traditional comic form: marriage-plot novels for the postmarriage world, in which the interactions among everyday people are carefully observed and represented—and in which characters are preoccupied by politics, technology, morality, sex, death, art and God. Her characters are distinct individuals whose names and actions are easy to recall, even years after reading the books. Perhaps Ms. Rooney's commercial success is largely down to her decision to pick up the novel's old tools for captivating and entertaining audiences when her literary peers are crafting novels that aspire for the artistic purity of poetry.

"Intermezzo" represents, in some ways, a shift for Ms. Rooney—here, her romantic storylines play second fiddle to family drama. In other ways, though, "Intermezzo" returns to the subject matter of her first novel, "Conversations With Friends"—ambiguous, boundary-free love between people of vastly different ages and material circumstances. Only now the novelist views this phenomenon from a later period in life, one that sees the change from late young adulthood to early middle age.

Ivan, in his early 20s, falls in love with Margaret, a divorcee in her mid-30s. Margaret, conscious of their age gap, worries that she's taking advantage of him, but Ivan is energized and purposeful, even growing to love chess again. Peter has a much younger girlfriend, Naomi, an online

sex worker with whom he has an emotionally distant and ambiguously transactional open relationship. He also pines for his lost childhood love, Sylvia, who is still alive but, after being disabled in an auto accident many years earlier, exists in a state of near-constant pain and can never have intercourse again. Rather than chain Peter to her, she broke up with him, but neither has really moved on.

The uneasy bond between siblings, who can seem both more and less than friends.

So as much as Peter might condescend to his awkward, unlaunched younger brother, when it comes to their private lives, Ivan is well ahead—it's Peter who is a mess, walking every day and thinking about suicide, who takes unprescribed drugs to focus on his work and who drinks too much. One of the novel's funniest scenes comes when Peter is having an emotional breakdown in a train station bathroom, dramatically narrating to himself:

Nothing can compel him, he bows to no one. Okay, he may at this moment be for some reason in a toilet cubicle in a train station pouring three hundred and fifty

millilitres of vodka into a plastic bottle of supermarket lemonade, which feels a little unsanitary, but nonetheless, he prostrates himself before no authority, he will not be forced.

Things come to a head when Peter, learning of Ivan's own unconventional relationship, tries to meddle out of brotherly concern. Ivan, insulted and outraged, cuts him off. Both brothers are acutely aware now that their relationship could simply go unprepared—their father dead, nothing really keeps them together.

That's another thing about siblings: They're easy to lose. For most of your childhood, should you have a brother or a sister, they're inescapable; their presence can be oppressive. But then one day you move out on your own and keeping in touch with your siblings turns out to require an act of will. It's easy to drift apart without even meaning to, as work and romance take over. A sibling relationship may fade amid adult chaos and lingering resentments, the sibling remaining in memory both more and less than a friend. But if you can hold on, even if you sometimes hate each other, even if the other becomes at times an unbearable reflection of the way your life didn't go—that's one more kind of love sustained in this world, and that alone would make it worth trying to do.

Ms. McCay is an essayist and critic.

How Money Changes Everyone

Entitlement

By Rumaan Alam

Riverhead, 288 pages, \$30

By HELLER MCALPIN

NOT FAR into "Entitlement," Rumaan Alam's unsettling fourth novel, his protagonist, an ambitious 33-year-old woman striving to make her mark in a new job at a philanthropic organization, inadvertently charges a couple of items already in her online shopping cart to the credit card she's been given for business expenses.

The items—a toilet brush and a paperback copy of Tom Wolfe's "The Bonfire of the Vanities"—highlight the sort of details with which Mr. Alam stocks his social novels.

Although less propulsive and scary than the author's apocalyptic comedy of manners, "Leave the World Behind" (2020), it offers a similarly shrewd, stylishly written tale that zeroes in the allure of wealth and our collective illusions about its ability to protect against misfortune. Mr. Alam is particularly interested in

how his characters' relationships with money affect them at the deepest levels of selfhood. With "Entitlement," he parses the relationships between needs and wants, generosity and selfishness, responsibility and guilt, satisfaction and happiness.

As in his first two novels, "Rich and Pretty" (2016) and "That Kind of Mother" (2018), Mr. Alam demonstrates an ability to convincingly inhabit a female point of view. He deftly channels the evolving mindset of his main character, Brooke Orr, whose work for the Asher and Carol Jaffee Foundation puts her close to extreme wealth for the first time. Her connection with the 83-year-old office-supply billionaire who is determined to give away his fortune is life-changing, though not in the way she hopes.

Brooke, who is black, was raised in Manhattan by her adoptive white mother, a lawyer who runs an organization dedicated to women's reproductive rights. Brooke and her younger brother, who is white and also adopted, were brought up with the expectation that as adults they would pursue careers aimed at doing good in the world.

After nine years teaching at a charter school in the Bronx, a job for which she was miserably ill-suited, Brooke is excited that her new position will help her find both her own calling and worthy causes to support. But her mother has her doubts about this "not-quite-starter job" in what

she deems a rich man's vanity project.

With his still-new foundation, Asher has acquired fresh purpose. His rejuvenation is amplified by delight in his outspoken new employee, whom he declares a protégé. During intimate evening outings to tony restaurants and the philharmonic, Asher shares what he considers to be the secret of success: Life is "what you

A young woman finds that her work for a wealthy philanthropist has an unexpected cost.

demanded it be." He instructs Brooke that "there are things to which you're entitled," and urges her to "demand something from the world. Demand the best. Demand it." Brooke takes his advice to heart.

"Entitlement" is a tale of insidious seduction, though not the sort that Mr. Alam teasingly leads us to expect. We read with mounting alarm as Brooke falls in love with the spoils of wealth and convinces herself that she, too, deserves a slice of the pie.

She calls to mind a long line of literary heroines who seek happiness and to be taken care of while insisting on their independence. Unlike, say, Lily Bart, the doomed heroine of

Edith Wharton's 1905 novel "The House of Mirth," Brooke is adamantly uninterested in marriage and children. Yet she, too, craves security and social standing—which she believes home ownership, along with her rapport with Asher, will provide. She isn't asking for anything like the luxurious new condo her best friend has purchased with a hefty inheritance, nor the spectacular view from the Jaffees' Manhattan penthouse. A modest apartment, she is convinced, is "the thing to which she could tether her life. It would be her spouse, hold close her secrets."

A dark sense of menace shadows the novel—a mysterious "Subway Pricker" panics commuters, Brooke winds up in altercations with strangers, two peripheral characters are hit by cars.

These lurking dangers underscore a central question: "What could keep you safe in this world?" Asher, who lost his daughter on 9/11 during her third week of work at the World Trade Center, knows firsthand that there are no guarantees in life and that wealth doesn't shield you from disaster. (It's a lesson Mr. Alam also brings home in "Leave the World Behind.") Asher tells Brooke that she's been brought to the vortex of craving, descends into her "quarterlife crisis" and steadily loses her sense of perspective and moral bearings. Its blazing climax is particularly well-earned.

Ms. McAlpin reviews books regularly for the Journal and other publications.

Why History Travels Right Along With Us

Slaveroad

By John Edgar Wideman

Scribner, 224 pages, \$28.99

By SAM SACKS

THE COMPLEXITY of John Edgar Wideman's books has much to do with their adherence to the concept of Great Time, a borrowing from West African tradition. As opposed to the system of "clock time" that we use to regulate the forward-moving progress of events, Great Time is akin to what Mr. Wideman calls a great sea: "nonlinear, ever abiding, enfolding past, present and future." Great Time does not recognize beginnings or endings but only a densely packed now, where the living and the dead, and all of their stories, clamoring coexist.

Looking back through the journeys of two missionaries whose lives connect across different eras.

If I understand it correctly, the compound-word title of Mr. Wideman's latest book, "Slaveroad," evokes a similar metaphysical realm, though here the associations are far more painful. In a literal sense, it calls to mind the trans-Atlantic slave trade, but Mr. Wideman speaks of that terrible passage as a continuing state of consciousness sustained by memory, suffering and the transmission of prejudice. "Whether or not direct descendants of slaves, we all inherit the curses of slavery," he writes, because of the ineradicable idea that color "signifies an intrinsic, unchanging difference in worth between some lives and others." The legacy works like original sin or the mark of Cain; to understand its resonance in our lives is to grasp the fundamentally tragic nature of humankind.

Mr. Wideman, now 83, has drawn on his own family history to exemplify such tragedy. His younger brother was convicted of second-degree murder and served 44 years in prison (he was released on parole in 2019). His younger son is serving a life sentence for a murder he committed when he was 16. The ubiquity of incarceration and violence in his family meshes strangely though, Mr. Wideman might argue, in a wholly American fashion—with his formidable professional success.

He has been in the public eye since 1963, when he became only the second African-American to receive a Rhodes scholarship. He has since published more than 20 books. So the collage of his life, which integrates the poor Pittsburgh neighborhood of Homewood (where he grew up) and Ivy League groves of academia, informs the collagist style of his writing, an inimitable mixture of high and low artistic registers (he claims both T.S. Eliot and Jean-Michel Basquiat as influences), and

of autobiography, fiction and history.

The historical figures whose lives intertwine in "Slaveroad" are William Henry Sheppard and Rebecca Prottin. Sheppard (1865-1927) was a Presbyterian minister from Virginia who became known as the "Black Livingstone" for his decades of missionary work in the Congo. Prottin (1878-190), born into slavery in the Caribbean, was also a missionary and was known as a leader in bringing Christianity to the enslaved world in Africa and the West Indies. Mr. Wideman sees them as fellow travelers on the Slaveroad, so he speaks both to them and through them, imagining their reflections at the end of their lives along with his own. Old age has placed all three "beyond fearing exposure, even if not beyond guilt and shame," and their testimony wrestles with the anguished question of whether their complicity within a cruel system undermines their attempts to trans-

sic. "What does your writing say. What does it teach," Mr. Wideman recounts a friend asking him; he is mortified to have no decisive answer. As the evangelist attempts to save souls, the writer seeks to rectify injustices, but the very immensity of human suffering makes all their struggles look like so much vanity. The intense reflexivity and self-doubt in "Slaveroad" has been a poignant feature of Mr. Wideman's late work, particularly his 2021 story collection "Look for Me and I'll Be Gone," from which a few passages have been reproduced nearly verbatim. "A fiction unfolds and attempts to make itself matter," he writes, but he doesn't know what to do except to persist in the belief that it might. And this fiercely moving drama of creation and undoing becomes, as well, a part of the book's intricate construction.

"Slaveroad" is not easy reading, both for its moral starkness and its profound inwardness. Mr. Wideman's primary audience is himself, since his purpose in writing the book is inseparable from his attempt to discover his life's purpose. The writing can resemble a private shorthand—it often confusingly refers to characters by their initials—and you tend to move through the meditations with little background or guidance, led on mostly by the force of the author's fixations.

But "Slaveroad" is a book worth getting lost in. A work of bruising candor and obsessive originality, it makes sense only outside the constraints of clock time, beyond trends or movements or even any contemporary notion of "relevance." At moments the Wideman-like narrator, constituted from the real and the fictive, acquires the grandeur of an ancient oracle, wise and endlessly tormented. The Nobel committee has not given an American fiction writer the literature prize for more than 30 years, but if its members are of a mind to, I hope they begin their considerations here.

Mr. Sacks is the Journal's fiction critic.

2013, including the "Brooklyn idyll" of "whizzing kids on plastic scooters, dads double-parking Volvos, lululemon moms bearing paper bags of farmers market rams." When Brooke, who has called in sick at work, rashly splurges at Saks on an armful of sumptuous designer clothes she can't afford, he writes: "The tiny sound of the card on the table was Brooke's contribution to the symphony of American commerce, a whisper that said she was there, she was alive, she was this person, she was worthy of these things, and deserved so much more than she had."

Not all the novel's excursions are quite as effective, including Brooke's multiple visits to a reluctant potential grant recipient, a powerful black woman operating out of a Brooklyn church basement, who senses she's being condescended to. But Brooke's humiliation at being mistaken for a server (despite her new designer togs) at a lavish birthday party at the Jaffees' art-filled Connecticut mansion resonates.

"Entitlement" is a slow burn of a book that intensifies as Brooke, pulled into the vortex of craving, descends into her "quarterlife crisis" and steadily loses her sense of perspective and moral bearings. Its blazing climax is particularly well-earned.

FALL BOOKS

'The War Office kept three sets of figures—one to mislead the public, another to mislead the cabinet and the third to mislead itself.' —H.H. ASQUITH

Mash Notes From No. 10

Precipice

By Robert Harris
Harper, 464 pages, \$30

By WILLIAM TIPPER

IN A LETTER written a few days before the outbreak of World War I, British Prime Minister H.H. Asquith wrote to a young woman named Venetia Stanley, telling her that "no one can say what is going to happen in the East of Europe." The recipient was a glamorous 26-year-old from an aristocratic family, with whom the 61-year-old Asquith had been having a clandestine affair. Apparently wishing to impress her with the confidence he had in her discretion, he enclosed his own copy of a secret telegram from the British ambassador to Russia. It would "interest you," he wrote, to see "how even at this stage, Russia is trying to drag us in."

Robert Harris has cleverly constructed his novel "Precipice" around the archival reality of this document and many others like it. Asquith's hundreds of letters to Venetia wove state secrets and Downing Street gossip with snippets of love poetry and entreaties to write back quickly. The efficient British postal system delivered mail 12 times a day in London, and the besotted prime minister took every opportunity to keep in touch with Venetia.

The resulting plenitude of material allows Mr. Harris—who has previously set works of fiction, such as "Enigma" (1995), "Pompeii" (2003) and "Munich" (2017), amid moments of world-changing crisis—to let the historical Asquith set the tone here. His letters to Venetia, excerpted frequently and at length, are, Mr. Harris tells us, transcribed from the real documents. Eloquent, beseaching, romantic and wildly indiscreet, these intimate notes offer a portrait of a leader who believes his responsibilities, privileges and desires can all be held in balance.

The story of "Precipice" takes place over less than a year—from July 1914 to May 1915—as the development of a brutal war of attrition dissolves all diplomatic illusions of a short road to peace. But there are no battle scenes here. Instead we witness a spectacle of self-regard and self-destruction involving "Prime," as Asquith's friends, and Venetia, often call him. His obsession with Venetia prompts him, even after war has begun, to continue sharing secret information with her. "He wanted to tell her everything, to show her the strain he was under, to elicit her sympathy."

A secret diplomatic message in July 1914 provides Asquith with the first inkling that the recent assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand by a Serbian nationalist might spark infinitely greater troubles. Reading it, the prime minister (who prides himself on possessing "the patience to wait for the perfect moment to act—or not to act") files the information away as merely worrisome. Less than two weeks later, a call from his foreign secretary breaks in on his reverie with confirmation that Austria will be demanding retribution. "In the smoothly functioning filing system of his lawyer's brain," Mr. Harris writes, "the European crisis moved up a drawer

Robert Harris crafts a page-turner from the real letters of a British leader, written on the eve of war.



HELLO, BOBBY Britain's Prime Minister H.H. Asquith leaves the War Office in London in 1915.

from low priority to high." Later on, when Asquith learns that Austrian forces are mobilizing against Serbia, he thinks that "it was unreal, as if a fire had broken out somewhere and wisps of smoke were beginning to curl beneath the door, but nobody moved because they couldn't believe it."

The disturbing contrast between Asquith's inertia and the outburst of military destruction soon to follow fuels the subdued tension of "Precipice." But it is in the accretion of the prime minister's letters over the

course of the novel that a more personal and more profoundly unsettling motif arises: the inability of the supposedly cool-headed occupant of 10 Downing Street to disentangle his infatuation from his official work. "Your darling little letter came just as I awoke," he writes to Venetia, following

immediately with news about his communication with Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War. "And you may like to see his answer," he adds, enclosing for her perusal the sensitive military communication.

Though Asquith and Venetia are figures drawn from history (Venetia's own letters back to Asquith have not been preserved), "Precipice" also follows a fully invented character, a police detective named Paul Deemer, who has been newly recruited into Scotland Yard's "Special Branch" and tasked with finding out why some secret military and diplomatic documents are in the hands of the public. His superiors

suspect a German spy network may be the cause.

Paul tracks down an eyewitness who recalls the car from which a crumpled telegram was carelessly tossed—a clue that eventually leads him to the shocking discovery that it was the prime minister's own car. Further sleuthing uncovers Venetia's identity, and Paul travels to her family's estate in Wales, posing as a gardener to get employment on the grounds. Eventually he sneaks into Venetia's room, where he uncovers the correspondence that she's been hiding—a trove she thinks of as a "Pandora's box."

Paul returns to London, confirming to Kell, his Special Branch superior, that Asquith is not merely leaking the occasional document but showering his inamorata with top-secret information: "cabinet discussions, military movements, diplomatic developments." Paul's boss instructs him to intercept the prime minister's mail to Venetia—to photograph it, but to do nothing more for the moment. After all, Kell muses, if they told the prime minister they were spying on his mail, "I doubt I'd still be in my job by the following morning."

Paul continues a disheartening surveillance, all the while fretting that the mismanagement of the war is putting his brother, fighting as an infantryman in France, in even greater danger. Venetia herself longs for a purpose beyond being a receptacle for the prime minister's anxieties. With "the whole world being stood on its head," she thinks, "surely it must be possible for a single woman with some spirit and a decent brain to break free." Hoping to take control of her future, Ven-

tia volunteers as a nurse at a London military hospital.

As the war progresses and the prime minister's infatuation becomes more uncontrollable, he finds himself writing to Venetia even during cabinet meetings, with ultimately disastrous results. When the bellicose Winston Churchill presses his case for a naval assault in the Dardanelles, and an ensuing landing on Ottoman soil, the prime minister's attention once again wanders to the letter he is writing to Venetia. Allowing Churchill's energy to carry the day, the distracted Asquith has unwittingly set in motion the plans that will eventually lead to the calamitous Allied losses at Gallipoli. By May of 1915, confidence in the Liberal government is destroyed, and the prime minister is forced to form a coalition government with his political rivals.

Meanwhile, Venetia decides to marry another suitor—a protégé of the prime minister's—on purely practical grounds. What she seeks is freedom, both from her privileged family's control and her bonds to the increasingly unrealistic prime minister. Paul's own dissatisfactions lead him to show up early one morning at an army recruiting station. "You're keen," remarks the sergeant there.

"Precipice" is a curious novel: Its title suggests a moment on a cliff edge. But the story doesn't trace the collective fall into the chaos of war so much as one man's collapse into the despond of human frailty—for which no possession of power or privilege can compensate.

Mr. Tipper is a books editor at the Journal.

Islands Lost At Sea

The Drowned

By John Banville
Hanover Square, 336 pages, \$28.99

By TOM NOLAN

NEAR THE EERIE start of "The Drowned," John Banville's latest psychological procedural set in 1950s Ireland, a lanky man named Armitage emerges from the dark onto a rural field near the sea. A fancy motorcar sits in the middle of the field with its doors open

and engine running. Armitage hails a passerby: "I think my wife has drowned herself."

The two go for help to a lone house up on a looming hill, where the Ruddock family—an arrogant husband, his sharp-tongued wife, their hemophiliac child—summon the police. Eventually, Detective Inspector St. John (pronounced "Sinjun") Strafford arrives from Dublin to supervise the hunt for a woman who, her strangely cavalier spouse now admits, may simply have fled on foot. The whole affair has an unreality about it, thinks Strafford. Armitage acts oddly at ease with the Ruddocks, though they've said never to have met. All these people seem to be hiding things. Even the man who walked Armitage up to the house scampered off home as soon as possible.

Mr. Banville once employed the

pen name Benjamin Black when writing crime fiction but "killed off" his alter ego several years ago. Some aspects of "The Drowned"—the car with its motor

A man claims his wife is missing, but his story doesn't add up.

running, the (possible) victim—are reminiscent of another incident, recently handled by Strafford in an earlier novel, of a young woman killed by carbon-monoxide poisoning. That case was closed—but was it truly solved? Strafford checks in with a Dublin colleague, the forensic pathologist Quirke. But Quirke is

still grief-stricken by the recent death of his wife and miffed that Strafford (separated, soon to be divorced) is seeing Quirke's vulnerable daughter, Phoebe. What could she possibly see, Quirke wonders, "in this cold-blooded long drink of water?"

All the characters in this fastidiously written novel are emotionally wounded; all are rendered with poignant precision as they struggle to get on with their lives, minus the solace of traditional comforts. "Every man is an island," Quirke says, begging to differ with the poet John Donne, "lost in the world's vast waste of waters." It seems unlikely the year will produce a more affecting literary thriller than "The Drowned."

Mr. Nolan reviews crime fiction for the Journal.

Comic or Tragic, You Can't Take It With You

What Does It Feel Like?

By Sophie Kinsella
Dial, 144 pages, \$22

By JOANNE KAUFMAN

A MONTH OR so before the pandemic lockdown, the bestselling British novelist Sophie Kinsella spoke at a luncheon for fans. According to an account of the event in Glamour magazine, Ms. Kinsella, who's best known for the "Shopaholic" series, the source for the 2009 rom-com film "Confessions of a Shopaholic," teasingly suggested to the crowd that she might one day write a book with a sad ending. "And this lady went 'no!' in complete panic . . . the whole audience started going 'We won't buy it!'" she recalled. "We're not here for it!"

At the end of 2022, Ms. Kinsella was diagnosed with a grade-4 glioblastoma, an aggressive and incurable form of brain cancer. The average survival time post-diagnosis: 12-18 months. She underwent an eight-hour surgery to remove the mass followed by radiation and chemotherapy, which is ongoing. This past April, she went public with the news.

Now, Ms. Kinsella is testing the loyalty of readers who for more than two decades have turned to her for a giddy good time. Her novella "What Does It Feel Like?" centers on Eve Monroe, an author whose enviable life (great husband, five lovely children, a novel with a movie adaptation on the way) is upended by brain cancer.

A bestselling author suddenly can't write her name. But if she can't handle small tasks, how can she grapple with life and death?

The book covers the 14-month period from diagnosis to apparent remission, as Eve struggles to regain mobility and fine motor skills, like the ability to write her name. She also grapples with persistent—and humiliating—memory problems. Initially, Eve can't come up with the day of the week, the words to familiar Christmas carols or the name of the current prime minister. Disconcertingly, she guesses Hugh Grant—who played the PM in the 2003 film "Love, Actually"—then hastily corrects herself. "No, he was ages ago, wasn't he?"

She wants to know about her children, not recalling that they've come to visit. And although Eve keeps asking, and though her husband, Nick, keeps answering, she can't remember what's wrong with her: "It comes every time, this moment. This terrible, impossible moment. And each time, it seems to come sooner; her eyes seem wider, her incomprehension seems greater."

"What Does It Feel Like?" takes its title from the questions that are posed to Eve during magazine and red-carpet interviews that are part of her life before cancer hijacks it: "What does it feel like to have five children?" ("The same as having one child, times five"); "What does it feel like to have your book turned into a major Hollywood movie?" ("It feels surreal.")

And there's the slight variant: "How does it feel to have it all?"

"It almost seems like too much luck for one person," Eve answers. "Now I'm just waiting for my luck to run out."

Divided into two sections, a brief segment labeled "Before," and the major portion "After," the novel unfolds through WhatsApp and email messages, third-person narration and monologues. There are strained attempts at humor and some heavy-handed foreshadowing. And, unfortunately, the book's structure gives readers little chance to get to know Eve before she becomes a grim statistic. As a consequence, they may be less than fully invested in her travails, however affecting.

But Ms. Kinsella is a skillful storyteller. She doesn't front-load the narrative with exposition, instead parceling out information organically. It's only in the last pages, for example, that she reveals the particulars of Eve's cancer symptoms.

Most resonant is this book's bravery—and its emotional honesty. "Is she ready for death?" Eve asks herself at one point. "Should she be? Or is contemplating death the same as giving up hope?"

Here's a spoiler alert for those Kinsella fans who insist on happy endings: In this particular instance, they, like Eve herself, will have to accept uncertainty and settle for hope.

Ms. Kaufman writes regularly about fiction for the Journal.



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FALL BOOKS

'Nobody in football should be called a genius. A genius is a guy like Norman Einstein.' —JOE THEISMANN

Scheming Your Way to the Top

The Why Is Everything

By Michael Silver
Norton, 448 pages, \$32.50

By S.C. Gwynne

FOOTBALL fans love "coaching trees," those minutely branched diagrams of who begat who in the coaching world. They show a coach's employment history and where his ideas came from. They help decode the often freakishly complex and constantly shifting world of schemes and plays that unfold on our screens every week. If you want to know where a pass play or defensive formation came from, just look back a couple of generations and you'll probably find it. Almost nothing is new in the game of football. Nearly everything comes from somewhere else—from someone else.

Though coaching trees pervade football at all levels, they figure to an astonishing degree in the NFL. In 1998, half of the active head coaches in the league traced their lineage back to coaching legends Bill Walsh or Tom Landry. Twenty years later, 28 of 32 NFL head coaches had ties to Bill Belichick or Bill Parcells.

One of the most important NFL trees belongs to Mike Shanahan, who won back-to-back Super Bowls with the Denver Broncos in the late 1990s. Shanahan, who is himself part of Walsh's tree, became famous for tweaking Walsh's West Coast offense and, more significantly, for utilizing "zone blocking," where offensive linemen attack space instead of players.

As head coach of the Washington Redskins from 2010-2013, Shanahan employed what would turn out to be a remarkably talented group of assistant coaches: his son Kyle Shanahan, Sean McVay, Mike McDaniel, Matt LaFleur and Raheem Morris. Today they are the head coaches, respectively, of the San Francisco 49ers, Los Angeles Rams, Miami Dolphins, Green Bay Packers and Atlanta Falcons. McVay (a Super Bowl win and a loss) and Kyle Shanahan (two Super Bowl losses) are considered two of the game's brightest lights. LaFleur is 61-33 with the Packers, while McDaniel's quarterback Tua Tagovailoa led the league in passing last year. Morris has so far had mixed results at Atlanta.

This branch of Mike Shanahan's tree is the subject of Michael Silver's "The Why Is Everything: A Story of Football, Rivalry, and Revolution." Mr. Silver has been a writer for Sports Illustrated, Yahoo Sports and other outlets, and it shows. As he traces the lives of Shanahan's heirs—which often intersect—he delivers a densely packed tour through the fickle, cruel, fad-crazy, crassly opportunistic, money-drenched, alcohol-fueled and hyper-competitive world of the NFL. The coaching carousel is probably the cruellest part of the league, a place where losing is what most people do, two-year tours are common and betrayal is the currency of the realm. Mr. Silver quotes McDaniel, who describes the group as "a bunch of overambitious, average athletes.... We're all Napoleon complex dudes.... We weren't outside the box; we didn't have one." They were all young, underqualified and struggling to make it in a big, bad world.



LEADER OF THE PACK Green Bay Packers coach Matt LaFleur speaks with quarterbacks Jordan Love (left) and Aaron Rodgers (right) in 2021.

Though Mr. Silver profiles all of these coaches, the book's main focus is Kyle Shanahan, who was offensive coordinator under his father in Washington. Mr. Silver portrays him as profane, difficult, egocentric and combative. He yells a lot. He tried to steal Aaron Rodgers from his friend LaFleur. Though Mr. Silver tries to make the case that Kyle "changed the game" and turned "the football world on its head," the argument is unpersuasive. His father's blocking and running schemes did change the game. Kyle reworked them brilliantly. He is one of the most talented coaches in the game. But he is not Bill Walsh.

What Kyle did have, early in his career, were two spectacular seasons when, as offensive coordinator, he bewitched and befuddled the entire league with his adaptive schemes. The first was in 2012, when he built a radically divergent offense around his prodigiously gifted rookie quarterback, Robert Griffin III, and lit up the league. No one could stop the Redskins. But the good times didn't last. The season ended in tragedy when the team allowed Griffin to play with an injured knee, culminating in a gruesome final injury

in a playoff game against Seattle that millions of viewers saw. Griffin was never the same again. Having killed the goose who laid the golden eggs, the Redskins descended rapidly into what Mr. Silver calls "a rancid and rancorous mess."

In Atlanta, Shanahan built an unstoppable offense with the help of future head coaches Morris, LaFleur and McDaniel.

Kyle's second flash of brilliance came in 2016 when, working under head coach Dan Quinn and blessed with another brilliant quarterback—Matt Ryan—he took the Atlanta Falcons to the Super Bowl. With help from assistant coaches LaFleur, McDaniel and Morris, he built another unstoppable offense. Though the Falcons suffered a horrific meltdown in the championship game, blowing a 28-3 lead in the second half and ultimately the game to the New England

Patriots, Kyle's performance got him the job he now has, as head coach of the 49ers.

The book's main shortcoming is its ambition. Mr. Silver tracks the careers not only of the principal coaches, but their fellow travelers too. The narrative dives deep into many different plot lines: draft and trade dramas, infighting over quarterbacks, the drinking problems of various coaches, and so on. Even with the time spent on Kyle Shanahan, the story seems to lack center. It must be said, too, that "The Why Is Everything" is not a book for the casual football fan. Coaches deliver long, unedited quotes in jargon-laden coach-speak. There are repeated references to "outside zone" offensive concepts, as well as to Tampa 2, Seattle 3 and Quarters defensive schemes. This will be good news for football nerds and the generations of scheme-obsessed bros who have been weaned on NFL video games—and who likely already know about the startling brilliance of this branch of Mike Shanahan's tree.

Mr. Gwynne is the author of "The Perfect Pass: American Genius and the Reinvention of Football."

A Most Dangerous Game

Why We Love Football

By Joe Posnanski

Dutton, 416 pages, \$30

By Will Leitch

THE power of football is that it's real," writes Joe Posnanski in his book "Why We Love Football," an intriguing, mostly inconsequential aside he uses to explain why there are more good TV shows and movies about baseball than about football. (The idea seems to be that football doesn't work as fiction as well as baseball does.) Yet this ends up being the sort of vague thesis statement his book can't quite muster up the energy to address.

What does it mean that football is real? Does he mean that it is more on the level than other sports? That it taps into something elemental, even primal, about Americans? Or—and I wonder if this is what he's getting at, even if he's too polite and Midwestern to say so—is it more real because every time we sit down to watch it, deep down we know somebody might get killed? Is it more real because

Mr. Posnanski is the author of numerous previous works, including an entertaining 2023 tome called "Why We Love Baseball." (He and I have also crossed paths on the staffs of various publications, and I like him and his work.) The new book follows nearly the same format as its predecessor and even refers to it on several occasions. You can tell Mr. Posnanski likes baseball much more than football, which is fine: So do I.

"Why We Love Football" is engagingly written. Mr. Posnanski is a big puppy dog of a writer, eager for you to like him and able to convey a contagious enthusiasm about his subject. The book's meatiest sections, the rare moments that make you sit up in your chair, come when the author talks about his beloved (and forever doomed) Cleveland Browns, a subject he's clearly passionate about and tormented by. The chapter about John Elway's legendary 1987 "Drive," when the Broncos quarterback defeated the Browns in the AFC Championship Game, is amusing in its irritated get-me-out-of-here efficiency. (He can hardly bear to look; he describes watching the final Browns home game, before the original franchise left Cleveland after the 1995 season, as "like watching your own open-heart surgery without anesthesia.") As the parent of a fan of the current, reconstructed Browns team—I did what I could, our children must find their own way—I trust him to guide my son through the muck.

Much of this book, though, is studiously pedestrian, pitched at a very specific sort of casual middle-aged fan looking for a nostalgia fix. There is a Bo Jackson chapter, there is a "Brian's Song" chapter, there is a "Super Bowl Shuffle" chapter, there is a Cal vs.

Stanford "the band is out on the field" chapter. Again, these passages are not unpleasant to read: Little that Mr. Posnanski writes is. But the stories in the book (which, curiously, includes

lor Swift, probably—but its cultural prominence is undeniable.

This makes the sport's countless controversies—from player safety, to greedy owners who transplant teams



GAMER The Miami Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa in September.

both professional and college football—two dramatically different enterprises) are anecdotal rather than analytical, and they have a print-the-myth quality that, in his baseball writing, Mr. Posnanski tends to puncture rather than inflate.

And unlike "Why We Love Baseball," this book rarely steps back to ask what all the fuss is about. Football has become the national pastime, perhaps the most powerful entity in all entertainment, not just sports. The reasons for football's popularity are myriad—from its unique suitability to television to its fundamental fight-for-territory, land-war-of-attrition, dominance-on-the-battlefield mentality to, well, Tay-

from one city to another, to the sport's historical blindness on matters of race—into major national issues. The NFL is irresistible (I watch it every week) but it is complicated: Every football fan has had to make peace with the fact that loving the sport requires ignoring things we don't want to think about. Mr. Posnanski does not engage with any of this. Colin Kaepernick is mentioned in passing, but the fact that he was seemingly blackballed by the league for his social-justice protest isn't. (On the other end of the spectrum, O.J. Simpson gets several notices...but not for, uh, that.) Chronic traumatic encephalopathy, and the suffering of great players like

Junior Seau (who had CTE and died by shooting himself in the chest) aren't mentioned, nor are the drastic changes made to the sport (and to how kids play it) to address the existential crises plaguing the game. You can read an entire chapter about Jim Brown, one of the most politically outspoken athletes in American history, and there are more references to his lacrosse career (two) than his central prominence in the civil rights era (zero).

Fans admire the players' speed, skill and talent—but also the way they put themselves at risk.

Now, this is a work called "Why We Love Football"; it needn't be a polemic about the sport's failings. But the book refuses to take up the larger question suggested by its title when it looks past aspects of the sport that might be unpleasant—but are also inherent to why people love football. I found myself thinking of Dolphins quarterback Tua Tagovailoa, a brilliant player who has suffered multiple concussions. He's been encouraged to retire, but he keeps insisting on putting his helmet back on to play. That sort of obsessive behavior—from players and fans—is somehow central to football's appeal. The answer to why we really love football? You'll have to find that in another book.

Mr. Leitch is a contributing editor at New York magazine, a contributing columnist at the Washington Post and the author of six books, including the recent novels "How Lucky" and "The Time Has Come."

FALL BOOKS

"That would be a good thing for them to cut on my tombstone: Wherever she went, including here, it was against her better judgment." —DOROTHY PARKER

Sharp Tongue, Restless Spirit

Dorothy Parker in Hollywood

By Gail Crowther
Gallery, 304 pages, \$29.99

By DONNA RIFKIND

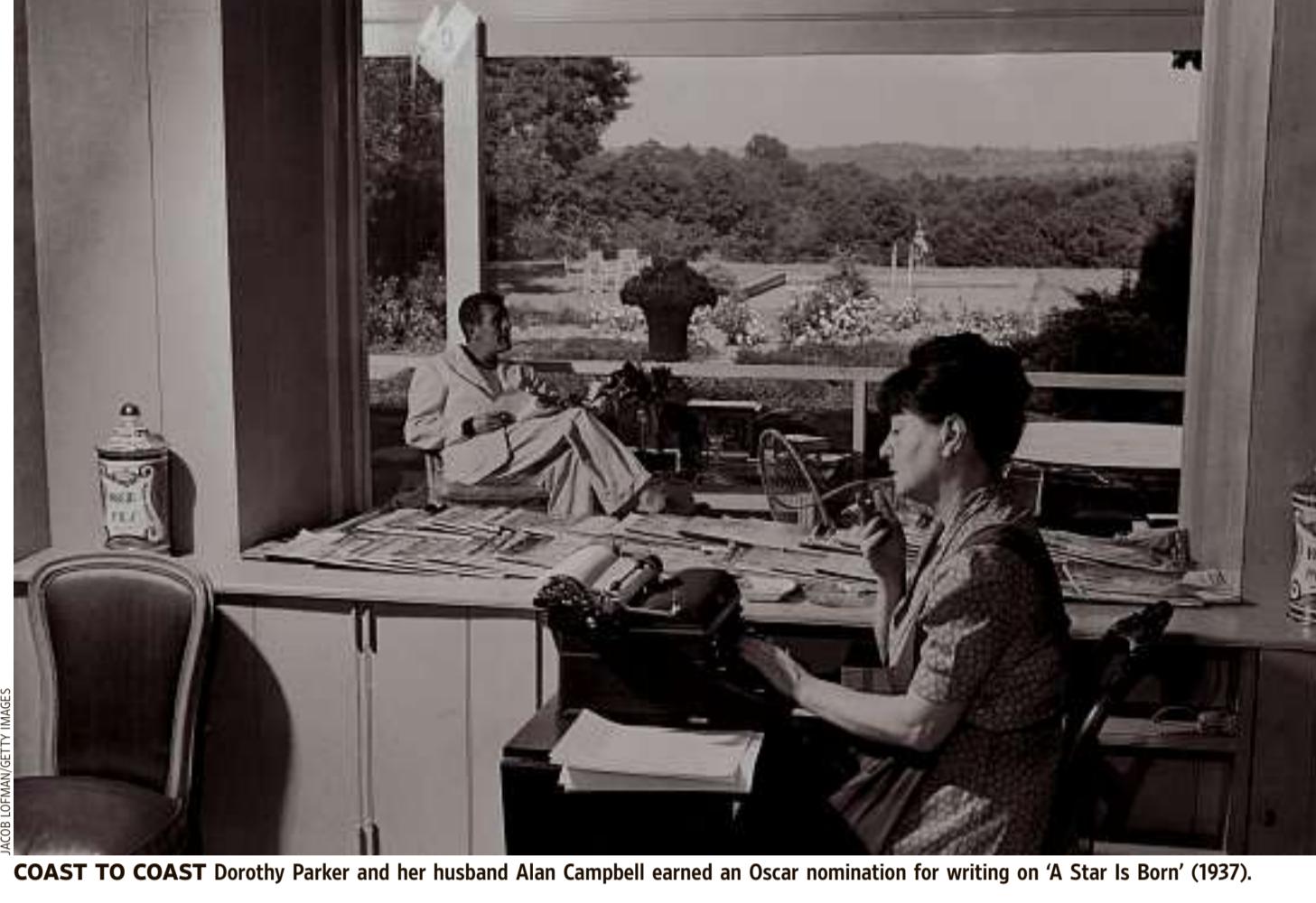
DOROTHY PARKER was one of the great transients of American literary history, yet she remains more permanent than most writers of her era. She wrote fleetingly, much of her work still pungent a century later: light verse and epigrams, stories and soliloquies, brief reviews, snippets of snappy film dialogue. A restless spirit, she dwelled mostly in hotels, and is most often linked with the Algonquin on West 44th Street in Manhattan. There she traded insults throughout the 1920s with a luncheon assembly of smart alecks known variously as the Round Table and the Vicious Circle.

In those years Parker was young, fearless and the wittiest of the group, even if many of her alleged wisecracks were invented by bored reporters desperate for copy. The Algonquin made a character out of Dorothy Parker, often copied but seldom matched: the petite, sexy blonde with an aura of mischief and a mouth full of razors. Beneath the legend lived a complex, deeply unsettled person with serious literary chops, trapped in an internal battle between the will to write and the wish to self-destruct.

At least four full-length biographies of Parker have been published, along with a number of affecting shorter portraits by fellow writers who knew her well, particularly Edmund Wilson, Lillian Hellman and Wyatt Cooper (father of Anderson), whose unparalleled Esquire magazine profile from 1968 is titled "Whatever You Think Dorothy Parker Was Like, She Wasn't." Cooper and Parker became friends in Los Angeles in the early 1960s, when they both worked as screenwriters on the Fox lot and lived near each other. Parker always insisted that she hated Hollywood. Yet she spent nearly half her life there off and on, an often underplayed fact about a figure so firmly connected in the public imagination to New York.

That makes Gail Crowther's "Dorothy Parker in Hollywood" a welcome effort to expand our view of the writer's career. The film industry's influence on Parker, as well as hers on it, is a juicy subject that's ripe for evaluation in our own screen-obsessed age. Ms. Crowther is the author of "Three-Martini Afternoons at the Ritz" (2021), a brisk dual narrative about the midcentury American poets Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton. Her new work is similarly efficient, neatly synthesizing all the available research in the absence of any new information.

Parker was in her mid-30s when she first arrived in Hollywood. She had already weathered an early marriage and divorce, some bad love affairs, an abortion, two suicide attempts (at least two more would follow) and a growing addiction to alcohol. She was also a near-instant literary success, with two bestselling collections of poetry, an O. Henry Prize for her short story "Big Blonde," and high-profile magazine stints as a drama critic and a book reviewer. Hollywood was paying attention. Having abandoned silent movies for talkies, the studio chiefs were looking for East Coast writers fluent in quick-fire dialogue. MGM executives poured on the flattery and offered Parker



COAST TO COAST Dorothy Parker and her husband Alan Campbell earned an Oscar nomination for writing on 'A Star Is Born' (1937).

a weekly salary of \$300 (about \$4,700 today, by Ms. Crowther's calculations). Needing the money, she accepted their three-month contract in early 1929 and headed west. She spent her days alone and ignored in her empty Culver City office and fled as soon as she could, insisting that MGM's head of production, Irving Thalberg, pay for her train fare back home.

Parker's second Hollywood sojourn was more successful, because she arrived this time with backup. It was 1934 and she was newly

hired—\$5,000 weekly as the Great Depression slogged on—they bought expensive houses in Beverly Hills and Bucks County, Pa., making a bid for stability.

As Ms. Crowther points out, it's difficult to trace Parker's specific contributions to the 18 film scripts she worked on. But the author makes some good guesses, spotting "Parker-esque quips with a more serious message underneath" in "A Star Is Born" and detecting aspects of Parker's experience as a woman with alcoholism in "Smash-Up." For Alfred Hitchcock's "Saboteur" (1942), Parker tried, she told an interviewer, "to give the girl more to do."

Parker gave a big portion of her earnings to political groups. She was ardently volatile about every cause célèbre from the trials of Sacco and Vanzetti and the Scottsboro Boys to the Loyalist efforts in the Spanish Civil War. She joined more than 30 organizations in the 1930s, hosted their fundraisers and donated lavishly. Many of those groups, including the Hollywood Anti-Nazi League, which Parker co-founded in 1936, were later accused by Martin Dies, the chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee, of being Communist fronts. She helped establish and drive attendance toward the newly formed Screen Writers Guild, also suspected by HUAC of Communist infiltration.

There is no reliable evidence that Parker was a member of the Communist Party, but she was sympathetic as it was possible to be. She was guilelessly convinced that it was on the right side of history. Also important to her was the sense of belonging that the party offered. Here was a chance to heal the wounds of her lonely childhood and an adulthood hounded by depression, which she tried and failed to medicate with alcohol. The film col-

ony's left-wing community represented home to Parker. Even when her life fell apart in the late 1940s, her marriage imploding and her livelihood threatened by insinuation during the HUAC investigations of the movie industry, her houses sold and her future uncertain, she still had some film work and like-minded friends in Hollywood. When she left for the last time, after Campbell's death from a second overdose in 1963, she lived for only three more years, dying of a heart attack in a grimy room at the Volney Hotel in Manhattan at age 73.

"It is time to take a fresh look at Parker and encompass the fullness of her achievements," Ms. Crowther writes in the book's epilogue. She deserves much credit for identifying Parker's Hollywood years as a valuable subject. But she ventures no further than the threshold of assessment, offering only that Parker "paid the price for somehow never quite fitting into her time." Really? Parker is pinned to her era like a moth on a board, as a figure all but epitomizing the idealism and anxieties of her American moment. Other vital questions that get only cursory attention offer invitations for future scholarship. Why does Parker continue to endure as an object of fascination? How best to appraise her film work in relation to her poems, stories, criticism? Was Parker wasting her abilities in Hollywood, as she herself believed, or is it possible that screenwriting was the apotheosis of her highly concentrated talent?

"Brevity is the soul of lingerie," Parker famously observed. But of biography, not so much.

Ms. Rifkind is the author of "The Sun and Her Stars: Salka Viertel and Hitler's Exiles in the Golden Age of Hollywood."

When Dorothy Parker took her razor wit to California and the movie industry, she brought her troubles, and ideals, along.

married to Alan Campbell, an actor and writer 11 years her junior who looked like a deluxe younger version of her good friend Scott Fitzgerald. Campbell was affable and capable, ready to do what she could not: structure a film treatment, cook them a meal, organize their finances and curb some of Parker's self-harming impulses, leaving her free to reel out the lucrative one-liners.

Flitting among studios, the Parker-Campbells worked assiduously and often uncredited on films throughout the 1930s—at least four in 1935 alone. In 1937 they earned an Oscar nomination for writing on David O.

Selznick's "A Star Is Born," which sent their prestige and their income soaring. (In 1948 Parker was again a nominee, without Campbell, for her work on Universal's "Smash-Up: The Story of a Woman.") With their grand com-

pany's left-wing community represented home to Parker. Even when her life fell apart in the late 1940s, her marriage imploding and her livelihood threatened by insinuation during the HUAC investigations of the movie industry, her houses sold and her future uncertain, she still had some film work and like-minded friends in Hollywood. When she left for the last time, after Campbell's death from a second overdose in 1963, she lived for only three more years, dying of a heart attack in a grimy room at the Volney Hotel in Manhattan at age 73.

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Long, Strange And Trippy

The Silver Snarling Trumpet

By Robert Hunter
Hachette, 256 pages, \$32

BACK IN 1961, aspiring young California artists and intellectuals would congregate at Kepler's Books in Menlo Park. You'd see them at table sharing a single cup of coffee, or smell the smoke from the cigarettes they'd rolled themselves. You'd hear them talking, trying to figure out who they were and what they wanted to become. And more often than not, you'd find them centered around a certain guitar player with a magnetic personality. That guitar player was Jerry Garcia, who would go on to lead the rock band the Grateful Dead.

One of Garcia's friends, Robert Hunter, recorded his impressions of that year in "The Silver Snarling Trumpet." Best known for providing the lyrics to many of Garcia's songs, Hunter wrote the book soon after the events he describes took place. Then he rewrote it, "waxing eloquent," he later confessed, "whenever possible." And then he put the book away. Only now is it being published, five years after his death in 2019.

It's no surprise that the book's strongest character is Garcia, who died in 1995. Garcia springs to life on the page, partaking in zany banter with his comrades and deflating their pretensions. But behind his easygoing demeanor is a musician dead set on mastering his trade. Hunter probes the tragic source of Garcia's ambition: surviving a car accident that killed a dear friend.

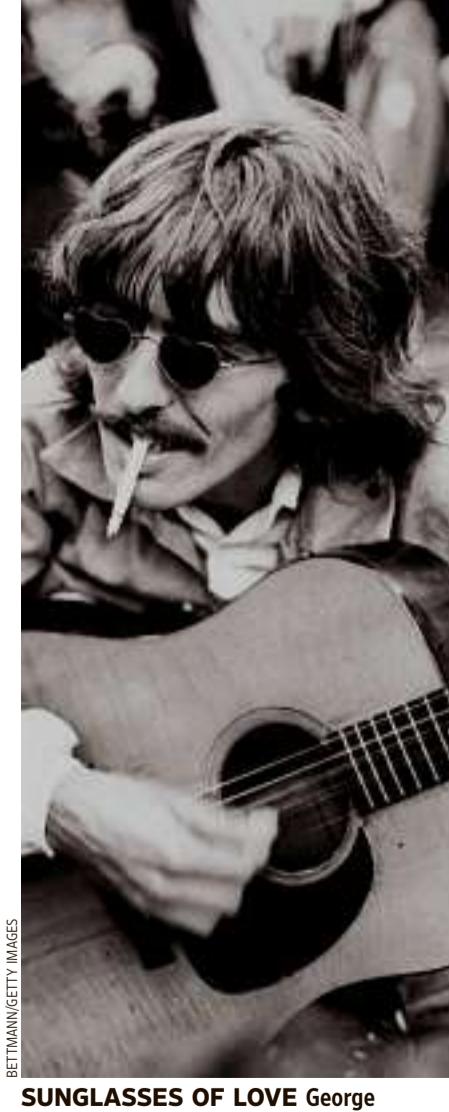
In an author's note, from 1982, Hunter acknowledges his book's main faults: overwriting and a tendency toward triteness. Nevertheless, he decided to retain his flourishes, hoping to remain true to the young man he was when he wrote them. His eloquence is most trying when he relates his dreams and visions, yet even these meanderings retain a boyish charm.

While the scenes Hunter describes revolve around a small number of places, they more crucially revolve around a small group of friends. The relocation of one of them toward the end of the book alters the group's chemistry, but not before a final night of camaraderie. In these moments Hunter nicely captures the excitement of youth, when everything feels new and possibilities seem endless.

One of the Grateful Dead's most successful songs was "Truckin'" (1970), with lyrics by Hunter himself. Its recurring line, "what a long strange trip it's been," hints at what everyday life was like for the members of the band. Back in 1961, the trip was just beginning, and Robert Hunter was along for the ride. His book shows how exhilarating it was.

SHORTCUTS: MUSIC

BY JOHN CHECK



SUNGGLASSES OF LOVE George Harrison in San Francisco in 1967.

Something In the Way He Played

Within You Without You

By Seth Rogovoy

Oxford, 232 pages, \$25

THERE IS NO question that George Harrison was "the quiet Beatle" is tempting yet incomplete. True, he didn't crave the spotlight. Quite the opposite: He was happy to ask a bandmate or a guest to furnish a solo, if that's what the music called for. He thought like an arranger, with an ear to the overall shape and feel of a song. Other musicians relied on him to suggest the right design to propel the music forward or bring it to a decisive close.

In "Within You Without You," Seth Rogovoy guides us through Harrison's career. The author of books on Bob Dylan and on klezmer music, Mr. Rogovoy is a keen listener with a knack for rendering musical details in plain language. Here he sheds new light on old favorites and brings forgotten gems out of the shadows.

Harrison famously joined forces with Paul McCartney and John Lennon in 1958, before the Beatles were the Beatles. His older bandmates were drawn to his superior ability as a guitarist. Mr. Rogovoy adeptly analyzes

Harrison's contributions to such Lennon-McCartney songs as "A Hard Day's Night" (1964), from its famous opening chord—which sustains "for the longest three seconds in rock music"—to its tightly knit solo.

Harrison's strength as a songwriter may have been underappreciated during his time as a Beatle, but the songs he did write were among the band's best. "Something" (1969), Mr. Rogovoy believes, was his greatest accomplishment, a sophisticated song that plumbs the mysteries of love. "Here Comes the Sun" (1969), he notes, is far and away the most frequently streamed Beatles song.

Mr. Rogovoy is candid about his subject's weaknesses—for instance, the preachment of some of the songs on the album "Living in the Material World" (1973). But this only makes the author's praise, say, for the triple album "All Things Must Pass" (1970)—Harrison's first post-Beatles release—more credible.

Mr. Rogovoy notes a pleasing circularity to Harrison's career: He was the first former Beatle to score a No. 1 hit on his own, "My Sweet Lord" (1970); and he was the last, with a cover of Rudy Clark's "Got My Mind Set on You" (1987). These songs, so different in their themes, testify to his range and help explain his appeal to listeners past, present and assuredly yet to come.

Mr. Check is a professor of music at the University of Central Missouri.

FALL BOOKS

'Colors pursue me like a constant worry. They even worry me in my sleep.' —CLAUDE MONET

The Price of Perseverance

Monet: The Restless Vision

By Jackie Wullschlager
Knopf, 576 pages, \$45

By DAN HOFSTADTER

NUMBERS HAVE an unmannerly way of explaining all too much about somebody's character. In Balzac's novels, for instance, numbers crop up constantly, referring to debts and incomes, hinting at greed and recklessness, becoming a kind of background noise no matter what the main theme might be. A tracking of such numbers is one striking aspect of Jackie Wullschlager's "Monet: The Restless Vision," a splendidly researched and shrewdly insightful biography.

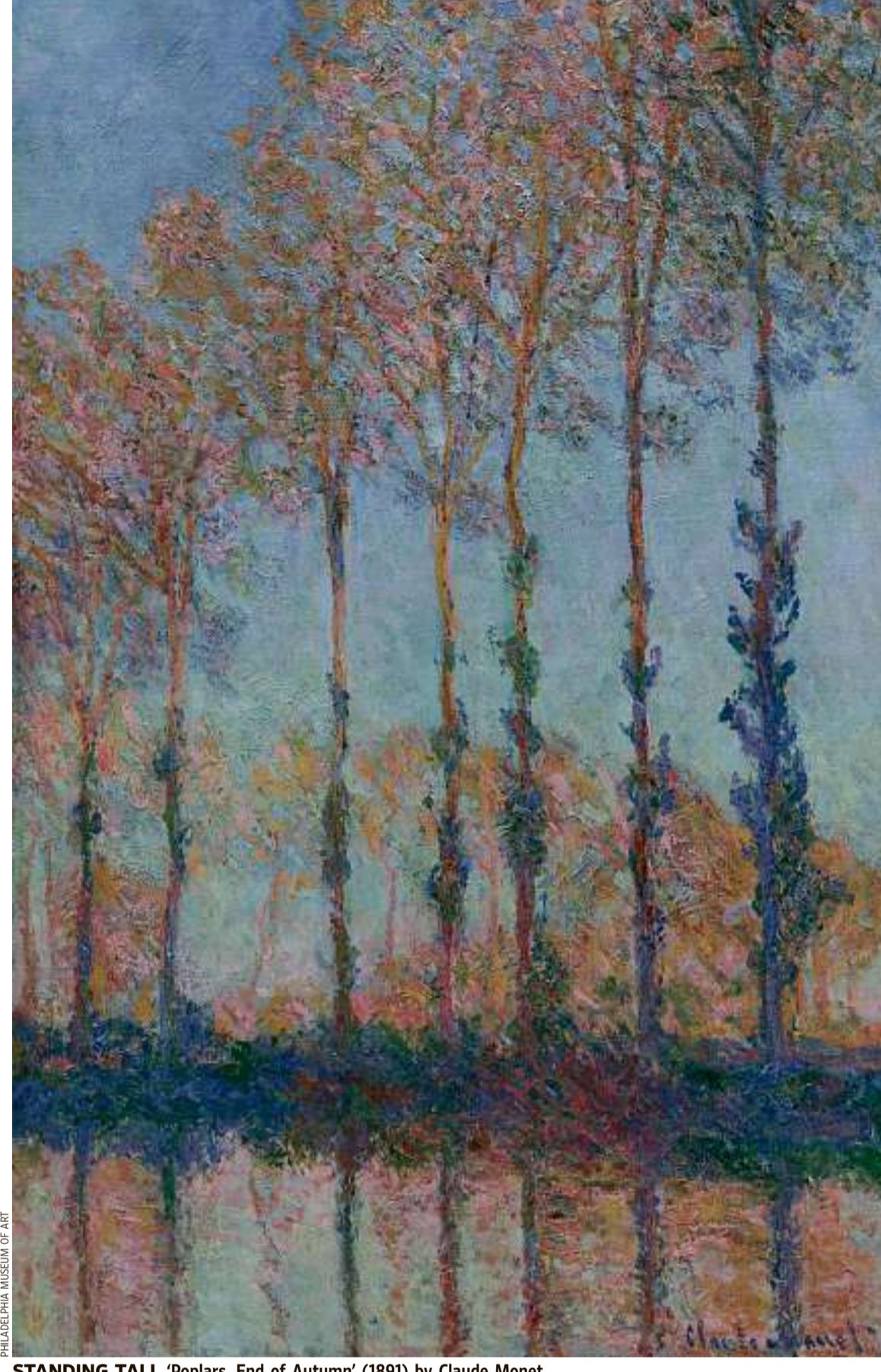
Ms. Wullschlager, the chief art critic at the Financial Times, pokes into the long, messy pileup of Claude Monet's money troubles with sympathetic ruthlessness. Of course, she loves his painting, but the financial angle reveals something of Monet's early hardship and ordeals, as well as the social predicament of the French Impressionists in the period running from about 1865 to 1880.

Born in 1840 to a moderately well-to-do family, Monet was brought up in the city of Le Havre. In his early 20s he left for Paris, where he entered a ramshackle art school in whose classes he met several of his future colleagues, including Pierre-Auguste Renoir. A little later he met a fetching young woman, still in her teens, named Camille Doncieux, who would become his live-in partner.

The daughter of a small-time wholesaler, Camille had no great dowry in view, and right there Monet's money woes began. His father opposed the union; neither the juries of the annual Salon nor well-heeled collectors were attracted to his sketchy-looking canvases; and he soon fell into arrears with landlords, grocers and coal merchants. To forestall the bailiffs, he began mooching off his friends, especially the talented painter Frédéric Bazille, scion of a wealthy family in Provence.

The fiercely stubborn Monet was scarcely inclined to give up Camille, who was not only his lover but, in Ms. Wullschlager's view, his virtual collaborator. In 1860s Paris, she explains, the female model as "academic nude" was yielding to the elegantly attired "contemporary Parisienne." Camille had an up-to-date wardrobe that she enjoyed trying on for Monet's early figure compositions, and her poses probably embodied her own ingenuity. In the meantime Monet's color-drenched style began to foretell Impressionism, and that, too, he was not about to give up.

The price of perseverance was a shocking level of penury. No food, no wine, no heat in midwinter—that is what Monet describes in his many pleading letters. "I have a lot to pay out tomorrow and afterwards, so you need to find a way to give me some money," Monet wrote to Bazille in 1868. "I never harass you [but] if you give me 20 or 10 sous at a time, we won't be done with it until the end of the world." And so it goes with one creditor after another for well over a decade.



STANDING TALL 'Poplars, End of Autumn' (1891) by Claude Monet.

Ms. Wullschlager reminds us that if Impressionism was launched, as is usually maintained, in Monet's and Renoir's 1869 pictures of merrymakers at La Grenouillère, a sort of tawdry *café-dansant* on the Seine, these were "paintings celebrating everyday leisure and pleasure by a pair of penniless artists." Yet there lurked an "inverted arrogance," as she points out, in Monet's often cheeky tone with his supporters, as though his troubles were somehow heroic. "It was a vanity born of supreme egoism."

Monet executed more than 2,000 canvases in his life, ranging from early tonal studies to the vast panoramas of

his later years. The man worked like a dray horse, often rising at 4 a.m. and struggling all day with sequences of easel pictures that ran to dozens on a single motif. He caught every nuance of the sunlight as it struck riverside villages, rock formations, haystacks; later, the fogbound Thames, the Italian Riviera, the Grand Canal in Venice. These might be called extroverted images, yet rather early on, in 1876, Monet painted something a little different—a large, decorative picture called "The Pond at Montgeron." Color was observed as delicately as ever, but here the mirrorlike presence of the pond and its reflections played to-

gether with foliage and sky to create a sort of emblem of reverie.

Camille died at 32, having borne Monet two children. The year was 1879. In this period, Monet's life changed enormously. His grief was awful, but his work began to sell, drawing the interest of enterprising dealers, like Durand-Ruel and the Bernheim brothers. And he found a new companion in Alice Hoschedé, the separated wife of one of his most loyal buyers. By nature uxorious, he remained deeply attached to her until her death in 1911. Most of all, his painting entered on a new phase of "interiority," to use Ms. Wullschlager's expression.

As Monet's finances improved, the "extreme egoist" became extremely generous, lending money to impoverished colleagues: One year, he lent Camille Pissarro 15,000 francs—worth, by one estimate, about \$300,000 today—to buy his house. The money-related anxieties that had once haunted his existence had, at last, abated. At the same time, however, he became ever more fiercely self-critical: A boot or a knife went through many a frustrating canvas.

Some of Monet's impatience with his work might have stemmed from its repetitiveness. His conception of space was becoming uninteresting, perhaps even to himself. It consisted, over and over, of a horizontal plane, perhaps a field or a sheet of water, stretching away to a vertical backdrop like a town or a mass of trees. Yet for fellow painters like Pissarro or Paul Cézanne space had filled up with shapes, with objects—cottages, rooftops, cliffsides—all of which might accent or block or half-screen one another in dramatic or ambiguous ways.

The young painter fell into arrears and began mooching off friends. His fortunes, and art, would eventually change.

In the early 1890s, Monet switched gears, devoting a series of more than 30 easel pictures to the Rouen Cathedral. From these the old horizontal ground plane has vanished. The facade of the church is almost coextensive with the entire canvas, such that a vigorous, intricate space is created by the shadowed portal, the sculptures, the rose window.

The ultimate triumph of spatial composition, both in illusionistic depth and in the surface tension of their encrusted brushstrokes, was achieved in the *Nymphéas*, or water-lily paintings, that Monet created at Giverny, the village near Paris where he settled in his final decades. Here Ms. Wullschlager, at her very best, deftly conjoins a discussion of the artist's family life, his failing eyesight and his increasing solitude with a sensitive treatment of his gigantic project—there were at least 250 of these splendid pieces.

As a spatial composer Monet finally had all the necessary elements at his disposal: not only the brilliant flowers and the clusters of lily-pads drifting toward the rear but also the mirrored sweeps of sky and massed foliage beneath them. The idea, in the author's words, was a "contemplation of infinity and an enclosed space." For more than 20 years, the endless, shimmering surfaces spun out a mazy, flowing visual trope for daydreaming, for thought itself. Sure, the master could be infuriating at times, as Ms. Wullschlager makes clear—he was given to petulance and moody withdrawal. But Monet's life-work, stupendous and uneven, bore witness to his never-failing elation over whatever colors he saw when he stepped outside.

Mr. Hofstadter is the author of "The Love Affair as a Work of Art."

The Land Teaches Its Lessons

Observations of an Accidental Farmer—and a Mindful Reader

By Harry Kavros
Paul Dry, 235 pages, \$19.95

By MAX WATMAN

WHEN Harry Kavros moved to North Carolina from New York City, where he'd been a dean at Fordham and Columbia (at which he taught the famous "LitHum" great books seminar), he bought a small farm and looked out upon the acreage, dreaming of managed landscapes.

"I left," he writes, "presuming it would be my last major journey. And like Odysseus, perhaps I would find order, homecoming, and respect for the gods. I would synthesize what I'd read and taught with my daily life on the property we'd just purchased." Early in "Observations of an Accidental Farmer—and a Mindful Reader," Kavros references Darcy's Pemberley estate in "Pride and Prejudice": "The landscape artist has made his efforts invisible. The

grounds look like nature untouched, but they have been organized from the house outward. Open expanses, clusters of trees, paths around lakes—everything conspires to fill the viewer with moral contemplation." He contrasts this distinctly un-American idyll with that of Frederick Law Olmsted, the master park-planner for whom landscapes create a "vital link . . . between leisure and contemplation on the one hand and republican virtue on the other."

Anyone who has sat on a tractor will, at this point, be chuckling knowingly. Without swarms of workers, tremendous machines and a budget stretching well into numbers more suited to municipalities, Mr. Kavros's plans are unachievable. What's in store for him will resemble neither leisure nor contemplation.

Mr. Kavros begins toiling against the poison ivy and the tree-of-heaven, working toward a playground for hart and hound. His account plays it straight, presenting his naiveté unhedged: he finds that the deer "tease [the] dogs from beyond the fence," and that trees "shed hundreds of branches . . . when they cannot resist the force of ice or fierce winds." And the farmer has to pick them up. Surely it's impossible to have taught the great books without catching on to the idea that Doctor Faustus might have been better off if he'd rested on his laurels? If someone shows up talking about how they're going to reshape the world and turn nature to their will, set the countdown

clock, a fall is coming. In the battle between Man and Nature, back nature.

Mr. Kavros does put in a valiant effort. He unclogs a creek, moving stones while contemplating Wordsworth. He contrasts Wordsworth's romantic images with the gritty reality described by James Rebanks, who offers

ing out a chicken coop each morning. Then again, if Mr. Kavros were a long-time farmer, steeped in tradition, instructed by those who raised him, this would be a different, and a lesser, book.

It is refreshing to see this tale told without that whiff of landed aristocratic elitism in which the dirt beneath the

Twain. For Percy, habit—"everydayness"—leads to unexamined mediocrity. For James it is a squandering of consciousness and a disregard of the soul. "For Twain it was social and moral. In 'Pudd'nhead Wilson,' habit underwrote not virtue but prejudice." This is anti-yoga, in which work or "repetition combats feelings of the sublime."

Instead of celebrating the mundane, or claiming some higher truth in the cyclical, repetitive nature of the cosmos

After buying a farm, a former dean gets an education in the balance between man and nature.

as represented by his compost heap, Mr. Kavros becomes a clear-eyed, relaxed observer. He notes that the older, calmer animals on the farm seem to move in curves. The older rooster doesn't charge his mates, but entices them, arcing around the hens in a dance. The old horse, summoned, comes to him on a parabola. So, too, the straight edge of Mr. Kavros's ambition has been replaced by digression. He set out to domesticate the farm, and was, instead, curved and rusticated.

Mr. Watman is the author of "Harvest: Field Notes From a Far-Flung Pursuit of Real Food."



"a paean not to the beauty of . . . imagination, but to a way of life that comprises diligence and work." The work was hard: "My fingers tingled with numbness and my forearms were slack." He notes at this point that he's lost 3 pounds. By the end of the book, such observations of self will have vanished.

Both the efforts and the digressions are entertaining, although in the case of the former, one wishes sometimes that he'd asked someone for advice before he began. I've never heard of anyone clean-

nails is the same dirt tilled by generations of one's own. None of that here. Mr. Kavros is no expert, but he is game and adaptable. It is adaptation that subtly creates the arc of the book, and his fall turns out not to be a fall at all. It's more of a settling in.

Mr. Kavros comes to love the farm and understand it. What's more, he does so without falling back upon the blithe platitudes so often applied to praise hard, repetitive work. He looks to Walker Percy, William James and Mark

FALL BOOKS

'What's the autumn? A second spring when every leaf is a flower.' —ALBERT CAMUS



MATT ROCKEFELLER

Palindromes and Portals



CHILDREN'S BOOKS

MEGHAN COX GURDON

TWO CELEBRATED writers for children, Ruta Sepetys and Steve Sheinkin, have combined forces for **"The Bletchley Riddle"** (Viking, 400 pages, \$18.99). Their novel is set largely at Bletchley Park, the English country estate that during World War II became a clandestine hive of cryptographers, mathematicians and chess champions who raced to decipher Nazi communications. In keeping with Mr. Sheinkin's history books, which include "Bomb" (2012) and "Fallout" (2021), the story abounds in satisfying factual detail. As with Ms. Sepetys' works of historical fiction, such as "Salt to the Sea" (2016) and "The Fountains of Silence" (2019), the narrative unfolds in mostly alternating chapters told from different perspectives—here, those of two teenagers. Jakob is a brainy 19-year-old Cambridge student who's been seconded to Bletchley to help crack the codes of Germany's fiendishly complex Enigma machines. Lizzie is his precocious 14-year-old sister, who's working as a messenger at Bletchley while trying to solve a puzzle of her own: If their mother died in a bombing, why is she still getting official mail? And why did she leave coded messages for her children to find?

The authors give cameo appearances to real people—among them, Joseph Kennedy, the American ambassador to London, and the math genius Alan Turing—in this suspenseful, informative wartime adventure for readers ages 10 and older.

During an earlier war, as it happens, the great storyteller J.R.R. Tolkien defied government censors and slipped code into his letters so that his wife could know exactly where he was. This small detail appears in **"The Mythmakers"** (Abrams, 224 pages, \$24.99), a fascinating double biography of Tolkien and his fellow Oxford don and storyteller C.S. Lewis.

The book is something of a hybrid, with John Hendrix combining passages of thoughtful and intelligent text with graphic-novel devices, such as cartoon panels and speech bubbles.

Tolkien and Lewis both had childhoods marred by personal loss yet were uplifted by a strange, stirring love of Norse mythology. Both fought in World War I, sharing the suffering and disillusion of their generation. Mr. Hendrix briefly plays their first meeting at Oxford in 1926 for laughs by noting that Lewis found his new acquaintance "a smooth, pale, fluent little chap . . . no harm in him: only needs a smack or so."

In truth, as Mr. Hendrix shows, it was a turning point in both their lives: "Tolkien was missing a creative confidant," he writes, while Lewis "was desperately looking for a path that could finally join his heart and his mind," and in the somewhat older Tolkien found a role model.

Both men created fictional worlds that continue to summon readers, not least "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy (Tolkien) and "The Chronicles of Narnia" (Lewis). This superb account of their lives and creative work is full of pictures and moments of goofy humor but never patronizes either the reader or its subjects. Mr. Hendrix has done an admirable job of explaining what went into the making of these two colossal figures and why we all still get so much out of the "portal of wonder" their writing opened.

The Scottish fantasy writer George MacDonald once said that "it is not the things we see the most clearly that influence us the most powerfully." Kate DiCamillo would seem to share this understanding, to judge from **"The Hotel Balhaar"** (Candlewick, 160 pages, \$17.99), a slim and elegant book in which stories both enthrall and exasperate a young girl.

The framing is delightful, if poignant: Little Marta lives with her mother in a small room at the top of a grand hotel, where the mother works as a cleaner in the aftermath of her husband's disappearance in an unspecified war.

Enjoined to be "as quiet as a small mouse" in her deluxe surroundings, Marta spends her time pondering spots of beauty: the brush strokes in a painting, the face of a grandfather clock, the label of an empty perfume bottle.

One day a haughty countess checks herself into the fanciest room at the Hotel Balhaar. Playing against type, the old lady adores chil-

THIS WEEK

The Bletchley Riddle

By Ruta Sepetys and Steve Sheinkin

The Mythmakers

By John Hendrix

The Hotel Balhaar

By Kate DiCamillo

Illustrated by Júlia Sardà

Drawn Onward

By Daniel Nayeri

Illustrated by Matt Rockefeller

Jonty Gentoo

By Julia Donaldson

Illustrated by Axel Scheffler

panels show a grieving boy rushing away from his father and making his way through a series of fantastical ordeals to reach the figure of his dead mother. In a passionate cry that marks the center, or turning, of the palindrome, the boy sobs: "Mom, were you glad you were mom?"

His anguish creates a kind of break in his sorrow, for from the encounter with his mother he carries away a small glowing gift—hope? love?—that looks like a beautiful gem. Now, with the words spooling backward, the child moves through a kindlier landscape to reach his father. Words that seemed bleak when arranged in one order, taking the boy into the labyrinth, become light and hopeful when reversed, taking him out of it. For instance: "And besides that, he no longer believed . . . they would make it" becomes "they would make it. And besides that . . . he no longer believed . . . she was gone."

The latest collaboration between the British rhymester Julia Donaldson and the German illustrator Axel Scheffler traffics in no mythology or ambiguity or sorrow. **"Jonty Gentoo: The Adventures of a Penguin"** (Scholastic, 40 pages, \$18.99) is, rather, a jolly rollicking tale of a bird in a zoo who decides to escape and make his way to the South Pole. "But where were the penguins? / And where was the Pole? / He waddled for weeks but he met not a soul," we read, as the plucky little fellow strides across an icy fastness.

It seems Jonty has gone in the wrong direction, and, as a friendly tern explains, no penguins live at the North Pole, where he has ended up. With the tern as his navigator, Jonty heads south toward warmer waters. ("There were swordfish that soared. / There were blue whales that blew. / This is the life!" declared Jonty Gentoo.) When Jonty arrives in Antarctica, he's thrilled to find a massive welcoming party of penguins of his own species. Like "The Gruffalo" and the "Stick Man," books by the same creative team, this one is effortless read-aloud fun for children ages 4-8.

She Could Taste Her Dream Job

Be Ready When the Luck Happens

By Ina Garten

Crown, 320 pages, \$34

By MOIRA HODGSON

HER MANTRA "How easy is that?" made Ina Garten a food-world superstar, with 13 best-selling cookbooks in 25 years. She is also the host of two popular television shows, "The Barefoot Contessa" and "Be My Guest." Dressed in her signature oversized blue denim shirt, she is a soothing but commanding presence on the screen.

Simplicity is at the core of her appeal. You won't be stumped by recipes for frozen foie gras dust or basil foam in any of her cookbooks. She makes what she calls modern comfort food. No beat-the-clock antics over the stove required. All ingredients are available at the local grocery. Each well-tested recipe appears opposite a tempting full-page color photograph of the finished dish.

At 76, Ms. Garten has reached the pinnacle of the food world firmament via an unusual path; after years of running a beloved gourmet food store and catering business in the Hamptons, she discovered a knack for cookbook writing, and then was coaxed, reluctantly, into TV, where her approachability,

charisma and close connection to the sensibilities of the home cook have given her a devoted following.

Now fans can follow her remarkable trajectory to fame in a memoir, "Be Ready When the Luck Happens." Ms. Garten not only reveals the challenges she has faced along the way, but makes surprising disclosures about her childhood and her marriage to Jeffrey Garten, an economist, who appears frequently as an enthusiastic diner on his wife's television shows.

A self-described adrenaline junkie, Ms. Garten recounts a life spent in constant motion. The Barefoot Contessa store employed dozens and was swamped every weekend; when her baker called in sick, Ms. Garten found herself personally making 1,000 baguettes a day. When her husband took a job in another hemisphere, they worked out the commute and kept going. Just reading about her schedule is exhausting.

That explosive energy may in part be a response to the confines of her childhood. In Stamford, Conn., where Ms. Garten and her older brother grew up, the kitchen was off limits. Her mother, a nutritionist, was a hypercritical, relentless controller. Butter and carbohydrates were forbidden. (No pasta, for example. Ms. Garten has made up for that since.) Dinners were flavorless low-fat affairs, and for school lunches her mother provided untraditional sandwiches filled with sardines, or tuna without mayonnaise, accompanied by raw carrots.

The outside world saw Ms. Garten's father as a handsome and chatty surgeon. At home he was given to outbursts of violence, often directed at his daughter. Ms. Garten was so frightened of him she kept to her

room. Both parents enforced a rigid atmosphere of self-improvement: toys had to be educational. Dolls, stuffed animals or board games were not allowed. She writes, "If it sounds like a cold and lonely life, it was."

She was a teenager when she met Mr. Garten, her great love and future husband (one of her books, "Cooking with Jeffrey," is filled with affectionate anecdotes about their life together).

They married in 1968, when she was only 20. Mr. Garten began a four-year term in the military, after which the couple made a long summer trip to

Europe and discovered French food. The coq au vin a campsite neighbor made one evening was an epiphany for Ms. Garten, like Julia Child's first encounter with sole meunière.

The pair moved to Washington, D.C., where both found government posts. Ms. Garten studied Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" and gave elaborate dinner parties. One morning in 1978, bored with her desk job, she spotted a classified ad: A small gourmet food and cheese store, "The Barefoot Contessa," (named after the Ava Gardner film) was for sale in West-Hampton Beach, on Long Island. Cooking was Ms. Garten's passion: could she make it her business?

At the store she was greeted by the enticing smell of chocolate chip cookies baking. Overcome, she writes, by a

rush of good feelings," she made an impulsive bid of \$20,000. It was a snap decision that would change her life.

She was in for a shock. Professional catering isn't remotely like cooking for guests at home. Ms. Garten started work the Thursday before Memorial Day weekend. On Friday the sleepy beach village was deluged with sum-

mer together for a decade. Ms. Garten writes that she was overwhelmed with work, commuting and the household chores that trapped her in a "classic gender role." After Mr. Garten landed a job in New York, a compromise was reached to redefine their relationship and after a few weeks, the couple was back together.

In 1996 she sold the store and turned to writing. "The Barefoot Contessa Cookbook" (1999) includes recipes for her favorites: roast chicken, brownies and coconut cupcakes. Not exactly ground-breaking dishes, but the book has sold well over a million copies.

She offers some great tips: A few tablespoons of instant coffee cut the sweetness of chocolate in brownies; a turnip and a clove-studded onion (tossed out after cooking) give life to stewed lentils. Puréed potato-fennel soup is no longer dull when you add goat cheese, croutons and crumbled bacon. That said, in spite of the warm reception given her cooking, she's been criticized for her predilection for foods high in fat and cholesterol—beef, pork, heavy cream, butter and all.

"Be Ready When the Luck Happens" is fireside chatty and conversational in tone. She tells her story well in easily digested prose, although she veers into self-help from time to time, dispensing nuggets of advice such as "Swing for the fences!" and "Don't get in your own way." But underneath the easygoing, comfortable personality she projects, it's clear that Ms. Garten—remember those 1,000 baguettes—is a pretty tough cookie.

Ms. Hodgson is the author of *"It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time: My Adventures in Life and Food."*



CHRISTOPHER SIMPSON/NYTIMES/REDUX

Bored with work at a desk, Garten opened the classifieds. Soon she was in the food business.

Europe and discovered French food. The coq au vin a campsite neighbor made one evening was an epiphany for Ms. Garten, like Julia Child's first encounter with sole meunière.

The pair moved to Washington, D.C., where both found government posts. Ms. Garten studied Child's "Mastering the Art of French Cooking" and gave elaborate dinner parties. One morning in 1978, bored with her desk job, she spotted a classified ad: A small gourmet food and cheese store, "The Barefoot Contessa," (named after the Ava Gardner film) was for sale in West-Hampton Beach, on Long Island. Cooking was Ms. Garten's passion: could she make it her business?

At the store she was greeted by the enticing smell of chocolate chip cookies baking. Overcome, she writes, by a

pair of people. By 10 p.m. everything (enough provisions, she'd thought, for the entire weekend) was gone. She stayed up for two nights feverishly making salads, dinners, cakes and pies. The store became such a success that in 1985 she established an East Hampton branch, which was frequented by celebrities such as Stephen Spielberg and Lauren Bacall.

Those of her followers familiar with accounts of her blissful 55-year marriage may be surprised to learn that the same year she bought "The Barefoot Contessa," she and Mr. Garten separated. They had been

REVIEW

By JOANNE LIPMAN

For people who have taken career breaks, four little words—"What do you do?"—can provoke dread. It seems to conceal a bundle of judgments: What's your social status? What's your income? What's your education? Are you worth my time to talk to?

This has long been an issue for professional women who leave the workforce to raise kids. They describe feeling invisible and being ignored by people they meet. But the dreaded question is now affecting a wider swath of people: stay-at-home fathers, career-changing young people, baby boomers forced into retirement, laid-off workers.

"It is truly the absolute worst question you can get when you're out of work. Society wants to put you in an

'The way you're sometimes perceived when you've been laid off is mind boggling.'

ASHLEY SCOTT
Corporate sustainability manager

easy-to-digest box," says Orlando-based Jen Kling, 40, a consumer brand marketer who has been laid off three times and is now an independent consultant.

It's also a head-scratcher when trying to frame an answer. When New York entrepreneur James Reichert, 62, moved to Canada temporarily for his then-wife's job, he printed up business cards that read "Trophy Husband." When Ashley Scott, 35, a Philadelphia corporate sustainability manager, was laid off from a previous job, she took to telling people she was in grad school. She found that when she said "I'm looking for a job, or I just got laid off... People would look at you like you're a loser."

For many of us, work isn't just a way to pay for our lives; it's how we define ourselves—and others. We are what we do. Psychologists have a term for this: "enmeshment." The concept was first coined to describe an unhealthy blurring of boundaries in personal relationships. But it applies with almost absurd accuracy to our relationship with work, when we are so closely linked to our careers that we have no idea who we are without them.

Career experts encourage staying in the game by freelancing, consulting or starting a new business. But once you've had an impressive title, saying you're "self-employed" can feel ego-crushing. When Kelly McMenamin, 50, worked as a financial analyst, she recalls, "I would walk around Manhattan dressed for interviewing CEOs." After she left that prestigious job and began a home-organizing business with her sister, everything changed: "The first day you're a small-business owner and nobody calls you back, you go from being 'somebody' to 'you're nobody,'" she says. She is now a nonprofit executive.

Many people hold tight to their former work identity. But "former" seems so sad," says Rachel Fortenberry-Deutschel, 59, who until recently was a top automotive parts executive in Detroit. "I'm not ready to face the reality of 'former.'" Nor is she ready to embrace "retired," as her grown children have urged her to do. "My identity was too much connected" to the job, she says now. "I value myself too much for what I can do at work."

Job titles can be especially important for people who belong to traditionally marginalized groups. Fortenberry-Deutschel, who was born in Brazil, says that having the title of global vice president gave her instant credibility with people she met. It was a crucial part of her own identity as well, "knowing I was able to be successful despite being an immigrant, despite being a female in the (male-dominated) automotive industry, despite being divorced. I like that validation that work gave to me."

Stop Asking People 'What Do You Do?'

As legions of retirees, laid-off workers and stay-at-home parents can attest, there are better ways to define yourself.



When James Reichert, left, moved for his then-wife's job, he had business cards that read 'Trophy Husband.' Rachel Fortenberry-Deutschel, a former auto executive, is not ready to retire: 'I like that validation that work gave to me.'

In some ways, our obsession with career as a proxy for identity is a uniquely American affliction, dating from the stern demands of the Protestant work ethic. Today that singular focus has metastasized into an unhealthy obsession that the writer Derek Thompson has dubbed "workism," in which career replaces other kinds of community, including religion.

"Perception is everything, and the way you're sometimes perceived when you've been laid off is mind boggling," says Scott, the corporate sustainability manager. Growing up in a blue-collar family of military veterans, she learned to "keep your head down, work hard, and your loyalty will be rewarded." So when she

was laid off for the first time in 2019, it "felt like I was being punched in the gut...I didn't know who I was without my job title."

When Scott was laid off a second time, in 2023, "I was still recovering emotionally from the first one. It made me feel awful about myself."

Janna Koretz, a Boston-based psychologist whose practice focuses on people in high-stress jobs, says that response is common. "Part of the reason why it feels personal is that fear of not having an identity," she says. When people lose their jobs, "they feel incredibly lost. It puts people into an existential situation."

Retirees know the feeling. This year marks "peak 65," when more

than 4 million Americans will reach the traditional retirement age—the highest number in history. This is a cohort that very often doesn't want to quit, even if it can afford to do so. Researchers have found that baby boomers are more tied to their careers, and more loyal to their companies, than younger generations. Their lives tend to be "work-centric," according to a 2022 Johns Hopkins University report.

America's culture of work may be changing, if slowly. During the pandemic, millions of people reprioritized their lives. "There is more openness in younger generations as to not necessarily always having the exact journey as someone else," says Liz Weaver, 39, of Bethesda,

Md. She left her corporate communications job earlier this year and has pivoted into career coaching. Jobs aren't a topic of conversation in her circle, she says: "I feel really strongly I don't judge people, and the people I hang out with don't judge me."

For those suffering from career "enmeshment," experts offer some suggestions on how to separate yourself from your job—and how to stop judging others.

■ **Assess your values.** What gives your life meaning? At Harvard Business School's "Life After CEO" workshop, Bill George, former CEO of Medtronic, urges retiring executives to take six months or a year to reflect on what is important to them. This allows them to discover new kinds of meaning and relevance, such as volunteering, sitting on boards or, like one of the workshop's participants, returning to his college music major and becoming a singer/songwriter.

■ **Reframe your skills.** Whatever your expertise or passion, it can be redirected. When Angela Calman, 52, of Portsmouth, R.I., was diagnosed with a rare illness, she had to quit the career she loved as a high-powered communications executive and endure a year of punishing chemotherapy. "This was a huge identity crisis for me. So much of who I am is wrapped up in what I do and loving my career," she says.

As she builds back her strength, she is refocusing her skills by creating a nonprofit, the Amyloid Action Network, to direct research into her disease and related conditions. "I'd been very good at writing other people's narratives my whole life," she says. "I now needed to write my own."

■ **Get some perspective.** For Teri Wadsworth, 45, of Evanston, Ill., losing her job was a wake-up call. A decade ago, when the innovation consulting firm she runs with her husband was going through a slow stretch, they had to lay off their staff and their children's nanny. "I didn't really know who I was right then," she says. But the experience of full-time parenting changed her perspective.

"Being home in some ways was just glorious. The first day I went to pick up my little girl she came running across the playground and gave me a huge hug. There were a lot of moments like that," Wadsworth remembers. When the business recovered, she and her husband reorganized their schedules so that they wouldn't need a nanny: It "helped me realize you can reprioritize."

■ **Make tiny changes.** Koretz, the Boston-based psychologist who has written about career enmeshment, urges clients to ease into new activities, to "build the other parts of themselves and figure out what they can do with their time and with their life to help them be fulfilled." The key, she says, is to take small steps, rather than jumping in all at once: "Our clients, when they are told to exercise more, they sign up for a marathon. That's not a sustainable life choice."

■ **Change your intro.** Find new ways to introduce yourself and greet new acquaintances that don't rely on work. Even a generic question like "What are you up to?" or "How are you doing?" can elicit a more meaningful response than "What do you do?" Fortenberry-Deutschel says she is at a

loss when people ask what she does, now that she doesn't have a job. But she loves the question "What do you like doing?" because it allows her to talk about her passion for running. "It transitions immediately to the positive," she says.

David Johnson, 53, a Washington, D.C.-based marketing and strategy consultant who has taken multiple career breaks, now leans into his identity, detours and all: "When people ask me what I do, I answer simply, 'Trock.'"

Joanne Lipman is the former chief content officer of Gannett and editor in chief of USA Today. She is the author of "Next! The Power of Reinvention in Life and Work."

REVIEW

OBITUARIES

LINDA DEUTSCH | 1943-2024



Deutsch with her notebooks from covering the O.J. Simpson trial, Los Angeles, January 1995.

She Covered the Trial of The Century. Many Times.

The longtime Associated Press correspondent reported on the trials of Charles Manson, Sirhan Sirhan, O.J. Simpson and Michael Jackson among other dramas of the modern age.

By JON MOOALLEM

Linda Deutsch was 26 years old when she covered Charles Manson's murder trial for the Associated Press. "There was such a scrum of cameras trying to get a shot of him," she recounted years later of the cult leader's first court appearance in 1969, "that they all collided, and they pulled a water fountain out of the wall, and the whole hallway was flooded." Deutsch said she turned to another reporter and whispered: "This is crazy."

It got crazier, as a spaced-out troupe of Manson's acolytes camped outside the courthouse promising to immolate themselves if "Charlie" wasn't acquitted, and as Manson—a "shaggy leather-clad chieftain," as Deutsch described him in one article—hurled himself over the counsel table at the judge, screaming "Someone should cut your head off, old man!"

At that manic moment, other reporters covering the trial had gone out for a smoke. "They all missed it," Deutsch recalled in 2013. "I was there."

Deutsch, who died Sept. 1 at home in Los Angeles at age 80 of pancreatic cancer, chronicled an astounding number of the nation's most attention-

grabbing criminal and civil trials in her nearly 50 years as an AP special correspondent—and, in the process, a sweep of American history and cast of American characters, too.

Deutsch was there for the trials of O.J. Simpson, Michael Jackson and the four police officers who beat Rodney King. She was there for the trials of Patty Hearst, John DeLorean, Exxon Valdez skipper Joseph Hazelwood, the "Night Stalker" serial killer Richard Ramirez, the Unabomber and the Menendez brothers. She was there for the trials over the deaths of John Belushi and Anna Nicole Smith, the trials when actor Robert Blake was acquitted of a murder and music producer Phil Spector was convicted of one, the trials after Daniel Ellsberg leaked the Pentagon Papers and after Winona Ryder shoplifted from Saks.

So many famous and infamous legal narratives were recorded in Deutsch's reporter's notebook that she joked on social media: "I've covered every big trial except Socrates."

Linda Deutsch was born Sept. 24, 1943, in Perth Amboy N.J.. At age 12, she founded one of America's first Elvis Presley fan clubs, cranking out typewritten bulletins on her father's mimeograph machine and mailing them to hundreds of members.

'In the end, I became a social historian.'

She wanted to be a poet. But recognizing her talent, her newspaper-editor uncle pointed her toward journalism. In the summer of 1963, at 19, Deutsch worked the night shift at the Perth Amboy Evening News, where she talked her editor into letting her cover Martin Luther King Jr.'s March on Washington. The next summer, at the Asbury Park Press, Deutsch first worked in an office bustling with journalists. "I remember I thought it was so glamorous that people drank coffee out of paper cups," she later said.

Deutsch started in the AP's Los Angeles bureau in January 1967, the only woman on staff. When Robert F. Kennedy was shot one night in 1968, Deutsch had just arrived for her shift, but the AP didn't allow women to go out and cover stories at night.

She did cover the trial of Kennedy's assassin, Sirhan Sirhan. (Almost a half-century later, Sirhan would spot Deutsch in the courtroom, covering one of his parole hearings, and flash a huge smile and a double thumbs-up.) Four months after Sirhan's conviction came the Manson murders.

"Linda started at the AP at exactly the moment when, by happenstance, we started getting a trial of the century every six months in Los Angeles," said her friend Laurie L. Levenson, a former federal prosecutor. Said Deutsch herself, on a podcast: "It was as if these people with damaged souls just came into being on the planet at the same time. It's a quandary no one will ever be able to explain."

Colleagues describe Deutsch taking notes with two different colored pens, held simultaneously in the same hand, to code quotes and facts so that at day's end she could sprint to a pay phone and dictate her story on the fly in one seamless soliloquy.

"She once told me she saw the story in her mind's eye like the news crawl in Times Square," said Terry Anzur, who worked for Deutsch during the 1976 trial of heiress-turned-bank-robber Patty Hearst. Deutsch tasked Anzur with tying up a courthouse phone by chatting for hours, so that no other reporters could use it when they all came barreling out.

Deutsch was praised for translating days of often-arcane court proceedings into relatable human drama, without sensationalizing or spinning. In a eulogy, her friend and AP colleague Edith Lederer called Deutsch "the premiere trial reporter in the United States...the gold standard for those who follow in her footsteps."

Thomas Mesereau, the lead defense attorney in Michael Jackson's 2005 trial for child molestation, said at Deutsch's funeral: "I was very suspicious of the media, to be honest...Linda was someone that I trusted unconditionally." Lance Ito, the judge in the Simpson case, also spoke—as did Deutsch's cousin, Elaine Deutsch, who noted that, one Thanksgiving, Deutsch and a friend made an absolutely stunning Judge Ito-shaped Jell-O mold.

Deutsch saw the Simpson trial, televised daily for eight months, as a turning point in the way American culture metabolized such celebrity cases. In an essay titled "Flash and Trash," she wrote of becoming a recognizable celebrity herself: "In Hawaii, a taxi driver screeched to a halt in front of me, jumped out of his car and said, 'I know you. You're from the O.J. trial.'"

Deutsch often spoke of trials as "theater" in the tradition of Shakespeare or Sophocles—dramas that animated truths about their times. Deutsch understood the Manson trial as an encapsulation of the 1960s, for example, while Patty Hearst's story articulated a certain "post-Vietnam alienation."

"In the end," Deutsch told the National Press Foundation, "I became a social historian."

Deutsch initially overcame pancreatic cancer with treatment when she was diagnosed in 2022. She began traveling again and threw herself a massive Elvis-themed 80th birthday party at the Skirball Cultural Center in Los Angeles last fall.

"When she got sick again," Negri said, "it came on really fast. She was frightened, as anybody would be. But she also said, 'I beat it, and I had the best year of my life.'"

DIKEMBE MUTOMBO | 1966-2024

An NBA Star Known for His Height and Heart

By ROBERT O'CONNELL

The 7'2" player won friends while blocking their shots and won fans for his towering presence as a trailblazer off the court.

IN THE 1990S, one of the most intimidating sights in professional basketball was a single raised index finger, wagging back and forth.

If you saw it, it meant only one thing: Dikembe Mutombo had just raised his massive hand and blocked your shot, sending it right back where it came from.

On the court, Mutombo, who died of brain cancer on Monday at the age of 58, was a titan in an era of basketball lorded over by giants, winning four Defensive Player of the Year awards while going up against the likes of Michael Jordan and Shaquille O'Neal. Off the court, Mutombo, who was raised in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (then known as Zaire), was renowned for his humanitarian and charitable work. His career was a kind of 20th-century blueprint for what the sport would become in the 21st: an expanding global game in which people from every corner of the world can participate and excel.

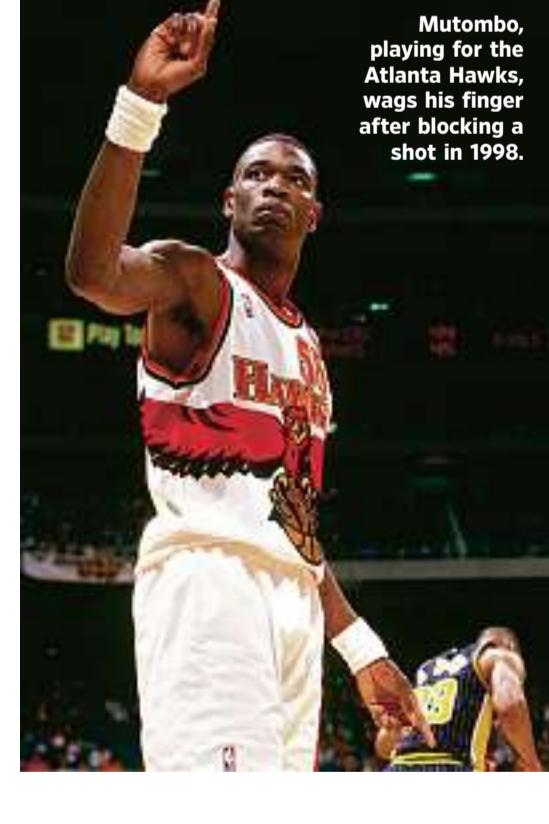
"That guy was the biggest giant that you could ever find," said Masai Ujiri, the Toronto Raptors' president who was raised in Nigeria and who visited a hospital Mutombo helped build in the Congolese capital where he was born. "The

biggest heart."

Mutombo attended Georgetown University starting in 1987, and after a year of learning English and practicing intramural basketball, he began playing for the legendary Hoyas coach John Thompson. Mutombo quickly showed a knack, not for putting the ball in the basket but for walloping it off. His first season, he averaged just 3.9 points a game but blocked 2.3 shots. Two years later, in his final college campaign, he averaged more than 15 points and 12 rebounds—and an astonishing 4.7 blocks a game.

"I didn't know the language, and I was new to the game," Mutombo said of his college days. "I was trying to learn the game as fast as I can."

Across 17 professional seasons with six franchises—he won his defensive awards with the Denver Nuggets, Atlanta Hawks and Philadelphia 76ers—Mutombo set the standard for protecting the rim. "Mount Mutombo"



Mutombo, playing for the Atlanta Hawks, wags his finger after blocking a shot in 1998.

smothered, smacked and otherwise swatted away 3,289 shots in total—the second-most blocks in NBA history.

His intimidating stature, though, belied a warm personality, and competitors were friendly with him even as they aimed to dunk over his outstretched arm—one of the rarest and most prized accomplishments in the NBA.

At an All-Star game, Mutombo and Jordan were filmed arguing over whether Jordan had managed to jam

on him. Mutombo said no; his Airness disagreed. "I haven't gotten you recently," Jordan conceded. "I agree with that."

When he was playing, Mutombo's career arc—a kid from Africa turning into a superstar in the booming NBA—was uncommon. Throughout his playing days and after he retired, Mutombo worked to make sure there would be more players like him. He became the NBA's first official global ambassador, using his fame and fortune to build schools and hospitals on his home continent.

He also coached at camps and clinics, pathways for future Mutombos to become professional players. A wide smile and ready laugh—and the wag of his iconic index finger—endeared him to global fans.

Today's NBA reflects Mutombo's influence. Each of the last six seasons, the MVP award was won by an international player; Joel Embiid, who was born and raised in Cameroon, won the 2023 trophy.

"It's a sad day, especially for us Africans, and really the whole world," Embiid said of Mutombo's death. "Because other than what is accomplished on the basketball court, I think he was even better off the court."

This week, LeBron James summed up just how nice Mutombo was: You could think fondly of the time he clobbered you. It was a rite of passage to absorb such a blow from Mutombo, who swung his arms at the height of other players' skulls. "My fondest memory of Dikembe Mutombo, he fractured my face, on my birthday in Cleveland, with an elbow," James said—with a grin.

REVIEW

By OLIVER BURKEMAN

Everybody knows the feeling of being unable to make a certain life choice, however much you'd like to, because circumstances simply don't allow it. Maybe you think you can't end an unhappy marriage because of the emotional impact on yourself and your loved ones, or that you can't leave a disappointing career because of the financial cost. On a more mundane level, you might feel that you can't spend half an hour working on an exhilarating creative project, because there are too many emails to be answered or too many household chores that need completing.

These are valid concerns. But the truth, though it often makes people indignant to hear it, is that it's almost never literally the case that you have to meet a work deadline, honor a commitment, answer an email, fulfill a family obligation or anything else. The astounding reality—in the words of Sheldon B. Kopp, a genial and brilliant American psychotherapist who died in 1999—is that you're pretty much free to do whatever you like. You need only face the consequences.

Consequences aren't optional. Every choice you make comes with some sort of consequences, because at any instant you can only pick one path, and must deal with the repercussions of not picking any of the others. Spending a week's holiday in Rome means not spending that same week in Paris. Avoiding a conflict in the short term means letting a bad situation fester.

Freedom isn't a matter of somehow wriggling free of the costs of your choice—that's never an option. It means realizing that nothing can stop you from doing anything at all, so long as you're willing to pay those costs. Unless you're being physically coerced into doing something, the notion that you "have to" do it just means that you don't want to pay the price of refusing to do it. After all, it's perfectly possible for you to quit your job with no backup plan. You could book a one-way ticket to Rio de Janeiro, or rob a bank, or tell your social media followers your honest views.

The economist Thomas Sowell summed things up by saying that there are no solutions, only trade-offs. The only questions to ask about any choice is what the price



Your Power to Choose Is Unlimited

It may feel like you can't simply decide to quit a job, end a bad marriage or say no to an invitation. But you're free to make any choice you want—as long you're ready to accept the consequences.

is, and whether or not it's worth paying.

This can come as a revelation and a liberation to the anxious among us, by reminding us that most of the potential consequences we face aren't really worth agonizing about. If ignoring an email causes its sender a flicker of irritation, or if your in-laws frown at your approach to parenting, the correct response might very well be: So what?

Laura Vanderkam, who has inter-

viewed many working mothers for books on how to manage work and family life, frequently hears versions of the same refrain: "I can't relax in the evening until the children's toys are tidied away!" But the reality, of course, is that you absolutely can relax with the toys not tidied away. "There is no 11 p.m. home inspection, with someone coming round to see if all the toys are picked up," notes Vanderkam. You need only be willing to pay the price of relaxing in such circumstances, which is a

less-than-pristine home.

Of course, the consequences of any given choice might be vastly more severe for some people than for others. There are employees who would get fired if they ignored a few emails, or spouses who would be violently abused for a toy-strewn house. But even these grossly unfair realities don't change the fact that choice is a matter of weighing the trade-offs.

If a path you'd love to take is genuinely likely to leave you desti-

tute, or seriously harmed in some other way, then you probably shouldn't take it. But for most of us, if we're being honest with ourselves, the temptation is often to exaggerate potential consequences, so as to spare ourselves the burden of making a bold choice. The philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre observed that there's a secret comfort in telling yourself you've got no options, be-

Once you approach life as a matter of trade-offs, it's easier to dare to say no to things.

cause it's easier to wallow in feeling trapped than to face the dizzying responsibilities of freedom.

Once you begin to approach life as a matter of trade-offs and consequences, it's easier to say no to things you might not previously have dared to turn down. Some people are naturals at this. "Oh dear," the English comedian Peter Cook is said to have responded when invited by a friend to have dinner with Prince Andrew. "Checking my diary, I find I'm watching television that night."

At other times, though, you'll decide to go ahead with an unpleasant obligation because you understand the cost of saying no and don't want to incur it. For example, if a friend asks you to help her move this weekend, you may decide that the stress and disappointment you'd cause her by refusing is a price you're unwilling to pay. Notice how different that is—how different it feels—from grudgingly saying yes because you "have no choice," then resenting it for days.

Whatever choice you make, so long as you make it in the spirit of facing the consequences, the result will be freedom—not freedom

from limitation, which is something we unfortunately never get to experience, but freedom in limitation. Freedom to examine the trade-offs—because there will always be trade-offs—and then to opt for whichever trade-off you like.

This essay is adapted from Oliver Burkeman's new book "Meditations for Mortals: Four Weeks to Embrace Your Limitations and Make Time for What Counts," published Oct. 8 by Farrar Straus Giroux.

CAROLE HENAFF

MASTERPIECE | 'MAPLE LEAF RAG' (1899), BY SCOTT JOPLIN

A Work of Splendid Syncopations

By JOHN EDWARD HASSE

A PULSATING PIANO SOLO by a black composer published 125 years ago this fall became an unexpected bestseller, drew droves of young people to the piano, and became an enduring classic of American music. That piece, "Maple Leaf Rag," crowned Scott Joplin the "King of Ragtime Writers."

Born near Texarkana, Texas, likely in 1867, Joplin studied music with local teachers and became, like contemporary blues pioneer W.C. Handy, an itinerant musician and then a composer.

He settled in the railroad town of Sedalia, Mo., and joined a social club called the Maple Leaf Club (no connection to Canada). It's not certain when Joplin wrote the piece, but it was copyrighted on Sept. 18, 1899. Local music merchant John Stark published it. Royalties were rather uncommon then, especially for black composers, but Stark agreed to one cent per copy. "Maple Leaf Rag" sold exceedingly well, lifting Joplin's fortunes and reputation.

The work showcases Joplin's gifts for originality, dynamic and melodic contrast, and propulsive rhythms. From the outset, it surprises with a left hand that diverges from the typi-

cal boom-chick, boom-chick pattern, instead offering seldom-heard boom-chick chick-boom figures. Joplin piques interest by varying the register (high or low) of the two hands and by mixing chords with single-note banjo-like melodies. The fourth and final theme goes out in a blaze of energy, leaving the pianist and listener with a feeling of delight and optimism. No other piano rag can match the inventiveness and exuberance of "Maple Leaf," nor its influence on later rags.

Like boogie-woogie piano, the magic of "Maple Leaf" and other such pieces lies in the polarity between the left and right hands. Each plays different rhythmic and melodic figures, and the divergence kindles aurial tension.

Joplin composed dozens of other piano rags, including "The Entertainer," most recognized as the theme from the 1973 movie "The Sting," as well as two operas, but he is best remembered by knowledgeable musicians for this singular piece.

For a well-trained pianist, the notes on the pages of "Maple Leaf Rag" don't look daunting. But perfecting the right-hand rhythms, making the chick of the boom-chick crisply staccato, establishing a groove with the bass part and coor-



dinating the two hands at a medium tempo or faster—those are challenges. Because of its difficulty, anyone who masters it can feel a sense of accomplishment. I began tackling the work when still in college, and it took me five years to finally play it at a brisk pace—but only after stumbling upon a hidden method: practicing and memorizing each hand separately.

Joplin warned, "It is never right to play ragtime fast." But some seasoned pianists ignored his wishes and sped it like a racehorse. "Maple Leaf Rag" became a test piece among professional piano "ticklers" and "professors," separating the hotshots from the wannabes. At piano "cutting contests," everyone had to know "Maple Leaf."

Ragtime became the first African-American music heard in homes of

board men, it became a mannequin on which to hang their colorful garments of style and improvisation. Indeed, ragtime became a vital root of jazz. At his famous Library of Congress recording sessions in 1938, Morton executed two very different treatments—a "Missouri" or ragtime style and his own jazz version—showing how adaptable the piece is. Johnny Guarneri even played a stunning version in 5/4 time. More than 500 recordings have been made by jazz artists of all kinds.

Recordings span the decades and a rainbow of musical styles. Performers include the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra, New Orleans soprano saxophonist Sidney Bechet, revivalist Turk Murphy's Jazz Band, the country-blues guitarist Reverend Gary Davis and the modernist jazzmen Anthony Braxton and Muhal Richard Abrams. "Maple Leaf Rag" has, in its maturity, been arranged for duo piano, accordion, percussion ensemble, string quartet and countless other combinations.

To this day, "Maple Leaf Rag" can still animate the foot, dazzle the ears and delight the mind. Its lasting power testifies to the genius of Joplin. It's an indelible, essential part of the American soundtrack.

Mr. Hasse is curator emeritus of American music at the Smithsonian. His books include "Beyond Category: The Musical Genius of Duke Ellington" (Da Capo) and "Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music" (Schirmer).

DAVID GOTTHARD



Electric Smackdown
The Porsche Taycan is gunning for Tesla and Lucid **D6**

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OFF DUTY

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

* * *

Saturday/Sunday, October 5 - 6, 2024 | **D1**

Dating App Duds

Guys, these fashion faux pas could be holding you back **D3**



'Status bags' cost more than some mortgage payments. But what kind of advantages do they really carry?

Very Important Purses

BY FARAN KRENTCIL

LIKE MARVEL VILLAINS, most fashion writers have origin stories. Mine began with a navy nylon Prada purse, salvaged from a Boston thrift store when I was a teen in the 1990s. Scuffed with black streaks and sagging, it was terribly beat-up. But I saw it as a golden ticket to a future, chicer self. No longer a screechy suburban theater kid, I would revamp myself as sophisticated, arch, even aloof. The bag, I reasoned, would lead the way.

That fall, I slung it over my shoulder like a shotgun and marched into school, where a girl far more interesting than I was called out, "Hey, cool bag." After feigning apathy—"I don't know, you could use a Sharpie on a lunch bag and it would look the same"—we became friends. She introduced me to a former classmate who worked at a magazine. That woman helped me get an internship, which led to a job.

Twenty years later, I still wonder how big of a role that

Please turn to page D2



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...say the tourists who book voyages on old-school cargo ships **D12**

STYLE & FASHION

What Kind of Status Does a 'Status Bag' Have?

Continued from page D1

Prada purse played in my future—and whether designer bags can function as a silent partner in our success. Branded luxury bags took off in 1957, when Grace Kelly posed with an Hermès bag in Life magazine. (Hermès renamed that bag "the Kelly" in 1973.) The term "status bag" was popularized in 1990 by Gaile Robinson in the Los Angeles Times, describing any purse that projects social or economic power. Not surprisingly, these accessories are costly. Kelly bags cost over \$10,000; ditto Chanel's 11.22 handbag. Some bags by Louis Vuitton and Dior command similar price points. The cost isn't repelling customers—both brands reported revenue surges in 2023. But isn't there something dusty about the idea that a branded bag carries meaning along with your phone and wallet? How much status can a status bag deliver in 2024?

Quite a lot, said Daniel Langer, a business professor at Pepperdine University and the CEO of Équité, a Swiss luxury consulting firm. Beginning in 2007, Langer showed a series of photo portraits to hundreds of people across Europe, Asia and the U.S., then asked them 60 questions. Those pictured carrying a luxury handbag were seen as "more attractive, more intelligent, more interesting," he said. The conclusion was "so ridiculous" to Langer that he repeated the studies several times over the next decade and a half. The results were always the same: "Purchasing a 'status bag' will prepare you to be more successful in your social actions. That is the data."

Intrigued, I gathered various Very Important Purses—I borrowed some from friends, and others from brands—to see if they could elevate my station with the same unspoken

'Studies say when you carry these bags, you are seen as more intelligent and more interesting to be with. It sounds made up but it's true.'

oomph as a "Pride and Prejudice" suitor.

First, I took Alaïa's Le Teckel bag—a narrow purse resembling an elegant flute case and carried by actress Margot Robbie—to New York's Carlyle Hotel on a Saturday night. The line for the famous Bemelmans Bar stretched to the fire exit. "Can I get a table right away?" I asked the host, holding out my bag like a passport before an international flight. "It's very busy," he said in hushed tones. "But come sit. A table should open soon." I sank into one of the Carlyle's lush red sofas and sipped a martini while waiting—a much nicer way to kill 30 minutes than slumped against a lobby wall.

Wondering if this was a one-time thing, I called up Desta, the mononymous "culture director" (read: gatekeeper) for Manhattan celebrity hide-outs like Chapel Bar and Boom, the Standard Hotel bar that hosts the Met Gala's official after party. "Sure, we pay attention to bags," he said. "Not too long ago at Veronika," the Park Avenue restaurant where Desta also steered the social ship, "we had one table left. A woman had a Saint Laurent bag from the Hedi Era," he said, referencing Hedi Slimane, the brand's revered designer from 2012 to 2016. "I said, 'Give her the table. She appreciates style. She'll appreciate this place.'"

Some say a status bag can open professional doors, too. Cleo Capital founder Sarah Kunst, who lives between San Francisco and



HANDLE WITH FLAIR

Classic status bags photographed in their element—at Caviar Kaspia, the five-star restaurant inside the historic (and very expensive) Mark hotel on New York's Upper East Side. Clockwise from left: Louis Vuitton Alma BB Bag, \$2,020; Dior Small Lady Dior Bag, \$6,000; Chanel 11.22 Bag, \$10,800.



London, notes that in private-equity circles, these accessories can act as a quick head-nod in introductory situations. Kunst says that especially as a Black woman, she found a designer bag to be "almost like armor" at the beginning of her career. "You put it on, and if you're walking into a work event or a happy hour where you need to network, it can help you fit in immediately." She cites Chanel flap bags made from the brand's signature quilted leather and stamped with a double-C logo as an industry favorite. "People love to talk about them. They'll say, 'Ohhh, I love your bag,' in a low voice." They talk to you, said Kunst, "like you're a tiger."

For high-stakes jobs that rely on commissions—sports agents or sales reps, for instance—a fancy handbag can help establish credibility. "It says, 'I'm succeeding at my job,'" said Mary Bonnet, vice president of the Oppenheim Group, the California real-estate firm at the center of Netflix reality show "Selling Sunset." As a new real-estate agent in her 20s, Bonnet brought a fake designer bag to a meeting. To her horror, a potential buyer had the real thing. "I work in an industry where trust is important, and there I was being inauthentic. That was a real lesson." Now Bonnet rotates several (real) Saint Laurent and Chanel bags, but notes that a super-expensive purse could alienate some clients. "I don't think I'd walk into [some client homes] with a giant Hermès bag."

Hermès bags are supposedly the apex predator of purses. But I didn't feel invincible when I strapped a Kelly bag around my chest like a pebbled-leather ammo belt. The dun-brown purse cost \$11,800, a sum that prompted my boyfriend to ask if I needed a bodyguard. Shaking with "is this insured?" anxiety, I walked into a showing for an \$8.5 million apartment steps from Central Park. I

made it through the door but was soon stopped by a gruff real-estate agent asking if I had an appointment. No, but I had an Hermès bag? Alas, it wasn't enough. The gleaming black door closed in my face.

"What went wrong?" I asked Dafna Goor, a London Business School professor who studies the psychology behind luxury purchases. "You felt nervous," she replied. "That always makes others uncomfortable, especially in a high stakes situation," like an

open house with jittery agents. Goor said recognizable bags from Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior are also often faked, which can lead to suspicion if not paired with "other signals of wealth."

"You can't just treat a bag as a backstage pass," said Jess Graves, who runs the shopping Substack the Love List. Graves says bags are more of a secret code shared between potential connections. "I've been in line for coffee and a woman will see my Margaux [from the Row] and go, 'Oh, I know that bag.' Then we'll chat." Graves moved from Atlanta to Manhattan in 2023, and says she's made some new, local friends thanks to these "bag chats."

I had my own bag chat that night, when I brought Khaite's Olivia—a slim crescent of shiny maroon leather—to a house party thrown by a rock star I'd never met. In fact I knew hardly any guests, but as I stood in the kitchen, a woman in vintage Chanel pointed to my bag and asked, "How did you get that color? It's sold out!" Before I could tell her my name, she told me the make and model of my purse. Then she laughed about her ex-boss, a tech billionaire, and encouraged me to buy some cryptocurrency. The token I picked surged nearly 30% in about a week. Now I was onto something—a status bag that might bring not just status, but an actual market return.

Thanks to their prominence on social media, certain bags have gained favor among Gen Zers. "TikTok and Instagram make some luxury items even more visible and more desirable to young people," said Goor. I experienced this firsthand on a stormy Saturday morning, when a girl in a college hoodie pointed at my Miu Miu Wander bag as I puddle-hopped through downtown New York. The piglet-pink purse is a TikTok favorite seen on young stars like Sydney Sweeney and Hailey Bieber. "Your bag is everything!" yelled the girl from the crosswalk. "Thanks, can I have your umbrella?" I shouted back. She laughed and left. My Wander had made a splash—but it couldn't keep me dry. I ran to the subway, soaked. The bag looked even better wet.



Changing the Status Bag Quo

Got your eye on the handbag horizon? Look out for these modern ascenders.

Everyone loves an ingénue—fashion insiders included. Perhaps that's why at Paris Fashion Week in September, newer handbags from Bottega Veneta and Loewe jostled for space and street-style flashbulbs. "These bags, especially ones by independent labels like Khaite, are quieter signals of cultural access," explained Dafna Goor, a professor of luxury psychology at the London Business School. "Everyone knows what an Hermès Kelly bag is. So now there need to be new signals" beyond traditional status bags to convey power.

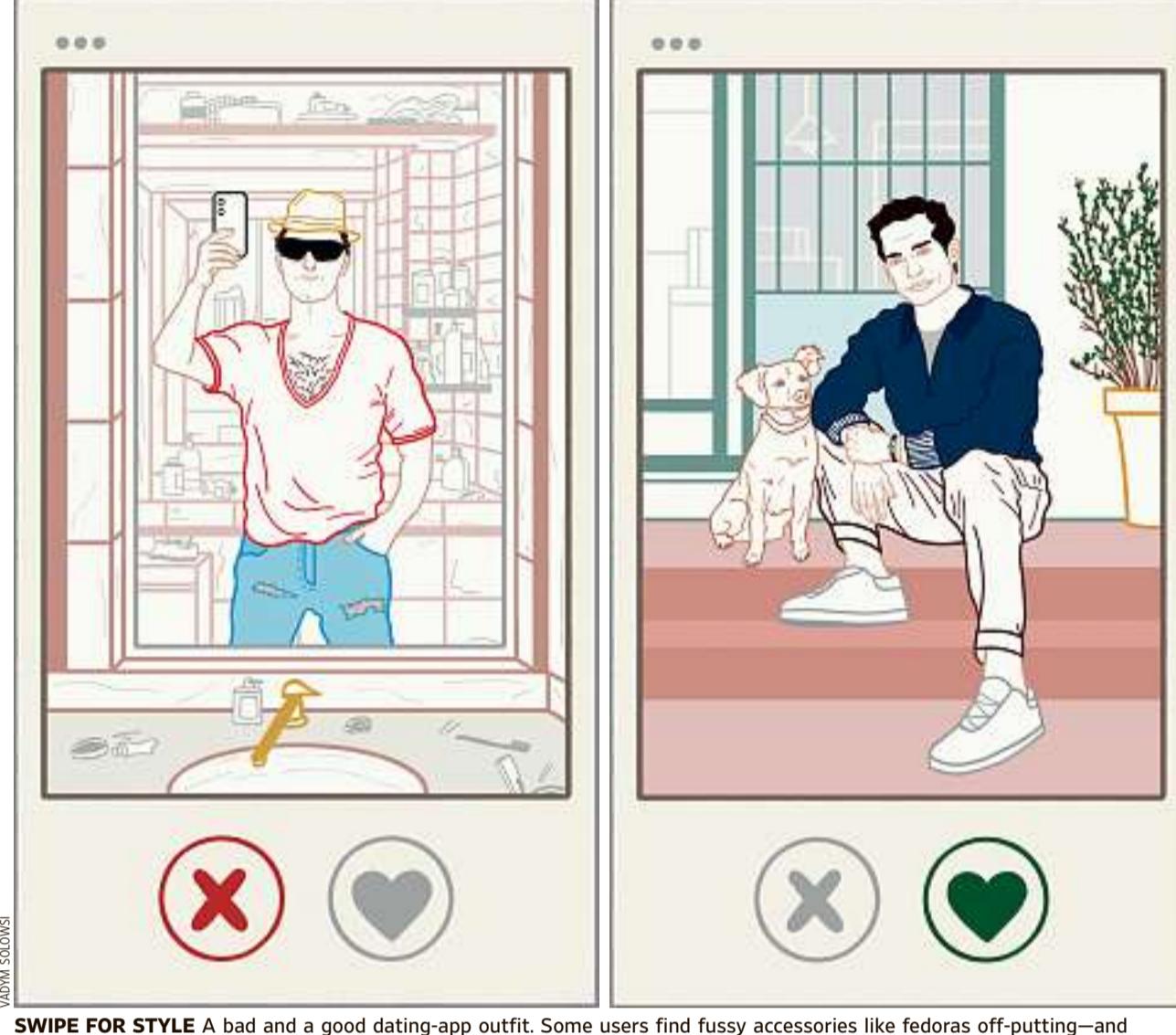
Sasha Bikoff Cooper, a Manhattan interior designer, says there's a less cynical explanation for why these bags have captured celebrity fans—and more important, paying customers. "They're fresh and also beautiful," she said. "Hermès is always classic. It's like a first love. But you want newness, too."

◀ **THE NEW GUARD** Clockwise from top: Miu Miu Wander Bag, \$2,750; Loewe Flamenco Bag, \$4,300; Khaite Medium Olivia Bag, \$2,000; Bottega Veneta Parachute Bag, \$5,900; Alaïa Le Teckel Bag, \$2,700

STYLE & FASHION

Heart-Winning Style

Why are men dressed so badly on dating apps? And what kind of looks will make them stand out—in a good way? We consulted style pros and singles for do's and please-don'ts.



SWIPE FOR STYLE A bad and a good dating-app outfit. Some users find fussy accessories like fedoras off-putting—and sunglasses indoors an absolute turnoff. Widely appealing: classic clothes accessorized with a bit of bling and a dog.

By GRACE COOK

LOUISE NISTLER, a 32-year-old New Yorker, estimates that only 10-15% of the men she comes across on dating app Hinge could be described as well-dressed. According to Nistler, a data scientist, some guys “look like they’re trying too hard,” posing in garish shirts and fussy accessories like fedoras. Most, however, show themselves in ill-fitting shirts or worn-out polos—as if they “haven’t been shopping since high school.”

Photos of guys in mismatched suits or squeezed into too-tight tees are rife on apps such as Raya and Hinge, says Hannah Kitto, a client-relations manager in London. And don’t get the 29-year-old started on the number of bathroom selfies co-starring toilets. Blaine Anderson, a dating coach for men in Austin, Texas, called out jeans with flip-

flops, and stained tops, as serial dating-profile offenders: “I’m like, ‘Dude, seriously? You literally have dinner down your shirt.’”

These women acknowledged that it might seem shallow to swipe left because of a bad outfit. But on an app—and, indeed, on a date that might eventuate—first impressions count. Sporting subpar looks on your profile is a missed opportunity, notes Anderson. Nailing those outfits “gets you past the first hurdle” and can create more chances to chat, she said.

Looking for love? Now’s the time to up your game. “Cuffing season,” the colloquial term for the post-summer period in which many singletons seek a mate for the colder months, has arrived. (“Cuff” alludes to handcuffs—i.e., shackling yourself to a paramour.) Men on apps should think twice about the message they’re sending with their clothes, says Michaela Mur-

ray, a New York stylist who advises guys aged 20 to 60-plus on their dating-app outfits. “Casual [outfits] might say I’m down to earth,” she said, while a more formal ensemble, like a blazer over a turtleneck, could suggest you’re a man

who “enjoys the finer things in life.”

Jordan McFarlane, the managing director of an educational nonprofit in London, says a good profile outfit can make him think a guy is “invested and reliable, and that they care.” To

WORTH A DATE / AN OUTFIT TO WIN HINGE, CONQUER TINDER, RULE RAYA



Clockwise from top left: NN.07 Raymond Lightweight Polo, \$220; MM6 Maison Margiela Classic Chain Bracelet, \$270; Noah Single-Pleat Baggy Chino, \$248; Vans Authentic Shoe, \$55; Uniqlo Colorful 50 Socks, \$5; Longines Flagship Heritage Moonphase, \$3,050

PRADA

the fashionable 32-year-old, such a look might feature timeless items interspersed with pops of interest. Socks in bright solids—not novelty prints, he made clear—make a “basic outfit snap.”

On Hinge, users can “like” individual photos. The most popular shot on McFarlane’s profile features a layered outfit fit for the cuffing months. He’s wearing a white T-shirt, a sage-green half-zip sweater, a navy puffer and stone-washed jeans with turned-up hems. Kelly-green socks, trendy Adidas Samba sneakers, a vintage baseball cap and round tortoiseshell glasses up the personality. He thinks the look attracts attention for its reliable and wholesome vibe.

quality versions with small, playful motifs from a brand like Maison Kitsuné, says Nguyen. Another way to beat blandness: Add a bit of bling, such as a box-chain bracelet, a chunky signet ring or a vintage watch.

Several pros find wildly patterned shirts too divisive and advise men to stick to solid shades or understated prints (a classic ticking stripe is always good). But you can still have fun with shirts, insisted Nguyen, who praises brighter greens and blues as safe bets that complement most skin tones.

Don’t let yourself down with the shoes. Avoid flip-flops at all costs, stressed Anderson—“unless you live in Hawaii or are actually on a beach [in the photo].” She

Dating coach Blaine Anderson says some men have stained tops in their pics. ‘I’m like, Dude, you have dinner down your shirt.’

Indeed, approachability is key. For a swipe in the right direction Anderson recommends exercising restraint, advising that you start with a clean, white crew-neck tee. Tuck that into dark jeans, which read sharper than light ones, says Peter Nguyen, a personal stylist in New York. He often puts guys in trousers from Officine Générale that sit slightly higher on the waist, to elongate the legs. Add an understated black leather belt, he says.

Nguyen, who often advises men about date outfits, emphasized that this isn’t about erasing individuality. But he recommends playing up quirks that feel grown up and appropriate. Into rock ‘n’ roll? Reach for a leather bomber. Avid gamer? Instead of wearing cartoonish T-shirts, grab

suggests pulling on Chelsea boots from Aussie brand Blundstone, which read as hardworking and sturdy. White leather or canvas sneakers look easy and unsloppy, says Murray; go for Stepney Workers Club, Koio or even simple Vans.

Any hard-won style gains could be undone by a cringe setting. Nistler begs that you resist the urge to post a clichéd photo brandishing a freshly caught fish. She finds hiking shots a much cooler way to telegraph outdoorsiness. And please don’t upload pictures of yourself with 10 friends, says Kitto—your potential suitors don’t want to play “Where’s Waldo?”

Universally appealing scenes? Strolling in a park or playing with a dog. Just make sure the puppy’s paws haven’t stained your shirt.

STYLE & FASHION



DENIM, UPGRADED Left: Frame founder Erik Torstensson with model Gisele Bündchen. Above: Karlie Kloss in her own Frame design.

Frame's board.

Their watershed moment was selling a quarter million pairs in 2014, said Grede. "First we made \$6 million, then \$36 million, then \$63 million and then \$100 million."

The growth made the demands of running the company suddenly very real. They focused on organizing the business, which now has around 200 employees. Grede relocated in 2017 to L.A. to run Kim Kardashian's Skims label. Torstensson now lives in New York, where he focuses on Frame full-time as chief creative officer. The guy they first found to make jeans, Nico Peyrache, became their head of denim. It was Grede's idea to bring in Rosen as a minority investor; they had met while consulting for Rosen's brand Theory. "We can either make all the mistakes ourselves, or work with a guy who has done this before," Grede recalled saying. Rosen says Frame's value on the market is clear: Now that luxury prices have shot up—plain blue jeans from Celine cost \$1,100 to \$1,500—Frame's relative affordability gives the brand a great deal of leeway.

In early 2020, CEO Nicolas Dreyfus joined Frame from French high street brand the Kooples, to oversee even more expansion. Dreyfus focused on building the direct-to-consumer business, both online and in



BLUE JEAN BABY Influencer Alix Earle stars in Frame's fall ads inspired by New Wave films.

Frame has turned a single style of jeans into a \$200 million business. They're not quite sure how.

By ELISA LIPSKY-KARASZ

ONE NIGHT IN 2011, Natalie Massenet, the founder of online retailer Net-a-Porter, nervously tried on a pair of jeans in her London townhouse. She had sold plenty of them, but this particular pair didn't look so promising by the standards of the era. They weren't too skinny, too stiff, dyed or decorated. Just simple, deep blue jeans with a gold button. Even worse, this pair had been made by her boyfriend, Erik Torstensson, a creative director who was now trying his hand at designing denim.

"Well, there goes our relationship," Massenet remembers thinking. But to her relief, the jeans were "chic and not tacky." 12 years on, the couple is still together. And Frame, Torstensson's denim brand, is ringing up nearly \$200 million a year in sales.

Denim is a supersaturated category, one where former superstars like J. Brand have crashed and burned into fashion obsolescence. Yet Frame has grown steadily for 12 years—including 20% sales growth thus far over last year—with paid print ads or fundraising. It's still owned by Torstensson and co-founder Jens Grede, whom he calls his "brother." Now Frame is opening new outposts including a Paris office, a shop in Shanghai and five new stores across the U.S. Though it launched with just one style of jeans, half of the brand's sales now come from ready-to-wear for men and women. Many pieces cost below \$500.

"Frame wasn't really supposed to work," said Torstensson from his East Hampton home. He and Grede launched it on a lark. At the time, the native Swedes ran the Saturday Group, a set of London-based agencies that mostly created advertising and marketing campaigns for a fashion clientele. They knew a guy in L.A. who said he could help them make jeans and thought, "Why not?" Even the name was gut instinct:

Frame has five letters and therefore would look symmetrical as a logo.

Frame was initially financed by their Saturday Group earnings. The launch strategy was modeled after luxury fashion rather than the contemporary jeans market. "Because we worked with all these big brands, we thought, 'OK, you need to do a campaign with a supermodel, and we need to do an event at fashion week because that's what our clients do, and it should come in a beautiful box because Chanel does that,'" said Torstensson. A key difference: They leveraged the relatively new platform Instagram rather than buying pricey magazine ads.

It helped to have model friends. The duo canvassed them for ideas, resulting in a slightly higher rise and quality denim that stretched without bagging out, as well as cuts inspired by French styling of the 1970s. The effect was quiet luxury before that really existed. At shoots for Saturday clients, or when they saw them socially, Torstensson and Grede handed Gisele Bündchen, Anja Ru-

bik and Miranda Kerr the results. They were inevitably paparazzi'd wearing them, or they posted them on their own social media feeds. Over dinner during Paris Fashion Week in 2013, Torstensson and another supermodel friend, Karlie Kloss, concocted the idea of a collaboration. "I was this lanky model, and I could never find jeans long enough," Kloss said. A new denim cut was born.

The Forever Karlie came in two styles, one skinny and one flared, each with 40-inch inseams. "It was the first time I was given the opportunity to launch something that was my own," said Kloss, who took a percentage of sales. "That gave me the confidence and the data to show to other brands and companies that there was a potential to build around me." Other similarly structured collaborations followed with models like Imaan Hammam and stylists like Julia Sarr-Jamois.

"They were on the forefront of the influencer thing and celebrity endorsement, things that are now commonplace," said fashion investor Andrew Rosen, who is on

'They were at the forefront of the influencer thing, which is now commonplace.'

bricks-and-mortar stores. In 2019, Frame had 10 stores, all in the U.S. The brand now has 17, including two in London and the newest in China.

With a seasoned exec on board, Torstensson is more free to indulge his creativity. He often shoots Frame campaigns himself, though he sometimes cedes the camera to photographers like Inez van Lamsweerde and Vinoodh Matadin, who recently shot influencer Alix Earle for a fall collaboration.

Other Torstensson brain waves include the ongoing Ritz Paris collaboration, featuring sweatshirts and caps with the hotel's logo, and luxurious new store designs. A sinuous metallic table featured in the revamped Madison Avenue boutique is actually something he designed, with the help of AI, and retails for \$22,000. More furniture will follow.

Torstensson is excited by the brand's maturation. "It's like we were in puberty," he said. "Now that we are a little older, we can do so much more."

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GEAR & GADGETS



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Porsche Turns Up the Heat in The Electrified Arms Race

IN THE AGE of electric performance, *gloria mundi* transits pretty quickly. Our guest last week, the 2025 Lucid Air Sapphire, went around all summer calling itself the quickest production sedan in the world, having dethroned the painfully immediate Tesla Model S Plaid.

This week, the quickest thing with four doors is the 2025 Porsche Taycan Turbo

GT (\$250,575, as tested). This diamond-hard, slightly overbred variant of the revised Taycan sedan can punch itself to 124 mph in 6.6 seconds and reach a top speed of 180 mph, PDQ. The Turbo GT is the first production car to break the 2-second mark from 0-60 mph (1.9 seconds) using Car and Driver's strict testing methodology. On behalf of a

grateful nation: Oww. If the Turbo GT forecasts the soulless, emotionally sterile future of performance driving, count me in. The damn thing feels nuclear powered. Together, the Model S Plaid, the Sapphire and the Taycan Turbo GT have only themselves to rival; behold three of the quickest, fastest, most powerful production automobiles

on the planet. I wonder if they are giving EVs a bad name?

Like the Plaid and the Sapphire, the Turbo GT is a six-figure halo car, a new collectible built for media influencers, one-of-each collectors and other fringe elements. It is priced accordingly. I noted that for many commenters under the Lucid story, the quarter-million-dollar figure alone represented the height of consumer folly, if not a kind of wealth-based dementia. I worry that the rising class of unspeakably fast, stupidly expensive electrics might be sending the wrong signal to the larger culture, conflating electrification with a nutty and detached elitism. Perhaps I am late to that party.

Introduced in 2019, the Taycan was Porsche's first swing at an electric performance sedan that could compete with the pivotal Tesla Model S. While Taycans sold reasonably well—about 150,000 units worldwide—the cars didn't stack up to Model S in some important metrics, including range, charging speed, convenience and packaging (luggage space).

Five years later, the redux Taycan—also available in the U.S. in the Sport Turismo body style—has nearly outgrown its adolescence. For 2025, all cars get a stronger, lighter and more efficient battery pack, providing more power, range and acceleration across the board. The better battery and 800V

hardware allows Taycan to fast-charge at up to 320 kW—equivalent to a 10-80% recharge in 18 minutes. A 150-kW DC/DC converter is also standard equipment that will speed up charging at 400V chargers.

The Taycan was also hamstrung by the capacity of its silicon pulse inverters, which are the semiconductor devices that convert direct current from the battery into AC current for the motor, and back again.

2025 Taycans get more powerful and efficient silicon carbide chips in the rear pulse inverter, with a nominal rating of 900A. The front

I worry that the rising class of unspeakably fast, stupidly expensive EVs might send the wrong signal—a nutty, detached elitism.

pulse inverter (600A) continues to use conventional silicon chips. Thanks to the high-capacity switches, the battery can now disgorge more power with less heat. The bigger switches also allow the Taycan to reabsorb up to 400 kW of regenerative braking energy, even before calling on Brembo brakes the size of Hoplite shields.

Current is no longer a problem. The Turbo GT restrains itself to a mere 777 hp in everyday driving. In order to access the pants-filling maxima of 1,019 hp, drivers have to use the Launch Control, which pro-

SPLIT SECONDS The Taycan Turbo GT is even speedier than its speedy predecessors.

vides an overboost function. Our example also featured the vaguely immoral Attack Mode function. Pressing the red button on the drive-mode selector sends output soaring by up to 120 kW (160 hp) for as long as 10 seconds. Once Attack Mode is engaged, the display will count down from 10 to 1 for as long as you're gunning it. Relax and continue to scream normally.

Oh, and it makes a sound, all right. Plenty of them, actually. As you lay on the throttle the synth-sound system fills the cabin with juice-pumping resonances, muscular aural washes and spiraling polytonal vortexes.

Or you can turn it off, spoilsport.

Corseted in black and neon-blue leather upholstery and coutured in a clingy black metallic paint, our test car waited at the curb, practically pouting. But when I approached with the key fob in hand, the car leapt to attention. The powerful hydraulics that support the active suspension suddenly pressurized, raising the car's body 2 inches in about a second—shushhssst—welcoming me aboard. That's cool.

With two body styles, nine trim levels, and options for single-motor/rear drive or dual-motor/all-wheel drive configurations, there are plenty of choices for the amply financed. Porsche makes an even more rarefied version of the Turbo GT called the Weissach package. In January, factory driver Lars Kerns orbited the Nürburgring Nordschleife with a lap time of 7:07.55, claiming the record for a production four-door of any description.

Remember when petrolheads used to say EVs couldn't even complete a full lap? What was that, two years ago?

The rising tide of equipment has been especially good for the entry-level car. For 2025, all cars get upgraded to four-corner adaptive air suspension, including

I worry that the rising class of unspeakably fast, stupidly expensive EVs might send the wrong signal—a nutty, detached elitism.

the option of active ride control, which is a little bit of magic. Even the humblest Taycan offers a push-to-pass function, summoning another 70 kW (94 hp) of oomph, for a nominal output of 402 hp.

Not that I don't enjoy having 1,019 hp to swing like a gold watch on a chain, but I could probably make do with less. Even the slowest Taycan is fast enough. For a price less than half of our test car, the basic Taycan can jolt you and your loved ones to 0-60 mph in entirely adequate 4.5 seconds, 0.6 seconds quicker than the car it replaces.

That'll do, pig.

2025 PORSCHE TAYCAN TURBO GT



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Price, as tested \$250,575

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rear axle; single gearset in

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wheel drive; 600A and 900A

pulse inverters front and rear; 97 kWh (net) 800V lithium-ion battery pack

Length/height/width/wheel-

base 195.6/114.2/78.7/54.3

inches

Max system power 777

hp/1,019 hp with Launch

Control

Curb weight 5,090 pounds

0-60 mph 2.2 secs (Porsche)

Top speed 180 mph

Cargo capacity 14.5 cubic

feet (3 front/11.5 rear)

Estimated range 276 miles

Maximum charging rate 320

kW, equivalent to 10-80% re-

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EATING & DRINKING

BY CHARLOTTE DRUCKMAN

WHAT IF I TOLD you some of the most artful desserts embrace flaws? It's true. In professional baking circles, individual expression is in. Home bakers can benefit from leaning into it, and perhaps letting go of some inhibitions, too.

Forget clean lines and smooth edges. Stop worrying if your birthday cake doesn't look exactly like the one you saw in a cookbook. Learn to trust yourself.

At ByClio bakery in Brooklyn, Clio Goodman is known for creative combinations of flavors like strawberry, sumac and labneh, but her painterly, textured decoration makes, if anything, an even stronger statement. "It's the beauty in imperfection," she said, considering the appeal of her loose and lavish style, which is given to kinetic whorls of frosting and an unstudied strewing of flowers. Yet she used to find cake decorating tedious. "For years, I refused to do it," said the pastry chef.

Born into a family of artists and an illustrator herself, Goodman revisited her anti-decoration policy in 2022 after seeing the work of painter Amanda Farber. "During the pandemic she started messing around with cakes, and they were amazing. I real-

Forget clean lines and smooth edges. Stop worrying if your birthday cake doesn't look exactly like the one you saw in a cookbook.

ized, Oh my God, she's just breaking the rules," Goodman said. "I was like, I can do that. I wanted to find my own sense of cake."

From then on, Goodman approached her cakes the way she would works on paper. "I wanted to enjoy the process of frosting instead of trying to achieve something that maybe wasn't natural to me," she explained. "I was just exploring the movement, and I realized I really liked the swirl."

Where most cake artists would name buttercream as their medium of choice, Goodman prefers whipped cream. It swirls better, with less resistance, and is more forgiving. A cream-based frosting is always ready to eat—and spread—straight from the refrigerator, whereas stiffer buttercream must first come to room temperature.

Imperfectly Yours

Today's most beautiful cakes are more expressive than immaculate

FREE DESIGN

A ByClio strawberry-milk cake with roasted strawberry-sumac filling and labneh frosting.



This is one of many lessons Goodman has shared with the team at her bakery and the students in her cake-decorating classes. "I'm really teaching them to relax as much as I'm teaching them to frost," she said. For example, when one employee got so frustrated by their results that they acted out with an angry, thoughtless swipe of frosting, Goodman told them to continue the very same mark-making again, and again: "You're just pushing it around. You're putting it in different places. You're applying different pressure. You're making bigger mountains, smaller mountains."

A ByClio-style cake gives hesitant bakers license to loosen up. The same can be said of the second cookbook from Hetal Vasavada, of the popular blog "Milk & Carda-

mom." The recipes in "Desi Bakes" (Oct. 15, Hardie Grant)

draw upon their author's heritage in India's applied arts. Her Gujarati mother's side of the family is in cotton-growing and weaving. "My mom did the sewing and embroidery work and beadwork," Vasavada said. "She showed me how to do it, just like her mom showed her." Vasavada's Indian-fusion baking has long been a showcase for the flavors and ingredients of her parents' homeland. But over the years, it's become a homage to the decorative motifs of India's handicrafts, as well—minus the clichés. "I'm showing that India is more than paisley elephants and peacocks," she said.

Vasavada applies the lippan kaam technique—traditionally used to embed mirrored



▶ Find Hetal Vasavada's recipe for Gajar Ka Halwa Blondies at [WSJ.com/Eating](#).

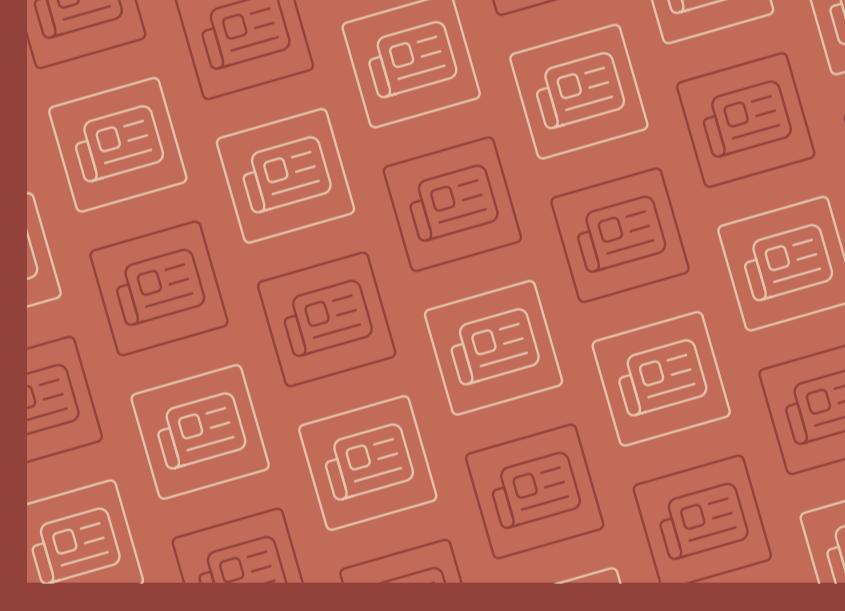
tiles in clay, mosaic style—to a chocolate cake's salted-vanilla Swiss-meringue frosting, embedding the surface with edible silver beads. She translates lehariya, a Rajasthani tie-dye technique, to aam papad (fruit leather), alternating mango and strawberry purée for a striped effect. These crafts might sound intricate, but Vasavada's recipes make them quite accessible to anyone wanting to make desserts stand out visually.

Like Goodman's cakes, Vasavada's creations emphasize the human hand behind the design. "You might have a squiggle, or a line might not be that straight, but that's OK because the beauty in handicrafts or anything made by hand is that you see the evidence of human error," Vasavada said. "You'll see that it's not perfect, but it's still pretty."

Some of Vasavada's decorative patterns might require a little more practice or experience, but even in those cases she provides options to ease beginners in. Plus, she keeps it fun. Makeup brushes become tools for dusting gold powder or sparkly luster dust, or painting on food coloring for line work. Blend a little vodka into your luster dust, and you can paint that on, too.

If you're not ready to bust out the brushes, start with the Gajar Ka Halwa Blondies, a recipe based on a traditional cardamom-scented sweet made of carrots cooked in milk and ghee. Vasavada puts each baked square through a simple beauty routine: a smear of cream cheese frosting, punctuated by an edible flower of your choosing. With a single swirl, you've got yourself a work of art. No two will look the same, and that's the beauty.

FROM LEFT: CLIO GOODMAN; HETAL VASAVADA



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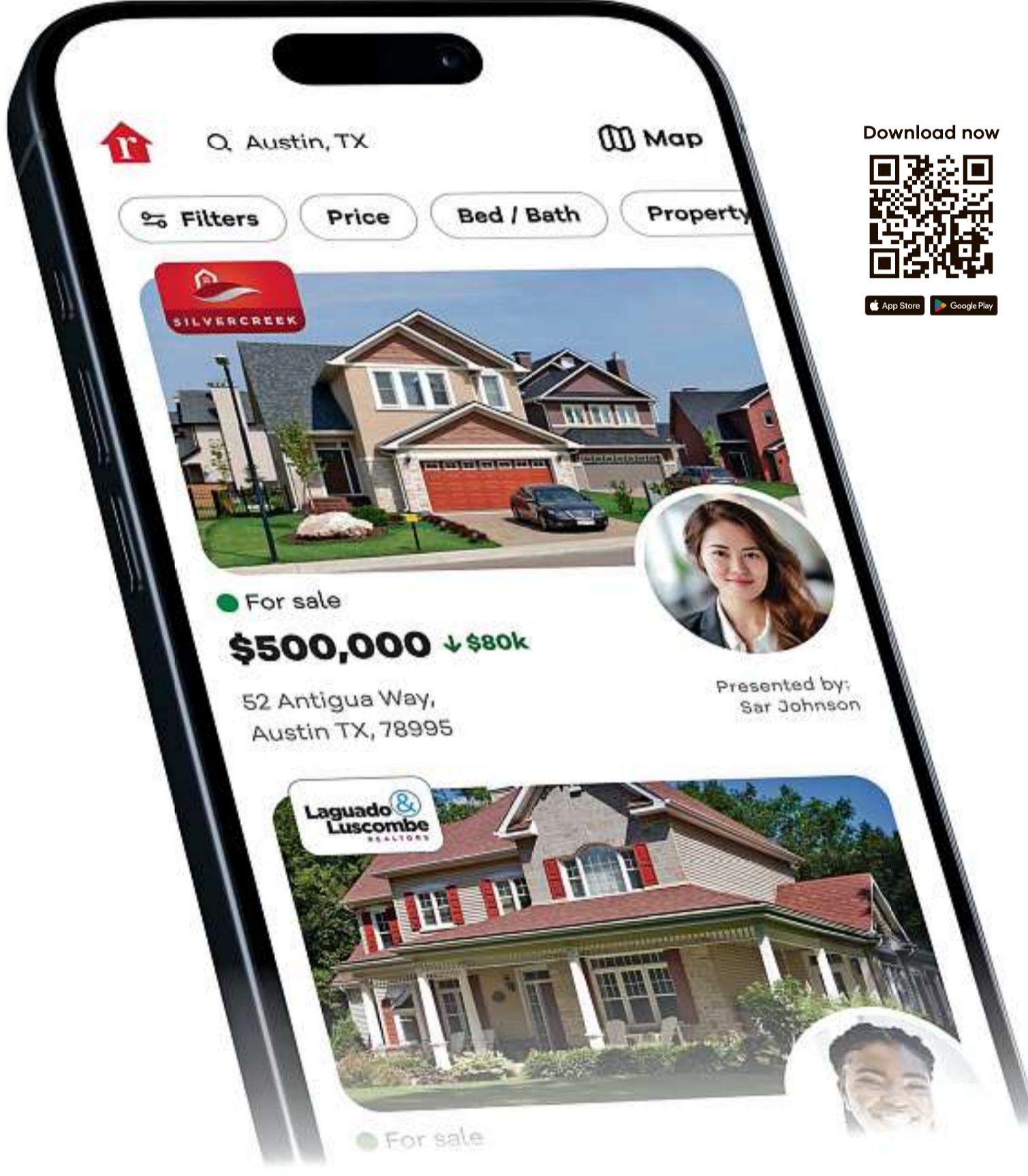
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EATING & DRINKING



LEHEL KOVACS (2)

ON WINE / LETTIE TEAGUE



A Piece of Wine Advice, From Those Who Know Best

THEY MIGHT HAVE a reputation for being intimidating, perhaps even imperious, but the sommeliers I know—the best of them, anyway—are approachable and eager to share their knowledge and their love of wine.

However, they can only impart so much information tableside. So I asked for a top recommendation from each of the following wine pros. They were generous with their insights for oenophiles in search of wines that deliver maximum pleasure and great value too.

'Drink outside your comfort zone.' —Allie Balin, food and beverage director of the Wildset Hotel and Ruse Restaurant, St. Michaels, Md. "We have a lot of customers who only want a New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc or a California Chardonnay, or they want a Napa Cabernet," said Balin,

noting that in St. Michaels, a small town, most restaurant wine lists feature such wines. "If you want to get a little crazy you put a Malbec on the list," she added with a laugh. Balin goes (much) further than that.

While she does offer a California Chardonnay at Ruse, her list also features an Aligote and a Grenache Blanc from California, as well as a few other, more obscure wines I'd be happy to try. For die-hard California Cabernet fans, Balin suggests the Vina Sastre Roble, a red from Ribera del Duero, Spain, with a similar structure and fruit profile.

She finds it particularly gratifying when someone not only tries one of her suggestions but returns to taste another unfamiliar wine.

"There are just so many fabulous wines out there," said Balin. She couldn't think of a

varietal she didn't love—and that includes Cabernet.

'Drink based on the producer rather than the vintage or appellation.'

—Aviram Turgeman, beverage director, Chef Driven Hospitality Group, New York While some wine drinkers might be faithful to a particular region or pay close attention to vintages, Turgeman, who oversees the wine lists of 16 New York restaurants, suggests you choose based on the producer instead.

"Even the most humble appellation of a great producer is a great bet," he said. For example, Turgeman suggests trying the 2019 Anseillan, a more-affordable wine launched in 2018 by Château Lafite Rothschild, home of the great first-growth Bordeaux. A bottle costs \$195 at Nice Matin, one-tenth the typical

price of its famed peer.

Turgeman noted a few other wines that offer a taste of greatness at an affordable price. The Domaine Jamet Côtes du Rhône, at \$115 on the Nice Matin list, makes a far-more-affordable swap for the sought-after and pricey Domaine Jamet Côte-Rôtie, which ranges between \$395 and \$795, depending on vin-

'Drink one glass of wine and recork the bottle for another day.' —Chris Ray, sommelier, Lutèce, Washington, D.C.

Too many wines are consumed far too rapidly, contends Ray. "I find that almost every bottle shows better the next day," he said. Otherwise, too often, "the aromatics fall by the wayside." I, too, have

Plenty of wines from less-heralded appellations are both worthy choices and considerably cheaper.

tage. Or try a basic Bourgogne from a great producer to get a taste of the same talent that produces a grand cru. The Coquard Fleurot Bourgogne Rouge (\$105 on the Nice Matin list) is "a magnificent glimpse of pristine Cotes de Nuits fruit."

seen far too many wine drinkers pay far too little attention to the aromas in their glass by rushing to down its contents. And yet so much can be ascertained simply by smelling a wine. (Find the best imaginable explanation of how and why in the seminal work "The Taste of Wine," by the great oenologist Emile Peynaud.)

Decanting helps to release aromatic compounds, too. Ray said that most wines will begin to open up after 30 minutes, though that might not be long enough for certain young wines.

I'd presumed his recorking tip was intended for oenophiles enjoying wine at home. But has a diner at his restaurant ever drunk just one glass of wine from a bottle they purchased and

taken the rest to go? Ray did recall a couple who particularly liked a wine he served during one course of a pairing dinner, the 2021 Mee Godard Morgan Corcelette. "They wanted to take a bottle home to enjoy later," he said. "I advised opening it the night before they intended to drink [it]."

'Price doesn't necessarily equate with quality.'

—Jared May, wine director and general manager, Vida Restaurant, Indianapolis

While the best wines of Burgundy and Bordeaux are more sought after than most others on the planet and, consequently, exponentially more expensive, plenty of wines from less-heralded appellations are both worthy choices and considerably cheaper.

The Loire Valley is a particularly good source of quality wines at reasonable prices, May noted, and Cabernet Francs from the subregion of Saumur Champigny are particularly good values. He was also quite enthusiastic about Oregon Chardonnay, having recently traveled to the state. "The Chardonnays are lights-out," he said. (That's a sports term meaning to play exceptionally well. Yes, I had to look that up.)

Producers May likes include Lingua Franca, Cristom Vineyards and Division Wine Company, whose entry-level Chardonnay "drinks like a white Burgundy."

'Learn a few wine terms.' —Joseph DiGrigoli, wine director, Kitchen Istanbul, San Francisco

"It really helps for a guest to find a few wines they like to drink and learn the terms to describe them," said DiGrigoli. These terms might include words like "acid" and "tannin," and adjectives such as "rich" or "light bodied."

With a few such words to draw on, wine lovers can more readily get something they want to drink, DiGrigoli opined. For example, "I like a high-acid Riesling"—as opposed to simply "I like a Riesling"—would enable DiGrigoli to find another suitable wine on his list should he happen to lack a high-acid Riesling at the time. Even just stating a preference for a wine that is "light and bright" or "full-bodied and rich" will give DiGrigoli enough information to find the wine to suit the particular palate. The bigger a wine lover's "mental Rolodex" of wine terms, the better DiGrigoli can help find a wine that will satisfy.

If you think about learning the language of wine like learning a foreign language, as I have often suggested aspiring oenophiles do, this makes a good deal of sense. When dining in Paris, wouldn't you learn a few basic menu terms in French so you can talk to the waiter? In that case, of course, you might have your accent corrected. I assure you none of the wine pros quoted here would think of doing something like that.

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DESIGN & DECORATING

BY ANTONIA VAN DER MEER

THE idea of wallpaper elicits so much apprehension in homeowners, New York designer Francis Toumbakaris purposely uses the term "wallcovering" when speaking to clients about it. Yet decorating websites and media accounts teem with instances of the stuff. "It transforms a room and gives it personality," said Casey Keasler, founder of design studio Casework, in Portland, Ore.

So what keeps folks from hanging the gorgeous material, and how do homeowners get over these wallpaper willies? Here, some case studies of conversions.

Hangup: It's too pricey. Budget concerns can hamstring homeowners. Home-services company Angi estimates that wallpaper can cost as much as \$12 a square foot for labor and materials, while painting tops out at \$6. "If the wall surface needs work beforehand, prices go up," said Bethany Adams, an interior

'Wallpaper does not mean what it used to. It can be abstract, meandering, ombre or sisal.'

designer in Louisville, Ky. And Keasler notes that paper can cost as much as \$400 a roll.

Antidote: Baby steps

New York designer Tara McCauley says homeowners can get more bang for their buck by using paper strategically. In an apartment in Brooklyn whose homeowners sweated the bottom line, she coated only the hallway with a dark-blue pattern inspired by Portuguese tiles. "It added so much impact," McCauley said of the modest use. The designer adds that another way to save money is by hanging what she calls the gateway drug to wallpaper: patternless grass cloth. With no need to align a motif, the material goes up quickly and costs less to install, she says, "but it adds visual depth in a way plain paint never could."

Hangup: I'll get sick of it A fear of commitment stops many would-be wall paperers, who worry about having a change of heart later. Erik Perez, a design publicist with his own firm in Los Angeles, campaigned hard for what he thought was the perfect old-

Where There's a Wall...

Designers love wallpaper's impact, but homeowners have reservations. Here, stories of very happy converts.



POPPY PANELS An aqua colorway modernizes Schumacher's Madame de Pompadour wallpaper panels hung in a room by Louisville, Ky., designer Bethany Adams.



Erik Perez, right, and his husband, Paul Hardoin, in their Los Angeles dining room, clad in CW Stockwell's Martinique paper.

Hollywood look for his and his husband's dining room—a maximalist, leafy green wallpaper made famous by the mid-20th-century decoration of the Beverly Hills Hotel. His husband, Paul Hardoin, a

voice-over actor, resisted. "Is it going to go out of style? Will I tire of it? Will it affect resale value?" he worried.

Antidote: Low-use spaces

Infrequently used rooms can

carry a bold choice long-term. Of the Brooklyn hallway she wrapped in blue, McCauley noted, "It's a pass-through, so you don't get overwhelmed by a bold pattern." Ditto powder and dining rooms, like that of Perez, who said, "We only used that room when we were entertaining and it was too cold to be outside."

It took three years, but Hardoin caved when the banana-leaf pattern became available in blue. "I thought it looked cool," Hardoin said. He took the leap, knowing his sister Annette Moran (a wallpaper enthusiast) would be their DIY installer. "Now it's the happiest room in the house," he said.

Hangup: It's dated

When Sarah and Nate Simon bought a historic home in Louisville, Ky., the walls sported oppressively dark patterns, including big, repeating medallions set in a grid. Sarah recalls thinking, "Not this! What's the opposite of this?" In my mind that would be paint." Even for folks who haven't pulled down awful examples, "the word 'wallpaper' can take them back to flowery

patterns of the '50s and '60s that feel very dated," said Toumbakaris.

Antidote: Modernity

"Wallpaper does not mean what it used to. It can be meandering, abstract, ombre or sisal," said Simon's interior designer, Bethany Adams. She suggested a sophisticated Chinoiserie that New York designer Miles Redd, in a collaboration with Schumacher, updated with an aqua colorway. Adams explains that like most Chinoiseries, this pattern doesn't repeat for more than 8 feet. "You get a peri-

patetic design that keeps the eye engaged," she said. "It's looser." Said Simon of her dining room today, "It's a complete transformation, like art on my walls."

Stereotypes of fusty florals and pitiless patterns fall away when designers present homeowners with contemporary picks. Still, sometimes the conversion takes time. One of Keasler's clients, gunshy after removing old paper, came back a year later, ready. "We chose a clean classic style that was graphic and minimal for a modern edge in the bathroom," said the designer.



Portland, Ore., designer Casey Keasler's client waited a year before hanging Kelly Wearstler's Chalet wallpaper.

A photograph of a woman named Lina Zhang, wearing a maroon jumpsuit, leaning against a stone wall. She is holding a small maroon clutch bag. The background shows a classical building with columns.

FIRENZE

LINA ZHANG PHOTOGRAPHED BY JUERGEN TELLER IN FLORENCE

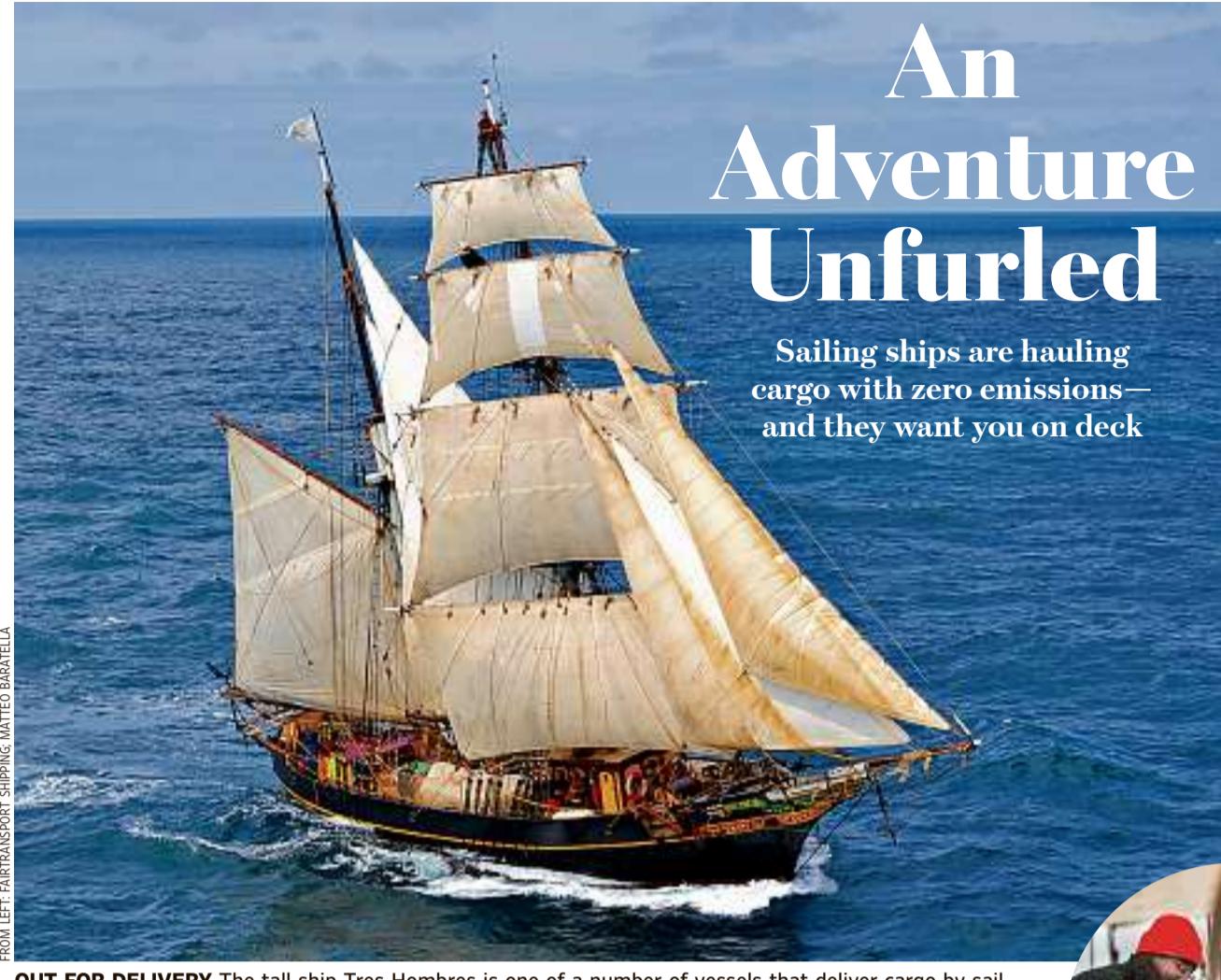
A close-up photograph of a dark leather handbag with gold hardware. The bag is being held by a person's hand. The background is a blurred indoor setting.

FERRAGAMO

ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

An Adventure Unfurled

Sailing ships are hauling cargo with zero emissions—and they want you on deck



FROM LEFT: FAIRTRANSPORT SHIPPING MATTEO BARATELLA

OUT FOR DELIVERY The tall ship Tres Hombres is one of a number of vessels that deliver cargo by sail—and guests are invited along for the ride. Inset: Volunteers work on the Grayhound Ventures ship.

By JACKIE SNOW

IT WAS MIDNIGHT on the North Sea and I was trying to keep my balance on the deck of a tall ship that looks like it dropped out of a time portal from the 18th century. My hands, raw from handling ropes all day, gripped a railing while my stomach churned with the sea. I prayed that my seasickness patch would do its job.

My husband, who had valiantly refused my offer of medicine, had just lost his dinner over the port side of the rollicking ship. "Why are we here again?" he asked before stumbling to his bunk.

Welcome to the cutting edge of sustainable tourism, where "all hands on deck" isn't just an order—it's your vacation itinerary.

A small but growing number of European companies have carved out a new tourism niche that blends eco-friendly cargo transport and adventure travel. Paying passengers work on ships that double as commercial freight haulers that ditch fuel in favor of sails.

Travelers might find themselves delivering artisanal olive oil between Mediterranean ports or hauling cacao from the Caribbean to Europe.

Built in 1943 and restored

over two years starting in 2007 by a trio of enterprising sailors (hence the name), Tres Hombres sports up to 19 sails, a cargo hold and bunk rooms that include eight berths for trainees who pay about \$100 a night to join.

In May, I boarded the ship in Amsterdam for a two-day sail to Blankenberge, Belgium, 120 nautical miles away. The ship had just arrived from an Atlantic crossing and the crew and trainees looked ragged and salt-stained after almost a month at sea. Still, the cargo needed to be unloaded and everyone was put to work immediately. With the help of winches, pulleys and a

level of elbow grease that my soft, writerly hands weren't quite prepared for, I helped unload 11 tons of cacao brought back from the Dominican Republic.

Nonprofessionals like me sign up for this kind of work for all sorts of reasons: to support the zero-emissions mission, to escape modernity and to learn to sail. Everyone, it seems, was up for an adventure.

Even with the guidance of the sailors, running a sailing ship proved to be difficult for an amateur like me to grasp. But if daytime was



daunting, nighttime was das-tardly. Temperatures dropped, the wind grew and the waves rattled our nerves and rolled our stomachs. The winds whisked us ahead of schedule, and we arrived at Blankenberge's tiny marina in less than 24 hours.

Despite the difficulties, I left the ship in Blankenberge wishing I could have stayed longer. Talking to Raphaël Jeger-Madiot, a 32-year-old immunology researcher, only intensified those feelings. He was booked aboard Tres Hombres for five weeks.

Jeger-Madiot told me that arriving by sail offered him a different perspective on several European ports he had visited before, including La Rochelle, a medieval town in his native France. The journey revealed unexpected contrasts, too. Massive wind turbine farms and behemoth cargo ships dotted the sea-scape. But he also saw dolphins, rainbows

and, on one approach, the iconic white cliffs of Dover rising from the English Channel. "It was good to feel wild, be closer to nature," he said.

Other companies ply these waters too, offering novices a chance to work as crew members aboard wind-powered vessels moving goods the old-fashioned way. On a much smaller sailboat, Aegean Cargo Sailing invites four to six paying guests to join a handful of trips a year around the Greek islands. For about \$250 a night, guests not only help with sailing operations, but also the delivery (and sampling) of goods like arti-

sanal cheeses and olive oil. Germany-based Timber-coast accepts trainees on its sailing ship, the Avontuur (for about \$80 a night), and brings local goods like coffee across the Atlantic.

Grayhound Ventures operates runs across the English Channel loaded with olive oil, rice, tea, flour, coffee and beer. For around \$130 a night, guests can come aboard and participate in

'Sometimes it's dark, wet, cold, and you ask yourself, what the hell am I doing here?'

every facet of running an old-school ship.

Wille Christiani, Grayhound Ventures' co-owner, isn't under any illusion that his ship is going to turn the global supply chain on its head, but he sees the burgeoning field as a catalyst for broader change in the shipping industry.

"Traditional ships could be a little link in a larger chain," he said.

For devotees, the disruption potential is only a small part of the appeal. I met Basel, Switzerland-based Daniel Haller aboard Tres Hombres. He was a fellow trainee, though that is not quite the right designation for Haller, who has logged about 23,300 nautical miles on Tres Hombres and has written a book on the ship. Like an explorer of old, the 69-year-old just keeps setting out for more.

"Sometimes it's dark, wet, cold, and you ask yourself, what the hell am I doing here?" he said. "But if the spirit of Tres Hombres becomes part of your soul, it's a real feeling of home."

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A RESEARCH PROJECT
IN 100 QUESTIONS

PARTICIPANT:
Philippe Starck,
Creator

WEARING:
710F2_Twill Wool Down-TC
Stone Island Ghost Piece

LOCATION:
Paris,
48.8566°N 2.3522°E

QUESTION 13 OF 100
WHAT HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN?
EVERYTHING, AND I AM HAPPY
ABOUT IT.

QUESTION 22 OF 100
WHAT THOUGHTS ARE ON YOUR MIND
RIGHT NOW?
SOUNDING SMART.

QUESTION 42 OF 100
WHICH BUILDING WOULD YOU LIKE TO
LIVE IN?
THE EINSTEIN TOWER,
IN POTSDAM, GERMANY.

QUESTION 53 OF 100
DO YOU HAVE ANY SKILLS THAT
MIGHT SURPRISE PEOPLE?
I SAY EVERYTHING I THINK.

QUESTION 54 OF 100
NAME A BOOK, FILM, PODCAST,
OR VIDEO GAME THAT CHANGED
YOUR LIFE?
THE DISCOVERERS BY DANIEL
BOORSTIN.

QUESTION 75 OF 100
CLASSIC OR MODERN OR BOTH?
DEFINITELY MODERN,
KNOWING THAT THERE IS NO
MODERN WITHOUT CLASSIC.

QUESTION 89 OF 100
WHAT IS THE MOST ATTRACTIVE
QUALITY IN A PARTNER?
HUMOR.

QUESTION 97 OF 100
DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE WORD?
YES, OF COURSE.

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ADVENTURE & TRAVEL

In Need of a Facade Lift

How do you revive a hotel like the Waldorf Astoria? With a lot of care.

BY PAIGE DARAH

EVEN A grande dame needs an occasional makeover. But renovating a legendary hotel comes with a lot of pressure. To better understand the process of giving an old mainstay new life, we interviewed interior designers who have recently renovated some big-name hotels.

A MANHATTAN ICON

Waldorf Astoria

New York

Closed for renovation since 2017, the Waldorf Astoria has, in its 93-year history, hosted every president from Hoover to Obama. Three of them even moved in after leaving office.

Yves Rochon who, given his vast experience spiffing up hotels like Paris's Four Seasons George V, was chosen to restore the Waldorf to its former glory.

Nearly eight years into what was projected to be a four-year renovation, the end is in sight. More than 6,000 noise-friendly windows have been replaced, but look unchanged from the 1931 originals; longtime Waldorf resident Cole Porter's Steinway piano (an unfortunate victim of late-night cocktail spillage) has been refurbed; the clock commissioned by Queen Victoria in 1893 will soon shine bright in the lobby again. The Waldorf Astoria is now slated for a spring 2025 reopening.

"I tried to draw away all



THE BOUNDARY WITH NOE & ASSOCIATES (LOBBY RENDERING); BETTMANN ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES (WALDORF HOTEL ARCHIVE)

STAYING POWER A rendering of the Waldorf Astoria's lobby, set to be done in 2025. Inset: An early image of the hotel.

area's sea of 16 check-in stations has now been reduced to just a handful, complete with 1930s-looking couches.

"I was stressed out about not ruining the Waldorf," Rochon admitted. "The luxe, the New York elegance—we kept all that. I hope."

JUST LIKE IN THE MOVIES

La Mamounia

Marrakesh, Morocco

Alfred Hitchcock filmed 1956's "The Man Who Knew Too Much" at this hotel near Marrakesh's medina. More recently, La Mamounia featured in Netflix's "Inventing Anna." That history, plus a propensity to host movie stars, prompted the design duo Jouin Manku to add a swank velvet-seated cinema to the grounds, part of a three-year renovation that ended in late 2023. The theater screens films like Hitchcock's twice daily; concessions include pastries by the chef Pierre Hermé.

The designers' first prior-

ity, however, was to restore a long-faded watering hole. "The old Churchill Bar wasn't working. But not strictly because of the decor—it was simply too big," designer Patrick Jouin said.

They reconfigured the hotel bar into a smaller, darker, sexier iteration with rounded ceiling edges meant to mimic a train coach, a nod to the fact that Morocco's national railway developed the hotel a century ago. They illuminated the space with the green banker's lamps one might spot in the office of a London barrister. Perhaps the bar's namesake had one on his Downing Street desk, where he worked in between seasonal stints painting and drinking at La Mamounia.

SHAKEN OR STIRRED

The Dorchester

London, England

Pierre-Yves Rochon likes to begin his research by trying



tea thoroughfare.

Before the top-to-toe renovation, started in 2021 and wrapping up in 2025 (the hotel has remained open), few travelers bothered to slog to the Champagne bar at the far end of the Promenade, Rochon says. "It's a bit of a long journey. Plus it was very dark and sad at the end."

While researching the hotel's history, Rochon happened upon some photos of Lalique crystal, and decided to follow suit when fashioning a light-infused, glowy new bar unveiled last year. Rochon also adhered a great many mirrored tiles to the ceiling to cut the perception of the long distance down the hallway—and to afford guests a little preview of what awaits, including Liberace's now-even-more-sparkly piano. "Now if you sit to have a drink and happen to spot a beautiful girl on the other side of the Artists' Bar, nobody will catch you noticing her," Rochon said. "You could, in theory, be watching the pianist."

The almost-reawakened Waldorf Astoria's 375 rooms, pared down from more than 1,400, will be among the largest in the city.

"But the Waldorf had lacked, let's say, improvements, for many, many years," said Ray Gu, project director at Dajia Insurance Group, which took control of the designated landmark building that was bought by China's Anbang Insurance Group in 2015. But who should lead such a weighty project?

"Forty years ago, my wife and I were standing in the Waldorf's lobby. I turned to her and said, 'I want to redesign this. Why is it so dark in here?'" recalled Pierre-

the curtains and darkness left over from the '80s and bring the light," Rochon said. The almost-reawakened Park Avenue hotel's 375 rooms, pared down from more than 1,400 (most of which had too-tiny bathrooms, in Rochon's view) will be among the largest in the city. Another section is being converted into condos.

Rochon thought the hotel lobby, often a hive of frenzied activity, didn't lend itself to the leisurely linger. "Not chic," Rochon said. The

designers' first prior-

The Ghosts of Grand Hotels Past

For every hotel spotlighting its historical bona fides, there are many that didn't stand the test of time. Here, some of the most infamous.



FALLEN STARS Guests congregate at the pool of Los Angeles's Garden of Allah hotel in 1959.

MANY LUXURY HOTELS only build on their gilded reputations with each decade. But others are less lucky. Here are three long-gone grandes dames that fell from grace—and, in some cases, succumbed to the wrecking ball.

THE PROTO-MARMONT | The Garden of Allah, Los Angeles A magnet for celebrities, the Garden of Allah was once the scene-making equivalent of today's Chateau Marmont. Frank Sinatra and Ava Gardner's affair allegedly started there and Humphrey Bogart lived in one of its bungalows for a time.

Crimean expat Alla Nazimova leased a grand home in Hollywood after World War I, but soon turned it into a hotel, where she prioritized glamorous clientele. Others risked being ejected by guards and a fearsome dog dubbed the Hound of the Baskervilles. Demolished in the 1950s, the site's now a parking lot.

THE FAILED FOLLOW-UP

| Hotel Astor, New York City

The Astor family hoped to repeat their success when they opened this sequel to their megahit Waldorf Astoria hotel in 1904. It became an anchor of the nascent Theater District, buzzy (and naughty) enough to inspire Cole Porter to write in "High Society": "Have you heard that

Mimsie Starr...got pinched in the Astor Bar?" That bar soon gained another reputation. "Gentlemen who preferred the company of other gentlemen would meet in a certain section of the bar," said travel expert Henry Harteveldt of consulting firm Atmosphere Research. By the 1960s, the hotel had lost its luster and was demolished; the 54-story One Astor Plaza skyscraper was built in its place.

THE ISLAND PLAYGROUND | Santa Carolina Hotel, Bazaruto Archipelago, Mozambique In the 1950s, colonial officers around Africa treated Mozambique as an off-duty playground. They flocked, in particular, to the Santa Carolina, a five-star hotel on a gorgeous archipelago off the country's southern coast.

Run by a Portuguese businessman and his wife, the resort included an airstrip that ferried visitors in and out. Ask locals why the place was eventually reduced to rubble, and some whisper that the couple were cursed—and that's why no one wanted to take over when the business collapsed in the '70s. Today, seeing the abandoned, crumbled ruins and murals bleached by the sun, it's hard to dismiss their superstitions entirely. —Mark Ellwood



The derelict ruins of the Santa Carolina Hotel in Mozambique.

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