



# U.S. NEWS

## U.S. WATCH



**LIGHT SHOW:** The Wisconsin sky glows with the northern lights as a geomagnetic storm brings vibrant colors to some states.

### PENNSYLVANIA

#### Judge Denies West Spot on Ballot

A federal judge has turned down Cornel West's request to be included on the presidential ballot in the key battleground state of Pennsylvania, expressing sympathy for his claim but saying it is too close to Election Day to make changes.

U.S. District Judge J. Nicholas Ranjan said in an order issued late Thursday that he has "serious concerns" about how Pennsylvania Secretary of State Al Schmidt is applying restrictions in state election code to West.

West, a liberal academic currently serving as professor of philosophy and Christian practice at Union Theological Seminary in New York, would likely draw far more votes away from Democratic nominee Vice President Kamala Harris than from the Republican candidate, former President Donald Trump. West's lawyers in the case have deep Republican ties.

—Associated Press

### GEORGIA

#### Election Workers Settle Lawsuit

Two Georgia election workers have reached a settlement in their defamation lawsuit against a Missouri-based conservative website that falsely accused them of fraud in the 2020 presidential election, according to a court filing earlier this week.

The lawsuit against The Gateway Pundit, its owner Jim Hoft and his brother Joe Hoft "has been resolved to the mutual satisfaction of the parties through a fair and reasonable settlement," lawyers for Ruby Freeman and Wandrea "Shaye" Moss said Friday.

Monday's filing in St. Louis City Circuit Court didn't give terms of the settlement, but said actions under the agreement are supposed to be completed by March 29.

Nearly 70 articles cited as defamatory in the lawsuit were no longer available Friday on the website.

—Associated Press

### NEW YORK

#### 'Diddy' Combs to Stay Locked Up

A federal appeals court judge has ruled to keep Sean "Diddy" Combs behind bars while he makes a third bid for bail in his sex-trafficking case, which is slated to go to trial in May.

In a decision filed Friday, Circuit Judge William J. Narndi denied the hip-hop mogul's immediate release from jail while a three-judge panel weighs his bail request.

Combs, 54 years old, has been held at a federal jail in Brooklyn since his Sept. 16 arrest on charges that he used his "power and prestige" as a music star to induce female victims into drugged-up, elaborately produced sexual performances with male sex workers in events dubbed "Freak Offs."

Combs has pleaded not guilty to racketeering conspiracy and sex trafficking charges alleging he coerced and abused women for years.

—Associated Press

### NEW MEXICO

#### Hot-Air Balloon Hits Radio Tower

A hot-air balloon struck and collapsed a radio tower Friday in Albuquerque, N.M., during the city's famous festival, authorities said.

There were no immediate reports of injuries, said Kevin Carhart, a spokesperson for the Bernalillo County Sheriff's Office. The balloon landed in a field.

The 52nd annual Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta is under way, but Carhart couldn't say whether the balloon that hit the tower was connected to the event. It wasn't clear how tall the tower was or whether its collapse threatened other structures.

A balloon bumped into a power line earlier this past week in Albuquerque on the festival's third day, leaving nearly 13,000 customers without power for nearly an hour. The fiesta is one of the world's most photographed events.

—Associated Press

## Upgrade With a Downside

*Continued from Page One*  
work. Some players are wistful about what they've lost and plotting what to do next.

"I had Diamond!" said Courtney Vandersloot, a New York Liberty guard, of her top-tier status. "I was able to hang on to Gold for a while, but I don't even know what I am now."

The new travel perk was a long-sought benefit that coincided with surging attendance and TV ratings spurred by a star rookie class featuring Indiana Fever guard Caitlin Clark and Chicago Sky forward Angel Reese, and nobody wants to give it back.

Shavonte Zellous, a 13-year WNBA veteran now playing professionally in France, remembers the countless commercial flights she took to play games.

"You got babies, you got coughing," she said.

The worst were games at the Connecticut Sun's arena in Uncasville, Conn. They required visiting teams to fly commercial to Hartford, Providence, R.I., or Boston, then take a bus another 45 minutes to two hours.

But Zellous also remembers the breathtaking view from the swimming pool in Hawaii where she went on vacation with some of her airline miles.

"I love Maui," Zellous said. She also has used miles for trips to see family in Florida, for jaunts to New York or California, and for a vacation in Jamaica.

For players, the trade-off of miles for charter flights was a layup. A number of WNBA players are 6-foot-3 or taller, and commercial airplanes' coach seats are cramped and counterproductive for trying to keep their bodies in top form. (NBA players also flew commercial well into the



1970s and '80s, when team owners started springing for charter flights or buying team planes.)

Then there are the commercial-flight snafus. In 2022, some of the Los Angeles Sparks spent the night at a Washington, D.C., airport after their red-eye flight was delayed repeatedly then canceled. There weren't enough hotel rooms available nearby so some players stretched out on rows of black pleather seats.

"Our beds tonight!" L.A. assistant coach Latricia Trammell posted on X at 1:45 a.m., adding "#theseplayersdeservebetter #charter #gametomorrow." The Sparks lost that game—which was across the country back in L.A.—to Connecticut, 97-71.

The Las Vegas Aces' Sydney Colson, who has played for four WNBA franchises in five cities (the Aces used to be in San Antonio), said she had never such mishaps over the

course of her career.

"Long flights and then you show up somewhere on game-day, and you get to take a nap essentially, and then you go and play the game," Colson said. "Super-dangerous, just dumb stuff that used to happen—and before the W was getting as much coverage, so nobody was really caring."

In 2022, the Liberty took a liberty of their own: They were slapped with a \$500,000 fine for violating the league's no-charters rule, put in place to limit team operating costs. A year later, Stewart got so desperate that she offered to donate some of the money she earned on brand sponsorships to subsidize league-wide charter flights.

Although the WNBA paid for charter flights to playoff games and select other trips in recent years, it wasn't until this season that it provided them for every game. They were greeted with exuberance.

A video taken by Fever

guard Erica Wheeler on the flight to the Fever's opening game against the Sun showed players luxuriating in their own rows and raising soda cans in triumphant toasts.

"This is niiice, baby!"

Wheeler declares.

For players still in mourning over their declining airline status, Tiffany Funk has good news. The president and co-founder of the rewards-program site Point.Me said, flying is "the least efficient way to earn miles right now," because of changes to airline frequent-flier programs. Credit-card perks and other rewards programs are superior, she says.

Of the charter flights, Funk said, "I think this is much better for everyone involved."

Minnesota Lynx guard Kayla McBride, a 10-year WNBA veteran, said she's "coping perfectly fine" with the trade of miles for charters. "Reclining, actually."

But she has big plans for her stockpile of miles. "Hopefully after the season I'll go on some grand vacation—with the championship."

—Robert O'Connell contributed to this article.

## Producers' Selling Prices Hold Steady

BY MATT GROSSMAN

Producers' selling prices stayed flat in September, more evidence of U.S. inflation cooling.

The producer-price index was unchanged last month compared with August, versus the 0.1% increase economists polled by The Wall Street Journal had expected. During the past 12 months, producer prices have risen by 1.8%. In September, a 0.2% increase in producers' services prices offset a 0.2% decline in goods prices.

The figures are a gauge of how much more companies are charging for their output. But one of the PPI's most important roles is as a data source for the Federal Reserve's preferred measure of overall in-

flation, the personal-consumption expenditures price index.

The next update is due Oct. 31—a week before the Fed's next rate-setting meeting.

A big share of the data that go into PCE inflation flow from the consumer-price index, which came in higher than expected on Thursday, at 0.2% month-over-month in September. But the PPI's inflation figures for healthcare services, airfare and financial services, to name a few key categories, are important too.

Friday's producer-price figures will help analysts nail down their guesses about September's PCE reading, which should be influential as the Fed decides whether to continue cutting rates, and how fast.

## JPMorgan Signals Soft Landing

*Continued from Page One*

early 2023 and were closing in on their all time high. Wells Fargo rose more than 5%. Those performances helped lead banks and financial stocks higher and power gains in the broader market.

The bank results add to economic data that suggest the Fed is approaching the soft landing. Inflation is slowly coming closer to the Fed's target, new job creation is strong and unemployment remains low.

However, it isn't all good news. At JPMorgan, deposit balances shrank overall and the bank has said it expects higher loan losses from its credit-card arm, a signal that some consumers are feeling increasingly stretched.

Profit at JPMorgan fell 2% to \$12.9 billion but was better than expected thanks to the lending profits. The drop was largely the result of increased losses in credit-card loans. Revenue rose 7% to \$42.6 billion.

Overall, customers at Chase Bank showed that they are continuing to spend on credit cards, and balances are growing. Although expected losses from credit-card loans are going up, executives said there isn't too much cause for worry.

"The consumer is fine and remains in effect on strong footing," Barnum said.

That sentiment was echoed at Wells Fargo, where CFO Mike Santomassimo said consumer spending had pulled back slightly and lower-income customers were struggling, but overall the picture remained solid.

"The consumers on the lower income or wealth level still are the ones who are most stressed and most stretched," he said.

At Wells Fargo, profit fell 11% in the third quarter to \$5.11 billion, weighed down by higher funding costs for customer deposits. The bank slightly dimmed its own forecast for net interest income for the rest of the year. Still, its profit was better than expected.

Companies have been hesitant lately to build inventory or invest in capital expenditures, Santomassimo said, but could become less cautious if a soft landing does become a reality.

"It may or may not have a dramatic impact on the economy," he said on a conference call. "We don't know. We're all hoping for the best."

## CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

Readers can alert The Wall Street Journal to any errors in news articles by emailing [wsjcontact@wsj.com](mailto:wsjcontact@wsj.com) or by calling 888-410-2667.

### THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

(USPS 664-880) (Eastern Edition ISSN 0099-9660)

(Central Edition ISSN 1092-0935) (Western Edition ISSN 0193-2241)

**Editorial and publication headquarters:** 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036

Published daily except Sundays and general legal holidays.

Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and other mailing offices.

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

All Advertising published in The Wall Street Journal is subject to the applicable rate card, copies of which are available from the Advertising Services Department, Dow Jones & Co. Inc., 1211 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036. The Journal reserves the right not to accept an advertiser's order. Only publication of an advertisement shall constitute final acceptance of the advertiser's order.

**Letters to the Editor:** Fax: 212-416-2891; email: [wsj.ltrs@wsj.com](mailto:wsj.ltrs@wsj.com)

**Need assistance with your subscription?**

By web: [customercenter.wsj.com](http://customercenter.wsj.com); By email: [support@wsj.com](mailto:support@wsj.com)

By phone: 1-800-JOURNAL (1-800-568-7625)

**Reprints & licensing:**

By email: [customreprints@dowjones.com](mailto:customreprints@dowjones.com)

By phone: 1-800-843-0008

**WSJ back issues and framed pages:** [wsjshop.com](http://wsjshop.com)

Our newspapers are 100% sourced from sustainably certified mills.

**GOT A TIP FOR US? SUBMIT IT AT WSJ.COM/TIPS**

# Tornadoes Punch Florida Amid Double Whammy

Residents dig in for disaster cleanup after Milton's winds, floods—and twisters

Johnny Picardo was giving a work presentation from his Florida home office when the thump of debris against his house broke his concentration.

By Ginger Adams Otis, Arian Campo-Flores and Joseph Pisani

Looking out his window, he saw a large funnel about 200 yards away, racing toward his backyard.

Picardo grabbed his dog, Daisy, and ran for the stairwell. Moments later, he was outside surveying the damage in his normally calm neighborhood in Palm Beach County, more than 170 miles east from where Hurricane Milton made landfall. Cars flipped over, roofs ripped open and windows shattered. A street sign from 2 miles away landed in his front yard.

"When we moved to Florida from New York City, I knew we might face natural disasters, like hurricanes and floods," said Picardo, who was

following Milton's trajectory and thought he was out of harm's way. "I was not anticipating tornadoes."

After twister-packed Milton made landfall Wednesday night on Florida's Gulf Coast, residents on Friday were reeling from the hurricane's combination of torrential rain, winds and powerful tornadoes. Milton shut airports, blocked roadways and left many without potable water.

About two million customers in Florida were still without power Friday night, according to data from PowerOutage.us. More than three million were without power during the worst of the storm.

Milton was responsible for at least 14 deaths, officials said, with the number likely to grow. The U.S. Coast Guard said it was searching for two men last seen sailing Tuesday from Charlotte Harbor, about 40 miles southeast of the point of landfall.

In St. Lucie County, five deaths were linked to one of the tornadoes Milton sent spinning across the peninsula.

The National Weather Service issued 126 tornado warnings across the state on Wednesday—the most ever for Florida in one day.



A resident and her dog were evacuated Friday after rising waters flooded her home in New Port Richey, Fla.

MIKE CARLSON/ASSOCIATED PRESS

GIORGIO VIERA/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES



People were busy at work in Tampa, Fla., cleaning items pulled from their homes and clearing debris from their yard.

You don't get a lot of warning on tornadoes," Gov. Ron DeSantis said Friday. "It is very hard to prepare [for tornadoes], you've got to just take cover and hope for the best."

DeSantis said Florida had several deaths since Milton left the state that could have been prevented. "We have had fatalities because of interaction with downed power lines and water," he said.

Search and rescue teams along with the National Guard rescued nearly 1,000 people and more than 100 animals during the storm, DeSantis said. State and local officials have combined resources in some areas to conduct door-to-door welfare checks.

President Biden is expected to visit Florida to survey storm damage on Sunday, the White House said.

Ports in Tampa, Miami and Key West were among those that reopened Thursday, the Coast Guard said.

In low-lying St. Petersburg and Clearwater, Milton's storm surge didn't reach the levels seen two weeks earlier with Hurricane Helene. But rain inundated many streets, threatening water damage to homes and buildings miles away from the beach. Even high-rise residents in St. Petersburg, which had nearly 19 inches of rain coupled with 100 mph winds, had to grapple with cleanup.

"My condominium is in shambles," said Shannon Valentine, who filmed her return to her St. Petersburg apartment Thursday and posted the footage to TikTok.

◆ Heard on the Street: Milton tests insurance market.. B12

Ribbed Retro Hoops



PAUL MORELLI

725 MADISON AVENUE (NYC)  
1118 WALNUT ST (PHL)  
917.227.9039

**THE EXCEPTIONAL DAYS** OCTOBER 11-27

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

valid in the US only, from October 11 to 27, 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

Photo by Raven Cardo, for advertising purposes only. Editions Zuma. © Exceptional Days 2024. Not to be used in conjunction with any other offer.

<p

## U.S. NEWS

# The Economy Under Biden vs. Trump

Covid slammed the country in Trump's final year, damaging performance. Jobs soared under Biden, but so did inflation.

By JUSTIN LAHART

Former President Donald Trump is running on his economic record from his four years in office. Vice President Kamala Harris isn't at the helm at the White House, but President Biden's record is, in effect, hers.

Americans have consistently given Trump better marks on the economy than Biden—to the frustration of Biden's advisers, who complain the president hasn't gotten the credit he deserves. While recent polls suggest Harris is making up ground on the economy, she still trails.

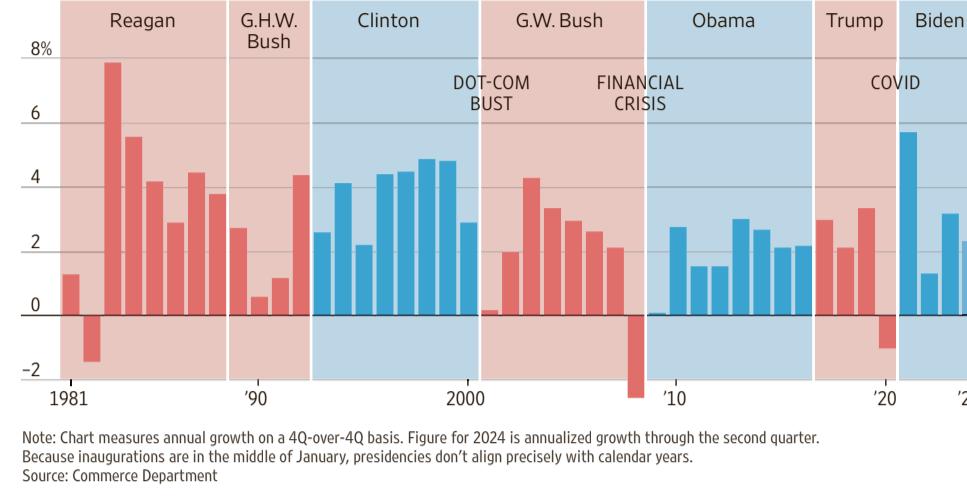
So just what does the data

show on how Trump and Biden performed?

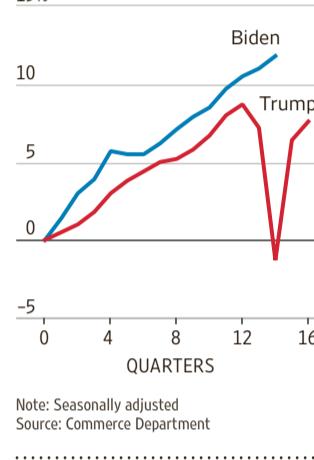
Comparing exactly how the economy has done during the Biden administration versus the Trump administration is less than straightforward. The pandemic severely disrupted the country during Trump's last year in office, and into the Biden years. Both men might like a pass or two on some aspects of how things fared under their watch.

Some caveats probably are in order, and a president's ability to influence the U.S. economy is often limited. That said, both were in charge, and their economic records are their economic records.

## Real gross domestic product, annual change



## Cumulative change in real gross domestic product, by administration



## Biden vs. Trump on GDP

Gross domestic product is the broadest measure of an economy's performance, and during Trump's first three years in office, it was pretty good: Inflation-adjusted, or real, GDP grew at a 2.8% annual rate from the fourth quarter of 2016 to the fourth quarter of 2019.

Then the pandemic hit and GDP got whacked, bringing the annual rate for his whole term to 1.8%.

GDP under Biden has been better. This is in part because it was still rebounding strongly from the pandemic during his first year in office. From the end of 2020 through

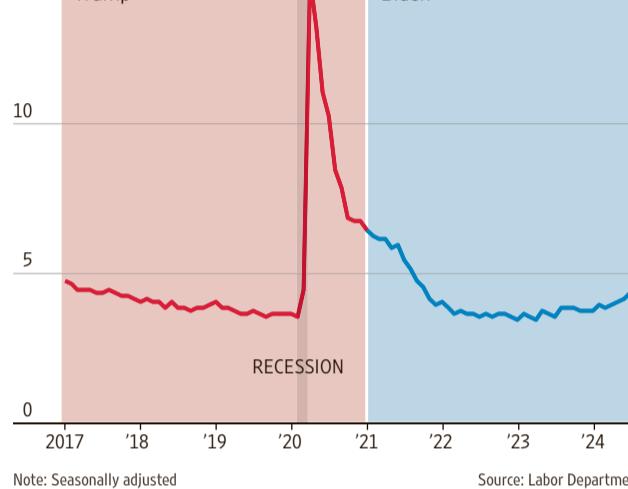
the second quarter of this year, real GDP has grown at a 3.2% annual rate. Its level is higher than what economists before the pandemic thought it would be now.

Put another way: GDP grew 7.6% over Trump's four years in office. It has grown 11.8% so far during Biden's tenure.

Economists estimate that the third-quarter GDP report, due from the Commerce Department at the end of October, will also be solid. At this point,

it looks as if GDP under Biden will post the strongest growth of a presidential term since former President Bill Clinton's final four years in office.

## Unemployment rate



## Biden vs. Trump on the unemployment rate

The unemployment rate charted a similar path to jobs during the two administrations.

It fell from 4.7% when Trump took office to 3.5% on the eve of the pandemic. Then it shot to its highest level on

record, and was at 6.4% in January 2021.

Under Biden, it fell from the 6's into the 5's and 4's. Last year, it matched its 70-year low of 3.4%. But it has since climbed to 4.1%.

## Biden vs. Trump on household income

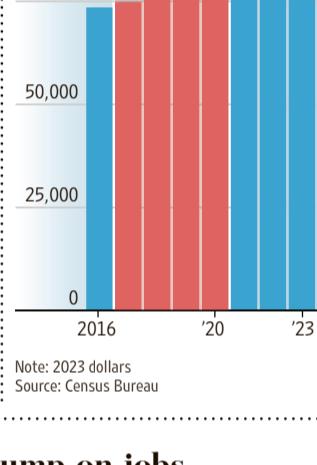
Census Bureau figures show that household incomes grew strongly during Trump's first three years in office, and then fell in his final year, though there are pandemic-related distortions here as well.

The Census Bureau surveyed households on their 2019 incomes in 2020, during some of the worst months of the pandemic. More of the people it was able to reach were higher income, and as a result, its data shows that median real income surged 7.2% in 2019. The following year, when the data was more accurately measured, it fell 2%.

Cutting through the noise, real median income was 8.2% higher in 2020 than in 2016.

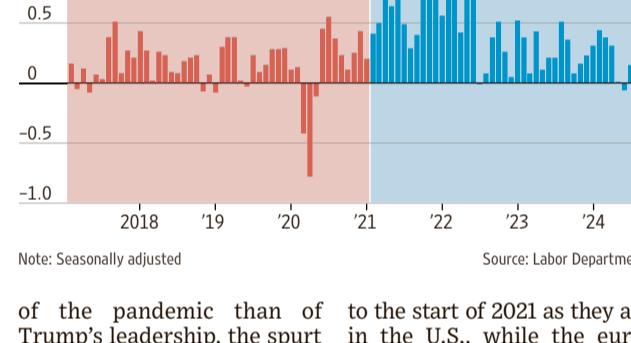
Meanwhile, under Biden, inflation weighed heavily on household income, especially in 2022. As of last year, real median income was up 1.3% from 2020. Analysts at Motio Research estimate it has risen since then. Even so, income growth under Biden will almost certainly be lower than under Trump.

## Real median household income



## Biden vs. Trump on inflation

### Monthly change in consumer prices during the Trump and Biden administrations

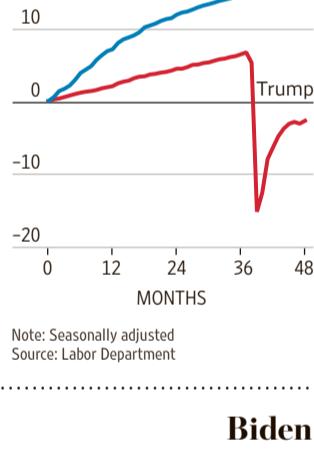


of the pandemic than of Trump's leadership, the spurt in inflation during Biden's tenure is in part a reflection of the supply-chain snarls brought on by the pandemic, and by the jump in oil prices brought on by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. One indication of this is that inflation elsewhere also shot up. Prices in the eurozone, for example, are about as elevated relative

to the start of 2021 as they are in the U.S., while the eurozone's economic growth has been far slower.

But few Americans are chatting about prices with their counterparts overseas. Instead, they are living with American inflation, and this is a major reason polling shows that Biden gets poor marks on the economy, despite strength in the jobs market.

## Cumulative change in jobs by administration



## Biden vs. Trump on jobs

During Trump's first three years in office, through February 2020, the economy added 6.7 million jobs. That March and April it lost 21.9 million jobs. Although the labor market began bouncing back that May, at the end of 2020 there were 2.7 million fewer jobs than at the end of 2016.

Under Biden, job growth has been strong.

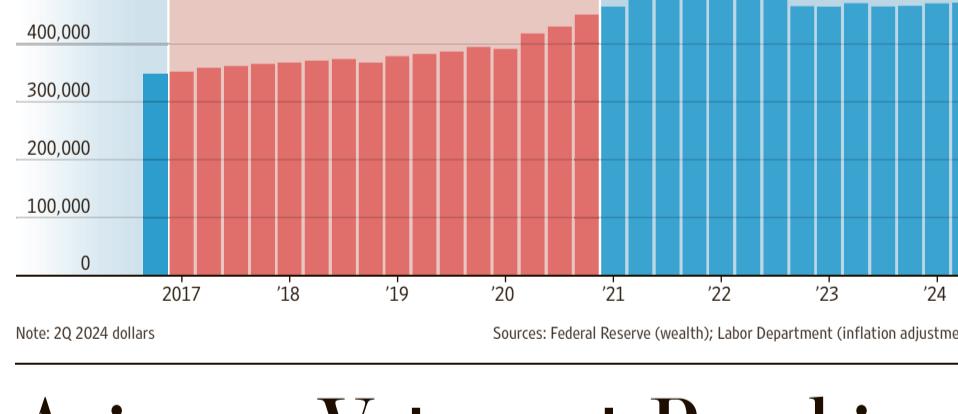
As of September, the U.S. has added 16.2 million jobs since January 2021.

That number might get revised down slightly. But revisions or not, as of September

there hasn't been a stronger annual pace of job growth during a single presidential term, measured by percentage, since Carter's term ending in January 1981.

Job gains during Biden's administration have been stronger than what many economists thought the economy could generate. Shortly before the pandemic struck, the Congressional Budget Office estimated there would be an average of 155.1 million jobs in the third quarter of 2024. There were over three million more than that.

## Real net worth for the average household in the middle fifth by income



Americans got significantly wealthier under Trump, and here, there was a big bump after the pandemic hit.

At the end of 2019, average real net worth for households in the middle fifth by income was 13.5% higher than it had been in the final quarter of 2016, according to the Federal Reserve.

By the end of 2020, that gain had swelled to roughly 30%. Jumps in the stock market and home prices had something to do with that. So

did the massive amounts of government relief that poured into household bank accounts.

Stocks and home prices have risen significantly during Biden's tenure, but inflation makes those gains much less impressive. Many households also have spent down the money they saved from government stimulus passed during Trump's last year in office and during Biden's first. As of the second quarter, real net worth for households in the middle fifth by income was up

4.6% from the end of 2020.

Wealth gains for many middle-class Americans during Biden's presidency also have been uneven, depending on whether they own a home. Homeowners have had what is typically their most valuable asset increase in price. But those rising prices, in combination with high mortgage rates, have put buying out of reach for many people who don't own a home.

—Peter Santilli contributed to this article.

By JEANNE WHALEN

PHOENIX—Lynn LeFevre is worried about plenty as the election looms, but one of her biggest concerns is her thermostat.

After a record-hot summer on the outskirts of Phoenix and a big hike in electricity rates, her June and July power bills surged by 36% and 20% over last year, peaking at \$308.60 for a 1,400 square foot home. "I've met a couple people who are planning to leave the state because of the horrible heat that keeps getting worse and these rate increases," the retired insurance agent said as the October mercury climbed to 105 degrees.

To bring down her costs, she sets her thermostat at 80 during peak afternoon hours and has taken to shielding her house from the sun. "My blinds are currently closed and I have a big sunscreen on the windows," she said. "It's

like you're living in a cave."

Gasoline often is the energy cost voters think about most. But in Arizona, electricity is giving it a run for its money. Rate increases, and a historic 113 consecutive days of temperatures peaking at or above 100 degrees in Phoenix, have generated record air-conditioning bills and widespread consternation.

Modest-sized homes are paying as much as \$500 a month, while the biggest properties are shelling out \$1,000 or more.

Even some homes with solar panels are getting surprisingly large bills.

The electric utility Arizona Public Service, or APS, says that between the hotter weather and higher rates, its

average residential customer paid 16.4% more for electricity this summer. APS supplies LeFevre and about half of Maricopa County, where most of the state's population lives.

Sunbelt states have seen a sharp rise in residents, draw-

ing Californians chasing lower housing costs and retirees looking for warm weather and low tax rates. What they also find is severe heat that strains government resources and individual budgets.

Former President Donald Trump has promised to slash AC and other energy bills—something that is easier said than done. Ruben Gallego, the Democratic Congressman running for Senate, called on the federal government to provide more resources to help vulnerable Arizonans pay their AC bills.

Maricopa County is the key to winning Arizona, a crucial swing state where polls show Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris in a tight race.

The eye-popping charges also are drawing attention to a state regulator previously unknown to many voters—the Arizona Corporation Commission, whose elected members set utility rates. Three of the five seats on the Republican-controlled

commission are up for election this fall, months after members approved new electricity rates that the ACC estimated would raise households' average monthly bills by 12% to 14%.

Some Arizonans reported bigger jumps in their bills this summer. Residents of Lake Havasu City, a resort area on the California border, have bombarded the ACC and their Republican state legislators with complaints about bills rising by 30% or more, prompting the legislators to push the ACC to re-examine the rate increases.

Jim O'Connor, the Republican chair of the ACC, who isn't running for re-election this fall, said the commission must balance the electricity companies' need to invest in power generation against consumers' pocketbooks.

During the pandemic there was a moratorium on rate increases, so many utilities were due an increase, he said.

Maricopa County, home to

Phoenix, said 645 people died from heat-related causes in 2023—most outdoors but about a quarter indoors. In most of the indoor cases, an AC unit was often broken. More than a third of people with stable residences who visited a Maricopa County cooling center last year said they struggled to pay their energy bills, a county study showed.

In Sun City retirement community, condominium owner Melanie Boone said she is \$298 past due on her APS power bill and keeping her thermostat at 81 degrees to try to save money. "My direct neighbor, she just turned 82," she said. "She keeps her air at 84. It's unbearable to me. I can't go visit her in the summer."

APS said this summer was the hottest on record for Phoenix. "The nights were hotter too, and overnight temperatures didn't provide the same relief as last year," forcing AC units to run through the night and rack up bigger bills, the

company said. LeFevre's higher energy demand accounted for about two-thirds of her bill increases, with higher rates explaining the rest, APS said.

The utility said it needed to keep investing in power generation, saying peak electricity demand will grow by about 40% over the next eight years.

Sherry and Vic McCullough, who have solar panels on the roof of their 1,600 square-foot Sun City home, normally pay APS about \$20 a month for electricity. In August, their bill was \$249. That is in addition to the \$161 they spend each month to lease their panels from a separate company.

When Sherry McCullough called to question the bill, an APS representative told her the McCulloughs had run out of credits for the solar energy they produce because of this summer's extreme heat and were consuming more APS-supplied power.

# Arizona Voters at Breaking Point Over Electricity Costs

By JEANNE WHALEN

PHOENIX—Lynn LeFevre is worried about plenty as the election looms, but one of her biggest concerns is her thermostat.

After a record-hot summer on the outskirts of Phoenix and a big hike in electricity rates, her June and July power bills surged by 36% and 20% over last year, peaking at \$308.60 for a 1,400 square foot home.

"I've met a couple people who are planning to leave the state because of the horrible heat that keeps getting worse and these rate increases," the retired insurance agent said as the October mercury climbed to 105 degrees.

To bring down her costs, she sets her thermostat at 80 during peak afternoon hours and has taken to shielding her house from the sun. "My blinds are currently closed and I have a big sunscreen on the windows," she said. "It's

like you're living in a cave."

Gasoline often is the energy cost voters think about most. But in Arizona, electricity is giving it a run for its money. Rate increases, and a historic 113 consecutive days of temperatures peaking at or above 100 degrees in Phoenix, have generated record air-conditioning bills and widespread consternation.

Modest-sized homes are paying as much as \$500 a month, while the biggest properties are shelling out \$1,000 or more.

Even some homes with solar panels are getting surprisingly large bills.

The electric utility Arizona Public Service, or APS, says that between the hotter weather and higher rates, its

average residential customer paid 16.4% more for electricity this summer. APS supplies LeFevre and about half of Maricopa County, where most of the state's population lives.

Sunbelt states have seen a sharp rise in residents, draw-

ing Californians chasing lower housing costs and retirees looking for warm weather and low tax rates. What they also find is severe heat that strains government resources and individual budgets.

Former President Donald Trump has promised to slash AC and other energy bills—something that is easier said than done. Ruben Gallego, the Democratic Congressman running for Senate, called on the federal government to provide more resources to help vulnerable Arizonans pay their AC bills.

Maricopa County is the key to winning Arizona, a crucial swing state where polls show Trump and Vice President Kamala Harris in a tight race.

The eye-popping charges also are drawing attention to a state regulator previously unknown to many voters—the Arizona Corporation Commission, whose elected members set utility rates. Three of the five seats on the Republican-controlled

commission are up for election this fall, months after members approved new electricity rates that the ACC estimated would raise households' average monthly bills by 12% to 14%.

Some Arizonans reported bigger jumps in their bills this summer. Residents of Lake Havasu City, a resort area on the California border, have bombarded the ACC and their Republican state legislators with complaints about bills rising by 30% or more, prompting the legislators to push the ACC to re-examine the rate increases.

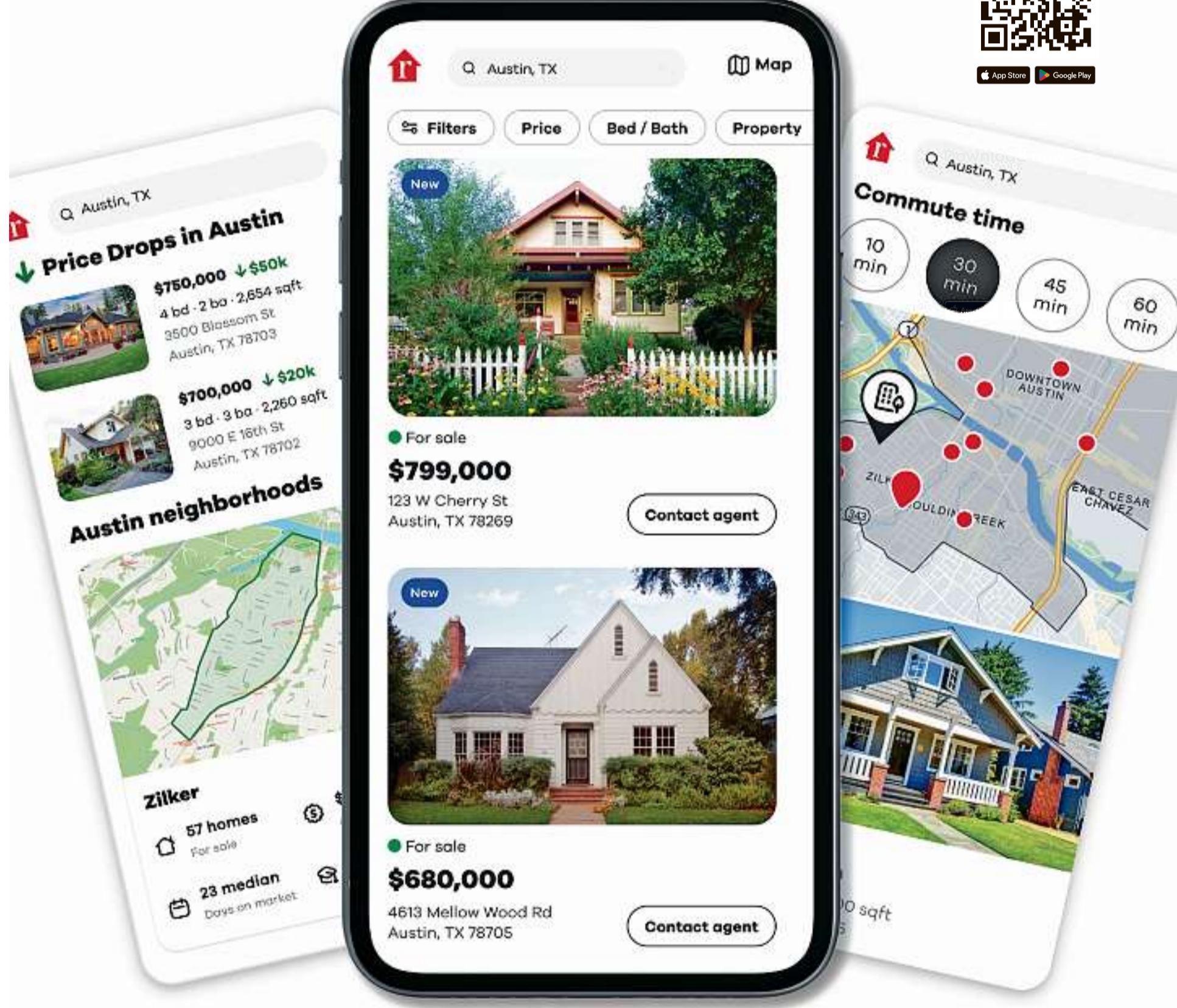
# Scroll less. Discover more.

Home listings, price drops, and local market trends, all in one place.

[Download now](#)



[App Store](#) [Google Play](#)



#1

Trust the #1 app  
real estate  
professionals trust

 **realtor.com®**

## U.S. NEWS

# Thune Mends Trump Ties Ahead of Race

GOP lawmaker is narrow favorite in contest to become next Senate leader

BY KRISTINA PETERSON  
AND LINDSAY WISE

It was a Sunday afternoon in March, and former President Donald Trump had just walked off the golf course.

John Thune, the second highest-ranking Republican in the Senate, was in Palm Beach, Fla., for fundraisers with his wife, Kimberley Thune, and called to see if Trump might be able to sit down and chat.

It wasn't a sure date. Less than four years prior, Trump had called Thune a "RINO," or Republican in name only, and urged others to try to oust him in a GOP primary.

But in the hourlong meeting with Trump at Mar-a-Lago, Thune and his wife helped defuse some of the tension in the relationship. Those strains have loomed as a problem for Thune, of South Dakota, as he vies to lead the GOP in a possible Trump second term, and shows how the complicated politics of the party and the uncertain election are pushing the onetime antagonists to mend fences.

"I think we have an understanding, and it's professional," Thune said of Trump in a recent interview in Michigan, calling the Mar-a-Lago visit important in establishing a personal rapport. "We both know we have a job to do."

If Trump wins the White House and Thune is elected Senate Republican leader, "we're going to need to work together for the good of the country. And I think both of us agree we can make that happen," Thune said.

Thune is running against Sens. John Cornyn of Texas and Rick Scott of Florida to lead Senate Republicans, with Sen. Mitch McConnell (R., Ky.) stepping aside after about 18 years in the role.

Republicans are favored to take back the Senate, which Democrats currently hold 51-49, but it is far from clear who will control the White House. If Trump wins in November, most Senate Republicans want to pick a leader who can work with the president but also brush him back when necessary, just as McConnell often has.

Trump is largely supportive of all the candidates and is focused on his own race, said someone familiar with his thinking. The former president believes the tall, chiseled Thune would "look the part," and Thune's outreach efforts



Sen. John Thune, right, recently campaigned with Michigan Senate candidate Mike Rogers, center, in Grand Rapids, Mich.

close relationships with GOP colleagues, and he filled in last year when McConnell was sidelined by medical issues.

Ahead of the election, Thune has been hitting the road. He was in Michigan last week to campaign with former Rep. Mike Rogers, who is competing for an open Senate seat.

Cornyn is also planning to visit the state this month to support Rogers, according to someone familiar with his political operation. Cornyn historically has had the edge in fundraising, a critical part of the job, and some Republicans wonder if the affable Thune would be an effective-enough heat shield when the GOP has to take votes that anger its

base, or lead sharp-elbowed attacks on Vice President Kamala Harris if she is elected.

Congressional aides and others involved in the leadership race said it is difficult to know how the competition will unfold. Few senators have indicated who they support, and many say they are undecided pending November's results.

In the leadership contest after the election, decided by a majority vote, Republicans will cast secret ballots, a format that gives Trump less leverage than a public contest. Still, the candidates have largely been proceeding down two tracks: building support among colleagues through one-on-one meetings and fundraising, and working to shore up their standing with Trump.

Following the March meeting, Thune and Trump chatted again on the phone, and Thune met in September with his transition team. Cornyn,

who was set to appear with Trump at a rally in Nevada on Friday, has said he also visited Trump at Mar-a-Lago and met with his transition team.

"I feel like it's going pretty well," Cornyn said of the leadership race, saying his primary focus was to help GOP lawmakers and candidates raise money.

Trump is most fond of Sen. Steve Daines of Montana, who is in charge of Senate Republicans' campaign arm this cycle, according to a person familiar with his thinking. But Daines isn't currently running for GOP leader. Trump also likes Scott, but the Florida Republican came up short when he previously challenged McConnell and is seen as a long shot.

Trump turned on Thune after the 2020 election, when the lawmaker famously commented that any attempt to block ratification of President Biden's win at a joint session

of Congress would "go down like a shot dog."

During the GOP presidential primary, Thune initially endorsed Senate GOP colleague Tim Scott of South Carolina. But after Scott dropped out and former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley lost her home state, Thune swung to Trump.

"It was clear he was going to be the nominee," Thune said. "I told him we would help him hit the ground running if he won."

But Thune has also made clear that if Trump loses, he wouldn't support an indefinite challenge to the results.

"I'm all for audits, I'm all for recounts, I'm all for lawsuits, everything that's allowed for under the law and under the Constitution," he said. But "eventually those all get settled, and it's time to move on."

—Jack Gillum and Alex Leary contributed to this article.

## Battle In Swing States Tied

**Continued from Page One**

Attempts on Trump have pushed Americans into their partisan corners, with neither candidate taking a meaningful share of voters from the other's party. Trump, the former president, is holding 93% of Republicans across the seven states, while Harris, the vice president, retains 93% of Democrats.

Independent voters are evenly divided, 40% for Harris and 39% for Trump—another factor that makes the contest

an up-for-grabs race in each state.

"This thing is a dead heat and is going to come down to the wire. These last three weeks matter," said David Lee, a Republican pollster who worked on the survey with Democrat Michael Bocian.

"It really could not be closer," Bocian said. "It's an even-steven, tight, tight race."

The results suggest that Harris has a potential path to victory through the competitive Sunbelt states, a route that seemed foreclosed when President Biden led the Democratic ticket. By 6 percentage points, more voters in Arizona are backing Harris now than supported Biden in a Journal survey in March. Her share of the vote has grown by 5 points in Georgia over Biden's showing, and by 4 points in North Caro-

lina. By contrast, Trump's share has changed little in the seven states, compared with March.

By 10 percentage points, more say Trump than Harris would be better at handling the economy—the issue that voters cite as most important to their choice of candidate.

By 16 points, voters favor Trump for handling immigration and border security, the No. 2 issue of concern.

Those advantages raise the question of why Trump's leads on the most pressing issues haven't translated into a clear advantage over Harris, despite a sense of pessimism about the nation's direction and the economy that is typically a warning sign for the party that holds the White House.

The survey suggests several possible reasons.

One is that voters hold a nuanced view of the candidates' leadership on the economy. Harris has the advantage when voters are asked which candidate would best handle some aspects of Americans' economic lives, such as healthcare, and she has a slight lead in handling housing affordability.

By 6 points, more voters say Harris "cares about people like you" than say so of Trump. The two are essentially tied when voters are asked which one would stand up for American workers.

Views of the economy show voters drawing a distinction between the state of affairs nationally and in their home state. Nearly two-thirds say the national economy is poor or not so good, with just more than a third rating it as good or excellent. But asked about the economy in their home state, a majority of 52% rate it as good or excellent.

Harris's clearest edge is on abortion: By 16 points, voters see her rather than Trump as better able to handle the issue. Some 61% say they want abortion to be legal in all or most cases.

That divide may be fueling questions voters have about Trump's leadership style. While Trump has the edge when voters are asked which candidate has the right experience for the job, he is also seen as "too extreme" by 48% of voters, compared with 34% who see Harris as "too extreme."

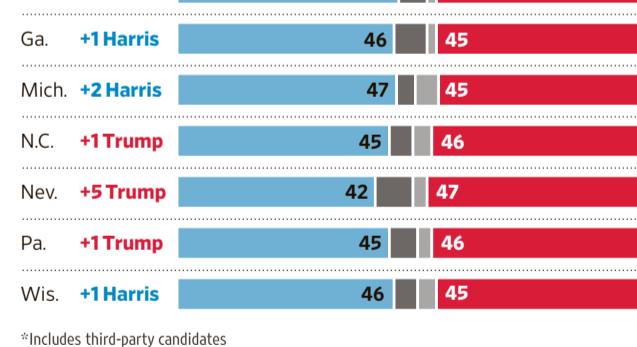
Those voters also might be commenting on Trump's aggressive rhetoric and personal style. "It's not necessarily a set of issues, but the way in which



Absentee ballots were prepared to be mailed in Raleigh, N.C., last month.

KRISTEN NORMAN FOR WSJ

If the 2024 general election for President were held today, for whom would you vote?



\*Includes third-party candidates

Source: WSJ survey of 600 registered voters per state in seven battleground states, conducted Sept. 28-Oct. 8, 2024; margin of error in each state: +/- 4 pct. pts.

dential battlegrounds in March. "Trump had clear advantages in all of these states," he said, "and you had a massive impact of third-party candidates," who were drawing 18% and even 20% support in some of the states. "Now the third-party support has evaporated almost completely, and the race is tied in all the states."

Lee said that the results suggest problems for Harris. He pointed out that polling averages at about this time in 2020 showed Biden with leads of more than 5 points in each of the industrial Northern swing states, a bigger gap than Trump faces today in any battleground.

The poll was conducted with live interviewers by cellphone and landline phone, with some respondents reached by text and offered the chance to take the survey online. It was conducted from Sept. 28 through Oct. 8. During the survey period, North Carolina was racked by Hurricane Helene, which devastated parts of the state. Pollsters avoided calling the most affected parts of the state when the storm was having its greatest effect.

The Wall Street Journal poll interviewed 600 registered voters in each of seven states. The margin of error for the full sample of 4,200 was plus or minus 1.5 percentage points and 4 percentage points for results from any one state.

### Watch a Video

Scan this code for a video explaining the WSJ poll's findings.

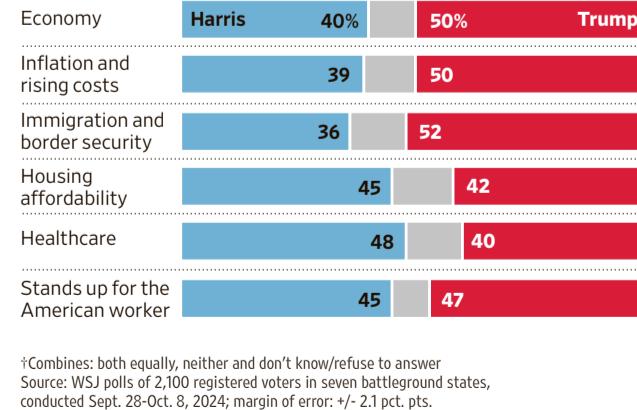
ALISON JOYE/GETTY IMAGES

Quitting smoking was hard.  
Screening for lung cancer is easy.

If you smoked, you may still be at risk, but early detection could save your life. Get SavedByTheScan.org

American Lung Association ad COUNCIL

Between Trump and Harris, who is best able to handle each of the following?



\*Combines: both equally, neither and don't know/refuse to answer  
Source: WSJ poll of 2,100 registered voters in seven battleground states, conducted Sept. 28-Oct. 8, 2024; margin of error: +/- 2.1 pct. pts.

He leads and governs and behaves," Bocian said.

The outcome of the race will come down to a small share of voters who haven't firmly locked into their choice. About 16% of voters are considered by pollsters to be "persuadable"—that is, available to either party, even if they are leaning toward a candidate now. That

is down from 32% in March, and compares with 12% in the Journal's most recent national poll in August.

More narrowly, about 6% of voters are undecided, and their views of the candidates are mixed.

To Bocian, the results reflect big gains for Democrats since the Journal surveyed the presi-

# U.S. Weighs Severity of China's Hacks

**Lawmakers ask companies what they are doing to protect wiretap systems**

By DUSTIN VOLZ  
AND DREW FITZGERALD

**WASHINGTON**—U.S. officials are racing to understand the full scope of a China-linked hack of major U.S. broadband providers, as concerns mount from Congress that the breach could amount to a devastating counterintelligence failure.

Federal authorities and cybersecurity investigators are probing the breaches of **Verizon Communications, AT&T** and **Lumen Technologies**. A stealthy hacking group known as Salt Typhoon tied to Chinese intelligence is believed to be responsible. The compromises might have allowed hackers to access information from systems the federal government uses for court-autho-

rized network wiretapping requests, The Wall Street Journal reported last week.

Among the concerns are that the hackers essentially could have been able to spy on the U.S. government's efforts to surveil Chinese threats, including the FBI's probes.

The House Select Committee on China sent letters Thursday asking the three companies to describe when they became aware of the breaches and what measures they are taking to protect their wiretap systems from attack.

Spokespeople for AT&T, Lumen and Verizon declined to comment on the attack. A spokesman at the Chinese Embassy in Washington has denied that Beijing is responsible for the alleged breaches.

Combined with other Chinese cyber threats, news of the Salt Typhoon assault makes clear that "we face a cyber-adversary the likes of which we have never confronted before," Rep. John

Moolenaar, the Republican chairman of the House Select Committee on China, and Raja Krishnamoorthi, the panel's top Democrat, said in the letters. "The implications of any breach of this nature would be difficult to overstate," they said.

Hackers still had access to some parts of U.S. broadband networks within the past week, and more companies were being notified that their networks were breached, said people familiar with the matter. Investigators remain in the dark about precisely what the hackers were seeking to do, said people familiar with the response.

The breaches are considered by some investigators to be a possibly catastrophic security lapse that could have

enabled China to spy on U.S. domestic wiretapping efforts, but others have cautioned that it is too soon to know the severity of the intrusions.

In separate letters also sent Thursday to the companies, Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R., Wash.), the chairwoman of the

House Energy and Commerce Committee, and other lawmakers on Capitol Hill pressed for answers and requested briefings this month.

Sen. Ron Wyden, a Democrat on the Senate Intelligence

Committee and a leading voice in Congress on cybersecurity issues, said in his own dispatch Friday to the Justice Department and the Federal Communications Commission that the companies are responsible for their own cybersecurity failures but that "the government

shares much of the blame."

The agencies for decades ignored warnings about vulnerabilities in systems required to comply with law-enforcement surveillance requests, Wyden wrote. His office separately asked the FCC for security and integrity plans submitted by AT&T, Verizon, and Lumen under the Communications Assistance for Law Enforcement Act, the federal law that requires telecommunications firms to allow U.S. agencies access to data pursuant to a court order.

The view of the Salt Typhoon hack in Washington has evolved since it was first disclosed publicly by the Journal two weeks ago, when many senior Biden administration officials—and the companies themselves in some cases—weren't yet aware of the intrusions.

The hack is one of several ongoing cyber campaigns linked to Beijing's intelligence services that have stunned U.S. officials both in terms of their sophistication and auda-

cious intent. Other recent hacks tied to China have focused on maintaining quiet but persistent access to vital infrastructure ranging from airports to energy providers and water treatment systems.

In contrast, the Salt Typhoon compromise is being treated by the Biden administration as a more traditional cyber-espionage threat.

"If Chinese intelligence operatives were able to get access to the government's foreign-intelligence surveillance systems, either with the ability to identify all or a significant portion of the targets under collection, it would be a counterintelligence failure of the highest order," said Jamil Jaffer, a former White House national security official and executive director of the National Security Institute at the George Mason University's Scalia Law School.

—Sarah Krouse and Aruna Viswanatha contributed to this article.

## Town Seeks Salvation In a Bar

*Continued from Page One*  
Down by the Green River where Paradise lay  
Well, I'm sorry, my son, but you're too late in asking  
Mister Peabody's coal train has hauled it away.

The song choice was no accident. Pomeroy, population 520, is clinging to life while communities just like it vanish from the American landscape. The fading farm town is at risk of dying unless Byron's can hold on.

For nearly 30 years, Byron's has been the town's lifeblood, an unlikely rollicking hub for blues, folk and rock bands from across the country and the droves of fans who trek here to see them.

Like hundreds of withering farm towns across the heartland, Pomeroy has seen an exodus for decades as family farms consolidated, fewer workers were needed, and young people left for jobs or college. Pomeroy has lost its high school, grocery stores, car dealership and nearly half its population.

In January, town leaders said the run-down building that houses Byron's was no longer safe and that its owner, a 71-year-old Deadhead named Byron Stuart, needed to vacate.

That launched Stuart and his supporters on a quest to find a new home, in the hopes of saving the bar, and in doing so, Pomeroy.

"Byron's is the heart of the town right now, so we want to keep him here," said Pomeroy Mayor Cindy Loots.

In 2020, the Census Bureau found more than 500 towns nationwide had fallen to fewer than 500 residents in the preceding decade. Of Iowa's more than 900 towns, almost three-fourths have lost people since 2000. Most are very small: 90% have fewer than 5,000 residents and 70% have fewer than 1,000. Like many rural areas, Calhoun County in northwest Iowa, where Pomeroy is situated, sees more deaths than births each year. It has been that way for at least 20 years.

Generations ago, around the turn of the 20th century, Pomeroy was a bustling way station along the Illinois Central Railroad for farmers shipping crops or cattle to Chicago.

At its heyday in 1900, some 910 people lived here. Pomeroy served as the nucleus of even smaller farming communities around it.

The town's website wistfully recalls Pomeroy's glory days. Among its 50 businesses, there were two banks, two barber shops, several beauty parlors, men's and women's clothing stores, a hotel, schools, and even a kaleidoscope shop.

There are 23 businesses left in Pomeroy's ZIP Code, according to census figures. All but seven have fewer than five workers. Main Street's banks, laundromat and movie theater



Byron Stuart, center above, faced losing the bar he owned since 1995 when the town said the building was no longer safe, jeopardizing what had become a hub of the fading farm town.



are long gone. The high school, which once churned out state championship basketball teams, closed about a decade ago.

"It seems like gradually people just left," said Stuart, the bar owner.

Like others here, Stuart was raised on a corn-and-soybean farm just outside of town. After high school, he, too, left Pomeroy to attend Iowa State University in Ames and fell in love with live music after seeing the Allman Brothers Band in concert. Right after Stuart finished college, in 1975, his father suffered a heart attack. Stuart returned home to care for him and the family farm.

By then, the vibrant Main Street that Stuart grew up with was already disappearing as more shops closed. But he dreamed of opening his own place where bands passing between cities could play on an off night. He bought the bar in 1995 for \$17,000 at auction.

People began driving to Byron's from the small communities scattered out among the corn and soybeans. Nationally known acts like Todd Snider, Canned Heat and the Bottle Rockets were soon playing his bar, and Stuart was booking musicians months in advance.

Byron's established itself as a friendly place that drew a diverse crowd. Several years after he opened it, Stuart came out as gay. His longtime partner works as a janitor at a community college in Fort Dodge, about 30 miles away.

Bands play in a small area in the back. The bar is blanketed with Grateful Dead and concert memorabilia Stuart collected over the years. Some nights, there might be 10 customers watching and drinking \$3 cans of Busch Light, other nights, 50. Stuart and his regulars call Byron's a "listening room." There's no talking when someone is performing. Stuart serves bags of popcorn and frozen pizzas.

He schedules shows for Sunday nights on the early side, starting at 5:30 and ending around 8:30. Acts can get back on the road—there hasn't been a hotel in Pomeroy for as long as anyone can remember—and the baby boomers

can get home at a reasonable hour.

"Byron has brought something to this area that otherwise would not exist at all," said Rae Danneman, 42, who left Pomeroy in high school but returns for shows.

"I can't tell you how many bands I've seen here that would say during their set, 'Man, there's something special about this place.'"

Danneman now lives in Des Moines, two hours away, but on a night in late July, she

was back home for the final show before Byron's was set to close. Her 75-year-old father, Luther, was with her. Between drags on a cigarette outside, the retired factory worker recalled how he had been coming to Byron's for nearly 30 years. After living in Ames, he moved back to Pomeroy because he missed its smallness.

Byron's faithful, including

musicians who have played

there, held fundraising

concerts and launched a Go-

FundMe page. They raised \$118,000.

Paradoxically, space in a town filled with vacant buildings was tight. There weren't many options for a new location.

In addition to dilapidated structures on Main Street, the city needs to either refurbish or tear down dozens of vacant homes, said Loots, the mayor.

One of Pomeroy's largest employers, the NEW Cooperative, which operates a towering livestock feed mill and grain storage facility for farmers to buy and sell grain, told her it needed the city's help in finding more housing for workers.

"If something doesn't change here, we will die," said Loots, who happens to be Stuart's distant cousin and is now in her second term as mayor.

David Peters, a professor of agricultural and rural policy at Iowa State University, said one of the main problems hurting small Midwestern towns isn't so much a lack of jobs as a lack of people to fill them.

If there's no workforce,

Peters said, companies won't

move in, people can't start

new businesses or expand existing ones, and communities

are left in stasis.

That can tear at the social fabric of these places.

Surveys conducted over two decades by Peters for the Iowa Small Towns Project run by Iowa State, bear that out. In 1994, 76% of survey respondents in Pomeroy said that when something in town needed to get done, the whole community helped. In 2014, the number had dropped to 37%.

Over the same period, 91% initially reported that they could find someone to talk to if they wanted to socialize. Two decades later, only 69% said the same.

Peters also noticed something else: There were some Iowa towns that were able to thrive even as they shrank.

The "shrink smart" places, as Peters termed them, had empowered younger residents—typically more open to change—to take leadership roles in government and local foundations. They also invested in businesses and projects that are draws for younger residents and families, like fitness and community centers.

"For these towns to survive, it really hinges on people coming together and trying to figure out creative solutions," he said.

Two scholars who worked with Peters—Ilona Matysiak, a sociologist with the Maria Grzegorzewska University in Poland, and Marian Krzyzowski, a retired researcher from the University of Michigan—spent time in 2021 and 2022 studying aging populations in small Iowa towns.

The pair searched for things to do when they weren't working. Krzyzowski had read about Byron's. One Sunday, they drove the roughly 95 miles to Pomeroy to see for themselves.

"We were greeted at the door by Byron. It was a unique, family atmosphere, and we felt accepted immediately," said Krzyzowski.

They were so taken, they kept coming back every month.

Using the money supporters raised, Stuart made a \$100,000 offer to the city to buy a little-used, free-standing metal building a block away that occasionally hosts community events. The city decided to let Byron's use the building while officials considered the offer.

Some people, noting that the building was constructed 50 years ago with donations from the community, didn't feel it should be sold to a business.

On Sept. 9, the city council voted 3-2 to approve the sale. Stuart posted a message on Facebook, saying a weight had been lifted from his shoulders. He could stay in Pomeroy.

The following Sunday night, he held his first show in the new venue since the sale. At the front of the community hall, an Omaha blues band called Lou DeLuca and the Delta 88s played a few sets, Grateful Dead tapestries draped behind them. Customers sat at folding tables, drinking their own beers until Stuart can transfer his liquor license.

Stuart smiled the whole night. His bar survived. People showed up as usual. The whirr of an electric guitar drifted once more toward Main Street.



Terry Klein performed during the last live show at Byron's original location on Pomeroy, Iowa's struggling Main Street.

# WORLD NEWS



Signs on Friday of suspected Israeli airstrikes on Beirut: left, rescue workers searched for victims; right, residents inspected the rubble of a building in the Basta neighborhood.

HASSAN AMMAR/ASSOCIATED PRESS

LEWIS JONES/ASSOCIATED PRESS

AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

## Israel Steps Up Its Offensive in Lebanon

**Two peacekeepers hurt when explosion rocks headquarters of U.N. mission**

By JARED MALSIN

BEIRUT—Israel is intensifying its air and ground offensive in Lebanon after suspected Israeli strikes overnight in central Beirut and United Nations peacekeeping forces in southern Lebanon said explosions hit close to their positions.

The Israeli military said it killed Araeb el Shoga, a commander in Iran-backed Hezbollah's elite Radwan forces who was leading the antitank missile unit in the area of Meiss El Jabal, a village abutting the Israeli border. The Israeli military also said it launched an airstrike on militants operating near invading Israeli forces in southern Lebanon.

Two peacekeepers were wounded when explosions rocked the headquarters of the U.N. mission on the Lebanon-Israel border on Friday, according to the U.N. Thursday, Israeli tank fire wounded two other members of the peacekeeping force, the U.N. said, raising concerns over their safety as the Israeli military widens its ground operation against Hezbollah.

Asked Friday by reporters at the White House whether he has asked Israel to stop hitting U.N. peacekeepers, President Biden said, "Absolutely, positively."

An Israeli military spokesman, Nadav Shoshani, said on Friday that the military learned two peacekeepers were "inadvertently hurt" during combat against Hezbollah. "The IDF takes every precaution to minimize harm to civilians and peacekeepers alike," he said.

On Thursday, the Israeli military said that Hezbollah

operates within and near civilian areas including posts belonging to the U.N. Interim Force in Lebanon, or Unifil, a multinational peacekeeping force. It said that Israeli forces operating in the area told Unifil staff to take shelter in protected spaces ahead of time and only then began firing.

Some Western and other foreign powers raised concerns about the wounding of U.N. peacekeepers. France condemned Israeli fire on U.N. forces and summoned Israel's ambassador over the matter on Friday, the French Foreign Ministry said. Dozens of countries including France, Germany and Italy contribute troops to the international force.

The Israeli military this month launched what it said was a limited ground operation to push Hezbollah back from its border, which would allow the return of tens of thousands of displaced Israelis. It has since ordered civil-

ians in a quarter of Lebanon to leave their homes, including in over 100 villages and urban neighborhoods across the country's south, telling them not to return. The Israeli military says the warnings are for residents' safety.

Israel's military chief of staff, Herzi Halevi, visited Israeli forces inside southern Lebanon on Thursday, the military said Friday, vowing to extend the Israeli military's campaign so residents of northern Israel can return to their homes.

"We continue to operate against the enemy and will not stop until we ensure that we can safely return the residents, not just now, but with a future outlook," he said.

"If anyone considers rebuilding these villages again, they will know that it's not worth constructing terrorist infrastructure because the IDF will neutralize them again," he also said. Israel escalated its

military offensive against Hezbollah in mid-September, launching waves of airstrikes that have uprooted as many as a million people from their homes, according to the Lebanese government.

More than 2,100 people have been killed in Lebanon since the war began last year, with most of those killed since September, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry. It wasn't clear how many were combatants.

Friday's exchange of fire came after suspected Israeli airstrikes in the Lebanese capital killed 22 people a day earlier, the deadliest attack in central Beirut since Israel expanded its campaign against Hezbollah in the country last month. The Israeli military declined to comment on the central Beirut strikes.

By late Friday more than 190 projectiles were launched from Lebanon into Israeli territory, according to the Israeli

military, with one death and one injury reported in Israel. The Israeli air force separately intercepted two drones that approached Israel from Lebanon, the military said.

Hezbollah has continued firing at northern Israel daily despite taking a hard hit with the killing of its leader, Hassan Nasrallah, and other senior commanders in the U.S.-designated terrorist group. Hezbollah began launching rockets at Israel on Oct. 8 last year in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. Israel launched its war against Hamas in Gaza after Hamas-led attacks on Oct. 7 last year killed around 1,200 people and took about 250 hostage, according to the Israeli government.

Israel has struck Lebanon more than 9,500 times by air, drone, missile and artillery from October last year to last week, according to the nonprofit Armed Conflict Location and Event Data.

LIMITED TIME READERS SPECIAL OFFER

### CLASSIC BRITISH CORDUROY PANTS

only \$95 buy 2 for \$180  
SAVE \$10

Classic British corduroy pants, expertly tailored in the finest quality thick, 8-wale corduroy. Smart, comfortable and very hard wearing – they look great and retain their color and shape wash after wash. Brought to you from the UK by Peter Christian, traditional British gentlemen's outfitters.

- FREE Exchanges
- 100% cotton corduroy
- Single pleat with a French bearer fly front
- 2 buttoned hip & 2 deep side pockets
- Waist: 32 34 36 38 40 42 44 46 48 50 52"
- Leg: 27 29 31 33"

Colors: Red, Black, Sand, Burgundy, Moss, Emerald, Royal Blue, Toffee, Navy, Corn, NEW Pine, Purple, Brown

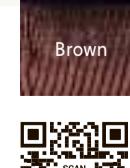
"This is our tenth pair from Peter Christian. They are beautiful, feel great, and are a perfect fit..."  
Allan, New Jersey

★ Trustpilot  
★★★★★

FREE SHIPPING\*  
from the UK to the  
United States & Canada  
+ Free Exchanges\*\*  
use code  
**53W41**



MT08  
Sand



Use code **53W41** for FREE SHIPPING  
to order Corduroy Pants (ref. MT08)

[peterchristianoutfitters.com](http://peterchristianoutfitters.com) | (631) 621-5255

Go Online or Call for a Free Catalog

\*Free shipping from the UK to the US & Canada, of 5-10 working days, ends midnight GMT 12/12/24. \$50 minimum spend applies. We do not accept cheques. This offer may not be used in conjunction with any other offer. Sales taxes charged at checkout if applicable. \*\*Full Refund & Exchange information available online.



### U.S. Hits Iran With New Oil Sanctions

By NANCY A. YOUSSEF  
AND MICHAEL R. GORDON

WASHINGTON—The Biden administration said Friday that it was tightening sanctions on Iran in response to Tehran's large-scale ballistic missile attack on Israel earlier this month.

The move comes as the White House is trying to persuade Israel not to carry out military strikes against Iran's nuclear sites and oil infrastructure, which U.S. officials fear could spark a wider conflict in the region and drive up oil prices.

National security adviser Jake Sullivan said Friday the new steps include measures against the "ghost fleet," the shipping companies that help Iran illicitly smuggle oil around the world. "These measures will help further deny Iran financial resources used to support its missile programs and provide support for terrorist groups that threaten the United States, its allies, and partners," Sullivan said.

Roughly 90% of Iranian exports go to China. To evade existing sanctions, some traders have transported Iranian oil to China and other destinations using companies based in Malaysia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates. The U.S. on Friday said that it had identified 23 vessels that helped transport Iranian crude and was taking action against them. About 15% of China's oil imports come from Iran.

The new steps come as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Biden, along with their aides, have been holding talks about Israel's plans to retaliate militarily against Iran for its Oct. 1 attack that involved more than 180 ballistic missiles.

Sen. Dan Sullivan, an Alaska Republican, said Friday the new sanctions still fall short of the measures taken during the Trump administration.

### Boeing to Cut 17,000 Workers

*Continued from Page One*  
a message to employees outlining the plan. "We need to be clear-eyed about the work we face and realistic about the time it will take to achieve key milestones."

Ortberg last month furloughed thousands of white-collar employees and froze hiring in an effort to preserve cash amid the machinists strike. He said Friday that the company would end the furloughs given the layoffs, which will occur in the coming months and will include all levels of the company.

The CEO said in his memo that the company needed to focus its resources "in the areas that are core to who we are, rather than spreading ourselves across too many efforts that can often result in underperformance and underinvestment."

Boeing will delay the launch of its 777X passenger jet to 2026 instead of 2025. In August the company grounded its test fleet after finding problems in the jets in initial test flights.

The plane, designed for airlines wanting to connect the globe's major cities and to carry some 400 passengers, is already years behind. Boeing unveiled the plane in 2013 and initially said it would start delivering the model in 2020. It has about 480 unfilled orders for the plane.

For the 767, a mainstay in

the cargo market, Boeing will fill the remaining 29 orders for the plane before phasing it out in 2027. Boeing has delivered eight this year through September to FedEx and UPS. It will continue to build a military variant of the aircraft.

Boeing said it would record a net loss of \$9.97 a share for the quarter ended Sept. 30, far worse than analysts' forecasts of around \$1.19 a share.

The company burned through \$1.3 billion in cash in the quarter, bringing its total hit for the year to more than \$8.5 billion. Analysts predicted the company would burn about \$3.3 billion in the quarter.

The company ended September with \$10.3 billion in cash and securities. Its revenue fell nearly 2% to \$17.8 billion in the quarter as it delivered planes finished before the strike started on Sept. 13.

Before the machinist walkout, Boeing was burning more than \$1 billion a month from its operations, as it slowed production to deal with quality issues that surfaced after a door panel blew out midair on a 737 MAX in January.

To shore up its balance sheet, Boeing sold about \$10 billion worth of debt earlier this year and the company has explored asset sales as well as potential secondary stock offerings to raise cash. Boeing shares slipped 2% in after-hours trading Friday. The stock has declined more than 40% year to date.

Earlier this week, credit ratings firm S&P had estimated Boeing will burn \$10 billion in cash this year. It put Boeing on its CreditWatch negative listing to signal an increased likelihood of a downgrade to junk status.

## WORLD NEWS

# Ukraine Expands Use Of Drones in Warfare

With fewer troops and resources, Kyiv uses tech to combat Moscow's might

By ISABEL COLES  
AND IEVGENIYA SIVORKA

The cutting edge of drone warfare is the front line of Ukraine's defense against Russia, where soldiers and manufacturers are innovating to counter Moscow's battlefield advantages.

In recent months, Ukraine has launched drones that intercept Russian flying machines or incinerate tree lines by dropping molten metal. In testing are drones that carry rifles and grenade launchers.

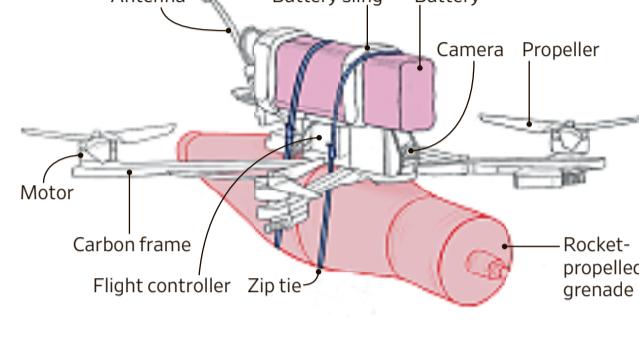
With a smaller military and fewer resources, Ukraine relies on tech to combat Russia's might. Once limited to dropping bomblets, Ukraine's drones now do jobs from planting mines to delivering supplies.

The focused is attaining an edge cheaply, quickly and for as long as possible. Ukrainian drone hacks are often rapidly copied by the Russians, eroding any tactical advantage.

Drone manufacturers churn out hundreds of thousands of small, cheap, strong and agile quadcopters, and maintain close contact with soldiers so designs are battle-ready. "That's how we evolve," said a founding member of drone manufacturer Wild Hornets.

The devices are the basis for these innovations that are changing the battlefield:

First-person-view drones, which can be made for a few hundred dollars from parts mostly commercially available, are among the most important weapons in Ukraine.



Note: Diagram is schematic.  
Source: Sparrow Avia

JEMAL R. BRINSON/WSJ

**Drone on drone:** Ukraine has found a solution to a problem vexing Western defense companies: how to combat cheap aerial drones.

Instead of fighting Russian reconnaissance drones with lasers, jammers or even nets, Ukraine destroys them using small drones—quadcopters and fixed-wing—that fly faster and higher than standard first-person-view drones.

Their digital communication system relays better-quality images, helping to find a target, said Ukrainian activist Serhiy Sternenko, who raises funds to buy drones for the military. He says the tactic has even taken out two Russian helicopters.

And while surface-to-air missiles cost hundreds of thousands of dollars each, drones are as little as \$700.

Russian reconnaissance drones have all but vanished over some cities, Sternenko said.

added. On the front line, "there is much less reconnaissance flying in the air than three months ago," said a Ukrainian platoon commander. "They can't use their artillery as effectively as before."

Eliminating Russian eyes-in-the-sky could make it less risky for Ukraine to deploy precious Western antiaircraft systems closer to the front line, where they could shield infantry against Russian glide bombs.

Russia is trying to adapt, disguising its spy drones as Ukrainian, fitting them with additional cameras and flying them higher, Sternenko said.

Success in downing reconnaissance drones is driving development of drones to intercept Iranian-made Shahed drones, which Russia has used alongside missiles to overwhelm Ukrainian air defenses.

"We already have some prototypes," Sternenko said.



A drone armed with a grenade launcher could attack from farther away, avoiding jamming.

SVET JACQUELINE FOR WSJ

our laptops and start fighting," said Ukrainian drone-platoon commander Serhiy Ihnatuka.

The test run was a success.

Conventional armed drones detonate on impact or drop munitions from above, making them vulnerable to the anti-drone force field that jammers create around targets. The drone-mounted grenade launcher can fire at a distance. Locking onto a target is a challenge—particularly if it is moving—but using artificial intelligence to help aim might increase the hit rate, Moss said.

Other experiments include mounting an assault rifle on a drone with a mechanism to fire it midflight. The weapon is imprecise but could be used to harass and suppress enemy fire. The aim is to preserve scarce infantry by limiting exposure to close combat.

"The dream is to sit in a lounge somewhere, open up

vision goggles, flew the drone toward the wreckage of a vehicle and fired.

**Mother-ship drones:** In the early days of the war, drones carried small weights over a short distance. Today, some models transport up to 20 pounds. That has widened drone capabilities to include resupplying troops and laying mines behind enemy lines. The Queen of Hornets quadcopter can hover at a height of 2 meters, enabling it to deposit a load without damage.

A drone's range is limited by its battery life. To overcome that, both Russia and Ukraine are using larger, longer range drones as mother ships to drop off smaller FPVs with one-way munitions.

"If you can fly a larger drone undetected...and hit targets that aren't expecting to be hit, that's very valuable," said weapons analyst Moss.

## Atomic-Bomb Survivors Win Nobel Peace Prize

By JAMES HOOKWAY

The Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the Japanese organization Nihon Hidankyo, a grassroots movement of atomic-bomb survivors from Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Norwegian Nobel Committee said the group of survivors, who are known as Hibakusha, is receiving the prize for its efforts to achieve a world free of nuclear weapons and for demonstrating through witness testimony that nuclear weapons must never be used again.

The group emerged in the aftermath of the 1945 U.S. nuclear attacks in Japan and proved pivotal in establishing an international taboo on the use of nuclear weapons.

"These historical witnesses have helped to generate and consolidate widespread opposition to nuclear weapons around the world by drawing on personal stories, creating educational campaigns based on their own experience, and issuing urgent warnings against the spread and use of nuclear weapons," the committee said.

"The Hibakusha help us to describe the indescribable, to think the unthinkable, and to somehow grasp the incomprehensible pain and suffering caused by nuclear weapons," it added.

The award comes as nuclear powers around the world modernize and upgrade their arsenals, and new nations appear to be working to acquire the weapons. Russian President Vladimir Putin has repeatedly raised the prospect of using nuclear weapons if the West provides further military support to Ukraine.

While only the U.S. had a nuclear bomb in 1945, eight nations now have nuclear weapons.

ons many times more powerful, while Israel is considered an undeclared nuclear power. Even a limited nuclear conflict between the U.S. and Russia or India and Pakistan could result in millions of deaths.

Iranian officials in recent months have said that Tehran has accumulated most of the expertise needed to build a weapon and that it might reconsider Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's longstanding pledge not to procure weapons of mass destruction.

The Nobel committee said this, a year before the 80th anniversary of the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, is a timely moment to recognize the survivors and their efforts to warn against nuclear war.

"One day, the Hibakusha will no longer be among us as witnesses to history. But with a strong culture of remembrance and continued commitment, new generations in Japan are carrying forward the experience and the message of the witnesses," the Nobel committee said. "In this way, they are helping to maintain the nuclear taboo—a precondition of a peaceful future for humanity."

Toshiyuki Mimaki, a survivor of the Hiroshima atomic bomb and a co-chairman of Nihon Hidankyo, responded to the news at Hiroshima's city hall, saying, "It's like a dream," and that he couldn't believe it, crying and pulling his cheek, a video from Japanese public broadcaster NHK showed.

"We have to appeal to the world, as we have always done, for the abolition of nuclear weapons and a realization of lasting peace," he said. "We want to continue working in a way that we are worthy of the Nobel Peace Prize."

—Yoko Kubota contributed to this article.

## WORLD WATCH



SHINE A LIGHT: At a château in France, an expert inspects 'The Virgin and Child with the Young Saint John the Baptist,' long thought to be a 19th-century work but recently determined to have come from the studio of 15th-century great Botticelli.

GUILLAUME SOUVANT/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE/GETTY IMAGES

### CANADA Businesses Expect Slower Inflation

Nearly three-quarters of Canadian businesses believe inflation over the next two years will hover within the Bank of Canada's target range of 1% to 3%, according to a quarterly central bank survey, marking a sharp turnaround in price expectations from the previous three-month period.

The Bank of Canada's business-outlook survey, published Friday, indicated that nearly half of companies anticipate a deceleration in worker pay raises over the next 12 months and a further softening in price increases for their goods and services due to weak consumer demand.

Inflation expectations converging around the central bank's target range, and other findings from the survey, are likely to provide Bank of Canada officials with renewed confidence that it can further cut interest rates to help revive growth without fear of triggering new inflationary pressure. The central bank sets interest-rate policy to achieve and maintain 2% inflation—or the midpoint of the target range—and its next rate decision is scheduled for Oct. 23.

### UNITED KINGDOM Economy Raises Soft-Landing Hope

The U.K. economy returned to growth in August, reviving hopes of a soft landing from the surge in inflation that has stifled activity in the wake of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

The economy expanded 0.2% on month in August, better than the stagnation in both June and July, helped by strong retail trade and as industrial production recovered some of the output lost in the prior month, the Office for National Statistics said on Friday.

Economists polled by The Wall Street Journal had expected a 0.2% increase in gross domestic product.

The uptick returns the economy to the growth it recorded in the early part of this year, when output rebounded from a mild recession at the end of 2023.

Growth was 0.5% in the second quarter of the year and 0.7% in the first.

August's expansion boosts confidence that the country has successfully pulled off a soft landing, when the economy recovers from a period of high inflation and elevated interest rates without a notable increase in unemployment.

—Paul Vieira

—Ed Frankl

### SOMALIA Egypt Offers Peacekeepers

Somalia says Egypt has offered to deploy peacekeeping troops to the Horn of Africa nation in a security partnership that is emerging as the mandate of a longtime group of African Union peacekeepers winds down.

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al Sisi on Thursday attended a summit in the Eritrean capital, Asmara, where he and the leaders of Somalia and Eritrea pledged strong cooperation in regional security.

Somali authorities said in a statement that they welcomed Egypt's offer to deploy troops in Somalia as part of a stabilization force when the present African Union force disbands in December.

The statement said the leaders welcomed the African Union Peace and Security Council's decision to launch the African Union Mission to Support Stabilization in Somalia, or AUSOM, under whose mandate the Egyptians or others would be deployed.

A separate statement following the summit signed by representatives of Somalia, Egypt and Eritrea asserted Somalia's sovereign right to determine the composition, tasks and deployment timeline for the AUSOM troops.

—Associated Press

### NORTH KOREA South Accused Of Drone Incursion

North Korea has accused rival South Korea of flying drones to its capital to drop anti-North Korean propaganda leaflets and threatened to respond with force if such flights occur again.

South Korea issued a vague denial of the allegation.

North Korea's Foreign Ministry said Friday that South Korean drones were detected in the night skies of Pyongyang on Oct. 3 and Wednesday and Thursday this past week.

The ministry accused the South of violating North Korea's "sacred" sovereignty and threatening its security, and described the alleged flights as a "dangerous provocation" that could escalate to an armed conflict and even war.

It said North Korean forces will prepare "all means of attack" capable of destroying the southern side of the border and the South Korean military, and respond without warning if South Korean drones are detected in its territory again.

Asked about the North Korean claims during a parliamentary hearing, South Korean Defense Minister Kim Yong-hyun told lawmakers, "We have not done that."

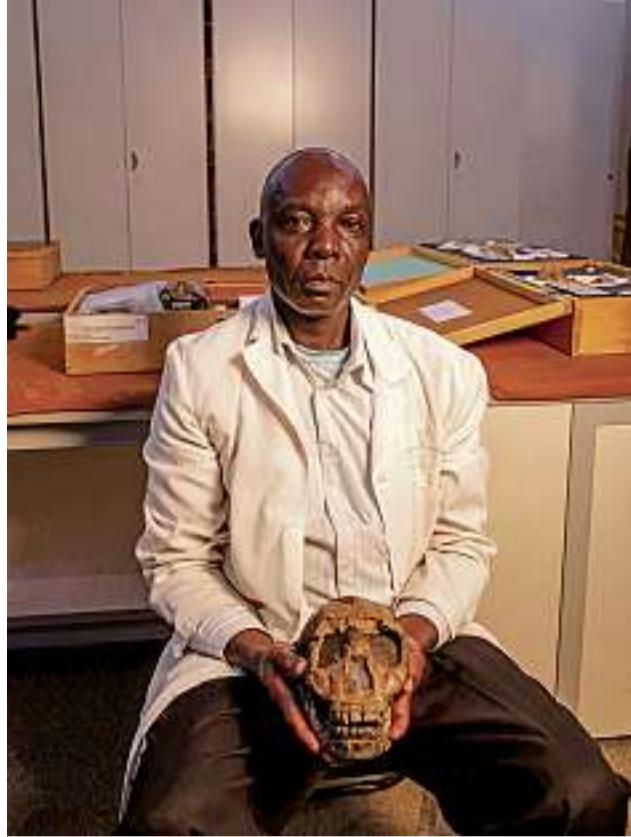
—Associated Press



Toshiyuki Mimaki, co-chairman of the Japanese organization Nihon Hidankyo, survived the Hiroshima atomic bomb.

KYODONews/ZUMA PRESS

## FROM PAGE ONE



KANG-CHUN CHENG FOR WSJ (5)

## Museum Races to Save Itself

*Continued from Page One*

"We hold here one of the most important collections in the world," Leakey says. "It's not in good shape."

Leakey, 52, is the granddaughter of Louis and Mary Leakey, who put East Africa on the paleontological map with the discovery of a 1.75 million-year-old human ancestor in Tanzania. She's the daughter of Richard and Meave Leakey, whose fossil-hunting team found Turkana Boy, a *Homo erectus* skeleton that's the jewel of the museum's collection.

Their work—and now hers—have helped uncover the story of humans and the natural world. The potential of losing all the history in the museum's collections worries her. "We need to make sure that we are keeping them safe for the future," she says.

The Nairobi National Museum, flagship of Kenya's museum system, is in trouble, overwhelmed by a bounty of specimens and a lack of money to keep them safe. Darkening the outlook are criminal charges against its former director-general for allegedly masterminding a scheme to steal \$4 million from its coffers.

Now an ad hoc coalition of scientists and boosters is frantically trying to save it, including Leakey, whose prospecting teams help stock the museum's paleontology trove.

There's also the museum's new director-general, Mary Gikungu, a soft-spoken Kenyan bee specialist who's working to repair its reputation. And there's Tom Mukhuyu, who started working at the museum in 1991, mopping lab floors. Now he's in charge of the hominin vault.

Marta Mirazon Lahr, a professor of human evolutionary biology at Cambridge University, dug into her own pocket to preserve priceless fossils of early man. U.S. Ambassador to Kenya Meg Whitman, the former chief executive of Hewlett Packard Enterprise, has roped in the White House and Smithsonian Institution to get a rescue under way.

"This," says Whitman, "could be the most amazing museum of the origin of man anywhere in the world."

### The lake

The museum, founded by colonial naturalists in 1910, contains some 10 million specimens. The bulk of the museum's paleontology collection comes from the shores of 160-mile-long Lake Turkana, in a remote area in northern Kenya. The lakeside hills are some of the richest fossil-hunting grounds in the world.

"Lake Turkana is the world's best field laboratory for the story of human ancestors from the time period six million years ago to the modern day," says Leakey. "There's nowhere else like it in the world."

Richard Leakey set up camp beside the lake in 1968, and was appointed director of the national museum by the government of Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's first president after independence from Britain.

Louise got into the family business inadvertently. In 1993, the engine on her father's plane quit midflight and he



crashed just outside of Nairobi, losing both legs below the knee. He and Meave went to the U.K. for his treatment, leaving Louise, then in her early 20s, in charge of their field camp. One thing led to another, which led to a doctorate.

Leakey was instrumental in founding the Turkana Basin Institute, a research organization situated along the lakeshore, and runs fossil-prospecting teams six to nine months a year. "Looking at the past really helps us interpret where we might be headed as a species," she says.

This year, Leakey set up camp near Ileret village, on the lake's east side, in June, after the rains ended. Every day, her 13 trained prospectors walked around likely sites. They ignore common fossils and search for big skulls and, mostly, evidence of hominin, the scientific term for a human ancestor.

"We never leave a hominin behind," says Leakey.

There are typically 10 research teams prospecting around Lake Turkana each year. Every tooth, every femur, every finger, every tool, every bowl—everything—they find belongs to the national museum. The museum receives some 5,000 new specimens a year.

### A new director

In June, Leakey escorted the museum's new director, Mary Gikungu, around the fossil-hunting grounds. There's skirmishing among scientists for very limited museum resources, and Leakey hoped to interest Gikungu, an entomologist, in preserving the paleontology collection.

"My God, this place is so rich," Gikungu marveled.

Gikungu grew up among coffee and tea fields in a village south of lush Mount Kenya.

Her grandfather didn't believe in educating girls, so Gikungu's mother grew up with no schooling and a determination that her own daughter wouldn't suffer the same fate.

She won a place at the University of Nairobi, then went on to earn a Ph.D. in Germany, where she studied bee pollination. Gikungu worked her way up the ladder at the National Museums of Kenya and was named director-general last year—stepping into a hornet's nest of alleged corruption and mismanagement.

Louise Leakey had long been skeptical of Gikungu's predecessor, archaeologist Mzalendo Kibunjia, thinking him unqualified to lead the museum back to health. She resigned as chair of the museum board of directors when the government named Kibunjia director-general in 2015.

Rumors circulated about al-

leged misuse of public funds at the museum. Eventually, a museum employee tipped off anti-corruption authorities to the alleged plot.

Kenyan investigators say Kibunjia and his accomplices recruited more than 100 ghost workers and put them on the payroll. The ghost workers were real people who did no work, received museum salaries, kept a small share for themselves and turned the rest over to Kibunjia and a handful of confederates, according to Eric Ngumbi, spokesman for Kenya's Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission, the independent government agency that filed the criminal charges.

All told, the conspirators allegedly stole 490 million Kenya shillings from the museum, or some \$4 million, Ngumbi said. Kibunjia and the other suspects have pleaded not guilty to the charges, filed in April. Kibunjia's attorney, Muema Masangya, says his client

isn't involved in the ghost-worker scam and alerted the museum lawyer as soon as he realized subordinates were dipping into the till. The prosecution, Masangya says, is politically motivated.

The Nairobi National Museum is the family legacy of Louise Leakey, above, and is crammed with ancient specimens. "It's not in good shape," she says. Tom Mukhuyu, above left, is in charge of the hominin vault. Left, fossil cleaning and preparation in the lab.

wasn't involved in the ghost-worker scam and alerted the museum lawyer as soon as he realized subordinates were dipping into the till. The prosecution, Masangya says, is politically motivated.

Kibunjia's trial got underway this month. If found guilty, the 58-year-old could face up to 10 years in prison and fines totaling more than \$7.5 million.

Gikungu says one of her first steps as museum director has been to prevent insider theft by making it easier to track money passing through the payroll system.

### The boy in the vault

The hominin vault shows what the Nairobi museum could be. The genuine fossils of apes and human ancestors are locked in the climate-controlled vault, built by Richard Leakey, to keep them safe. The museum's public galleries display only replicas.

On the shelves are bits of monkey skull in Mary Leakey's wooden cigar box. She liked to smoke Dutch coronas and drink whiskey after a long day of prospecting for fossils. Meave Leakey, now 82, secures her small finds in Perles d'Océan chocolate tins.

Inside the vault also rests Turkana Boy, the 1.5-million-year-old *Homo erectus* found near Lake Turkana in 1984. The boy likely died in a swamp, the sediment covering him before predators could eat his flesh and scatter his remains.

Until recently, Turkana Boy and the other fossils in the vault were stored on decaying green foam.

The Japanese government

donated modern metal rolling cabinets, which allow for the safe storage of double or triple the number of specimens as old-style shelving. Marta Mirazon Lahr, the Cambridge professor, paid for high-quality foam and Tyvek wrap.

Overseeing the vault is Mukhuyu, 59, who started out as a janitor at the museum.

During the Covid pandemic, he worked alone in the vault, nine hours a day, cutting foam to fit each of 4,000 individual fossils of monkeys, apes and early man,

nestling them in Tyvek and securing them in wooden boxes. "So this one is safe for future generations," he says.

The problem, officials acknowledge, is their inability to protect the rest of the museum's huge collection.

### The ambassador

In addition to her time leading Hewlett Packard, Meg Whitman was chief executive of eBay and ran, unsuccessfully, to be governor of California. Since becoming ambassador in 2022, she has promoted business ties between the two countries.

During a February visit to Lake Turkana, Leakey and other scientists described to Whitman the dire condition of the Nairobi collection. Whitman was already a fan—she and her husband routinely stopped in when friends visited from overseas.

**'This could be the most amazing museum of the origin of man.'**

that the reptile's entire body is seven times the length of its head, suggesting this one had been in excess of 35 feet long.

In the entomology lab, Whitman admired the vast collection of butterflies. She was alarmed to see there were no sprinklers to douse the flames should the rows of wooden storage cabinets catch fire. Hanging over Nairobi is the specter of the 2018 fire at Brazil's national museum, which destroyed most of the 20 million specimens in the 200-year-old collection.

Whitman suggested the first step to saving the museum would be to assess its needs: How much modern rolling shelving is required? Can the existing buildings withstand the weight of shelves and fossils? How can the museum bring in more revenue?

The museum team was enthused about undertaking such an assessment, but didn't have the capacity to do so itself, Whitman says.

### Looking for a lifeline

U.S. ambassadors around the world have funds at their disposal to support local cultural institutions, an effort to secure both diplomatic good will and global treasures. But corruption concerns cast a long shadow over the Nairobi museum, and Whitman was wary.

In May, President Biden hosted Kenyan President William Ruto in Washington, recognizing Kenya's position as an economic and political powerhouse in eastern Africa, as well as its role helping the U.S. fight al-Shabaab, al Qaeda's virulent franchise in Somalia.

Kenya's government, facing huge deficits and street protests over taxes being proposed to fix them, has little cash to spare. The government funds only staff salaries at the museum. Donations and grants finance research and some construction projects. The museum's operating revenue comes from ticket sales, and it's not nearly enough.

The White House announced a list of programs and spending for Kenya, including \$150,000 to dispatch Smithsonian experts to Nairobi to catalog the museum's needs and help plan an eventual rescue operation. By paying the Smithsonian to review the museum's needs, the State Department avoided giving the money to the museum itself.

The Smithsonian expects to send a scouting mission to Nairobi this fall and hopes to complete the assessment by August 2025. Then comes the hard part: Finding the uncounted millions required to save the collection before it's too late.



The museum's taxidermy backroom, top. Above, fossil prospectors at work near Lake Turkana, an area known as some of the richest fossil-hunting grounds in the world.

## OPINION

# Mike Rogers Tries a Michigan GOP Comeback

By Nicholas Tomaino

**I**t's autumn in the Midwest, but Michigan Republicans have been through a long political winter. In 2018 the GOP held the governorship, a supermajority in the state Senate and a majority in the House. Four years later it had lost all three. The state party, meantime, had been taken over by what one member referred to as "a tyrannical incompetent dumpster fire," a chairwoman who presided over mountainous debt and paltry fundraising.

At the federal level things have been even bleaker. Donald Trump's narrow victory in 2016 was the only time a Republican presidential candidate has carried the state since 1988. The last Republican to win a U.S. Senate race here was Spencer Abraham in 1994. Six years later he lost his re-election bid to Debbie Stabenow, who is retiring after four terms.

**Four years of progressive governance may help him end a 30-year Republican U.S. Senate drought.**

But things may be warming up for the party. It ousted its chairwoman and installed an old hand, former Rep. Pete Hoekstra. He describes his members as fed up with losing and resolved to support a serious candidate for Senate. He encouraged former Rep. Mike Rogers—who like Mr. Hoekstra served as chairman of the House Intelligence Committee—to seek the seat. Mr. Rogers now faces Rep. Elissa Slotkin in a race most analysts are calling a toss-up.

Mr. Rogers, 61, is a Livonia native who left Michigan to serve as an Army lieutenant and a Federal Bureau of Investigation special agent, focused on organized crime and corruption in Chicago. He then returned home, entered politics, and was elected to the U.S. House district Ms. Stabenow vacated when she was elected to the Senate in 2000. An erstwhile Democratic colleague described him as "a voice of moderation and consensus building," and he served in the House until 2015.

Ms. Slotkin, 48, grew up in the town of Holly, later part of Mr. Rogers's district. She too left Michigan and pursued a career in public service, serving as a Central Intelligence Agency analyst and Pentagon official. In 2017 she prepared to challenge Mr. Rogers's successor in the House and reflected on his tenure: "I remember being kind of proud that he was the congressman from back home, and Michigan, and had a very strong national-security back-

ground," Ms. Slotkin told a local podcast. "I tell people very openly that I would never be running in this race if Mike Rogers were the congressman, because he had offices all over the district."

For many weeks Ms. Slotkin looked like a strong favorite. She had no serious challenger in the August primary and has reportedly raised about \$42 million. Mr. Rogers, his team tells me this week, has brought in \$9.2 million. Polling averages showed her 4 to 5 points up.

But her advantage appears to have been fleeting. "It's August in Michigan," says former Rep. Peter Meijer, who sought the Republican nomination but dropped out before the primary. "Everyone is on vacation—they're up at their cabins, they're hanging out." Come fall, Mr. Rogers would have a chance to introduce himself and let the message settle.

The Senate Leadership Fund, a super PAC, helped him do so by contributing \$22.5 million in television, radio and digital ads to the once-neglected race. That seems to have had an effect: The RealClearPolitics polling average as of Friday had Ms. Slotkin up by 1.9 points. A Quinnipiac survey released Wednesday has the contest tied at 48%.

Mr. Rogers's political hiatus poses a challenge. At a "Believers for Trump" event in Livonia, Gary Luna, 66, a woodworker, says something I encounter often: "I haven't heard much about him." He's hardly seen the candidate on air or his name on neighborhood lawns.

That isn't altogether surprising. Mr. Rogers was out of office during the divisive Trump and Biden tenures, during which his party fractured and Michigan voters punished its excesses. But they've now lived for four years under progressive Washington policies that impose a unique burden on the state.

"They have so screwed up our auto companies," Mr. Rogers says in an interview: "2,400 layoffs at Stellantis, 1,000 at General Motors, that all came because the government decided they were going to tell car companies what to produce." He's referring to Environmental Protection Agency rules that require battery-powered and plug-in hybrid vehicles to compose a larger share of auto maker sales. By 2032 no more than 29% of new cars can be gasoline-powered.

EVs take less manpower and parts than old-fashioned cars to produce, which will mean a smaller workforce. "I'm for EVs coming into the market organically," says Chris Vitale, 52, a United Auto Workers member who works for Stellantis. "But this feels like the 1970s repeating itself. This time the auto industry won't survive." The damage extends beyond Detroit. Auto suppliers exist throughout the state, meaning al-



Democrat Elissa Slotkin and Republican Mike Rogers

most everyone knows someone affected by changes in the industry.

In a new ad, Ms. Slotkin distances herself from the rule: "No one should tell us what to buy, and no one is going to mandate anything." But Mr. Rogers notes that last month she voted against a Congressional Review Act resolution to repeal the agency's emissions standards. "The only reason they did that," Mr. Rogers says of the Slotkin campaign's ad, "is because they don't think we have enough money to come back and say, 'That's wrong.'"

Ms. Slotkin's disavowal of the mandate is consistent with her pitch that she is a nonideological centrist. She emphasizes that her executive-branch service spanned the presidencies of George W. Bush and Barack Obama and talks about "proudly claiming your patriotism." She says she has worked to "claw back \$30 billion in unspent Covid funds," advises illegal migrants that they should "be removed to your home country," and emphasizes that she has stood up to the left and right.

That strategy isn't new. Two years ago she told Politico that Mr. Biden had been late to acknowledge inflation and Democrats risked being too dependent on abortion as a winning issue. "I just don't think in Michigan that's ever going to be the only issue," she said. Proposal 3, a ballot initiative that passed 57% to 43%, juiced turnout in the Wolverine State in 2022 and established a right to abortion throughout pregnancy.

This year Ms. Slotkin suggests Mr. Rogers favors a national abortion ban—he doesn't—though it isn't her main focus.

The trouble is that a claim of moderation is most effective when it's true. Ms. Slotkin emphasizes looking at "what people do, not what they say," but she has voted with the Biden administration 100% of the time, according to ABC News's 538. (Ms. Slotkin didn't respond to my re-

quests for an interview.)

Mr. Rogers has run slightly behind Mr. Trump, who led Kamala Harris 50% to 47% in the Quinnipiac poll and is up by 0.9 in the RealClearPolitics average. People like Nelson Westrick, 49, may explain part of the deficit. A Ford employee of nearly 30 years, he's voting for Mr. Trump but not Mr. Rogers, whom he calls "an establishment guy, part of the George Bush, Paul Ryan era." Mr. Vitale, the Stellantis employee, says, "I won't put a bumper sticker on for Rogers." He'll probably vote for him, but not "enthusiastically."

You can hear Mr. Rogers talking to voters like these. In a debate in Grand Rapids this week, he mocked Ms. Slotkin's intel-community ties: "I get it, the CIA has deception training—my opponent clearly went through that. But you're supposed to use that against your adversaries, not Michigan voters."

**H**e describes how Ms. Slotkin and her staff allegedly signed a nondisclosure agreement to glean information about a battery-plant project, planned near Big Rapids, Mich., and operated by Gotion Inc., the U.S. subsidiary of a Chinese corporation. Ms. Slotkin denies ever signing "with any Chinese company," which appears technically true, but the details of what she learned are nevertheless opaque. That allows Mr. Rogers to play up the issue, harmonizing with Mr. Trump.

Another important constituency is educated suburbanites, who have gravitated toward Democrats in the Trump era. They live in counties like Kent, which supported Mitt Romney by 8 points in 2012 but Mr. Biden by 6 in 2020, and Oakland, which Mr. Obama carried by 8 points and Mr. Biden by 14.

One such voter is Gordon Byslma, 70, of Grand Rapids. His top issues this cycle: immigration,

the economy and "the sanity or insanity of one of the candidates." Mr. Byslma is a "born and bred Republican" and voted like it until 2016, when the GOP went "off the edge." This year, though, he's "leaning toward" Mr. Rogers because "I'm a conservative at heart."

Perhaps that's because Mr. Rogers has trodden carefully, welcoming Mr. Trump's endorsement without appearing sycophantic. The Detroit Free Press this week published an op-ed titled "Trump is no conservative. We're Republican men and we're voting for Kamala Harris." I asked the authors, Jimmy Greene and Bill Nowling, about their plans for the Senate.

Mr. Greene supports Mr. Rogers: He doesn't "plan to punish good Republicans, especially those who still carry traditional Republican values." Mr. Nowling is undecided. "I've voted for both [candidates] in the past. . . . For Rogers, it is going to come down to how hard MAGA he moves in the closing weeks."

That dance works to Ms. Slotkin's advantage, but she and Ms. Harris have a different problem: As the war in the Mideast persists, so too does the anger of a key Democratic constituency: Arab-Americans. The state is home to some 500,000 of them, around half of whom are Muslim. This February 101,000 Democratic primary voters, or 13%, cast "uncommitted" ballots largely to protest the Biden administration's stance on Israel. As the year progressed an Abandon Biden campaign gained steam and changed its name to reflect Ms. Harris's nomination. This week it endorsed the Green Party's Jill Stein.

City Council President Michael Sareini of Dearborn, an Arab-majority city of 107,000, says in an interview that he "can see many, many, a high percentage, a majority of the constituents in the city of Dearborn or even, the greater Southeast area, that will not vote for Harris." Although he is a Democrat, Mr. Sareini adds that "there's no way" he could vote for Ms. Harris or Ms. Slotkin, notwithstanding their calls for a cease-fire. The congresswoman has nevertheless been "lying low key" on the issue, he clarifies, and may well take on less damage as a result.

All these votes make a difference in a state Mr. Trump carried by only 10,704 votes in 2016. Michigan had no Senate race that year, but in every state that did, the result matched the presidential outcome. If this is another razor-thin contest, it won't be the first for Mr. Rogers. When he succeeded Rep. Stabenow in 2000, he won by 111 votes.

*Mr. Tomaino is an assistant editorial features editor at the Journal.*

## Legalize Magic Mushrooms? Massachusetts Should Just Vote No



Massachusetts voters have a far-out opportunity on Election Day: They can make certain psychedelic drugs legal in the Bay State.

If Question 4 passes on Nov. 5, Massachusetts would permit adults to grow, possess and use psychedelic mushrooms, mescaline, ibogaine and dimethyltryptamine (DMT), which is the active ingredient in ayahuasca. The ballot measure is part of a broader cultural embrace of these long-stigmatized drugs. Advocates have claimed it will create "regulated therapeutic access to natural psychedelic medicines."

**Psychedelics have real therapeutic potential, but it's a dangerous mistake to allow everyday use.**

They're right that psychedelics have real potential for treating some mental illnesses. But if psychedelics are medications, they should be approved by the Food and Drug Administration and prescribed by physicians. Massachusetts' plan—like those in other states—end-runs this system, creating an uncontrolled market for dangerous psychoactive drugs. Question 4 wouldn't bring psychedelics into the mainstream. It would drag everyday Americans toward the kooky fringes.

Question 4 envisages a highly permissive regime. Bay Staters could home-grow psychedelics in plots as large as 12 square feet, possess relatively large amounts, and give the drugs to others. Cities and towns

would be allowed to restrict the "time, place, and manner" of sales, but not to ban them outright. In theory, psychedelics would be sold and administered by licensed "psychedelic therapy centers." These licenses would be easy to get: The initiative would prohibit restricting licenses to physicians or any other licensed professionals, or imposing any "unreasonable financial or logistical" barriers.

In May a state legislative committee recommended against passage of the ballot question, arguing that the "decriminalization" provisions—permitting home-growing and personal possession—would create an "unregulated, unlicensed marketplace." The committee is right. Oregon legalized psilocybin in 2020. An official from the Oregon Health Authority told the Massachusetts legislative committee that only about 400 people a month used Oregon's legal products between January 2023 and March 2024. Demand is so low that one of the licensed administration centers closed six months after opening. People in Oregon are growing their own mushrooms and taking them without supervision.

The same thing has happened in the District of Columbia, which decriminalized psychedelics in 2020. It's now possible to buy psychedelics over the counter in dispensaries a few blocks from the White House. As of April, a packet of magic mushrooms ran \$17 a gram; a hit of DMT is \$150.

The grey market is flourishing in Colorado, too. Colorado Public Radio estimated that "dozens or perhaps hundreds of people" now offer unregulated magic-mushroom therapy sessions around Denver. Even these small experiments are creating social problems. A recent study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found rates of psilocybin poisoning

more than tripled among adolescents, and more than doubled among young adults, between 2018 and 2022.

Some will protest that psychedelics cause less harm than cocaine or fentanyl and that the law should reflect that reality. But psychedelics aren't safe for casual consumption. Even in controlled laboratory settings, there are substantial risks. In a major study of psilocybin as a treatment for depression, nearly 10% of subjects reported a serious adverse event within 12 weeks, compared with 1% of the control group. Such events included suicidal ideation, intentional self-harm and hospitalization.

Clinical evidence suggests that psychedelic use is particularly dangerous for the more than 1 in 5

Americans with mental illnesses. One recent review found that about 4% of mentally ill patients in trials experienced adverse events, including "worsening depression, suicidal behavior, psychosis, and convulsive episodes." Dangerous side effects might be acceptable for patients making informed decisions with their doctors. But we shouldn't be handing these drugs out like candy.

Uncontrolled use can have real-world consequences. In October 2023, Alaska Airlines pilot Joseph Emerson took magic mushrooms. Two days later, as a passenger in the cockpit of a flight to San Francisco, he allegedly tried to shut off the plane's engines and had to be wrestled away from the controls. He told ABC News in August that he thought

he was dreaming and was trying to wake himself up—a crisis he blamed on the prolonged hallucinatory effect of the mushrooms. He is awaiting trial on dozens of state and federal charges.

There may be real promise in psychedelic therapies for depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and other hard-to-treat conditions. But commercialization of these substances should come through proper channels: scientific research leading to FDA approval and careful distribution. What advocates of state legalization want is a psychedelic free-for-all. That isn't medicine, or science. It's crazy.

*Mr. Lehman is Manhattan Institute fellow and contributing editor of City Journal.*

## Brevity: Or, the Soul of Wit

By Brenda Cronin

**J**ames," "Held," "Orbital." The name of a celebrity's newborn? No, those are the one-word titles of novels, all nominees for the Booker literary prize. The other three contenders are the two-word "Creation Lake" and "The Safe-keep" and the hefty three-worder "Stone Yard Devotional."

Succinct titles aren't only for books. Load up Netflix for "Outlast" and "Heels" and the films "Outlaw," "Uglies" and "Boxer." On Amazon Prime you can stream "Cuckoo," "Afraid" and "Slingshot" as well as a film called "1992."

This concision may be a result of our shorter attention spans thanks to television, smartphones and social media. But there have been concise thinkers and writers for ages. Shakespeare clearly knew what he was up

to: "Macbeth," "Othello," "Richard III." In "Hamlet," his slightly doltish—and long-winded—character Polonius, gets the line: "Brevity is the soul of wit."

There is nary an excess word in the title or chapters of "Persuasion" or "Emma" by Jane Austen (1775-1817). The same can't be said for Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), whose windy epistolary novels have one-word titles and unwieldy subtitles: "Clarissa: Or, the History of a Young Lady," and "Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded." Those clunkers brace readers for Richardson's prose, such as this: "Dear Mother, For the last Letter was to my Father, in Answer to his Letter; and so I will now write to you; tho' I have nothing to say."

But what if the barrage of choices our devices spew—on food, clothes, entertainment—has trained us to be, as George W. Bush might

put it, "the decider"? Has this gusher of options honed our ability to discern promptly what we want? And the more succinct the label, the better because time is still money. So who needs "Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil" or "Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters," or the "Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" when one word will do?

Like hemlines and trends everywhere, from food to fashion, labels are cyclical. Just as there are phases in the design of book covers and movie posters, there are phases in the very titles that are meant to promote. But who am I kidding? I've already gone on for almost 400 words. You probably stopped reading at "literary prize."

*Ms. Cronin is an associate editorial features editor at the Journal.*

## OPINION

## REVIEW &amp; OUTLOOK

## California's Law and Order Revolt

A decade ago California launched a not-so-grand experiment in progressive criminal justice. The ugly results since are now fueling a voter backlash, and support is growing for a course correction on the Nov. 5 ballot.

For better but often worse, California's direct democracy system enables voters to change state law. In 2014 voters approved a George Soros-backed initiative, Prop. 47, that made drug possession and theft of less than \$950 misdemeanors. Advocates including Gov. Gavin Newsom said this would save money for taxpayers.

The social costs have far exceeded any savings. Prosecutors had been able to leverage jail time to compel drug addicts into treatment. No more. As a result, vagrancy, open-air drug use and mental illness have proliferated. Organized crime rings plunder stores and freight trains with impunity. On Oct. 4, two dozen people ransacked a Nordstrom store west of Los Angeles that had been looted by another crew of masked thieves in August 2023. Violent crime has surged by some 35% since 2014—about four times as much as nationwide.

Enter Prop. 36, a Nov. 5 initiative that would restore penalties as a criminal deterrent and rehabilitation inducement. Shoplifters with two or more past theft convictions could be charged with felonies. Sentences would also be enhanced for organized crime. Drug traffickers would have to serve time in state prison rather than county jail.

The initiative would also let prosecutors charge people found possessing illegal drugs with a "treatment-mandated felony" if they have two or more past convictions for drug crimes. Those who complete treatment would have their charges dismissed.

A UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies poll last week showed voters favor Prop. 36 by a three-to-one margin, with support strongest among Latinos. This explains why its progressive opponents, including Mr. Newsom and his union allies, are misrepresenting the initiative as a revival of "the war on drugs."

Why do they oppose locking up drug traffickers and rehabbing addicts? The teachers unions say spending on incarceration and treatment will reduce funding for schools, never mind the costs to society from crime and addiction. As Kamala Harris acknowledged when she was San Francisco District Attorney two decades ago, there is "a direct connection between drug sales and violent crime."

Early on Sept. 25, a man hijacked a Los An-

## Voters may oust LA's DA and toughen drug and shoplifting laws.

geles public bus, killed a passenger and held the driver at gunpoint until he was stopped by a SWAT team. The hijacker had two drug trafficking convictions and previously had been arrested for several violent offenses that weren't prosecuted. He was last arrested in 2020 on suspicion of drug sales.

Los Angeles DA George Gascon is throwing the book at the hijacker, but his relaxed enforcement for four years has fueled such mayhem. One of his first acts after winning election in 2020 was to direct his deputies not to prosecute such crimes as disturbing the peace, resisting arrest and making criminal threats. He also moved away from using cash bail.

Violent crime on Los Angeles's mass transit has increased by a third and 8.5% overall in the county since before the pandemic. Union Pacific in 2022 blamed a spike in cargo thefts on Mr. Gascon's catch-and-release policies for thieves.

By the way, Ms. Harris endorsed Mr. Gascon in 2020, saying he would provide "real justice for every Angeleno." Voters are revolting against that "real justice." Mr. Gascon trails his opponent Nathan Hochman, a former assistant Attorney General under George W. Bush, by 30 points in a UC Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies poll this week.

Mr. Gascon has tried to tie Mr. Hochman, a registered independent, to Donald Trump. The DA in a recent debate compared Mr. Hochman's promise to prosecute lawlessness to Mr. Trump saying that Haitians are eating pets. The attack-line makes as little sense as Mr. Gascon's policies. In any case, Mr. Hochman says he didn't vote for Mr. Trump in 2016 or 2020.

\* \* \* \* \*

Further north, San Francisco Mayor London Breed is also facing a voter revolt as she campaigns for re-election. She was elected in 2020 on a promise of restoring competence in City Hall but has failed. She's running neck and neck in a crowded field with Daniel Lurie, a Levi Strauss heir, and former city supervisor Mark Farrell.

Progressives and government unions that rule San Francisco perceive Mr. Farrell as the bigger threat since he is campaigning for stepped-up law enforcement and government accountability. He has drawn support from investors and techies frustrated with Ms. Breed's management and tired of stepping over human feces and drug needles.

Californians have a high tolerance for disorder, but even they may have had enough.

## Australia Wins Its China Trade War

Chinese lovers of lobster are celebrating. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese says Beijing will lift the ban on Australian lobster it imposed in 2020 after the previous Prime Minister called for an independent investigation into the origins of Covid-19. Lobster was the last of a group of Australian exports from coal and wood to wine to beef the Chinese had sanctioned.

As is the case with trade wars, there were no winners but plenty of innocent victims. Yet for all the pain inflicted on Australian exporters by the sanctions, they failed in forcing Canberra to back down on its policy.

The Australian economy took a \$13 billion hit because of the bans imposed by China. Given Australia's export-dependent economy and the fact that China was its leading destination for those exports, Australian producers had to scramble for alternate markets after China imposed the sanctions. Prior to the ban, for example,

China accounted for 95% of the market for Australian lobster.

Though it's good to see the trade ban lifted, China remains a bully, and the only thing politicians seem to consider in response is sanctions and tariffs. As the Australian case demonstrates, a huge part of the answer to China has to be helping those who have become overly reliant on China either in their supply lines or as a destination for their goods. The Trans-Pacific Partnership—which excluded China—would help greatly by making it easier to invest in non-Chinese alternatives. But after Barack Obama signed TPP, Donald Trump repudiated it, Joe Biden then refused to join its successor pact, and Kamala Harris, who campaigned against the TPP in her Senate run, won't join.

It's still the best idea for building economic and trade resilience against a regime like China's that uses economic leverage to punish countries that don't do its foreign-policy bidding.

## Trump Sees Harris, and Raises

Donald Trump and Kamala Harris are in a bidding war for votes, and it isn't pretty. After the Vice President pitched a Medicare home healthcare entitlement, Mr. Trump countered by pitching a tax break for auto loans and U.S. citizens overseas. If he wins, Mr. Trump may regret these tax favors.

"We will make interest on car loans fully deductible," Mr. Trump vowed at a rally in Detroit on Thursday. "This will stimulate massive domestic auto production and make car ownership dramatically more affordable for millions and millions of working American families." This is the fanciful economics typical of Democrats.

Mr. Trump is trying to woo auto workers harmed by inflation and the Biden Administration's electric-vehicle mandate. Higher car prices and interest rates are crimping sales. Car makers are laying off workers and cutting shifts amid slowing demand. They also need to cut costs to finance increasing EV production to meet government mandates.

A tax deduction for auto interest could reduce the cost of buying a car and boost demand in the short term. But it would also fuel higher prices and make cars less affordable over time. This is what has happened with the mortgage interest deduction. It's another tax subsidy for debt and consumption, which the economy doesn't need.

More debt could increase defaults. Auto loan delinquencies are the highest since 2010 because consumers have taken out more debt than they can sustain. The subsidy would also benefit a specific politically favored industry, like

## The former President is piling up special interest tax giveaways.

Mr. Biden's green-energy tax credits. Although not as costly as Mr. Trump's proposed tax exemptions for overtime pay (\$680 billion to \$3.1 trillion) or Social Security (\$1.6-\$1.8 trillion), the auto loan carve-out would still make it harder to finance the extension of his 2017 tax reform. Ditto his promise this week to end what he called the "double taxation" of Americans working abroad.

Americans abroad aren't double taxed now since they receive a credit against the foreign taxes they pay. Exempting the difference would encourage more professionals to work abroad and companies to expand offices in low-tax countries like Singapore, where employment income for nonresidents is taxed at a flat 15% rate.

The larger problem is that Mr. Trump's proposals would make a hash of the tax code and can't possibly be paid for while also extending the provisions from his pro-growth 2017 provisions that expire next year. These include the lower marginal rates, larger standard deduction, 20% pass-through business deduction and doubled estate-tax exemption.

Mr. Trump is setting voters up for broken promises and may higher tax rates, which Democrats will demand to pay for his tax giveaways. That's more likely if he wins and Democrats control one or both chambers of Congress. But even Republicans will be hard pressed to pay for his sops without junking parts of his 2017 reform.

No matter who wins, this could end up being the most expensive election in history for American taxpayers.

## OPINION

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Harris's 'Politics of Joy' vs. Trump's Chaos

Regarding Peggy Noonan's "Do Americans Really Want a 'Politics of Joy'" (Declarations, Oct. 5): The Harris-Walz campaign has been called the Seinfeld campaign, a campaign about nothing. It bases itself on "vibes" and "joy." Americans who find their wages not keeping up with the cost of food, housing and gas wouldn't describe themselves as similarly joyful or even optimistic.

Vice President Kamala Harris has repeatedly said that it is time to "turn the page." Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz recently said, "We can't afford four more years of this." Both are correct. We must turn the page on the policies of President Biden and Ms. Harris because those policies have brought four years of chaos, a border uncontrolled, wars in Europe and the Middle East, lack of real wage growth and an axis of evil combining Russia, China, Iran and North Korea. It all feels out of control, and we need a change.

I am not some biased MAGA worshiper, but I know I was wealthier, the world was at peace, crime was lower and the border was under control when Donald Trump was president. In short, life was better. Any chaos associated with Mr. Trump in those years was substantially a creation of the mainstream media in association with the Democrats.

RICHARD REINITZ  
Houston

MICHELLE HUBBELL  
Lakewood, Ohio

British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher is reported to have advised political leaders: "If you set out to be liked, you would be prepared to compromise on anything at any time, and you would achieve nothing."

Though Ms. Noonan focuses on the Harris campaign's strategy of hiding behind the politics of joy to combat her unfavorable rating with independents, she offers Ms. Harris the same blunt advice: Risk exposure to the voters and convey to them your true political intent on the issues.

RAYMOND J. TERMINI  
Dallas

## The Broadband Blowout Is a Waste of Money

"The Broadband Rollout Fiasco" (Review & Outlook, Oct. 5) is real. Few American households live in areas without access to broadband in the first place. In its 2021 Broadband Deployment Report, the Federal Communications Commission found that 99.4% of the U.S. population in 2019 lived in areas that met the FCC's broadband definition for either fixed or mobile services.

The remaining 0.6%, roughly 770,000 households, who lacked access to broadband were mostly in the rural West or Alaska.

The 2021 infrastructure law allocated \$42.5 billion to areas "unserved" by broadband. That is more than \$55,000 for each unserved household in 2019. Many would have chosen a check for \$50,000 rather than a new government service.

Rather than admit that \$42.5 billion was unneeded for broadband deployment, the administration took two steps to rationalize the spending. First, although Congress specified that the programs funded be technology neutral, the Commerce Department funded fiber technologies almost exclusively rather than newer,

less expensive wireless and satellite technologies. Second, in 2024 the FCC changed the definition of broadband from 25/3 Mbps to a faster 100/20 Mbps, substantially expanding the population of "unserved" areas to about 10% of the population.

Practically all Americans today can access what they consider broadband services from either fiber, wireless or satellite providers, which offer services based on private investment in competitive markets. With \$35 trillion of federal debt, \$42.5 billion in federal broadband spending is unneeded.

HAROLD FURCHTGOTT-ROTH  
Hudson Institute  
Washington

Mr. Furchtgott-Roth is a former FCC commissioner.

Amid the disaster of Hurricane Helene, the only reliable way for rural western North Carolina to communicate has been through Starlink. Cell and internet went down on Friday, Oct. 4. Starlink has literally been a life saver for our communities.

BARBARA VANSCOVY  
Little Switzerland, N.C.

## Competitive Electricity Markets Deliver Results

In "How Florida Keeps Electricity Plentiful and Rates Low" (Cross Country, Oct. 5), Mario Loyola writes, "Compared with Florida, residential electricity is 27% more expensive in Pennsylvania, 60% more expensive in New York and 137% more expensive in California."

While the U.S. Energy Information Administration data shows higher residential electricity prices in California, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas than in Florida, the story differs in other sectors. In the commercial sector, Texas' electricity prices are 12% lower than Florida's. In the industrial sector, Texas' prices are 25% lower and Pennsylvania's 7% lower than Florida's. In the transportation sector, Texas' prices are 62% lower than Florida's, and Pennsylvania's prices are only 2% higher.

My point is that Texas and Pennsylvania, which participate in wholesale electricity markets, have been unfairly singled out, despite evidence that these markets work effectively. Both states demonstrate that competitive electricity markets deliver results.

While Florida's exclusion from a regional transmission organization might contribute to lower residential prices, this doesn't imply that wholesale markets and grid operators in other states aren't performing well.

RAO KONIDENA  
Roseville, Minn.

## The Israeli Flag in Lebanon

A group of Israeli soldiers, having taken a high point known as the Garden of Iran Park in southern Lebanon, posed while planting an Israeli flag. U.S. State Department spokesman Matthew Miller condemned the flag as "obviously inappropriate."

Undoubtedly, he will condemn the iconic raising of the U.S. flag atop Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima as imperialistic and obviously inappropriate as well ("The Anti-Israel Mind in Profile," Review & Outlook, Oct. 8). This is all too consistent with the incoherent, political drivel that U.S. foreign policy has become.

RAYMOND REICH  
New York

## Pepper ... And Salt

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL



"We can't split the stock anymore. We'll have to splinter it."

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

JONATHAN BANKS  
Pacific Palisades, Calif.

## OPINION

# What a Deadly Flood Revealed About America

**DECLARATIONS**

By Peggy Noonan

We have been thinking about disasters, about Hurricane Helene and North Carolina, about Milton and Florida. It sent me back to the great classic on American disaster, "The Johnstown Flood" by David McCullough, published in 1968. I hadn't remembered it contains information pertinent to the current moment.

Johnstown, Pa., in the western part of the state and the heart of the Allegheny Mountains, was a growing, thriving steel-mill and factory town in 1889, one of a string of such towns in a deep valley that McCullough likened to "an enormous hole in the Alleghenies." The Cambria Iron Co. had giant converters going there, making steel for rails and plowshares. The place was alive.

**In 1889, Johnstown, Pa., witnessed extraordinary heroism, managerial genius and deep endurance.**

Twenty-three thousand people lived in the valley, 15,000 of them in Johnstown, of all types, sorts and classes—doctors and lawyers, laborers and factory workers, small-business men and steel executives. There was just about every ethnicity too—Italians, Poles, Hungarians and Russians, though the majority of the population were Irish, Scots-Irish, German and Welsh. There were blacks—Johnstown had been a stop on the Underground Railroad—and Jewish merchants.

The mood of the town was the mood of the country, aspirational. There was a busy library and an opera house, and people worked hard,

"not only because that was how life was then, but because people had the feeling they were getting somewhere. The country seemed hell bent for a glorious new age."

Johnstown was built at the confluence of two rivers. Above the town was a reservoir, whose formal name was Lake Conemaugh but which everyone called the South Fork Dam. There had long been worries about that dam. It was controlled by a powerful trust whose leaders hadn't always been interested in warnings from townspeople that it wasn't sturdy enough or maintained. The lake was about 2 miles long, a mile wide, and in some places 10 feet deep. It was a fearsome body of water to have up there on a mountain over a town.

There had been heavy rains through the spring of 1889, and on Memorial Day more storms came in. The rivers ran high. The lake rose. On Friday the dam was breached. Then its center collapsed, and the lake fell down into the valley, and Johnstown was drowned.

Within days, McCullough writes, the Johnstown flood was the greatest story since the death of Lincoln. Newspaper reporters from Pittsburgh, New York and Philadelphia struggled to the scene, taking trains until the tracks washed out, then horses and mules, and finally slogging through seas of mud.

One by one they got there and saw: devastation.

The heart of the town was empty spaces, "an unbroken swath of destruction." Landmarks were gone. Huge trees, whole houses, dead livestock and barns had been plunged into a huge wall of water. When the water came into sight, an eyewitness said, "It just seemed like a mountain coming." Most of the people of Johnstown never saw it coming, "they only heard it; and those who lived to tell about it would for years after try to describe the sound of the thing as it rushed on them." It was a deep, steady rumble, a roar like thunder, like the rush of an oncoming train.

SEPIA TIMES/UNIVERSAL IMAGES GROUP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Johnstown, Pa., after the flood of May 31, 1889.

The drowning of the city took about 10 minutes. Well over 2,000 were killed, but hundreds unaccounted for would never be found. The flood killed just about 1 person in 10 in the valley, 1 in 9 in Johnstown.

Word of what had happened electrified the nation and ignited the biggest humanitarian response America had ever seen. Within days food, water, clothing and blankets poured in. Even Clara Barton came with her newly organized group, the Red Cross. It was their first real disaster. Barton vowed, as she threw up hospital tents, to be "the last to leave the field." She stayed five months, never left once, and when she departed the people of Johnstown cheered with tears in their eyes and gave her a golden locket. Johnstown made the Red Cross.

Newsmen spread other stories, too. Within days of the flood came reports that bands of "Hunkies"—local Hungarian laborers—were robbing, raping and pillaging. It wasn't true but caused plenty of trouble, and it turned out the rumors were

started by a local lawyer who'd lost his wife and children and gone off his head.

There were true tales of heroism. Seventeen-year-old Bill Heppenstall was at the water's edge when a small house in the swift current lodged, for a moment, in a clump of trees. He heard a baby crying, but the house was too far to reach. He got a bell cord from a railcar, tied it around his waist, swam to the house, and came back with the child. Witnesses cheered. He'd seen a mother in the house and went back for her too, and as they reached shore together the house was torn from the trees and spun madly downstream.

Also, unbelievably, survivors organized almost immediately. They formed citizen committees to establish morgues, improvise housing, see to unclaimed children. They appointed policemen, who cut tin stars from tomato cans found in the wreckage.

The inventive rigged up rope bridges; the brave crossed them to find survivors.

What are our thoughts from this?

In great disasters rumors spread quick as fire. When you're in one you must take this into account.

When you've got a feeling about something, when your mind keeps going to it, unbidden—I don't trust that dam—listen to it, even if you don't understand it. Act on it. Premonitions have to be followed by action or they're just something that keeps you up at night.

We have always been a clever people but in the past we were clever not only with our heads but our hands. We made things, knew how to work wood and metal, and in a physical crisis we knew how to rig up the rope ladder and build a raft, quickly. When we lost the mills and factories we lost jobs, yes, but we also saw the lessening of a capability, a broad ability to handle the physical world when that world turns dark. We need to pay more attention to this.

History reminds us: America is and always has been a freak show. We should accept this in ourselves more, that it is in our nature as a people. When the floodwaters receded and camp towns sprang up, the region's prostitutes came in, followed by the ladies of the Christian Temperance Union. We are cantankerous. When strangers who had survived overnight in an attic saw that a stone church next door had broken the wall of water, someone said, "The Methodist church saved us." Within seconds a voice shot out: "Only the Catholic Church can save!"

We did something nobody ever tried before, to fill a continent with people from every country in the world, and ask them to come, build something, get along, and invent an arrangement of rules and rights by which they could operate together. It produced a dazzling, strange and gifted nation, a freak show, and a fabulous one.

To read our history is to say, "We got through that."

We've got through a lot. Whatever's coming, immediately and further out, we'll likely get through that, too.

## Campus Protesters Hijack Academic Freedom

By Greg Weiner

The Scottish cleric and philosopher John Witherspoon arrived in New Jersey in 1768 to assume the presidency of the future Princeton University. He educated dozens of men who became the American founders. These alumni include James Madison, 21 future U.S. senators and three Supreme Court justices. They declared independence, fought a revolution and framed a Constitution.

Yet the founders' education addressed the enduring questions of the human condition, not the boiling events of the day. Consequently, their political work was informed by a deep historical, political and moral sensibility. Witherspoon's influential "Lectures on Moral Philosophy and Eloquence" mention Cicero and John Locke but not George III or George Washington.

That helps illustrate a fundamental problem plaguing campuses, which have suffered more than a year of anti-Israel unrest. Almost everyone assumes campuses have a unique role to play in debating current events. Consequently, most disputes about unrest on campus pertain to how colleges address current controversies, regardless of whether those controversies have anything to do with higher education's actual purpose.

That purpose is teaching and learning in pursuit of truth. This justifies an enhanced privilege of academic freedom, including broader protections for expression than are provided in most realms of society. Academic freedom should guide campus policies. But these policies should also recognize this enhanced privilege comes with special responsibilities.

Instead, campus activists treat this privilege as a special entitlement to say or do anything in pursuit of political goals, free from consequences. But the purpose of scholarship is different from that of political demonstrations. The latter

aren't about the pursuit of truth. They reduce complicated issues to slogans and assume demonstrators already know the truth. They have played a vital role in American history, but that role isn't the role of colleges.

Campus policies should err on the side of encouraging more conversation, not less. But campus protesters aren't entitled to such enhanced privileges of freedom unless they are engaged in the activity for which it exists: the pursuit of truth.

The idea that academic freedom entails both expansive privileges and enlarged responsibilities isn't reactionary. It is the asserted position of the organization making the strongest claims for freedom of expression on campus: the American Association of University Professors.

The AAUP's 1940 Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom and Tenure provides an excellent foundation for campus policies today. It calls for "full freedom" in research, publication and teaching. But these

freedoms are balanced by duties, such as the obligation not to introduce unrelated controversies to the classroom—a place where the power dynamic between teacher and student is uneven.

The statement points out that teachers are both officers of their institutions and citizens. When they speak as citizens, they should be free

**John Witherspoon knew campuses were meant for the pursuit of truth, not political activism.**

from institutional censorship. But even then, their "special position" as educators "imposes special obligations." These include being scrupulously accurate, exercising "appropriate restraint" and showing "respect for the opinions of others."

Campuses should foster the ex-

change of ideas with settings that facilitate conversation and deliberation. "Exchanging" ideas also implies "receiving" ideas, so academic freedom entails a duty to listen to others.

This exchange relies on mutual trust and accountability. Masks and other identity concealments make this impossible and shouldn't be protected by academic freedom. Similarly, encampments, harassment and building occupations—which impose rather than exchange ideas—are abuses of privilege that warrant consequences, not amnesty from them.

Above all, universities, like Witherspoon's Princeton, should be places where faculty and students can retreat from the contemporary to focus on the enduring. A 1775 seminar on British colonial policy would have been useless by the time of the Constitutional Convention a dozen years later.

Current events may be one appropriate topic of conversation on campus. But so are laboratory results,

novels, social science and Platonic dialogues. Academic conversations are useful precisely because, unlike the transience of current events, they endure. A well-taught course on the history of the Israel-Palestinian conflict may shed light on Hamas's atrocities. But it won't help as much as engagement with longer-lasting subjects, from millennia of reflections on just-war theory to the great literary canon dealing with armed conflict.

Witherspoon's students agitated for American independence. So did Witherspoon himself. But that wasn't the purpose of the classroom. Instead it was the enduring nature of their education that prepared them to build a republic. Universities hoping to reclaim trust must do more than simply make political activism evenhanded. They must reclaim the pursuit of truth that alone justifies university education.

*Mr. Weiner is president of Assumption University.*

## Taxpayers Pay People to Be Hurricane Risk Takers

**BUSINESS WORLD**

By Holman W. Jenkins, Jr.

In the wake of devastating storms, the least popular argument is nevertheless an important one. We wouldn't be asking of people in storm-prone areas anything not asked of every other American.

Insurance markets exist—indeed, all markets exist in a sense—to inform people of the cost of their choices so they can make better ones.

Hardly a point emphasized by climate obsessives, today's rising storm damage is due mainly to more people putting up more expensive and elaborate structures in places where destructive weather is a predictable hazard.

They do so not least because of the availability of federal rebuilding money, including federal flood insurance that is underpriced and subsidized by taxpayers who don't benefit from beachfront charms.

Luckily, this week's Hurricane Milton landed on Florida with less force than expected and then moved out to sea. Less luckily, the previous week's Helene continued inland and dumped oceans of rain on Appalachian terrain, where it can only be funneled into narrow stream and river valleys. Residents, perhaps especially recent retirees and escapees from the Northeast or California, appear not to have been adequately warned of this effect. Some tragically drowned in their cars. That's a lesson for officials to pocket for next time.

But what about the lesson that's never learned?

"It was like an urban-renewal program out there," commented the head of the National Hurricane Center after witnessing the federal spending spree occasioned by 1979's Hurricane Frederic.

"We call weather-related catastrophes 'natural disasters,'" observed a 2016 Stanford Law Review study, but the losses are often due to "questionable government policies."

In the 40 years since planetary warming landed on the front pages, global emissions have doubled, topping 40 billion tons last year. But hasn't investment in renewables

been outpacing conventional fuels for at least five years? Input isn't output. Even with more capital, solar and wind can't keep pace with efficient fossil energy. Meanwhile, the 40 billion tons of CO<sub>2</sub> have a half-life in the atmosphere of an estimated 120 years.

But a second effect has also been in evidence for decades: a steady decline in death rates from severe weather.

**Florida wouldn't be less popular if insurance were properly priced. A lot else would be different.**

An ounce of prevention turns out to be worth 20 pounds of FEMA. Better building codes, better planning, better weather forecasting—all make killer hurricanes less deadly than those experienced by our forebears in the days before man-made climate change.

The climate press tends to picture social meltdowns and global strife from millions of people gradually having to relocate or change their practices. But adaptation is survival. Florida and other tropical areas will hardly be denuded of people even if storms are stronger and summers hotter. In an unlikely summing of congressional spine on subsidized insurance, even then Americans would build on coastal plains. They would insure their own risks from their personal piggy banks if necessary; they would build

more cheaply so they could afford a total loss every 30 years or so.

That's how Americans survived before federal flood insurance in 1968, shouldering the full cost for the amenities they value. And Americans today are richer and have better risk-management tools at their disposal.

The climate crowd is strangely reactionary on adaptation, theoretically in favor of it but often seeing a surrender to Big Oil. The right question for politicians always and ever should be: Do our policies create the best incentives? Congress's last run at reforming flood insurance, in 2012, was ignominiously repealed two years later. Now a fundamentally bankrupt program will have to pay for Helene and Milton losses, even as its accumulating deficits are a fraction of the sums the federal government pours into green-energy subsidies that don't actually have any effect on climate change.

When the United Nations climate panel a few years ago backed away from its worst-case warming and emissions scenarios, I predicted the mainstream press would emphasize outlier forecasts involving highly speculative climate tipping points and doom loops. My prophecy came to pass, but it should still be understood: The central scientific forecast doesn't suggest that climate change is unmanageable for the human race. This is good news because, apart from rhetoric, the economic incentive to turn fossil fuels into greenhouse emissions remains utterly untouched by 40 years of climate politics.

## THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

PUBLISHED SINCE 1889 BY DOW JONES &amp; COMPANY

Lachlan Murdoch

Executive Chairman, News Corp

Rupert Murdoch

Chairman Emeritus, News Corp

Emma Tucker

Editor in Chief

Liz Harris, Managing Editor

Charles Forelle, Deputy Editor in Chief

Elena Cherny, Senior Editor; David Crow,

Executive Editor; Chip Cummins, Newsweek;

Tanieth Evans, Associate Editor; Brent Jones,

Culture, Training &amp; Outreach; Alex Martin, Print

&amp; Writing; Michael W. Miller, Features &amp;

Weekend; Prabha Natarajan, Professional Products;

Bruce Orwall, Enterprise; Philana Patterson,

Audio; Amanda Wills, Video

Paul A. Gigot

Editor of the Editorial Page

Gerard Baker, Editor at Large

DOW JONES | News Corp

Executive Chairman, News Corp

Robert Thomson

Chief Executive Officer, News Corp

Almar Latour

Chief Executive Officer and Publisher

DOW JONES MANAGEMENT:

Mae M. Cheng, EVP, General Manager,

Leadership; David Cho, Barron's Editor in Chief;

Jason P. Conti, General Counsel, Chief

Compliance Officer; Diana DeSevo, Chief People

Officer; Jared DiPalma, Chief Financial Officer;

Artem Fishman, Chief Technology Officer;

David Martin, Chief Revenue Officer, Business

Intelligence; Dan Shar, EVP, General Manager,

Wealth &amp; Investing; Ashok Sinha, Chief

Communications Officer; Josh Stinchcomb, EVP

&amp; Chief Revenue Officer, WSJ / Barron's Group;

Sherry Weiss, Chief Marketing Officer

# SPORTS



Let's be real, friends. This football game wasn't circled in red on the calendar.

When the NFL released its 2024 schedule, nobody was dancing in the streets about the Washington Commanders trudging up to Baltimore to play the Ravens on Sunday, Oct. 13 at 1 p.m. ET.

I mean, come on. Ravens vs. Commanders looked like a dismal, one-sided joust. If you're a Ravens season ticket holder, it was the ticket you gave to your deadbeat cousin. Or that kid at the office who won't leave you alone about fantasy football.

An optimist might label Baltimore vs. Washington a mid-Atlantic showdown, a "Beltway Bowl," but that hyperbole is a stretch, even for the pregame TV blowhards. For decades, these have been neighboring franchises trending in opposite directions: relevance and irrelevance.

Since their 1996 arrival in Baltimore, the Ravens have routinely been among the NFL's most successful teams, twice Super Bowl winners. Over the same period, Washington has been an epic mess, a proud once-champion reduced to a joke by volatile ownership and repeated losing seasons.

Now the joke's on everyone else, because of a transformational player: Washington's rookie quarterback sensation, Jayden Daniels.

On Sunday, Daniels—a bona fide MVP candidate five games into his pro career—will lead a reborn 4-1 Commanders team versus the 3-2 Ravens and two-time MVP Lamar Jackson in one of the most improbable can't miss games in a long while.

Jayden Daniels and Lamar Jackson? You're in already. I probably had you at "Jayden." Lamar's presence kicks the whole proposition into overdrive.

It's a game to make you cancel plans. Bail on that autumn hayride. Skip your own wedding.

Daniels and Jackson might be interchangeably 1-2 on the league's list of unskippable talents. Daniels, 23, has dazzled the NFL with hyper-accurate passing, versatility and veteran-level composure. Jackson, 27, is a known dynamo, a historic threat as a passer and runner—a player you can't look away from, at any moment.

Both teams score—a lot. Rest fairly assured this game isn't going to end 6-3.

Washington possesses the league's highest scoring offense (31.0 points per game). Baltimore is second with 29.4 points per game,

**JASON GAY**

## The NFL Game Nobody Saw Coming

The Washington Commanders and Baltimore Ravens are neighbors but not rivals.

A showdown between Jayden Daniels and Lamar Jackson could change the regional mood.



Rookie sensation Jayden Daniels, left, leads the Washington Commanders against the Baltimore Ravens and two-time MVP Lamar Jackson, right.



the signing of free agent power rusher Derrick Henry adding a dizzying new threat.

Defense? Let's put it this way: Neither team is ready to induct its secondary into the Football Hall of Fame. There will be throwing, lots of it.

This is such a juicy matchup, NBC tried to hijack it from CBS for its Sunday prime time telecast. CBS blocked it, as is its right. Some fans may be ticked to not see this game on a national platform, but it's hard to blame CBS. You're paying billions for the NFL, and you're supposed to let the competition eat off your plate?

(I also understand NBC's wandering eye, as it's now stuck with a sad pillow fight between the 2-3 New York Giants and 1-4 Cincinnati. Many of you would not watch that game if it was happening in your backyard.)

Is there bad blood between Washington and Baltimore? Nah. Washington-Baltimore is a rivalry that never was.

The Ravens measure themselves against the Steelers, Chiefs and other AFC heavies. NFC Washington does play in Landover, Md., but that may as well be Mars. Mars with traffic.

Jackson and Daniels have been

gracious toward each other—the former lauding the No. 2 pick's skill and ascension; Daniels holding up Jackson as a transformational player while claiming his independence from comparisons.

"I want to be known as Jayden Daniels," the Heisman winner said, "and not the next such-and-such."

Stakes? This game is early enough in the season that it isn't make or break. Rather, this is what the TV blowhards call a "statement game."

For the favored Ravens, a victory would be their fourth in a row and a statement that they're a Super Bowl contender after an 0-2

start.

For the Commanders, a victory would mean...phew.

The D.C. region is already nuts about their quarterback and their team. Those old embarrassed grocery bags are being yanked off proud heads.

You think the hype is crazy around Daniels now? Just wait if they win this game.

It's a pronounced change. Time to get that red marker and circle that date on the calendar. Nobody saw it coming but it's true:

Baltimore and Washington are playing the football game of the season. So far, at least.

KIM HUKARI/NEWSCOM/ZUMA PRESS/GREG FUMA/GETTY IMAGES

## After Revolutionizing Football, He Took a Demotion

BY LAINIE HIGGINS

**BACK WHEN HE WAS THE HEAD** coach at the University of Oregon, Chip Kelly revolutionized nearly every aspect of college football.

His warp-speed offense changed the way the game was played. His focus on conditioning changed the way teams practiced. His insistence on going for two instead of taking the extra point even changed the way coaches thought.

Now, nearly a dozen years since leaving the Ducks, Kelly is back in Autzen Stadium this weekend to show off another grand innovation that could reorder the entire sport: himself.

Earlier this year, Kelly made the stunning decision to step down from his job as head coach at UCLA to become the offensive coordinator at Ohio State. From the outside, it looked like a completely bewildering career move, like a chief executive abandoning the corner office to return to middle management.

"I thought it was a joke," said Ohio State offensive lineman Donovan Jackson.

In fact, Kelly was quite serious. In his mind, it was merely his latest experiment aimed at finding just enough of an edge to do the one thing he's never done in college football: win a national championship.

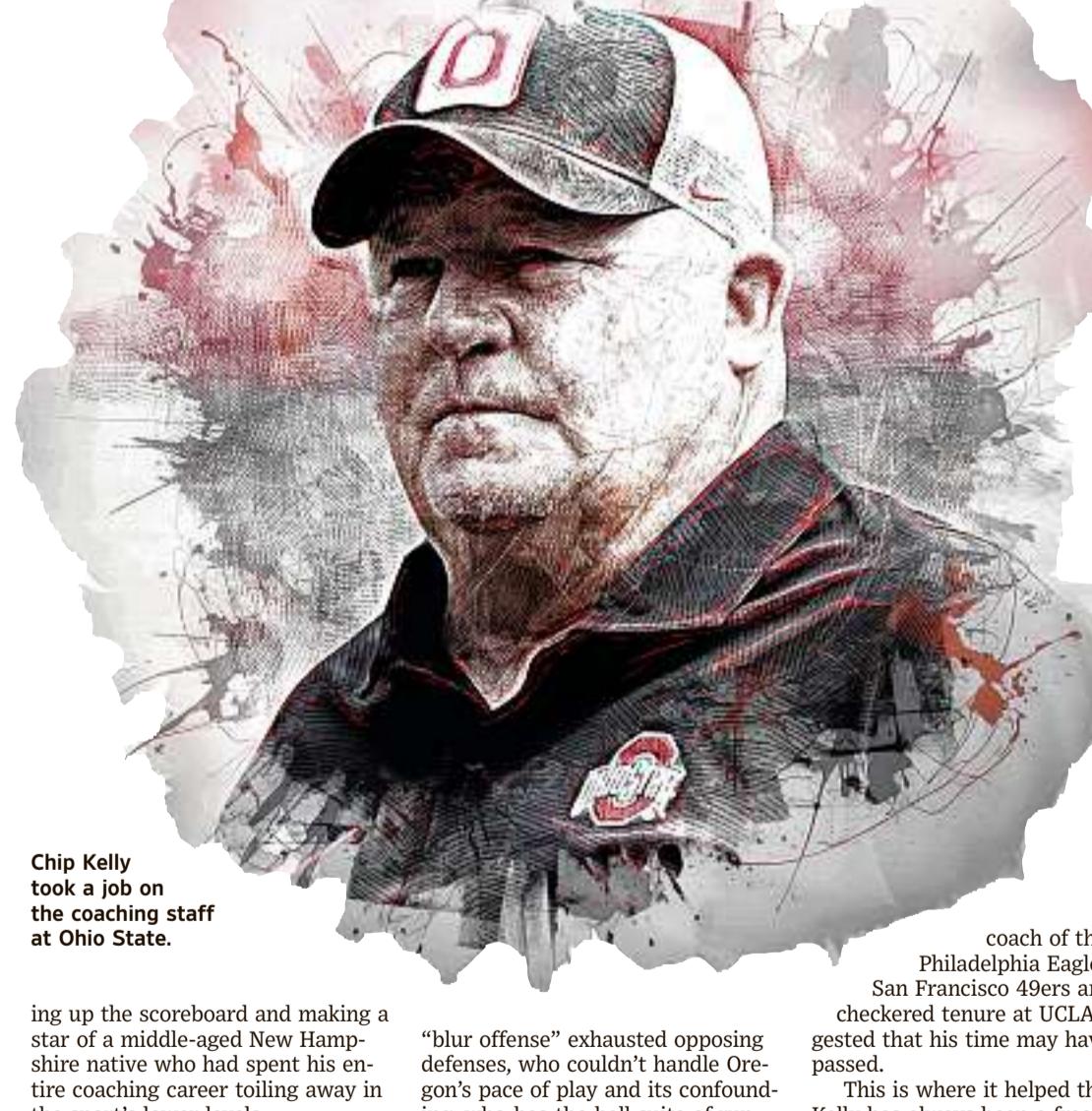
Kelly's genius has always been for scheming up offensive plays. But in today's era of college football, he found that the role of head coach was increasingly about—well, everything else. Between schmoozing with donors, cozying up to high school recruits and minding his current players' endorsement deals, he barely had time for his beloved Xs and Os.

So he accepted a job that would allow him to focus on what he was best at.

"I want to coach football," Kelly said. "I want to be around players."

Believe it or not, taking a voluntary demotion and a multimillion-dollar pay cut might not be the most unorthodox thing Kelly has ever done as a football coach.

Two decades ago, his speedy offense transformed the sport, wearing out defenses and referees, light-



Chip Kelly took a job on the coaching staff at Ohio State.

ing up the scoreboard and making a star of a middle-aged New Hampshire native who had spent his entire coaching career toiling away in the sport's lower levels.

"The high pace and scoring of those Oregon teams, it changed the game of football," Ohio State coach Ryan Day said.

Kelly's practices were back-breaking, said Mike Bellotti, who brought him to Oregon as offensive coordinator in 2007. Every day, they would run a drill where the offense and defense ran up and down the field just to see how many plays they could get off in 10 minutes.

"Managers had to get their ankles taped because they had to spot the ball so fast," Bellotti said.

The speed and scope of Kelly's

"blur offense" exhausted opposing defenses, who couldn't handle Oregon's pace of play and its confounding, who-has-the-ball suite of running plays.

Like any good idea in sports, Kelly's offense first got copied.

Then it got countered by defensive coaches with new formations and more agile players. Then it got rendered obsolete by rule changes.

For Kelly, that might have been the end. Sports are littered with examples of coaches who start winning by exploiting a loophole with an opportunistic scheme, but are unable to adapt once that marginal advantage is eliminated. Sustained success requires constant adaptation, and Kelly's struggles as head

coach of the NFL's Philadelphia Eagles and San Francisco 49ers and a checkered tenure at UCLA suggested that his time may have passed.

This is where it helped that Kelly has always been a free thinker who seeks inspiration from some unlikely sources.

In his Oregon days, Miami Heat coach Erik Spoelstra was a regular visitor to Kelly's practices, and the two continue to bounce ideas off each other to this day. During his time with the Eagles, Kelly met with New Zealand All Blacks coach Graham Henry. He grew close with Vanderbilt baseball coach Tim Corbin. At UCLA, he would regularly stop by water polo practices as he hunted for ideas.

"His mind is constantly thinking about how you can be different,

how can you be consistent and how can you be great," said Bruins water polo coach Adam Wright. "He's a savant."

But the thing that Kelly was most interested in was learning how to teach and motivate young people more effectively. And last fall, he began to realize that there was one obstacle preventing him from getting his message across to his players: his job.

As a head coach, Kelly rarely was involved in the one-on-one coaching and study sessions that had once allowed him to train up some of the most dynamic quarterbacks in college football's recent history. "I hadn't actually been in a position room since 2008," Kelly said.

As it happened, the route back there came from one of those former quarterbacks—only not one of those dynamic ones.

Day, the Buckeyes head coach, had piloted Kelly's offense at New Hampshire in the late 90s and later coached under him in the NFL. He decided to give up play calling after the 2023 season, but found himself in February suddenly searching for an offensive playcaller when newly hired coordinator Bill O'Brien resigned after just three weeks to take the top job at Boston College.

When Day reached out to his former coach, Kelly realized this was the sort of bold move that would allow him to deploy his playcalling genius more effectively on a team overflowing with talent and championship aspirations.

"It's a cool thing to be a part of, when you can focus and concentrate on what your job is as a coach because the other stuff is run by some really, really good people," Kelly said.

It's also let him go back to what he loves most: scheming up ways to befuddle defenses.

"This is a lot of fun for him," said Corbin, the Vandy baseball coach, "being a scientist and understanding how to score points and being imaginative."

Kelly has discovered that giving up the responsibilities of head coach also comes with some unexpected perks. "You can go to the bathroom between series if you have to," he said.

KIM HUKARI/NEWSCOM/ZUMA PRESS/GREG FUMA/GETTY IMAGES

KRIS ARECHAVALA/THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY



**Counterculture**  
Shaping America's  
view on trade from  
China **B3**

# EXCHANGE

BUSINESS | FINANCE | TECHNOLOGY | MANAGEMENT

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

\*\*\*

Saturday/Sunday, October 12 - 13, 2024 | **B1**

DJI 42863.86 ▲ 409.74 0.97%

NASDAQ 18342.94 ▲ 0.3%

STOXX 600 521.98 ▲ 0.6%

10-YR. TREAS. ▲ 5/32, yield 4.072%

OIL \$75.56 ▼ \$0.29

GOLD \$2,657.60 ▲ \$37.00

EURO \$1.0939 YEN 149.14

**Roll Back**  
From Ikea to Nike,  
companies lower  
prices **B9**



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY EMIL LENDOF/WJS; AIRX GETTY IMAGES; BLOOMBERG; STEVE MARCUS/REUTERS

AirX Chairman John Matthews, left, and his rival, VistaJet Chairman Thomas Flohr.

## Inside the Nasty Rivalry Rocking the World of Private Jets

**J**ohn Matthews answered his doorbell in a London suburb this past February with his 4-month-old in one arm, baby spit-up on his shirt, and his toddler racing after him. Matthews, the founder of a private-jet charter company called AirX that shuttles celebrities and executives around the world, was greeted by a stranger who handed him a letter.

It was from lawyers for his company's much-larger rival, VistaJet. Scanning it over, Matthews realized they had his text messages. The lawyers told Matthews: Prepare to answer for them in court.

For 11 months on WhatsApp, Matthews had been texting with a handful of his most trusted staffers about VistaJet, and the ways they could spread dirt on the company.

VistaJet knew what he had been up to. The letter cited 139 pages of his WhatsApp group chat.

This wasn't just a rivalry between competitors. Matthews had been obsessed with Thomas Flohr, VistaJet's founder, for about a decade.

Matthews and his AirX employees had been emailing, at times anonymously, with VistaJet suppliers, bondholders, ratings firms and journalists. He and his staffers raised questions about VistaJet's corporate structure. They called out its \$4.25 billion in debt. And they portrayed Flohr as unethical and underhanded.

The head of a private-jet company has been involved in a massive, often secret campaign to undermine his bitter rival. Now it's spilling out into the open.

By Benjamin Katz



A bedroom inside a high-end VistaJet airplane.

Flohr is a part-time race-car driver whose primary residence is a James Bond-inspired seven-story mansion in the Swiss Alps. The 64-year-old cuts a big figure in private aviation, including in 2015 being recognized by the Living Legends of Aviation. (SpaceX founder Elon Musk won the same honor in 2009.)

VistaJet has spent two decades positioning itself as an ultraluxury private-jet operator, offering clients Italian-leather cabin seats, brushed-cotton pajamas, cashmere socks, and small blankets made from the hair of baby alpacas. Its cabin hosts are trained by the British Butler Institute, a butler training school. It offers in-flight dishes designed by the celebrity chef behind Nobu, and passengers can fork out to hire actors to entertain their children during longer flights.

VistaJet aircraft have carried the likes of Brad Pitt, George Clooney, Claudia Schiffer, musician DJ Khaled, and sports stars such as Novak Djokovic and Formula One driver Charles Leclerc. Barack Obama was photographed disembarking from a VistaJet aircraft on a private trip to Kenya, while Julian Assange flew on a VistaJet plane back to his native Australia in June after a plea deal allowed him to walk free from a London prison.

VistaJet has over 350 aircraft, is second in size only to Berkshire Hathaway's NetJets, and dwarfs

Please turn to page B4

SCIENCE OF SUCCESS | BEN COHEN

## This Family Built a \$1 Billion Tortilla Business

Siete Foods went from a startup to stores across the country. The entrepreneurial tale can be broken down into seven steps.



When they walked into their local food cooperative a decade ago with a Ziploc bag of homemade tortillas, Veronica and Miguel Garza had no clue that they would one day have a billion-dollar business.

At the time, they didn't have a business of any kind.

Veronica had just started making grain-free tortillas from her Texas kitchen, and her wildest dream was selling them at a farmers market. But after that fateful day, she founded a company with Miguel, her youngest brother. They called it Siete Foods—*siete* as in the seven members of the Garza family.

In only 10 years, their products have gone from a single grocery store to just about every supermarket. These days, Siete's collec-

tion of grain-free snacks includes tortillas, chips, taco shells, cookies, churro strips, beans, queso puffs, salsas and sauces. What started as a side hustle has become one of America's most successful food startups.

And it was just acquired by PepsiCo—for \$1.2 billion.

The story of how this family business became a tortilla empire is a classic tale of entrepreneurship that also flips the traditional story of startups upside down. And it can be told in seven parts.

### 1. Have the right idea.

Siete might just be the only billion-dollar company that exists because of lupus.

Born and raised in Laredo as a third-generation Mexican-American, Veronica was in

Please turn to page B2



Siete's gluten-free line includes tortillas, chips, taco shells, cookies, churro strips, beans and queso puffs, plus salsas, seasonings and sauces. Bags have a family photo on the back.

JANELLE JONES FOR WSJ

## EXCHANGE

THE SCORE | THE BUSINESS WEEK IN 6 STOCKS

**JPMorgan Boosts Banks, Tesla Loses Traction****JPMORGAN CHASE**

**JPM** America's top banks kicked off earnings season with reassuring news. Both JPMorgan Chase and Wells Fargo on Friday posted quarterly profits that fell from a year earlier, but by less than what analysts expected. JPMorgan said profit decreased 2% to \$12.9 billion, bolstered by lending profits and weighed down by increased losses in credit-card loans. At Wells Fargo, profit dropped 11% to \$5.11 billion, dragged down by higher funding costs for customer deposits. JPMorgan said the economy remains strong for consumers and big companies, a sign that the Federal Reserve may have achieved a soft landing. JPMorgan shares **rose 4.4% Friday**.

## Performance of bank stocks this week



Source: FactSet

**DELTA AIR LINES**

**DAL** Delta reported earnings that came in below analysts' estimates in the latest quarter, in part because of a \$380 million hit to sales resulting from flights canceled during the global CrowdStrike IT outage. Expenses related to reimbursements and grounded crews totaled \$120 million, even after accounting for the fuel savings of flying less. All in all, it led to its earnings per share coming in 26% lower than during the same period of last year. Delta shares **lost 1.4% Thursday**.

**TESLA**

**TSLA** Tesla's driverless robotaxi made a flashy debut—but investors weren't impressed. Chief Executive Elon Musk on Thursday unveiled the new autonomous Cybertaxi, with no steering wheel or pedals. He also announced the Robovan, designed to shuttle up to 20 people at a time. Musk said Tesla plans to start Cybertaxi production before 2027. He also left questions unanswered, including business model specifics. The unveiling got a chilly reception from investors. Tesla shares **fell 8.8% Friday**.

\$380M

Direct revenue impact of CrowdStrike outage on Delta

\$30K

Musks said the Cybertaxi will cost customers less than \$30K.



Pfizer CEO Albert Bourla faces demands from an activist investor.

**PFIZER**

An activist investor is taking aim at Pfizer. Starboard Value has taken a roughly \$1 billion stake in the drugmaker and wants the struggling company to make changes to turn its performance around, The Wall Street Journal reported. The company overestimated future demand for Covid-related products after the pandemic subsided, and its other offerings haven't been able to fill the gap. In addition, the company's first attempt at a weight-loss pill disappointed. Pfizer shares **climbed 2.2% Monday**.

## Pfizer performance this week



Source: FactSet

**SUPER MICRO COMPUTER**

**SMCI** Super Micro Computer announced positive shipment data Monday, saying that it recently deployed more than 100,000 graphics processing units with liquid-cooling solution to large AI factories. The stock, which recently split 10-for-1, was hit last month after The Wall Street Journal reported that the Justice Department is probing the company following a critical report by an activist short-seller firm. In August, an annual filing delay also prompted a sell-off. Super Micro shares **surged 16% Monday**.

**ALPHABET**

**GOOG** The Justice Department submitted a filing Tuesday that presented a federal court with options to remedy what a judge said was Google's unlawful monopoly in search. The remedies range from conduct restrictions to a breakup. Google responded that the initial proposal is "radical and sweeping" and could have "negative unintended consequences for American innovation and America's consumers." Parent company Alphabet shares **slipped 1.6% Wednesday**.

—Francesca Fontana



Today, seven members of the Garza family—five siblings and their parents—work at Siete Foods. In front: parents Bobby and Aida. Behind, from left to right: Veronica, Linda, Robert, Becky and Miguel.

**Against the Grain With Siete Foods**

*Continued from page B1*  
high school when she was diagnosed with several autoimmune conditions. After college and business school, she adopted the paleo diet: no grains, dairy, refined sugar or legumes—basically, no Mexican food.

When her family had carne asadas in the backyard, she would bring her own lettuce wraps.

So the other Garzas soon decided they would go paleo, too.

Veronica began experimenting with almond flour to create a tortilla she could actually eat.

She kept tweaking the recipe until one day, she plopped them on the dinner table without telling anybody in her family why they were different. They were so good that she even got her *abuela*'s stamp of approval.

Veronica began selling her grain-free tortillas at the family's CrossFit gym and couldn't keep up with demand. Her brother Miguel was a law student at the University of Texas, and her grain-free tortillas were hugely popular at his gym, too.

She had made something that was clearly meeting a consumer need and feeding an unserved market—the story of any successful startup. But other entrepreneurs are inspired by their own hubris. Siete was born from hubris.

"There wasn't a moment when we started when I believed that we would be where we are today," said Miguel, now 37. "Every time we take a step, I can see a little bit farther."

From that bottom rung, Miguel thought his sister's grain-free tortillas had all the ingredients of a solid business, but Veronica was reluctant to quit her teaching job. She told her brother that she could only take a risk on tortillas if they had a retailer willing to put their product on the shelf.

And he knew just the one.

**2. Find a believer.**

The company the Garzas built around grain-free food got its start in Wheatsville Co-op.

Yes, it's really called Wheatsville.

One day after his lunch break, Chris Moore was paged to the hospitality desk of the Austin food cooperative to meet a potential new vendor. As the store's "chill coordinator," Moore was responsible for the grocery's selection of refrigerated and frozen products, and Miguel gave him a Ziploc bag of Veronica's grain-free tortillas while they were still warm. He thought they were delicious.

Moore told them if they started a business, he would stock their product.

Siete's first name was Must B Nutty. The Garzas started out by selling their hand-pressed tortillas for \$12 a dozen—and one store manager thought they were the ones who must be nutty. Were shoppers really going to buy this product at that price?

The grain-free tortillas hit the Wheatsville shelf one day in May 2014. By the next day, they were sold out. Within six months, they

beat out milk, eggs and yogurt to become the top-selling item in the entire refrigerated section.

Along the way, they learned one of the most important lessons of entrepreneurship: Sometimes all it takes in the very beginning is one person who believes in you.

**3. Hustle.**

Then it was up to the Garzas to make the most of that chance.

They moved out of a home kitchen and rented space in a gluten-free commercial kitchen. Veronica started driving three hours from Laredo to Austin after work on Fridays to spend the weekend pressing tortillas. By the end of 2014, she left her job, showed up at Miguel's house with a suitcase and stayed for months. She pressed so many tortillas that she was constantly visiting the physical therapist with shoulder pain.

They asked anyone and everyone they could find for help: family members, friends, even a woman they spotted in the grocery store buying several packs of tortilla masa. She was hired as one of Siete's first employees.

They later applied for a local startup accelerator and raised \$1 million from angel investors to buy specialized equipment, scale up manufacturing and give Veronica's shoulder a break.

But in the beginning, they didn't pay themselves a penny. They simply used the profits from their tortillas to keep making tortillas, and they went looking for more people to buy them and places to sell them.

**4. Make your luck.**

Once the product was a hit at Wheatsville Co-op, Miguel was desperate to get into another Austin-based grocery: Whole Foods Market.

As it happens, a Wheatsville shopper who was friendly with John Mackey mentioned to the co-founder and chief executive of Whole Foods that she couldn't stop eating these grain-free tortillas.

Soon, an email was forwarded and forwarded and forwarded until it landed in the inbox of a Whole Foods forager named Lynda Berrios, who was in charge of sourcing local brands. By early 2015, Siete was in the flagship Whole Foods store in downtown Austin.

**5. Get past gatekeepers.**

Once the product was in a few Whole Foods locations across Texas, Miguel scored a meeting with the man who could put Siete tortillas in Whole Foods stores across the U.S. As the company's global grocery purchasing coordinator, Dwight Richmond decided what Whole Foods should sell.

Since he lived in Austin, he was familiar with Siete, which was no

longer called Must B Nutty. He was impressed by its colorful packaging, sales velocity and lack of competition. And with more Americans rethinking their diets, he knew there was an appetite for grain-free tortillas that didn't taste like cardboard.

But that was Siete's only product. To make sure the brand wasn't a one-hit wonder, Richmond wanted to hear Miguel's plans for the future. He was impressed by the company's focus on owning an increasingly valuable market—whether it was tortillas or tortilla chips. They met at a trade show in Baltimore and both went back to Austin knowing that Siete would soon be everywhere.

"This one was going to be a hit right from the get-go," Richmond says. "They had a vision for who they wanted to be."

**6. Change—and don't.**

Now that Siete has grown up, it has expanded into other aisles of the grocery store.

But the values that have driven the company since the beginning haven't changed. In fact, there's still an old family photo on every bag of Siete chips. Today, all seven Garzas work full-time at Siete, and Miguel is CEO.

"It's my job to both steward the brand and protect my family," he says.

When investors wanted to back their company, he made sure they understood what they were building and why—and how they were going to build it.

The Garzas had to trust their business partners, which meant their business partners had to appreciate their culture and heritage. Stripes, a growth-equity firm based in New York, invested \$90 million in 2018 after spending two years getting to know the entire family over dinners and CrossFit workouts. It was the first time their investment diligence involved pull-ups and burpees with the CEO's mother.

**7. Cash in.**

The other thing that Miguel made clear to Siete's investors was his ultimate goal for the family business.

"I want to build a billion-dollar, better-for-you, Mexican-American food brand," he told them.

And he did. This month, PepsiCo announced its \$1.2 billion deal for Siete. Miguel says he's staying to lead the brand, and so are the other Garzas. When the acquisition closes next year, they plan to celebrate their success the same way it began: with a family barbecue.

This time, whether they order parrilladas from their favorite taco spot or grill their own fajitas, they won't have to settle for lettuce wraps.

They'll just open another pack of Siete tortillas.



Siete's product line avoids grains, dairy, refined sugar and legumes—all usually essential to Mexican cuisine.

## EXCHANGE

# An Influential Punk Rock Economist

Michael Pettis has the attention of both Biden and Trump with his counterintuitive views on trade. He has spent two decades in China, has run a music label and clubs, and he calls free trade a mirage.



BY JASON DOUGLAS AND GREG IP

**T**ucked away in a *hutong*, a narrow alleyway that shuts out Beijing's bustle, is a tranquil home set around a courtyard garlanded with grapes and pomegranates. This is where a former investment banker turned music impresario is quietly reshaping how Washington thinks about international trade.

Michael Pettis, a professor of finance at Peking University, has spent two decades in China observing its breakneck economic ascent and its impact around the world. Among his conclusions: He thinks former President Donald Trump's plan for across-the-board import tariffs isn't a bad idea. He also says the U.S. should use capital controls to discourage China and other high-saving nations from snapping up treasures, stocks and other American assets.

Those views make the 66-year-old Pettis perhaps the world's foremost punk-rock economist, embodying in his theories the same counterculture, do-it-yourself and antiestablishment ethos that he cultivated as a music club and record-label owner in New York and Beijing.

His ideas are at odds with mainstream economists, who say such policies would push up inflation and interest rates and cripple the U.S. economy. He has a devoted following that includes some of the figures shaping recent U.S. economic policy, including people inside the Biden administration and advisers to Trump.

Free trade, Pettis argues, is a mirage. In books, articles and talks, Pettis has long made the case that do-

mestic choices made by China and other major exporters impose corrosive costs on their trading partners and distort the global economy.

Pettis isn't a trained economist. He describes himself as "a finance guy," with a background in physics and math. Born in Spain to an American father and a French mother, he had an itinerant childhood in countries including Pakistan, Peru and Morocco thanks to his father's job as a geologist and civil engineer.

A career on Wall Street gave him an up-close view of the destabilizing potential of unfettered flows of capital into and out of emerging economies, such as the Mexican currency crisis of 1994, when worries over a government debt default sparked a collapse in the peso. Pettis worked in the bond divisions of investment banks Bear Stearns and First Boston.

Pettis landed in China in 2002 to take up a teaching job, expecting to stay for a couple of years before returning to Wall Street. "But China just was too interesting and I never got around to leaving," Pettis said.

A big reason was music. A rock fanatic, Pettis had run a punk club called SIN in New York's East Village and became entranced by Beijing's burgeoning underground scene. In Beijing, he set up a club called D-22 in the capital's student district, which he said he fashioned after New York dives where the musicians were always the top of the pyramid.

"It just exploded," he said.

D-22 became the crucible for a generation of edgy Chinese rock bands such as P. K. 14 and Joyside. The club hosted Western rock royalty who were passing through—Pettis recalls one night spent with Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page. On another, The New York Dolls lapped up performances by young Chinese acts before taking to the cramped stage themselves at 2 a.m. He founded a record label, Maybe Mars.

## Michael Pettis

■ **Formative experience:** Working on Wall Street during the Mexican currency crisis of 1994

■ **Lived as a child in:** Spain, Pakistan, Peru and Morocco

■ **Underground music clubs he's run:** SIN in New York's East Village and D-22 in Beijing's student district

■ **Favorite book:** James Joyce's "Dubliners"

■ **Favorite record:** Coleman Hawkins's "Body and Soul"

lin's Jimmy Page. On another, The New York Dolls lapped up performances by young Chinese acts before taking to the cramped stage themselves at 2 a.m. He founded a record label, Maybe Mars.

With old friends he has recently set up a new label called, Sally Bu Tiao, a rough approximation in Mandarin of Lou Reed's "Sally Can't Dance," to focus on more experimental music, he said.

Watching the strains in the global economy from Wall Street and later from Beijing, Pettis was drawn to the work of economists including John Maynard Keynes, who argued that government spending could pull economies out of recession, and his Depression-era contemporary Joan Robinson, who described how efforts by one country to cure its economic problems could cause harm to others.

He is also a fan of Dani Rodrik, a Harvard professor who has written about the tension between sovereignty, democracy and globalization.

Pettis saw China's transformation into the world's foremost manufacturing power and number two economy facilitated by policies that favored production and investment by encouraging saving and pinning down consumption. That generated huge trade surpluses that went toward purchasing foreign assets, especially U.S. Treasury debt.

"I grew up like everyone else thinking, 'Lucky America, thank God. We don't save enough, and foreigners are generous enough to give us their savings.' But looking at it from the point of view of trade and the currency, it became very clear that's not generous," he said.

Since trade and investment-income

surpluses and deficits across the world must equal zero, Pettis argues the U.S. is forced to run trade deficits as long as it absorbs the savings of China and other surplus economies. As those savings flow into U.S. assets, they drive up the value of the dollar. That encourages America to import more, which benefits foreign manufacturers at the expense of jobs and earnings at their U.S. rivals.

And to offset the manufacturing sector's weakness, the U.S. must borrow more to keep up the big spending, resulting in huge fiscal deficits and periodic financial bubbles.

It is the surplus countries like China, he says, not the deficit countries like the U.S. that are the real protectionists.

Most economists blame the U.S. trade deficit on low U.S. saving. That gets the "causation backward. It's not the saving rate driving the trade deficit, it's the trade deficit driving the saving rate," said Robert Lighthizer, Trump's former trade ambassador and currently an adviser. "Michael gets a lot of credit for being the first to articulate this." Pettis is one of the few people Lighthizer follows on X (formerly Twitter), and the two talk by phone from time to time.

Pettis is on the advisory board of American Compass, a think tank close to Trump allies, including vice-presidential running mate JD Vance, which seeks to shift conservative priorities away from free markets and low taxes to workers and reindustrialization.

"The central insight that I see him really bringing forward is...that the presumption that any country should simply embrace free trade, and it doesn't matter what other countries do, is false," said American Compass founder Oren Cass.

Some influential Democrats are also fans. "He is looking at things with a kind of objectivity that is unusual and incredibly valuable," Katherine Tai, President Biden's trade ambassador, said in a recent interview.

Both Republicans and Democrats have embraced tariffs as an important tool of economic policy to counter China. Pettis has another idea: He believes that taxing surplus countries' purchases of U.S. assets would stop the inflow of their savings, weaken the dollar, aid U.S.-based manufacturers' competitiveness, and reduce the trade deficit. For tariffs to have a similar effect, he thinks they'd need to be imposed on everyone, which Trump has proposed. Pettis said that would penalize allies and antagonists alike, whereas capital taxes target surplus countries directly.

Many mainstream economists say blaming the world's economic stresses primarily on surplus countries like China instead of deficit countries such as the U.S. is seductive, but wrong, as it lets Washington and other governments off the hook for their own decisions. Taxing capital inflows would risk driving up interest rates and financial market panic, they say.

Andrew Batson, head of China research for Gavekal Dragonomics, said Pettis's description of China as an economy "based on the repression of household consumption is a bizarre conceit that is impossible to take seriously." China's growth in household consumption since the 1980s is the biggest and fastest in human history, Batson said.

"The world is really complicated. For Michael Pettis, the world is really simple," said Maury Obstfeld, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, a think tank in Washington, D.C.

Pettis believes policymakers will come around to his way of thinking, just as tariffs and industrial policy are back in vogue after decades of free-market orthodoxy. "We are so far away from free trade," he said.

## Restaurants Woo Diners With Chips, Meal Combos and Bottomless Drinks

After years of raising prices, chains try promotions like buy one, get one free

BY JENNIFER WILLIAMS

While many restaurants have rolled out substantial discounts and deals to attract inflation-wary consumers, some are trying a different strategy: introducing carefully sculpted offers to keep business flowing without training consumers to expect to regularly pay less.

Among the chains more aggressively fighting it out with deals and promotions, Starbucks, Shake Shack and Sonic have bet on buy one, get one free offers. Applebee's is selling \$1 cocktails, 50-cent boneless wings and late-night half-price appetizers.

The restaurant industry's offerings seek to entice diners back after around three years of raising prices, and it is working for some, analysts said. The risk is training diners to expect discounts.

"You run the risk of being viewed as always on promotion, so when you go off, consumers will

just shop elsewhere," said Jim Salera, an analyst at financial services firm Stephens.

Red Robin Gourmet Burgers is trying to mitigate that risk while still giving diners something to latch on to. The chain has more than 30 bottomless sides, drinks and desserts as well as a \$10 cheeseburger combo on Tuesdays and a deal on margaritas and shakes on Mondays. But it hasn't offered the kind of deep discounts across the menu it did in earlier days, calling them hard to come back from.

"We'll have some offers out there," said Chief Financial Officer Todd Wilson. "But we're going to be really thoughtful about where they live and how they live as opposed to the deep discounting, the broad blanket approach that Red Robin has used in the past."

Potbelly prefers bundling menu items over discounts, said Potbelly Chief Financial Officer Steven Cirulis. "It drives sales, it protects

margins for us, and we think it protects those visits that were most vulnerable," he said.

Cirulis noted Potbelly tested a \$7.99 meal deal bundling a small sandwich, chips and a drink, as well as an \$8.99 combo, which came with drink and a larger sandwich, and a complete meal that added chips to the combo for \$9.99. The \$7.99 deal prevailed, as it appeals most to customers who eat at the restaurants, a group that has been more likely to eat elsewhere or cut out visits, he said.

The \$7.99 offering so far is a success, Cirulis said, although it is too soon to know the full effect.

Value is also important for fast-casual restaurant chain Portillo's a chain known for Chicago-style street food such as Italian beef sandwiches.

Portillo's runs limited-time offers such as seasonal milkshakes and ran a summer promotion on hot dogs in some areas outside of its primary market in Chicago.



Potbelly tested \$7.99, \$8.99 and \$9.99 meal bundles before discovering that its \$7.99 combination worked best.

And the chain's menu prices are competitive, said finance chief Michelle Hook, noting customers on average spend \$11 at Portillo's restaurants.

"We don't believe we should be a brand that's discounting," she said. "I don't think that is the right strategy."

Investors and analysts will be looking for signs that holding back on deals is working starting early next year, when many restaurant

businesses will provide guidance for the coming 12 months, said Salera, the analyst.

Companies with slower growth will face pressure to consider whether discounts would help improve their fortunes, Salera added: "The longer that that is the case, if the traffic trends diverge, those questions are going to get louder and louder and more poignant to say, 'Hey, you should really do this.'"

## EXCHANGE



1. An AirX plane at London Stansted Airport in England.

2. VistaJet planes on the tarmac in Shanghai.

3. WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange flew on a VistaJet plane to Australia in June after reaching a plea deal with U.S. prosecutors.

4. VistaJet's Thomas Flohr, left, and Bombardier's Steve Ridolfi after the two announced a VistaJet order of 56 planes in 2012.



## The Nasty Rivalry Rocking the World of Private Jets

*Continued from page B1*  
not only AirX's 17 aircraft but also most commercial airlines.

After reading the letter from the lawyers, Matthews said he took out his phone, opened the group chat that was the source of the messages, and quickly tapped out a text: "Vista seem to have my WhatsApp messages, anyone shared the group messages?"

Only one member of the group—AirX's head of communications—failed to respond, Matthews said. That employee then requested leave. Within weeks, he resigned. (He declined to comment.)

In April, Matthews, his employees and his company were named in a lawsuit accusing them of "malevolent, negligent and egregious conduct" designed to disrupt VistaJet's business and tarnish the company's reputation. VistaJet's suit, filed in Malta where AirX is based, is seeking \$422 million in damages, citing the WhatsApp transcript as the primary evidence.

In a letter that Flohr sent to VistaJet bondholders that same month, he addressed what he called "malicious misrepresentations" from outsiders. "For the last 18 months, a group of individuals seeking to damage...our business has disseminated half-truths, false rumors and lies," he wrote, according to a copy of the letter reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

AirX hasn't contested the existence of the WhatsApp group, nor has it denied the actions the messages describe. (Two Wall Street Journal reporters, including the author of this article, were among the journalists mentioned in the chat.) It said in its reply to the suit that VistaJet's lawsuit is an attempt to "muzzle and 'arm-twist'" Matthews and his employees and derided the damages figure as a "fantastical quantum."

Matthews says he has done nothing wrong.

"It is not only reasonable but also responsible for competitors to raise warnings," Matthews said in an email this week.

If VistaJet's intention was to muzzle Matthews, it didn't work. He has shifted from covertly dishing about his rival to publicly ridiculing it and issuing open challenges to Flohr on social media.

In one video posted in July under the caption "The Rebellion Strikes Back," Matthews describes the stand-off between AirX and VistaJet as if it were the latest Star Wars blockbuster.

"Thomas: I am unafraid of you; in fact, I have never felt so empowered," he wrote in May in an open letter to Flohr titled "Challenge Accepted?" that he published on LinkedIn after VistaJet filed its lawsuit.

### A-list clientele

Flohr started VistaJet in 2004 with a single aircraft. The company, now based in Dubai, bills itself as a subscription flight service. It typically flies bigger aircraft bought brand new on longer, international

routes than many of its rivals, including AirX. It charged on average \$17,700 per flight hour in 2022, according to its financial report from that year. The company hasn't publicly disclosed a more recent audited annual report.

Flohr, who grew up in a rural German village where his father was a high-school teacher, now moves in some of the same social circles as his A-list clientele. For his daughter Nina's 18th birthday, he threw a party for 300 guests that included a historical re-enactment of the rise of Communism. Actors were hired to dress as Bolshevik peasants and as Soviet soldiers on horseback. In 2021, his daughter married a Greek and Danish prince who is the godson of the late Princess Diana.

His 35,000-square-foot property in the Alps includes a movie theater, squash court, bowling alley, pizzeria, spa and a rosewood desk that was used in the Bond film "From Russia With Love."

"I come from nothing," Flohr said during a 2015 tour of his home for T, the New York Times style magazine. "One day you dream of having a home for generations to stay, and I think I achieved that with this house."

Matthews's business also started small. Matthews, 43, took the reins of the flailing AirX charter-jet company in 2011 and took out a loan to begin rebuilding it. He says his preoccupation with VistaJet started shortly after. Matthews was struggling to compete with the larger company's pricing. So, he said, he set out to understand its business model better.

AirX derives most of its revenue selling one-off charter flights and aspires to offer privacy and comfort, but doesn't offer the same ultraluxury amenities of its rival. Unlike VistaJet's fleet, Matthews' 17 aircraft are often over 20 years old, refreshed with a coat of paint and new interiors.

When VistaJet published its first bond prospectus about a decade ago, Matthews combed through the 486-page document. He found a section where VistaJet outlined how the company typically buys its aircraft from Bombardier via a separate entity owned by Flohr, positioning the executive as a middleman in the transactions. Matthews said that made it seem as if Flohr was incentivized to grow VistaJet even if it meant exposing the company to an

139

pages of WhatsApp messages from AirX executives' group chat are evidence in a lawsuit

VistaJet accuses rival AirX in court of 'malevolent, negligent and egregious conduct.'

'I have a complete vested interest for the obsession I have against him,' said John Matthews of VistaJet's Thomas Flohr. 'But I hope that doesn't make me wrong.'

▼ VistaJet's founder, Thomas Flohr, is a part-time race-car driver. He crashed at a race in Le Mans, France, in June.



additional financial burden.

It's a risk that VistaJet itself flagged in its most recent bond documents, but it describes the deals as being arranged with "arm's-length terms." VistaJet disclosed an example of the structure, saying that it was required to pay Flohr a \$1 million fee for some of the aircraft it decided to buy. Flohr has also typically collected additional money from VistaJet on the transactions, depending on the value of the planes at the time of purchase, the prospectus says.

It is unclear how profitable the arrangement has been for Flohr, but VistaJet disclosed in its audited financial statement for 2022 that it owed \$81 million to Flohr at the end of 2022, most of which was related to aircraft purchases.

Flohr has vociferously pushed back against the idea that he's doing anything wrong. The transactions associated with the recent acquisition of aircraft, he said in his April letter, were done at market value and approved by the company's board in a session in which he did not vote. Flohr also said that he had never taken a salary or dividend from VistaJet.

### Not clear-cut

Corporate-governance specialists and academics say the structure is unusual but that the rules around such related-party transactions aren't clear-cut.

"It's curious, it's very cozy. It's sort of clever, actually," said Rob Britton, a former American Airlines executive and professor at Georgetown University's business school.

To be sure, Britton added, VistaJet has only two shareholders—Flohr and an investor called Rhône Capital—and it hasn't defaulted on any bond payments, so it is not clear if any investors have been harmed by the arrangement. A spokesman for Rhône, a New York-based private-equity fund, declined to comment.

VistaJet's auditor, Ernst & Young, last year wrote in its audit of VistaJet that "a material uncertainty exists that may cast significant doubt upon the Group's ability to continue as a going concern," noting that at the end of 2022, its current liabilities exceeded its current assets by \$1.46 billion. VistaJet's net debt more than doubled in 2022, from \$1.97 billion to \$4.25 billion. Its debt early this year was trading at prices that indicated bondholders were concerned about default, with one issue falling to about 65 cents on the dollar in January. The same bond traded Wednesday at around 86 cents on the dollar, according to MarketAxess.

The company has since switched auditors to PricewaterhouseCoopers.

The company used the borrowed money to add more than 100 aircraft in 2022, some by acquiring smaller rivals, and to refurbish the planes to meet VistaJet's standards, Flohr wrote in his letter. Since the going-concern warning from EY, "we have made significant progress in our financial, sales and operational strategies," he wrote. A new audit from

April contained no going-concern warnings, he said, adding that he expects VistaJet to "de-lever materially" this year.

EY and PwC declined to comment.

### The fight escalates

In September 2021, Matthews's company suffered a crisis that threatened to bring it to its knees.

Matthews received notice that Canadian airplane supplier Avmax had terminated his leases on eight planes and demanded the aircraft be grounded by the next day in preparation for their seizure.

"I couldn't work out what on earth was going on," Matthews said.

Matthews raced to court in Alberta, where Avmax is based, and got an emergency injunction to halt the seizure.

In a more recent legal filing in Alberta, Matthews said in an affidavit that he subsequently learned that Avmax had lined up someone else—an unnamed third party—to lease the planes at a higher price. The filing accuses Avmax's then-chief executive of acting in bad faith by accepting deposits for AirX's leased aircraft and taking "improper actions" that interfered with AirX's business.

Avmax and the former CEO declined to comment.

The Alberta episode spurred Matthews, he says, to create the WhatsApp group. He picked a photo of convicted financial fraudster Bernie Madoff as its profile image and added some of his closest confidants.

Over the next 11 months, Matthews and his colleagues used the chat to discuss their plans to publicize VistaJet's corporate structure and indebtedness, according to the WhatsApp messages in the court filing. The group chatted about conversations with VistaJet suppliers, the use of anonymous email accounts to distribute documents, and conversations with journalists.

The group repeatedly discussed how VistaJet's challenges could benefit AirX, including by presenting an opportunity to raise its own charter rates and negotiate a higher valuation with potential investors.

VistaJet said in its legal filing in Malta that AirX's efforts have resulted in a spate of negative media coverage, prompted customers to ask for their deposits back and made new financing harder to obtain. Suppliers have also slapped VistaJet with credit limits, and its executives have been "severely impacted" by persistent queries from journalists, staff and stakeholders.

"Even if they will likely proclaim that they are spreading such information for the common good, in reality the defendants' true intentions are solely for financial gain," VistaJet said in its filing.

Matthews acknowledges his motivation for continuing his campaign against Flohr is both financial and personal—even though the two men have never met.

"I have a complete vested interest for the obsession I have against him," Matthews said. "But I hope that doesn't make me wrong."

## EXCHANGE

KEYWORDS | CHRISTOPHER MIMS

# This AI Godfather Says AI Is Dumber Than a Pet Cat

Yann LeCun, an NYU professor and senior researcher at Meta, says warnings about AI's existential peril are 'complete B.S.'



Yann LeCun helped give birth to today's artificial-intelligence boom. But he thinks many experts are exaggerating its power and peril, and he wants people to know it.

While a chorus of prominent technologists tell us that we are close to having computers that surpass human intelligence—and may even supplant it—LeCun has aggressively carved out a place as the AI boom's best-credentialled skeptic.

On social media, in speeches and at debates, the New York University professor and Meta Platforms AI guru has battled with the boosters and Cassandras who talk up generative AI's superhuman potential, from Elon Musk to two of LeCun's fellow pioneers, who share with him the unofficial title of "godfather" of the field. They include Geoffrey Hinton, a friend of nearly 40 years who on Tuesday was awarded a Nobel Prize in physics, and who has warned repeatedly about AI's existential threats.

LeCun, 64 years old, thinks that today's AI models, while useful, are far from rivaling the intelligence of our pets, let alone us. When I ask whether we should be afraid that AIs will soon grow so powerful that they pose a hazard to us, he quips: "You're going to have to pardon my French, but that's complete B.S."

Sitting in a conference room inside one of Meta's satellite offices in New York City, he exudes warmth and genial self-possession, and delivers his barbed opinions with the kind of grin that makes you feel as if you are in on the joke.

His body of work, and his perch atop one of the most accomplished AI research labs at one of the biggest tech companies, gives weight to LeCun's critiques.

Born just north of Paris, he became intrigued by AI in part because of HAL 9000, the rogue AI in Stanley Kubrick's 1968 sci-fi classic "2001: A Space Odyssey." After earning a doctorate from the Sorbonne, he worked at the storied Bell Labs, where everything from transistors to lasers were invented. He joined NYU as a professor in 2003 and became director of AI research at what was then Facebook a decade later.

In 2019, LeCun won the A.M. Turing Award, the highest prize in computer science, along with Hinton and Yoshua Bengio. The award, which led to the trio being dubbed AI godfathers, honored them for work foundational to neural networks, the multilayered systems that underlie many of today's most powerful AI systems, from OpenAI's chatbots to self-driving cars.

Today, LeCun continues to produce papers at NYU along with his Ph.D. students, while at Meta he oversees one of the best-funded AI research organizations in the world, as chief AI scientist at Meta. He meets and chats often over WhatsApp with Chief Execu-

tive Mark Zuckerberg, who is positioning Meta as the AI boom's big disruptive force against other tech heavyweights from Apple to OpenAI.

LeCun has publicly disagreed with Hinton and Bengio over their repeated warnings that AI is a danger to humanity.

Bengio says he agrees with LeCun on many topics, but they diverge over whether companies can be trusted with making sure that future superhuman AIs aren't either used maliciously by humans, or develop malicious intent of their own.

"I hope he is right," says Bengio.

LeCun thinks AI is a powerful tool. Throughout our interview, he cites many examples of how AI has become enormously important at Meta, and has driven its scale and revenue to the point that it's now valued at around \$1.5 trillion. AI is integral to everything from real-time translation to content moderation at Meta, which in addition to its Fundamental AI Research team, known as FAIR, has a product-focused AI group called GenAI that is pursuing ever-better versions of its large language models.

"The impact on Meta has been really enormous," he says.

At the same time, he is convinced that today's AIs aren't, in any meaningful sense, intelligent—and that many others in the field, especially at AI startups, are ready to extrapolate its recent development in ways that he finds ridiculous.

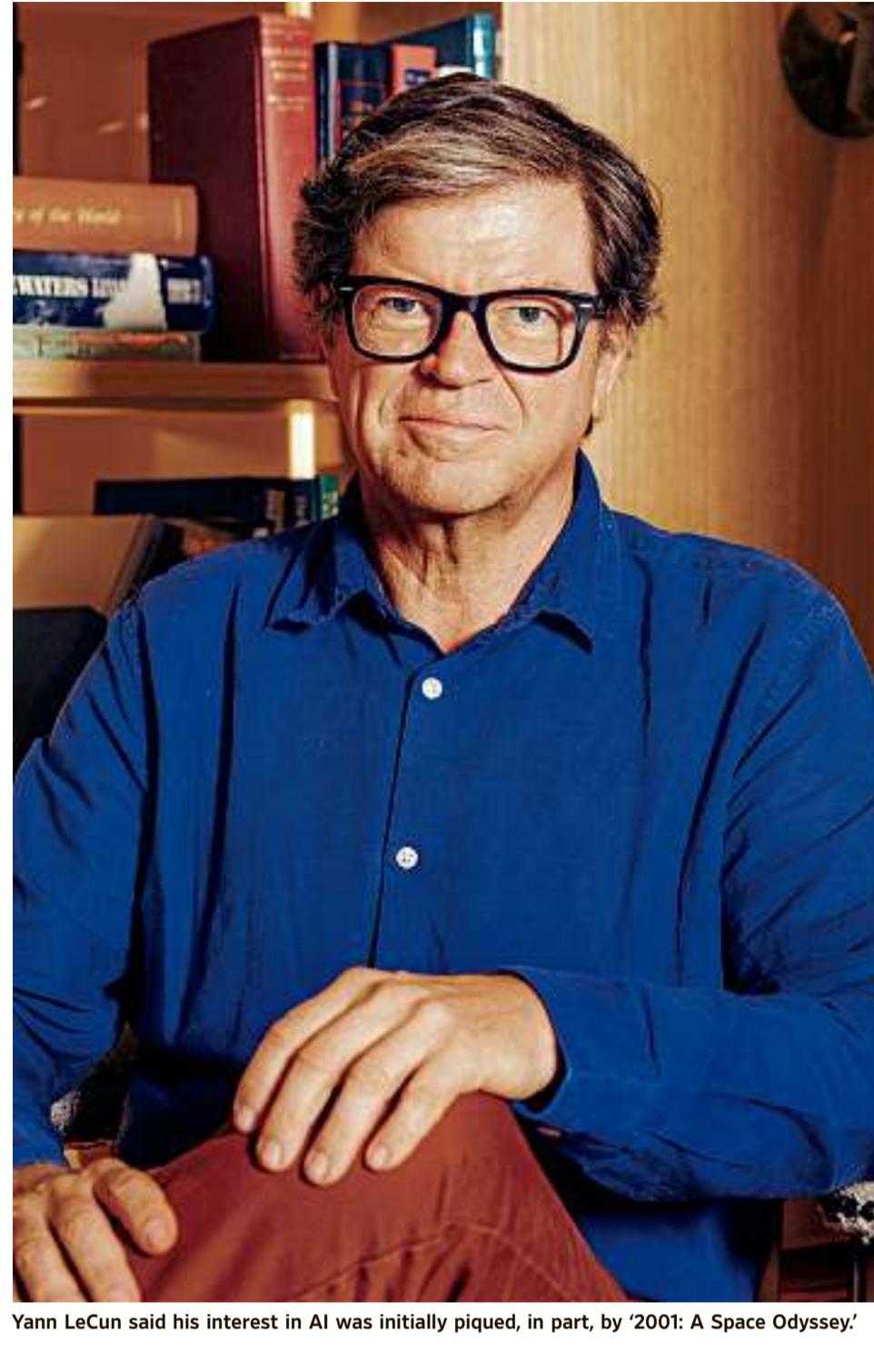
If LeCun's views are right, it spells trouble for some of today's hottest startups, not to mention the tech giants pouring tens of billions of dollars into AI. Many of them are banking on the idea that today's large language model-based AIs, like those from OpenAI, are on the near-term path to creating so-called "artificial general intelligence," or AGI, that broadly exceeds human-level intelligence.

LeCun says such talk is likely premature. When a departing OpenAI researcher in May talked up the need to learn how to control ultra-intelligent AI, LeCun pounced. "It seems to me that before 'urgently figuring out how to control AI systems much smarter than us' we need to have the beginning of a hint of a design for a system smarter than a house cat," he replied on X.

He likes the cat metaphor. Felines, after all, have a mental model of the physical world, persistent memory, some reasoning ability and a capacity for planning, he says. None of these qualities are present in today's "frontier" AIs, including those made by Meta.

Alexander Rives, a former Ph.D. student of LeCun's who has since founded an AI startup, says his provocations are well thought out. "He has a history of really being able to see gaps in how the field is thinking about a problem, and pointing that out," Rives says.

LeCun thinks artificial general intelligence



Yann LeCun said his interest in AI was initially piqued, in part, by '2001: A Space Odyssey.'

is a worthy goal.

"In the future, when people will talk to their AI system, to their smart glasses or whatever else, we need those AI systems to basically have human-level characteristics, and really have common sense, and really behave like a human assistant," he says.

But creating an AI this capable could easily take decades, he says—and today's dominant approach won't get us there.

The generative-AI boom has been powered by large language models and similar systems that train on oceans of data to mimic human expression. As each generation of models has become more powerful, some experts have concluded that simply pouring more chips and data into developing future AIs will make them ever more capable, ultimately matching or exceeding human intelligence.

LeCun thinks that the problem with today's AI systems is how they are designed, not their scale. No matter how many GPUs tech giants cram into data centers around the world, he says, today's AIs aren't going to get us artificial general intelligence.

His bet is that research on AIs that work in a fundamentally different way will set us

on a path to human-level intelligence. These hypothetical future AIs could take many forms, but work being done at FAIR to digest video from the real world is among the projects that currently excite LeCun. The idea is to create models that learn in a way that's analogous to how a baby animal does, by building a world model from the visual information it takes in.

The large language models, or LLMs, used for ChatGPT and other bots might someday have only a small role in systems with common sense and humanlike abilities, built using other techniques and algorithms.

Today's models are really just predicting the next word in a text, he says. But they're so good at this that they fool us. And because of their enormous memory capacity, they can seem to be reasoning, when in fact they're merely regurgitating information they've already been trained on.

"We are used to the idea that people or entities that can express themselves, or manipulate language, are smart—but that's not true," says LeCun. "You can manipulate language and not be smart, and that's basically what LLMs are demonstrating."

## TAX REPORT | LAURA SAUNDERS

## Hurricane Damage and Your Taxes. Here's What to Know.



So far this year, part or all of 33 states have been declared federal disaster areas, and some areas have qualified more than once. Losses, especially in the wake of Hurricanes Milton and Helene, are expected to be in the tens of billions of dollars.

Making matters worse, many disaster victims don't have sufficient insurance, or the right kind of insurance, to cover these losses.

Part of the losses could be deductible for tax purposes for some victims, cushioning the blow. But there are strict and complex limits on disaster deductions that will severely limit the amounts many can recover unless Congress changes the rules. Lawmakers enacted such changes for Hurricanes Harvey and Irma after they hit in 2017. Efforts are afoot to make changes for recent disasters, perhaps in the post-election, lame-duck session.

Both victims and non-victims in disaster areas could benefit from delayed tax deadlines, however.

Here's what to know about disaster-loss deduction limits and delayed deadlines.

Under current law, casualty losses—from, say, a hurricane or wildfire—must be from a federally declared disaster to qualify for a deduction. Damage from an isolated event like a house fire doesn't qualify.

That's because in 2017 Congress suspended broader deductions for casualty and theft losses as part of the tax overhaul. This suspension

lasts until the end of 2025, when the 2017 changes are due to lapse.

Key limits lower the amount of deductible losses, however. Taxpayers must subtract Federal Emergency Management Agency and insurance reimbursements from the allowable loss. They must also subtract an amount equal to 10% of their adjusted gross income, or AGI. AGI doesn't include itemized deductions, so it's often much larger than taxable income.

In addition, a casualty loss deduction can't exceed the taxpayer's cost basis in the asset. For a home, this is often the purchase price, with adjustments for improve-

ments like an addition or a deck. It's not the home's market value or assessed value for local taxes.

In practice, the pileup of these limits often leads to disappointing—and sometimes weird—results, as a simplified example shows.

Say that two homeowners had similar properties near Asheville, N.C., and both were washed away by floods from Helene. Neither owner had insurance or FEMA reimbursements.

Both houses were worth about \$500,000, but one owner bought for \$150,000 years ago while the other bought more recently for

April, pushing the deadline to next week on Oct. 15, now have until May 1, 2025, to file. Even better, these filers won't have to pay their 2024 taxes due next April 15 until May 1.

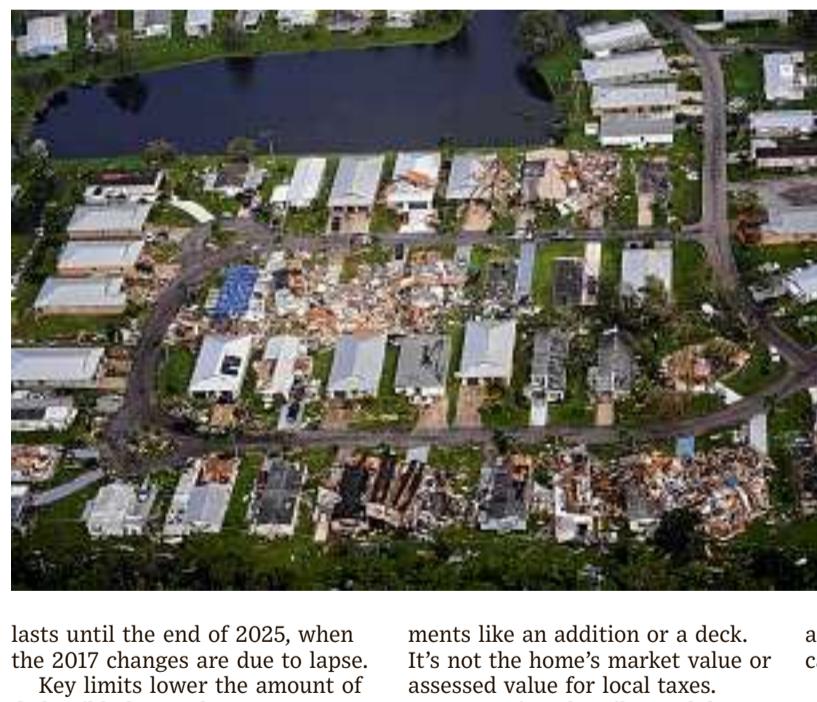
In addition, the third- and fourth-quarter deadlines for estimated quarterly payments have been extended to May 1, 2025 for many Florida taxpayers. Penalties for underpayments also stop accruing.

Say a Tallahassee taxpayer had an income windfall in the first quarter of 2024 and didn't pay estimated tax due on it, triggering an interest-based penalty of 8% on the underpayment. Even if this filer had no hurricane damage, the delayed deadlines will help because the filer's underpayment penalty paused in August, and the pause will continue past next April 15. The savings could be hefty.

But this largess will also cause confusion. A number of retail and professional software programs don't adjust for delayed deadlines due to disasters—so they may assess penalties that aren't actually owed.

If that happens, the IRS's computers typically catch the discrepancy and issue a refund, but the taxpayer may have no idea what it's for. A surprise refund can cause almost as much anxiety as a surprise tax bill.

Taxpayers can, and should, check if they qualify for extended tax deadlines due to disasters on the IRS website. With so many disasters this year, this is important because extensions vary from area to area.



The aftermath of Hurricane Milton in Fort Pierce, Fla.

\$400,000. As a result, the upper limit for the newer owner's loss deduction is \$400,000, while it's \$150,000 for the other owner.

The loss would also have to exceed 10% of each owner's AGI, and owners would have to subtract that amount from what they're looking to deduct. So the two owners' deductible losses could diverge even more.

"This is going to be a mess. There will be no consistency in loss deductions, due to homeowners' tax basis, insurance coverage and income," says Gerard Schreiber, a CPA who heads

a disaster tax force for the American Institute of CPAs.

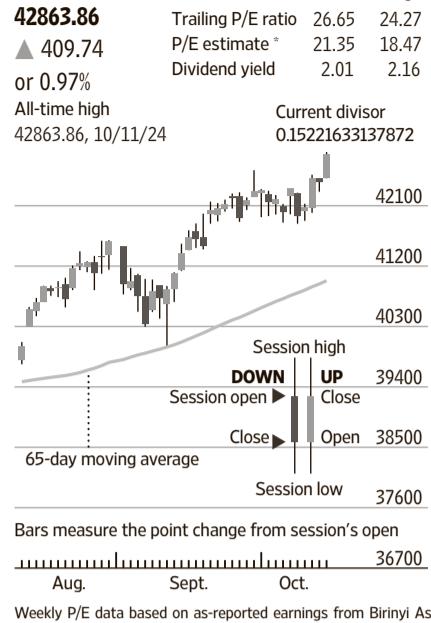
However, many non-victims—as well as victims—of declared disasters could benefit from tax-deadline extensions this year.

Here's an example. The entire state of Florida has been declared a disaster area due to Hurricanes Debby, Helene and Milton. As is usual, the IRS has delayed many tax deadlines and may delay more, and the new deadlines apply to all filers in an area whether or not they suffered damage.

So Florida filers who received the standard six-month extension to file their 2023 returns back in

## MARKETS DIGEST

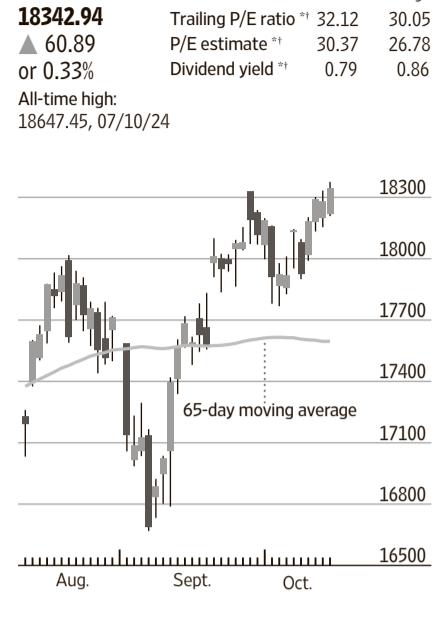
## Dow Jones Industrial Average



## S&amp;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
Dow Jones Transportation Average	2.68%		
Nymex RBOB gasoline	2.66		
NIKKEI 225	2.51		
S&P 500 Information Tech	2.50		
FTSE MIB	2.13		
S&P 500 Industrials	2.10		
S&P 500 Financials	1.81		
Nymex crude	1.59		
Wheat	1.57		
S&P 500 Health Care	1.46		
Nymex ULSD	1.35		
DAX	1.32		
S&P/TSX Comp	1.28		
Dow Jones Industrial Average	1.21		
Nasdaq-100	1.18		
S&P MidCap 400	1.13		
Nasdaq Composite	1.13		
S&P 500	1.11		
KOSPI Composite	1.06		
S&P 500 Materials	1.01		
Russell 2000	0.98		
S&P/ASX 200	0.79		
Euro STOXX	0.75		
STOXX Europe 600	0.66		
Indonesian rupiah	0.65		
South African rand	0.53		
IBEX 35	0.52		
CAC-40	0.48		
Comex gold	0.45		
WSJ Dollar Index	0.36		
S&P 500 Consumer Staples	0.33		
S&P SmallCap 600	0.33		
Swiss franc	0.10		
iSh TIPS Bond	0.08		
Lean hogs	0.07		
iSh 1-3 Treasury	0.02		
Mexican peso	unch.		
-0.04	iShiBoxx\$HYCp		
-0.09	Indian rupee		
-0.17	Japanese yen		
-0.18	South Korean won		
-0.20	VangdTotalBd		
-0.21	iShNatMnlBd		
-0.23	Chinese yuan		
-0.27	S&P 500 Real Estate		
-0.33	FTSE 100		
-0.35	Euro area euro		
-0.38	BSE Sensex		
-0.38	Norwegian krone		
-0.41	S&P/BMV IPC		
-0.42	U.K. pound		
-0.45	VangdTotalBd		
-0.49	iShJPMUSEmgbd		
-0.54	S&P 500 Energy		
-0.62	Australian dollar		
-0.63	iSh 7-10 Treasury		
-0.64	iShiBoxx\$InvGrdCp		
-0.85	S&P 500 Consumer Discr		
-1.24	Bloomberg Commodity Index		
-1.37	Bovespa Index		
-1.37	Canadian dollar		
-1.39	S&P 500 Communication Svcs		
-1.57	Comex copper		
-1.89	Comex silver		
-1.94	iSh 20+ Treasury		
-2.12	Corn		
-2.57	S&P 500 Utilities		
-3.11	Soybeans		
-3.56	Shanghai Composite		
-6.53	Hang Seng		
-7.78	Nymex natural gas		

## Major U.S. Stock-Market Indexes

	High	Low	Latest Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	Low	% chg	YTD % chg	3-yr ann.
<b>Dow Jones</b>										
Industrial Average	42899.75	42507.53	<b>42863.86</b>	409.74	■ 0.97	42863.86	32417.59	<b>27.3</b>	13.7	<b>7.5</b>
Transportation Avg	16251.73	15966.10	<b>16238.25</b>	339.44	■ 2.14	16331.72	13556.07	<b>10.5</b>	2.1	<b>3.6</b>
Utility Average	1031.76	1022.20	<b>1031.49</b>	8.65	■ 0.85	1065.16	801.98	<b>25.1</b>	17.0	<b>5.7</b>
Total Stock Market	57662.03	57165.23	<b>57605.93</b>	428.42	■ 0.75	57605.93	40847.04	<b>34.1</b>	20.5	<b>8.4</b>
Barron's 400	1246.72	1227.74	<b>1246.49</b>	18.75	■ 1.53	1246.49	907.97	<b>31.0</b>	16.2	<b>6.9</b>

## Nasdaq Stock Market

	High	Low	Latest Close	Net chg	% chg	52-Week High	Low	% chg	YTD % chg	3-yr ann.
<b>Nasdaq Composite</b>										
Nasdaq Composite	18375.53	18208.44	<b>18342.94</b>	60.89	■ 0.33	18647.45	12595.61	<b>36.8</b>	22.2	<b>8.2</b>
Nasdaq-100	20313.20	20142.18	<b>20271.97</b>	30.21	■ 0.15	20675.38	14109.57	<b>35.2</b>	20.5	<b>11.3</b>

## Trading Diary Volume, Advancers, Decliners

NYSE NYSE Amer. Total volume\* 789,106,206 11,952,835 Adv. volume\* 630,757,987 9,250,825 Decl. volume\* 152,345,409 2,155,510 Issues traded 2,857 297 Advances 2,223 168 Declines 566 114 Unchanged 68 15 New highs 206 13 New lows 13 6 Closing Arms\* 1.16 0.32 Block trades\* 4,040 151 Nasdaq NYSE Arca Total volume\* 5,140,446,390 265,063,419 Adv. volume\* 3,615,14,586 186,323,241 Decl. volume\* 1,322,190,419 78,269,914 Issues traded 4,372 1,996 Advances 3,141 1,715 Declines 1,086 251 Unchanged 145 30 New highs 293 452 New lows 94 26 Closing Arms\* 1.02 3.58 Block trades\* 42,911 1,457

\*Primary market NYSE, NYSE American NYSE Arca only. (TRIN) A comparison of the number of advancing and declining issues with the volume of shares rising and falling. An Arms of less than 1 indicates buying demand; above 1 indicates selling pressure.

Sources: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

Nasdaq PHLX

Source: FactSet; Dow Jones Market Data

International Stock Indexes

Region/Country	Index	Close	Net chg	Latest % chg	YTD % chg
World	MSCI ACWI	<b>852.73</b>	4.54	■ 0.54	17.3
	MSCI ACWI ex-USA	<b>348.14</b>	1.22	■ 0.35	10.0
	MSCI World	<b>3731.93</b>	21.22	■ 0.57	17.8
	MSCI Emerging Markets	<b>1159.56</b>	2.60	■ 0.22	13.3

Americas

Americas	MSCI AC Americas	<b>2188.59</b>	13.47	■ 0.62	20.7
Canada	S&P/TSX Comp	<b>24471.17</b>	168.91	■ 0.70	16.8
Latin Amer.	MSCI EM Latin America	<b>2184.81</b>	-10.55	■ -0.48	-18.0
Brazil	Bovespa	<b>12999.29</b>	-360.57	■ -0.28	-3.1
Chile	S&P/IPS	<b>3560.32</b>	-3.16	■ -0.09	2.7
Mexico	S&P/BMV IPC	<b>52395.66</b>	4.37	■ 0.01	-8.7

EMEA

EMEA	STOXX Europe 600	**521.98**	2.87	■ 0

## MARKET DATA

## Futures Contracts

## Metal &amp; Petroleum Futures

	Contract	Open	High	Low	Settle	Chg	Open interest
Copper-High (CME)-25,000 lbs.; \$ per lb.							
Open	High	hi lo	Low	Settle	Chg	interest	
Oct 4,005 4,4480	4,4055	4,4480	4,4055	4,4455	0,0665	1,094	
Dec 4,4475 4,4990	4,4480	4,4480	4,4495	4,4495	0,0660	130,425	

Gold (CMX)-100 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.

Oct 2638.30 2658.10 2638.20 2657.60 37.00 478

Nov 2634.40 2666.80 2634.40 2664.40 37.00 1,521

Dec 2647.40 2679.00 2645.30 2676.30 37.00 436,067

Feb'25 2670.50 2701.90 2669.70 2699.70 37.10 48,398

April 2688.80 2720.90 2686.80 2719.50 37.20 25,452

June 2708.70 2740.80 2706.60 2739.60 37.30 12,873

Palladium (NYM)-50 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.

Oct 1041.00 1049.50 1041.00 1061.80 -3.60 4

Dec 1072.00 1091.00 1063.00 1069.80 -2.40 17,084

Platinum (NYM)-50 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.

Oct 948.00 952.20 948.00 985.00 17.30 12

Jan'25 981.10 996.70 980.00 994.40 18.20 68,129

Silver (CMX)-5,000 troy oz.; \$ per troy oz.

Oct 31,535 31,535 31,525 31,520 0.515 5

Dec 31,375 31,845 31,260 31,755 0.515 117,383

Crude Oil, Light Sweet (NYM)-1,000 bbls.; \$ per bbl.

Nov 75.74 76.04 74.53 75.56 -0.29 189,085

Dec 75.00 75.28 73.85 74.85 -0.26 261,684

Jan'25 74.40 74.68 73.32 74.31 -0.22 146,084

March 73.38 73.71 72.47 73.43 -0.18 108,046

June 72.35 72.64 71.48 72.43 -0.07 149,462

Dec 70.63 70.95 69.93 70.78 -0.03 153,247

NY Harbor ULSD (NYM)-42,000 bbls.; \$ per gal.

Nov 2,3491 2,3499 2,3215 2,3439 -0.070 95,202

Dec 2,3575 2,3739 2,3235 2,3552 -0.064 89,581

Gasoline-NY RBOB (NYM)-42,000 gal.; \$ per gal.

Nov 2,1459 2,1646 2,1715 2,1516 .0007 89,209

Dec 2,1192 2,1326 2,0900 2,1231 .0017 91,601

Natural Gas (NYM)-10,000 MMbtu's; \$ per MMbtu.

Nov 2,687 2,727 2,615 2,622 -0.043 167,379

Dec 3,115 3,146 3,030 3,047 -0.055 173,228

Jan'25 3,365 3,388 3,281 3,294 -0.054 215,808

Feb 3,267 3,280 3,177 3,190 -0.062 117,219

March 3,015 3,031 2,932 2,948 -0.059 186,237

April 2,899 2,910 2,822 2,838 -0.053 86,426

## Agriculture Futures

Corn (CBT)-5,000 bu.; cents per bu.

Dec 418.50 422.75 415.25 415.75 -2.75 731,988

March'25 435.75 439.75 432.50 433.00 -3.25 355,464

Oats (CBT)-5,000 bu.; cents per bu.

Dec 382.75 388.75 378.25 379.75 -4.25 3,249

March'25 381.75 383.50 377.00 377.75 -3.75 627

Soybeans (CBT)-5,000 bu.; cents per bu.

Nov 1014.50 1023.75 1004.00 1005.50 -9.25 324,442

Jan'25 1031.00 1039.75 1019.50 1021.00 -10.50 219,204

Largest 100 exchange-traded funds. Preliminary close data as of 4:30 p.m. ET

Friday, October 11, 2024

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

Symbol Price (%) (%)

ETF Closing Chg Chg YTD

# BIGGEST 1,000 STOCKS

## How to Read the Stock Tables

The following explanations apply to NYSE, NYSE Arca, NYSE American and Nasdaq Stock Market listed securities. Prices are consolidated from trades reported by various market centers, including securities exchanges, Finra, electronic communications networks and other broker-dealers. The list comprises the 1,000 largest companies based on market capitalization.

**Underlined quotations** are those stocks with large changes in volume compared with the issue's average trading volume.

**Boldfaced quotations** highlight those issues whose price changed by 5% or more if their previous closing price was \$2 or higher.

### Footnotes:

**i**-New 52-week high; **t**-New 52-week low; **dd**-Indicates loss in the most recent four quarters.

**Stock tables reflect composite regular trading as of 4 p.m. ET and changes in the official closing prices from 4 p.m. ET the previous day.**

**YTD** 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**A B C** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**D E F** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**G H I** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**J K L** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**M N** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**R S** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**T W X Y Z** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**W** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**X** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**Y** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**Z** YTD 52-Week % Chg Hi Lo Stock Yld Sym % PE Last Chg Net Sym % PE Last Chg

**\*\* \* \* \* \***

**THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.**



## BUSINESS &amp; FINANCE

# Sanofi Looks to Sell Big Stake in Unit

The consumer-health business generated sales of \$5.7 billion last year

By ADRIÀ CALATAYUD

**Sanofi** said it entered into talks with Clayton Dubilier & Rice to unload a controlling stake in its consumer-health division, leaning toward a partial sale to a private-equity firm rather than a listing in its bid to shed the business.

The French drugmaker laid

out plans to separate its consumer division—home to brands such as Allegra, Dulcolax and IcyHot—from its innovative medicines and vaccines businesses a year ago. With its decision, Sanofi joined peers Johnson & Johnson, Pfizer and GSK in divesting off businesses that sell over-the-counter medicines to focus on more lucrative, but riskier, prescription drugs.

Sanofi's negotiations with CD&R show the Paris-based company is following a different path to exit from the business, though. The company said Fri-

day that it was in discussions with New York-based CD&R for a potential sale of a 50% controlling stake in its consumer-health business Opella.

Financial details of the potential sale weren't disclosed.

By contrast, J&J and GSK spun off and listed their consumer units to form Kenvue and Haleon, respectively, and initially retained stakes. J&J and GSK earlier this year said they would unload their remaining stakes in the businesses. Pfizer—which had a 32% stake in Haleon when the business listed in 2022—has been

selling shares in the business, and earlier this month reduced its ownership to around 15%.

At the time Sanofi outlined the separation plan last year, the company said it was looking at different scenarios, but that the most likely option would be a transaction to create a publicly listed company based in France. The company had previously said a separation of the business could be achieved in the fourth quarter of 2024 at the earliest.

Sanofi's decision to negotiate a sale of a 50% stake in Opella points to a desire to keep the

remaining stake, which would make a public listing unappealing to many investors, said Bruno Bulic, equity research managing director at investment bank Bryan Garnier. It could also indicate that CD&R is offering more than what the market wants to pay for consumer-health businesses, Bulic said.

If a deal materializes, Germany's Bayer will be left as the largest drugmaker to also own a consumer-health business. The aspirin maker in March said it wouldn't pursue a split into separate units for now.

# X Drops Unilever From Advertising Lawsuit

Social-media giant has accused ad industry coalition of boycotting platform

By MEGAN GRAHAM

Social-media company X has dropped **Unilever** from its lawsuit against an advertising industry coalition and large marketers, according to a court filing Friday.

The lawsuit, filed in August against the World Federation of Advertisers, along with federation members including Unilever, CVS Health and Mars, alleged that the defendants had conspired to withhold billions of ad dollars from X to force the platform to maintain certain safety standards.

The boycott began in November 2022 after Elon Musk acquired Twitter, the lawsuit said. At least 18 brands associated with the coalition stopped advertising on Twitter in November and December 2022 either in the U.S. or worldwide, according to the lawsuit.

Dozens more of the coalition's members cut back spending on ads through 2023.

The filing on Friday said X had dismissed its claims against Unilever, with each bearing their own fees and costs, but that it would continue to pursue its claims against the other defendants.

Unilever, whose portfolio includes Dove soap and Hellmann's mayonnaise, said in a statement that X had committed to ensuring the "safety and performance" of its brands on the platform. It declined to comment further on the agreement.

Unilever's main X account has been active on the platform, but the company didn't respond to a request for comment on whether it has been advertising on the platform. The company said it plans for its brands to advertise on X.

Unilever hadn't stopped advertising on X outside the U.S., an X spokesperson said.

X said in a post on the platform that it would be continuing its partnership with the brand.

"Today's news is the first part of the ecosystem-wide solution and we look forward to more resolution across the industry," the post said.

The announcement comes about a month after X announced it had hired former Hyundai Motor America top marketer Angela Zepeda to be its new global head of marketing.



Dove is a Unilever brand.

# Korea Zinc Raises Buyback to Stop Takeover

By KWANWOO JUN

Bain Capital-backed **Korea Zinc** has raised its share-buyback offer to frustrate a takeover bid by Seoul-based private-equity firm MBK Partners, in a battle for control over the world's largest zinc smelter.

The South Korean nonferrous metal company said Friday that it increased its stock repurchase price by 7.2% to 890,000 won a share, equivalent to \$659 each. That is higher than MBK's raised and final offer of 830,000 won.

The company also said it will buy back 3.225 trillion shares for cancellation, up 21% in value from its original plan.

In a separate regulatory filing, Korea Zinc said it will also raise its tender offer for Young Poong Precision, an industrial-valve manufacturer with a stake in the company, by 17% to 35,000 won apiece.

The sweetened offer came days after MBK, which manages around \$30 billion in assets, declined to raise its tender offer further for Korea Zinc. MBK had already increased its bid for a second time since the takeover tussle began in mid-September. Its tender offer runs until Oct. 14.

MBK, in its response, said Korea Zinc's newly raised buyback offer—heavily financed by loans—could weaken the smelter's financial health and business competitiveness. "Korea Zinc shareholders would be



The South Korean nonferrous metal company said it increased its stock repurchase price by 7.2% to \$659 each.

left with a worse-off company financially and profitably," MBK said in a statement.

Having teamed up with Young Poong and other Korea Zinc shareholders to secure a controlling stake, MBK said it would continue with a legal fight against the company board's decision on debt-fi-

nanced share buybacks regardless of the tender offer outcome.

Korea Zinc, however, said a local court had already ruled against MBK's earlier challenge to the stock-repurchase plan.

"Korea Zinc remains fully committed to completing the ongoing buyback and cancella-

tion process, as approved by the court, to enhance shareholder value and return profits to our shareholders," the company said.

The fight for control over Korea Zinc, which also processes copper and nickel and produces sulfuric acid used by semiconductor manufacturers to clean

wafers, became global recently when Boston-based Bain Capital stepped in and agreed to buy a 2.5% stake in the company for 430 billion won.

South Korea's financial watchdog earlier this past week warned against any unfair trading practices surrounding the takeover battle.

# Nippon Steel to Unload Stake In ArcelorMittal Joint Venture

By PIERRE BERTRAND

**Nippon Steel** said it agreed to sell its stake in a joint venture with **Arcelor-Mittal** to the European steelmaker in a bid to address antitrust concerns over its planned acquisition of **U.S. Steel**.

Calvert, a 50-50 joint venture owned by Nippon Steel and ArcelorMittal subsidiaries, is a manufacturing base for steel sheets operating in the U.S.

The companies said Friday that ArcelorMittal would take on Nippon Steel's 50% stake in the joint venture if the Japanese steelmaker managed to acquire U.S. Steel.

U.S. Steel, formed in 1901, was a giant of American industry with roots that go back to some of the most famed U.S. industrialists such as Andrew Carnegie and J.P. Morgan.

The Pittsburgh-based company has supplied steel for iconic structures across the

U.S., including the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge, Willis Tower in Chicago and the United Nations headquarters in New York City.

It was the first U.S. company to reach a \$1 billion market valuation, but its fortunes have languished over the years.

The company closed 2023 with a fourth-quarter net loss. It also posted profit declines in the first and second quarters of this year.

Nippon Steel entered the picture in December last year, when it agreed to purchase U.S. Steel in a \$14.1 billion deal. However, its planned takeover has become politically charged and a U.S. presidential election issue as candidates Donald Trump and Kamala Harris vie for votes in the tight race for the company's home state of Pennsylvania.

The deal also faces a national-security review by a special U.S. government committee that probes foreign in-

vestments in U.S. companies, but a ruling may not come until after the November presidential election. Both Harris and Trump have voiced their opposition to the deal.

Nippon Steel said Friday that shedding its stake in the Calvert joint venture was the best option to address any antitrust concerns that may arise and obtain timely regulatory approval. The companies agreed that ArcelorMittal would pay \$1 for the stake, while Nippon Steel would inject cash and forgive loans amounting to around \$900 million.

Should the takeover of U.S. Steel not go through, the transfer of Nippon Steel's Calvert stake wouldn't proceed either. ArcelorMittal said there were no guarantees Nippon Steel would complete its acquisition of U.S. Steel.

Formed in 2014, Calvert is the outcome of ArcelorMittal and Nippon Steel acquiring Thyssenkrupp Steel USA.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Unique Opportunity to own a Private School in Guatemala

36 Years of Providing Unequaled Pre-K thru 12th Grade Education

We Seek a buy-in partner(s) with teacher-administrator experience

More Info at: [www.equity.edu.gt](http://www.equity.edu.gt)

Email Lynn: [justicelynn@eas.edu.gt](mailto:justicelynn@eas.edu.gt)

Texas Phone: (936) 615-5457

## RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

### Scenic 1214 Acre Ranch

South West

New Mexico near Pinon

Nice Furnished 2 story Log house, Elk, deer.

Other Ranches Available.

Zia Real Estate | 575-355-2855

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

### 1ST TRUST DEED 11% RETURN

54% L.T.V. • 2 YEARS

CORONA DEL MAR, CA  
COMMERCIAL

866-700-0600

ALLIANCE PORTFOLIO  
120 Vantis Dr., Ste. 515 • Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

www.AlliancePortfolio.com

RE Broker + CA DRE # 02666755 Broker License ID  
Investment in real estate involves risk or loss of principal is subject to loss.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.  
THE MARKETPLACE

ADVERTISE TODAY  
(800) 366-3975

© 2024 Dow Jones & Company, Inc.  
All Rights Reserved.

## BP Flags Hit on Weaker Refining Margins

By DOMINIC CHOPPING

BP warned that weaker refining margins will hit third-quarter earnings by \$400 million to \$600 million as lower oil prices continue to weigh on the energy sector.

The London-listed oil-and-gas giant said Friday that its oil-trading result was also weak, while net debt is expected to rise from the previous three-month period, driven mainly by weaker realized refining margins and the delay of \$1 billion of divestment proceeds into the fourth quarter.

BP's statement comes as global oil refiners contend with a sharp drop in oil prices which are expected to drag on results across the European energy sector.

Concerns over the outlook for global demand saw Brent crude prices end the quarter at \$71.70 a barrel, slumping from above \$87 a barrel early in the period.

On Monday, peer Shell also warned of continuing refining margin weakness in the third quarter which it expects to drag on earnings.

In its update Friday, BP said upstream production in the third quarter is now expected to be broadly flat on the previous three months, an upgrade from previous guidance for lower production, but that its oil pro-

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Unique Opportunity to own a Private School in Guatemala

36 Years of Providing Unequaled Pre-K thru 12th Grade Education

We Seek a buy-in partner(s) with teacher-administrator experience

More Info at: [www.equity.edu.gt](http://www.equity.edu.gt)

Email Lynn: [justicelynn@eas.edu.gt](mailto:justicelynn@eas.edu.gt)

Texas Phone: (936) 615-5457

## RESIDENTIAL REAL ESTATE

### Scenic 1214 Acre Ranch

South West

New Mexico near Pinon

Nice Furnished 2 story Log house, Elk, deer.

Other Ranches Available.

Zia Real Estate | 575-355-2855

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

### 1ST TRUST DEED 11% RETURN

54% L.T.V. • 2 YEARS

CORONA DEL MAR, CA  
COMMERCIAL

866-700-0600

ALLIANCE PORTFOLIO  
120 Vantis Dr., Ste. 515 • Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

www.AlliancePortfolio.com

RE Broker + CA DRE # 02666755 Broker License ID  
Investment in real estate involves risk or loss of principal is subject to loss.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.  
THE MARKETPLACE

ADVERTISE TODAY  
(800) 366-3975

© 2024 Dow Jones & Company, Inc.  
All Rights Reserved.

## BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

### 1ST TRUST DEED 11% RETURN

54% L.T.V. • 2 YEARS

CORONA DEL MAR, CA  
COMMERCIAL

866-700-0600

ALLIANCE PORTFOLIO  
120 Vantis Dr., Ste. 515 • Aliso Viejo, CA 92656

www.AlliancePortfolio.com

RE Broker + CA DRE

## MARKETS &amp; FINANCE

# S&P 500, Dow Break Records On Strong Financial Earnings

The S&P 500 and Dow climbed to new highs on Friday, powered by strong earnings results from some of the country's largest financial institutions.

The early signs from bank earnings season were reassuring. At both JPMorgan and

**Wells Fargo**, profit fell from a year earlier, but by less than analysts had feared. Both stocks gained more than 4%.

While the Federal Reserve's recent rate cut will take time to work its way through the financial system, the results from JPMorgan demonstrated that the nation's biggest bank is motoring along—in turn suggesting the economy is moving at a healthy clip.

The banks' reports show that U.S. consumers remain resilient, said Michael Landsberg, chief investment officer of Landsberg Bennett Private Wealth Management.

"What you are seeing now is the consumers continue to spend and pay their bills," he said. "That's a good thing for

banks and a good thing for the consumer-led economy."

Meanwhile, investment heavyweight BlackRock said its assets have grown to a record \$11.5 trillion.

## Elsewhere:

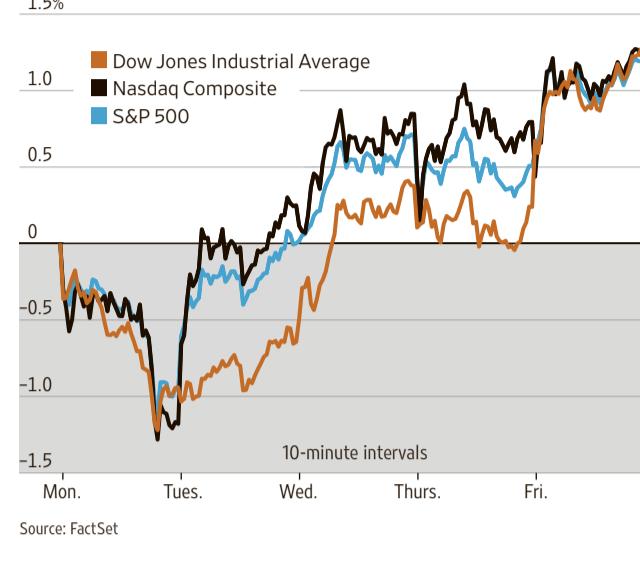
◆ U.S. indexes rose: The Dow Jones Industrial Average and the S&P 500 climbed to new highs. The Nasdaq Composite gained 0.3%. All three posted weekly gains of more than 1%.

◆ Bank stocks climbed after strong earnings. The S&P 500 Financials Sector rose 2% to a new closing high, and the KBW Nasdaq Bank Index logged its largest one-day percentage gain since the end of last year.

◆ Tesla stock slumped nearly 9%, reflecting investor disappointment over its robotaxi event. Shares climbed in Uber and Lyft, which have their own autonomous-driving projects.

◆ Global stocks largely declined. Chinese shares fell as investors

## Index performance this past week



Source: FactSet

awaited a Saturday Ministry of Finance briefing, which they hope will bring more stimulus measures. The Stoxx Europe 600 and Japan's Nikkei 225 both rose about 0.6%.

◆ Treasury yields crept higher, with the 10-year yield settling

at 4.072%.

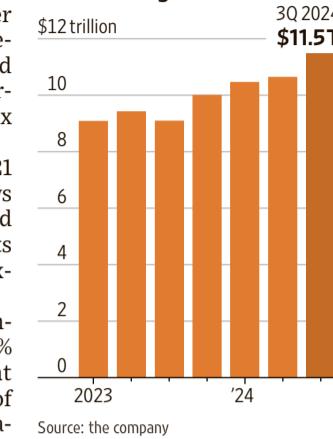
◆ Benchmark oil contracts traded lower. Brent crude fell 0.5% to \$79.04 a barrel, and WTI crude declined 0.4% to \$75.56 a barrel.

—By Angus Berwick and Vicky Ge Huang

# BlackRock's Assets Hit \$11.5 Trillion

BY JACK PITCHER

## BlackRock's assets under management



BlackRock's assets under management jumped to a record \$11.5 trillion in the third quarter, boosted by rising markets and a record high influx of new money from clients.

The asset manager's \$221 billion of third-quarter inflows were its most ever, and topped the \$160 billion that analysts polled by FactSet had expected.

BlackRock posted net income of \$1.6 billion, up 1.7% from a year ago. That amounted to earnings of \$10.90 per share, topping analyst expectations of \$9.98.

"We think the robust flows that BlackRock delivered this quarter should boost investor confidence that the long-awaited great rotation where investors move off the sidelines and start to 're-risk' by investing in equity and fixed income products is beginning to materialize," Edward Jones analyst Kyle Sanders wrote in a note to clients.

BlackRock shares gained 3.6% Friday. More highlights from Black-

Rock's third-quarter results: Assets under management have grown by \$2.4 trillion over the past year.

Revenue rose 15% from a year earlier to \$5.2 billion, topping analyst expectations.

Base management fees—those that aren't tied to a fund's performance—grew 5% on an organic basis.

Performance fees jumped to \$388 million, up more than fivefold from the year-ago period.

# Artificial Intelligence Attracts Big Share of Venture Pie

BY MARC VARTABEDIAN

AI has a huge appetite for data—and venture dollars.

It has been almost two years since the mainstream launch of OpenAI's ChatGPT set off a frenzy among venture capitalists for AI deals. The gold rush has turned artificial intelligence into the heftiest slice of the venture funding pie with no signs of letting up, according to the latest batch of third-quarter reports.

In the third quarter, funding for AI startups made up 31% of global venture funding, its second-highest share ever,

according to data firm CB Insights. The latest rush is fueled by generative AI, which proponents say will reshape everything from advertising to how companies operate.

While the figure is shy of the 35% share that AI deals accounted for in the second quarter, the back-to-back quarters amount to a dramatic widening from only a couple of years ago. In the third quarter of 2022, for instance, AI made up just 13% of all venture-deal value, according to CB Insights.

To put this into historical context: Fintech accounted for about a fifth of all funding in 2021, while crypto never reached more than 6% even at its peak, according to data firm Crunchbase.

Investors' ravenous fixation on AI deals makes once-dominant sectors pale in comparison. Financial technology had the second-highest market share in this year's third quarter with 13% of funding value.

"AI is dominating—enough said," CB Insights senior lead analyst Benjamin Lawrence commented during a briefing call. "AI companies are almost sucking the oxygen out of the room for everyone else."

Granted, funding for AI startups sank nearly 30% to \$16.8 billion in the third quarter from the previous one, per CB Insights. But the drop was likely the result of at least one large deal closing just after the quarter ended. Early this month, OpenAI said it raised a \$6.6 billion funding round led by Thrive Capital with investment from tech giant Microsoft and chip maker Nvidia, among others.

To be sure, the focus on AI has pushed up valuations of those companies at a time when venture investors are struggling to exit from investments in late-stage startups with lofty valuations.

Among the noteworthy AI deals of the third quarter was a \$1 billion round raised by **Safe Superintelligence** from investors including Andreessen Horowitz, Sequoia Capital, DST Global, SV Angel and NFDG.

Rounds of \$100 million and up across all sectors accounted for 39% of overall global funding value, down from 47% in the prior quarter, according to CB Insights.

The propulsion behind AI funding is a far cry from the

global venture market overall, which saw funding in the third quarter fall nearly 20% to \$54.7 billion from the prior quarter and 21% from the year-ago quarter, according to CB Insights.

"You have this market divergence thing where a lot of the market is following the pattern of the dot-com bust," said Wing VC Founding Partner Peter Wagner, referring to the tech-sector crash that occurred around 2000. "But then you have this subset of the market which is very closely linked to generative AI, which is kind of in a late '90s-type of acceleration."

It's always been  
easier for me  
to help others  
  
than to  
help myself



As a Veteran, when someone raises their hand for help, you're often one of the first ones to respond. But it's also okay to get help for yourself. Maybe you want or need assistance with employment, stress, finances, mental health or finding the right resources. No matter what it is, you earned it. And there's no better time than right now to ask for it. **Don't wait. Reach out.**



U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

Find resources at [VA.GOV/REACH](http://VA.GOV/REACH)

# HEARD ON THE STREET

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS &amp; COMMENTARY

## Obamacare Will Survive the Election

Investors in companies focused on the Affordable Care Act are tracking the candidates' every word

When the early outlines of President Barack Obama's health plan emerged, health economist Stephen Parente was struck by their resemblance to longstanding Republican proposals. At the time, Parente was an adviser to Sen. John McCain's 2008 presidential campaign.

"When we saw it coming out, we said, 'This is pretty good, but it's actually our design,'" recalls Parente, a professor at the University of Minnesota.

Although the Affordable Care Act was signed into law in 2010, it remains a contentious topic on the campaign trail. With elections less than a month away, Democrats are warning voters that the future of the program hangs in the balance. Former President Donald Trump continues to criticize Obamacare, promising during his debate with Vice President Kamala Harris to unveil "concepts of a new plan" should he regain the presidency.

Regardless of who wins, though, Obamacare is unlikely to be dis-

mantled. A majority of Americans now view the ACA favorably, and more than 45 million people are covered either through its marketplaces or via the law's expansion of Medicaid. The exchanges are growing in popularity in red states such as Texas and Florida and have helped bring the country's uninsured rate from 16% when the law was passed, to about 8%.

"When you give something to voters, the more it gets embedded into the system, the harder it is to take it away," says Stephen Myrow, managing partner of Beacon Policy Advisors, an independent policy research firm. "And I think Republicans of all stripes don't want egg on their face by trying to repeal Obamacare once again."

But that doesn't mean the debate will end. One of the program's most popular features is its prohibition on denying coverage for pre-existing conditions. However, requiring insurers to charge people the same price regardless of their cost to the system, while offering expanded benefits like maternity care and mental-health coverage, has led to increased premiums, particularly for those who are younger and healthier.

To address rising healthcare costs, President Biden temporarily expanded Affordable Care Act subsidies, but they are set to expire in 2025. If Republicans regain control in the coming November elections, they could let them expire, potentially increasing healthcare costs for millions of Americans and leading many to drop their insurance, says Cynthia Cox, director of the Affordable Care Act program at KFF, a nonprofit health research group.

Republicans argue that these subsidies distort the insurance market by artificially lowering



Healthcare providers and insurers rely on the Affordable Care Act framework.

prices, leading to higher costs to the taxpayer. Their permanent extension would increase the budget deficit by \$335 billion over the next decade, according to a Congressional Budget Office projection. In a recent article for National Review, Brian Blase, who served in Trump's White House, contends that the subsidies funnel millions of people into purchasing overpriced insurance products that many don't need, essentially cross-subsidizing those who require extensive medical care. He says that subsidies could be redirected in ways that enhance healthcare freedom and improve coverage for those with serious health issues.

Investors in companies focused on Obamacare are tracking the candidates' every word. As health exchanges and Medicaid have expanded, insurers such as Centene, Molina Healthcare, and Oscar Health have experienced significant membership growth. Oscar, which primarily serves the exchanges, has seen its shares rise by more than 200% in the past

year, but its gains could be at risk if Trump were to win. Earlier this year, Bank of America downgraded Oscar's stock to neutral, citing uncertainty around the future of exchange subsidies.

For much of the year, Oscar's stock has traded as if it were a direct bet on the elections. When Biden crashed in his debate with Trump in June, Oscar's stock plunged 10% the next day. When Harris was declared by pundits to be the winner following the Sept. 10 debate, Oscar surged 19% the following day and went on to rally for another six consecutive sessions.

Mark Bertolini, chief executive of Oscar Health, says investors may be putting too much emphasis on the election's outcome. He says he doesn't think any result will be catastrophic for the ACA exchanges. For instance, he points out that in red states like Texas, Ohio and Indiana, the exchanges have become a crucial lifeline for many. That is because these states chose not to expand Medicaid, despite federal funding that covers

nearly all the cost of expansion so residents who earn too much to qualify for Medicaid have relied heavily on the subsidized exchanges.

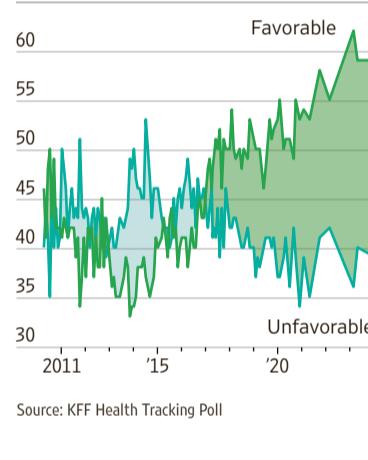
Indeed, if the elections produce a divided government—currently the most probable scenario—the expanded subsidies are likely to survive in some form. This is because they are expected to be included in a broader negotiation involving the Trump tax cuts, the provisions of which are also set to expire at the same time.

Regardless of what happens to the subsidies, Bertolini is bullish on the individual coverage market. For example, he says there is bipartisan support for plans that allow employers to provide a tax-free allowance for employees to purchase their own health insurance in the individual market.

Although it has changed shape more frequently than Play-Doh in a kindergarten, it doesn't look like Obamacare will disappear. The outcome of the elections will determine its next form.

—David Wainer

### The public's views on the Affordable Care Act



Source: KFF Health Tracking Poll

ance stocks might have a higher bar to keep significantly outperforming their primary peers.

Analysts and investors will be looking closely at what expected losses from Hurricane Ian are disclosed, to better benchmark the industry's new pricing and terms versus losses from past events. "It would stand to reason that if 2022's Hurricane Ian occurred today, it would result in a better return profile for reinsurers," says Jefferies analyst Yaron Kinar.

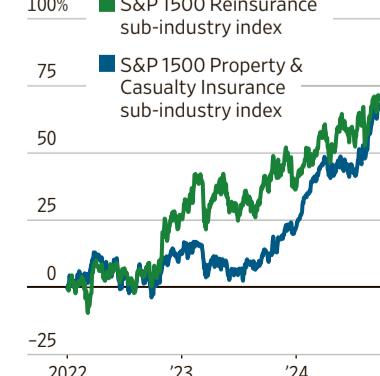
Industry losses being short of a worst-case scenario might make it harder for reinsurers to push through another big jump in pricing during policy renewals at the start of next year. An industry loss of around \$40 billion might not be favorable to shares of Bermuda-based reinsurers, as it could drive some hits to earnings but "without offering much pricing support," according to Autonomous Research analyst Ryan Tuinis.

Whether the cost of reinsurance pricing continues to rise is also a pocketbook issue for many homeowners. A study by professors now at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and the University of Wisconsin School of Business estimated that the recent "reinsurance shock" added \$375 in 2023 to premiums for homeowners' policies in the top 10% of zip codes by disaster risk.

An industry that proves it is better able to absorb a disaster of this scale without another big adjustment at least means things won't get significantly worse.

—Telis Demos

### Performance of property-and-casualty insurers and reinsurers since start of 2022



Source: FactSet

## AMD's Second AI Act Faces a Tougher Crowd

Strong sales of first GPU chips still barely make a dent in Nvidia's armor

Going from zero to nearly \$5 billion in sales in a year is nothing to sneeze at. Unfortunately for Advanced Micro Devices, it's also a hard act to repeat.

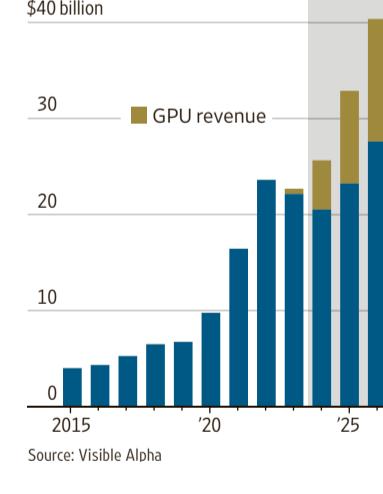
The chip maker better known as AMD unveiled its latest generation of artificial intelligence processors Thursday. Those come a little less than a year after the company launched its first entry into the market of so-called GPU accelerators—the systems crucial to generative AI computing. Nvidia dominates that market, but that didn't stop AMD from making some bold promises, including a target of selling \$2 billion worth of the initial chips in their first year on the market.

AMD has already more than doubled that target, projecting GPU revenue of more than \$4.5 billion for this year during its last earnings call in July. But that seems to have left little upside for Thursday's event, which disappointed investors who were looking for further updates to the company's financial outlook. AMD's shares fell 4% Thursday.

That is a contrast to last year's unveiling, which sent the stock soaring 25% over the following month after already having surged 80% since the start of the year.

AMD has been mostly a laggard this year—relative to both semiconductor peers and the broader market. The company's ability to field compelling AI chips isn't the worry.

But AMD has other business lines exposed to slowdowns in demand for both personal computers and videogame consoles. And the challenge of a very powerful incumbent means the company still has doubters—even given the strong sales of its first GPU offerings.



Source: Visible Alpha

AMD's latest offerings certainly won't cost Nvidia its enormous lead. But with demand still booming for AI infrastructure, the hope is that AMD can carve out a lucrative slice of a growing pie.

Curtis of Jefferies noted that "with Nvidia potentially sold out through 2025, there still seems to be enough demand to go around." Wall Street expects AMD's GPU revenue to hit nearly \$12.8 billion in 2026, which would make it nearly one-third of the company's total business by that time, according to consensus estimates from Visible Alpha.

Nvidia, however, is projected to do nearly \$85 billion in revenue for just its Blackwell line of GPUs in roughly the same period.

And AMD isn't Nvidia's only challenger. There aren't estimates yet for how many AI workloads will fall by that time to the processors designed in-house by today's biggest AI chip buyers: Amazon, Microsoft and Google.

In a report last week, Vivek Arya of BofA Securities said AMD needs to show a "credible path" to a 10% share of the AI market. AMD still has some chipping away left to do.

—Dan Gallagher



Damage from Milton in St. Pete Beach, Fla.

## Hurricane Milton Tests The Insurance Market

Hurricane Milton has taken a heavy toll on families, property and businesses. But in the complex insurance market, the effects aren't so straightforward.

At this early stage, preliminary estimates of Milton's insured damages suggest that a relatively larger proportion of the losses will be borne by reinsurers, and less so by primary insurers. These levels likely wouldn't result in big losses for catastrophe bonds, which are specialized investments that typically bear the risk of loss when extreme events occur.

Fitch Ratings estimates that Milton's insured losses will range from \$30 billion to \$50 billion, which would make it significantly more costly than Hurricane Helene, but wouldn't rise to the level of Hurricane Ian in 2022. The Insurance Information Institute estimates Ian's inflation-adjusted insurance losses at over \$55 billion.

Reinsurance has become more expensive in the past couple of years, driven in part by the impact of Hurricane Ian, as well as the sharp jump in interest rates since then, which reduced the amount of investment capital pouring into the sector, at least for a while. Some recent reinsurance has also come with higher attachment points, or the loss level at which coverage kicks in.

"Any industry loss event that is \$10 billion or less would largely be retained by primary insurance companies," says Neuberger Berman global insurance analyst Chai Gohil. "And as events go from \$10B onwards, more and more is retained by reinsurance companies."

Since the start of 2022, reinsurance stocks in the S&P Composite 1500 had well outperformed property-and-casualty stocks in that index through the beginning of the Atlantic hurricane season this year in June. But that gap has narrowed since then.

S&P Global Ratings estimates that the reinsurance industry has a buffer of \$64 billion before catastrophe losses affect its capital. "Global reinsurers will feel the impact but we do not foresee Milton overstepping the sector's annual catastrophe budgets," S&P wrote this week.

Catastrophe bonds designed to cover some of the most extreme risks have also recently seen strong returns despite covering more remote risks. Florian Steiger, chief executive of Icosa Investments, which focuses on alternative fixed-income investments, says that "most cat bonds really shouldn't start taking losses at events below \$50 billion."

Going forward, though, reinsur-



**My Monday Morning**  
Gracie Abrams on her new album and opening for Taylor Swift **C14**

CULTURE | SCIENCE | POLITICS | HUMOR

# REVIEW

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

**Contagious Ideas**  
The dark side of  
Malcolm Gladwell's  
'Tipping Point' **Books C7**



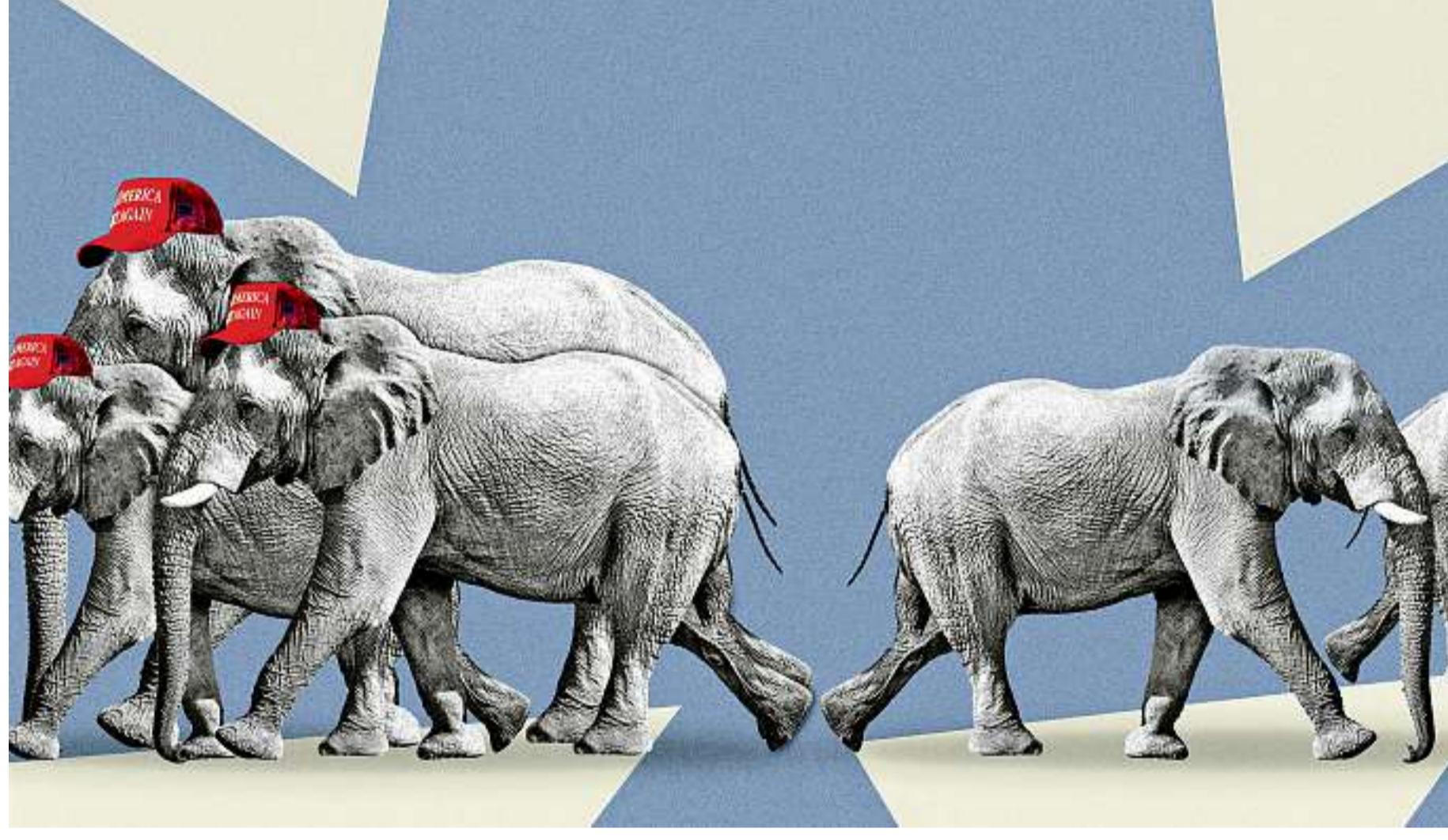
\* \* \* \*

Saturday/Sunday, October 12 - 13, 2024 | **C1**

## Where Do Never Trumpers Go From Here?

It's decision time for the five tribes of the anti-Trump right.

By Kevin D. Williamson



JOHNNY SIMON/WSE/ISTOCK, AGFGETTY IMAGES

**C**enter-right opponents of Donald Trump are not exactly a tribe of our own—we are more of a tribe of tribes, the Five Nations of the Anti-Trump Confederacy. The confederacy's constituent tribes, the borders between which are necessarily fuzzy and porous, are:

**1. NEOCONS:** The broken-hearted denizens of The Bulwark substack and likeminded allies keeping alive the flame of vintage Weekly Standard-style neoconservatism.

**2. FRENCHMEN:** Pro-lifers and other social conservatives (the New York Times columnist David French being the exemplary specimen) who could not abide a Mammon-worshipping amoral bigot such as Donald Trump even before the former game-show host attempted to stage a post-election *coup d'état* in 2020.

**3. LIBERTARIANS:** Cato Institute-type Republicans who still secretly thrill to Ayn Rand's "Atlas Shrugged" and more or less agree with Reason magazine's positions on drug legalization.

**4. SNOOTS:** Affluent, Economist-reading (well, Economist-subscribing) members of the urban-to-suburban professional classes who much preferred a Republican Party that prioritized their values and who dislike the fact that Fox News is now on 24/7 at the clubhouse.

**5. LIFERS:** The long-term committed Republican partisans who have been determined to wait out Trump and Trumpism rather than surrender to the GOP to grifters and ignoramuses, cognizant that dopey right-wing populism has had only very modest po-

litical success outside of Republican primaries.

Two of these tribes—the Snoots and the Lifers—we can dispose of first.

As you can see from the long-term partisan shift in the well-heeled suburbs of Philadelphia's Main Line or in the voting habits of the prospering, federally-subsidized high bourgeoisie

*Please turn to the next page*

*Kevin D. Williamson is national correspondent at the Dispatch and a writer in residence at the Competitive Enterprise Institute.*

## I Was a Binge Drinker. This Is How I Stopped.

I felt alone in turning to alcohol to manage my stress, but as a middle-aged woman, I had plenty of company. **By Ericka Andersen**

A round five years ago, I told my doctor that I was under a lot of stress. With two toddlers, a full-time job and all the trappings of a modern suburban life, everything felt hectic—all the time. My blood work was fine, and I was otherwise healthy, so the doctor wasn't concerned. Gazing into my tired eyes, she suggested a glass of wine might help me unwind in the evenings.

As it happens, I was already drinking up to a bottle of wine several nights a week. But I didn't tell her that.

Addiction is in my genes, and I'd had an unhealthy attachment to alcohol from my first drink at 16. In moments of sadness, loneliness, stress or frustration, alcohol had become my most loyal companion.

I tried to convince myself that my drink-

ing wasn't a problem. Although I looked forward to my first drink of the day, I'd wait patiently until around 5:30. I rationalized that a little wine was a relatively innocuous way to overcome the dread of cooking dinner or lighten the drudgery of drag-out bedtime routines.

Wine helped ease the tension of these witching hours, when the composure I'd mustered throughout the day began to unravel. But one drink led to another, and I'd wake up in a dark mood, with an aching head and a short fuse.

I felt alone in my quiet drinking at home, but it turns out I had plenty of company. Various studies and surveys have shown that binge-drinking is on the rise among middle-aged women. Men are more likely than

*Please turn to page C4*



ERIK OJALA

## Inside

### SELF-IMPROVEMENT

When A.J. Jacobs signed up for a triathlon, he had one goal: not to finish last. "There had to be a few in the crowd even less prepared." **C5**



### Travel Travails

Nobody visits the hidden gems Joe Queenan suggests. So: Maybe you've heard of the Louvre? **C3**

### EDUCATION

Do teachers have to call trans students by the names they wish? Federal courts will decide. **C3**



### OBITUARY

Scott Thorson was known as Liberace's lover and a witness to an infamous killing spree. **C6**



## REVIEW

# What's Next for Never-Trump Conservatives?

*Continued from the prior page*

of Northern Virginia, the Snoots have already jumped ship in numbers and mostly vote Democratic now. Wherever that tattooed guy in the giant Ford pick-up with a "Let's Go Brandon" mural across the rear window is headed to, it isn't to drop his kids off at Phillips Exeter or to the C-suite parking at Lazard. The Snoots have scooted.

The Lifers, for their part, are either going to go into internal exile following a Trump victory in November or fight what's left of the Trumpists following a Trump defeat. In the latter case, the Trumpists will

**The GOP won't be a home again anytime soon for conservatives who take an attitude toward conservatism that is...conservative.**

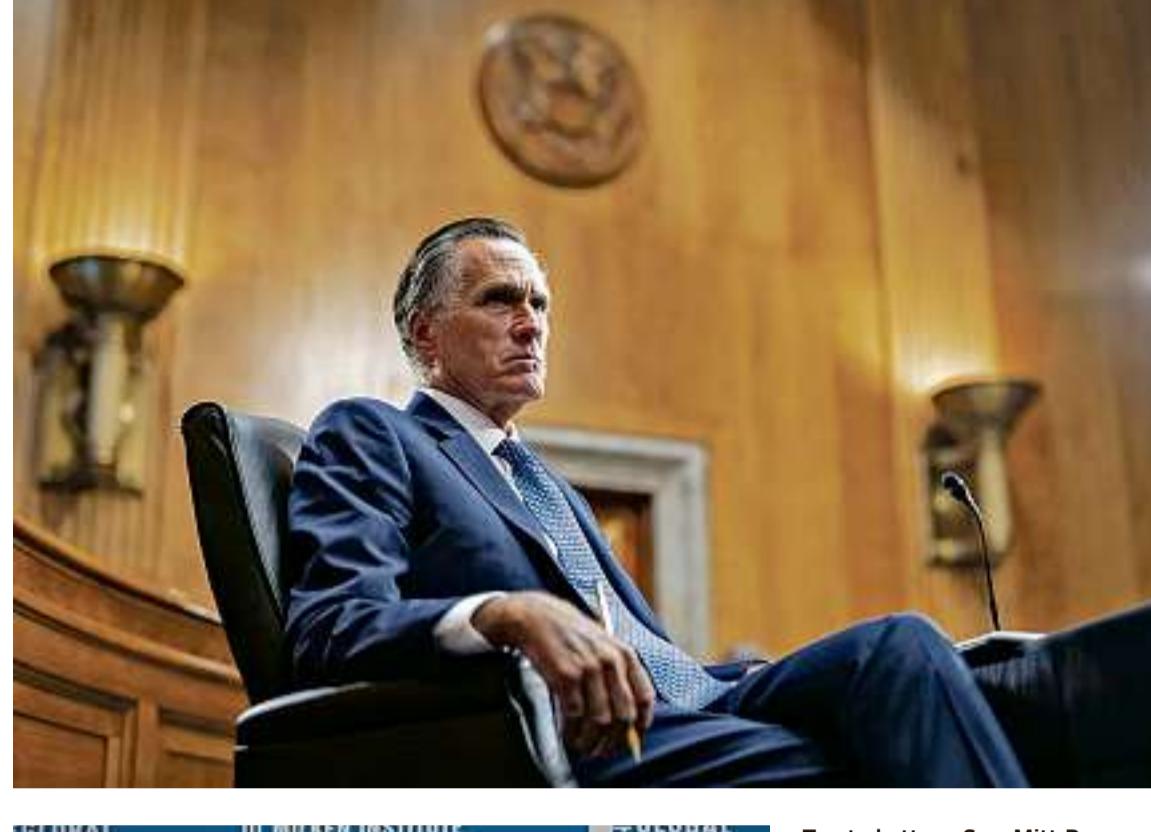
still be led by Trump, who will simply insist that the election was illegitimate, and the Lifers will lose, again. Mitt Romney, Lifer-in-Chief, is an intelligent and patriotic man, but his argument for withholding his endorsement of Kamala Harris—that he wants to retain his influence in the GOP—is straight-up delusional.

Some of those Lifers are big-money donors who have discovered that, in the age of small-dollar fundraising, they have less influence in the GOP than they used to. Having failed to move national and state-level Republican party organizations in their direction, they've invested in third-party-ish projects such as No Labels, an expensive and disappointing misadventure. The best-case Lifer scenario in the foreseeable future is political purgatory as a cranky and impotent minority faction.

So much for them. The others are a little more complicated.

Like the Snoots to whom they are adjacent, the prodigal Neocons have, to a significant degree, already switched teams, returning to their ancestral home: the Democratic Party. One of the fault lines that runs through the anti-Trump right has to do with how attached one was to the GOP to begin with. Some of my friends in the neocon universe were deeply engaged as Republicans per se: advising candidates and officeholders, serving as speechwriters and party operatives, etc. There is something of the jilted lover in their current politics: Sure, they're going steady with the Democrats now, but their strongest feelings are reserved for their ex. (And there's even a fair bit of bitter, late-night, wine-glass-in-hand social-media stalking on the anti-Trump right.)

Their embrace of the Democrats has the hot flush of a new romance, but these are intelligent and patriotic men and women. If they form a durable new right wing of the Democratic Party (strange as those words are to



Top to bottom: Sen. Mitt Romney, Republican 'Lifer-in-Chief'; David French, a leading conservative critic of Donald Trump; former Republican Rep. Liz Cheney campaigns with Democratic nominee Kamala Harris, Oct. 3.

the Democrats are not exactly Milton Friedman on free trade or Scoop Jackson on foreign policy, they are, at the moment, slightly more amenable to the libertarian view of trade and the assertive, internationalist sensibility on foreign policy (especially vis-à-vis Moscow) than is the GOP, the neurotic xenophobia of which is broad enough to encompass both international trade and multinational alliances. If the Democrats could get over their "Norma Rae" nostalgia and back-burner the union goons—who are a tiny share both of the workforce and of the electorate, and whose rank and file are, after all, pretty Trump-ish—then they might realize that there is something useful to them in that old neo-conservative critique.

The problem is that many of the good and necessary policies that need to be implemented (such as entitlement reform and fiscal rationalization) are not very popular. But the least-popular policies in American political life do have one reliable champion: Libertarians. I don't mean the kooks associated with the so-called Libertarian Party, but the business-aligned offshoot of midcentury conservatism who did their MBAs at the University of Chicago with copies of Milton Friedman's "Free to Choose" in their briefcases, imbibing a "Mad Men"-era political cocktail that was 97% Chamber of Commerce small-government stuff and 3% LSD. You want a U.S.-EU free-trade deal, entitlement reform and a more humane approach to drug problems? The Libertarians will be on board.

Of course, they'll bug Democrats about things progressives despise, like spending discipline and the lib-

FROM TOP: AL DRAGO/BLOOMBERG NEWS; ARIANA RUIZ/PRESA INTERNACIONAL/ZUMA PRESS; JIM VONDRA/GETTY IMAGES

type!), then the Democrats will be better for it. After November, the smart Democrats, if there were any, would be doing what they could to keep the Neocons in the party this time around.

Historically speaking, the rightward-most fringe of the Democratic Party has been a pretty good place to be. That fertile political ground has produced figures such as Charles Krauthammer, Irving Kristol, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, Jeane Kirkpatrick, Henry Jackson, Saul Bellow, etc. While the epithet "neo-conservative" was deployed by both

the Noam Chomsky left and the Pat Buchanan right as a term of abuse directed at foreign-policy hawks in the George W. Bush administration, it is worth keeping in mind that the original neoconservatives were focused on a critique of the domestic welfare state, a line of criticism that had both a fiscal aspect (it's expensive!) and a social one (it creates disincentives to work and marriage).

There are Democrats who will listen to arguments for fiscal stability and regulatory reform, and for casting a more critical, evidence-based eye on social programs. And while



**Actor Sebastian Stan's goal in 'The Apprentice' was to subvert the many pop culture versions of Donald Trump.**

memoirs and interviews, biographies and legal filings. Sherman, who covered Trump's 2016

presidential cam-

paign for New York magazine, says he was fascinated by how soft-spoken Trump seemed in early TV interviews: "What I was blown away by was how different he was." Still, "The Apprentice" opens with the disclaimer that it is a work of fiction.

The movie has given Hollywood massive indigestion. Following its rousing reception at the Cannes Film Festival in the spring, Trump's lawyers sent Abbasi and Sherman a cease-and-desist letter that included a warning of legal trouble for the film's backers, according to Sherman.

Abbasi says that studio executives who had praised "The

of course it is important. We're sort of riding on the back of a dragon here."

The movie portrays Trump as a protégé of the contentious political operative Roy Cohn, played by Jeremy Strong, who teaches him three lessons of survival. The first: attack, attack, attack. The second: deny everything. The third: always claim victory.

Trump campaign communications director Steven Cheung has called the film "election interference by Hollywood elites" and "garbage" that "belongs in a dumpster fire."

The screenplay, written by journalist Gabriel Sherman, is based in part on Trump's

eralization of labor laws—but it's not like they're going to get these from Donald Trump or his epigones, either. Problem is, they'll be a hard get for the Democrats. To borrow Irving Kristol's heuristic, the right-leaning Libertarians aren't just anti-state—they are also anti-left, in many cases even more than they are anti-state. And, for many of them, working with the Democrats just feels...dirty. To listen to them talk, you'd think Liz Cheney and everybody to the left of her is a Marxist.

The same politics of ick holds true for most of the Frenchmen—though, notably, not for their namesake. David French has put forward a much-discussed endorsement of Kamala Harris, though it is clear that my friend David, and many others like him, would prefer to return to a sufficiently reformed and sobered-up GOP than to keep supporting Democrats.

As Republicans and longtime policy activists know, one of the challenges of working with evangelical conservatives is that they are politically eccentric. Other than their anti-abortion stance, it is difficult to tell where any of them will come down. For example, some religious conservatives are very opposed to capital punishment and very interested in criminal-justice reform, some are more engaged on environmental policy, and some advocate a more comprehensive welfare state, while most evangelicals are indistinguishable from standard-issue Republicans on most issues.

And then there is the matter of peer pressure. David French is very much in the minority among his coreligionists, with most politically engaged evangelicals having been all too happy to go along with Donald Trump's pageant of idolatry and cruelty. A few recently have broken with Trump over his inconstancy on abortion and his newly accommodating view of the subject, but most are still loving the Kool-Aid.

What that probably means is that anti-Trump evangelicals and pro-Trump evangelicals will end up together in a faction that no longer enjoys the influence it did only a few years ago, amounting to little more than a series of prayer breakfasts. Like the NRA, which spent many, many millions of dollars securing its own irrelevancy as a political organization, evangelicals forgot what it is that pride goeth before.

The Democrats are never going to be the party of anti-abortion voters or hardcore gut-the-state guys with Hayek tattoos. And the Republicans won't be a home again anytime soon for conservatives who take an attitude toward conservatism that is...conservative. The Dispatch, the conservative-oriented news outlet where I work, was founded with an eye toward the post-Trump era, but we aren't there yet. Our politics is suspended, if not in amber then in some other kind of slowly fossilizing goo.

So the five tribes of the anti-Trump right now face a choice about how to best serve their interests:

through an alliance of convenience with a Democratic Party that doesn't

really want them or, for the sake of the kids, by sticking it out in a loveless marriage with a Republican Party that doesn't really want them either.

## The Controversial Trump Movie 'The Apprentice' Finally Arrives

Its timing is serendipitous, despite strikes, legal threats and wary distributors.

BY ELLEN GAMERMAN

**WHEN SEBASTIAN STAN** got the script for "The Apprentice," the new movie about Donald Trump's early years as a real-estate developer in New York, the first thing he did was cross out the names of all the characters. He wanted to pay less attention to who was speaking to better hear what was actually being said.

Reading the script this way made him see aspects of young Trump's story as universal. "I actually found it to be much more relatable than I thought," says Stan. "What this was trying to explore was: What happens to a human being in pursuit of the American dream?"

Stan's portrayal of Trump—which viewers will find 1) humanizing 2) demonizing 3) polarizing or 4) all of the above—is just one controversial element of the movie. There's also the timing of its release, less than a month before Election Day.

Every step of this film has been a battle, with struggles to secure financing, delays due to the writer-and-actor strikes, studio refusals to distribute the film and a legal threat from Trump's attorneys. The movie arrives in roughly 1,740 theaters this weekend before opening overseas later this month.

Director Ali Abbasi says he hadn't planned for an election-season debut when he began working on the film in 2018, but he's embracing the serendipity. "Some people would say, 'OK, this is too flattering, this is too good a portrait of him—aren't you afraid people will go vote for him?' That's not my job," says Abbasi. "But

of course it is important. We're sort of riding on the back of a dragon here."

The movie portrays Trump as a protégé of the contentious political operative Roy Cohn, played by Jeremy Strong, who teaches him three lessons of survival. The first: attack, attack, attack. The second: deny everything. The third: always claim victory.

Trump campaign communications director Steven Cheung has called the film "election interference by Hollywood elites" and "garbage" that "belongs in a dumpster fire."

The screenplay, written by journalist Gabriel Sherman, is based in part on Trump's

"Apprentice" swiftly abandoned the project: "You're left out in the street."

Every major studio and streamer passed, says Tom Ortenberg, the film's eventual distributor at Briarcliff Entertainment. "I enjoy taking on pictures that others are afraid of, that others are frankly too cowardly to take on," he says.

Stan says he took the role of Trump, against the counsel of some friends, because he wanted to better understand the man. The challenge

seemed scary in a way that felt exciting. He noticed an interesting evolution in Trump's voice and speech, and got used to mouth implants and poofy blond wigs. His goal was to subvert clichéd assumptions about Trump.

"You see a red tie, you know what that means, you see anything with the lips, you know what that means," says Stan. "Part of the job that I had was to figure out beforehand all of the projections, opinions and ideas and impressions and caricatures that people were walking into the theater with before the movie even started, to know what not to do."

FLIXPIX/SCYTHIA FILMS/ALAMY STOCK PHOTO



## REVIEW

# How I Stopped My Binge Drinking

*Continued from Page One*

women to overdrink, at 36% to 18.8% in 2023, but the rate of women aged 35 to 50 consuming five or more drinks in a row in a two-week period increased almost twice as fast as that of men between 2012 and 2022, according to nationwide surveys by the University of Michigan.

Men are still more likely to die from drinking-related causes than women, but this gap is narrowing too. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, deaths from excessive alcohol use increased 26.8% between 2016 and 2021 among men, but 34.7% among women.

Studies show that women are more likely than men to use alcohol to help cope with stress. The stress

year-old, had moved me to drink more. But after a summer of bingeing, I realized I had a problem. It was Sept. 30, 2020, and I'd had enough.

Sober October, a popular annual challenge in which people abstain from alcohol for the month, started the next day. Feeling flustered and disappointed with myself, I committed to a month of sobriety. I needed to prove to myself that I could regain control.

With hindsight, I can see how easy it was to drink away my evenings. My social-media accounts are filled with "mommy drinking" memes and merch, such as wine glasses engraved with "Mommy Juice" and pink T-shirts that say "Wine O'clock!" My trips to Target involve passing cases and coolers filled with fruity, low-cal alcoholic beverages in cheerful bottles and cans, marketed as sources of you-go-girl empowerment, pleasure and self-care.

The rosy-hued zeitgeist seems to be that alcohol is a fun and easy way to take the edge off, particularly if you're a mom. But as the rise in drinking-related deaths and hospitalizations among women demonstrates, this trend in self-medicating is hardly cost free.

"Because alcohol is both socially acceptable and legal, people underestimate its potential for harm," says Caroline Newton, an addiction psychiatrist in Connecticut. She notes that significant life stressors, including divorce and infertility, can escalate casual drinking, which can lead to a rising tolerance of alcohol dependence.

This is a particular problem for women as studies consistently show that they are more vulnerable to alcohol-related health risks than men, including cancer, stroke and liver damage. A study published in the journal *Addictive Behaviors* in 2021, for example, found that heavy-drinking women were up to two times more likely to have been diagnosed with a "significant medical condition," including cancer, than heavy-drinking men.

Given the ways alcohol is often framed as a cheap and legal source of escapism—something that can be enjoyed while cooking or cleaning or wrangling the kids—many women don't see their drinking as a problem. Others feel they lack the time or money to manage their stress another way. After all, drinking is cheaper than therapy and easier than yoga or meditation. The relief it offers may be temporary, but it is also immediate.

"We've allowed ourselves to be marketed to while ignoring all the science, which is very clear about alcohol: it worsens anxiety, depletes



**'Because alcohol is both socially acceptable and legal, people underestimate its potential for harm.'**

CAROLINE NEWTON  
Addiction psychiatrist

of the pandemic certainly nudged more women to drink in excess. In research published in *JAMA Health Forum* this year, women aged 40 to 64 saw a stark rise in alcohol-related hospital visits in 2020 and 2021.

Nick Mathews, founder of Still-water Behavioral Health, a drug and alcohol treatment program with centers in California, saw a spike in demand during the pandemic. He told me that many women, "including mothers, faced a lack of external resources and social outlets. This led them to turn to alcohol as a coping mechanism because they didn't have the same opportunities for self-care and social interaction."

## Through a glass darkly

America's maxed-out, stressed-out, burned-out women are clearly drinking too much. I used to be one of them. Between hustling at work, managing daycare schedules and keeping up the appearance of contented normalcy at church, I found it hard to take the time to slow down and consider why I'd obliterate so many of my nights and wake up feeling hung over. Instead I popped Excedrin, guzzled Gatorade and coffee and pretended I was fine.

Four years ago, something changed. I had just spent a Sunday afternoon drinking with my neighbors—fellow parents of young children—and I woke up feeling ill and regretful. I promised myself it was time to stop this constant cycle of binge and remorse. But then, hours later, I was at a book club bargaining with myself over how much of the free-flowing wine I would drink.

Why did I think I needed to drink to get through an evening among friends? Alcohol, long a source of relief, had become a trigger for self-loathing. The pandemic, which I spent working from home with a 2- and 4-



white matter in the brain, totally corrupts sleep, and it's a Group 1 carcinogen," said Paige Rien, a former HGTV host who's been sober for years. "Drink if you want, but know the science."

## Mommy's little helper

The "mental load" of motherhood often includes largely invisible stressors like filling out forms, maintaining schedules, shopping for clothes and groceries, and meeting with teachers. Such constant vigilance—the sense that there is always something that needs doing or buying or cleaning—is exhausting.

Finding time for actual self-care is a challenge many know too well. Even when women are primary breadwinners, they still tend to devote more time to child care and housework and less time to leisure than their husbands, according to a 2023 Pew Research Center survey.

The circumstances that drive many middle-aged women to drink are also what may prevent them from seeking treatment. A 2023 study published in the journal *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* found that women often reported "gendered responsibilities," such as caregiving, as a significant obstacle for seeking treatment.

The same study found that women who struggle with substance abuse are "more likely than men to perceive stigma for seeking help." Many worry that by admitting they have a problem, they could compromise their access to their children—or their standing as a mother.

The pandemic may have driven more women to drink, but it also offered more pathways to treatment. Before 2020, there was less awareness of the problem and fewer ways for women to commune online. Today, groups such as Sober Mom Squad and Sober Sis boast tens of thousands of members.

"Connection is the 'secret sauce' and often the antidote to addiction," says Sober Sis founder Jenn Kautsch. She notes that membership boomed between 2020 and 2022 and has remained elevated. Though Sober Sis was one of the few programs with online support meetings before the pandemic, the group grew its capacity in 2020, when many women felt some pressure, in Kautsch's words, to "renegotiate their relationship with alcohol."

Hearing from and communicating with fellow women in this way certainly made a difference in my recovery process. I joined an online support group called the Luckiest Club, which hosts multiple open daily meetings online, some of them "women's only." Seeing fellow women—teachers, mothers, doctors, writers—grappling with their dependence on alcohol helped me realize I wasn't alone.

Most people are unaware of recovery programs outside of Alcoholics Anonymous. Even googling treatments for alcohol abuse can feel scary for people who don't want anyone else to know that they are struggling. Some mistakenly assume they need help only when they hit "rock bottom."

"What really wore me down was the constant mental battle over wine—why couldn't I stop at two

glasses? Why did it seem like everyone else could drink normally while I felt powerless to control it?" said Christy Osborne, an author and sobriety coach, whom I met through a group I joined for people who are writing about addiction and mental health. Osborne says her breaking point came when she realized she was "utterly fed up" with "the relentless cycle of waking up at 3 a.m., heart racing with anxiety, and then struggling to find patience with my kids the next day." Her last drink was in 2019.

## The last drop

When I started Sober October, my commitment was for the month. The prospect of anything longer was too daunting to think about. Someone in one of my recovery groups said it took at least 90 days to feel like she wasn't "white knuckling" it. Her observation offered both validation and a goal.

The struggle did ease a bit when I hit 90 days, but my first full year of sobriety still felt endless. I tracked my days on an app, attended online meetings and gritted my teeth through alcohol-infused birthday parties, ballgames and concerts. For the first rock concert I attended sober, I made sure I had a full stomach, plenty of water and a friend on hand to text if I felt weak. I let myself drink Red Bull and eat a bag of sour gummy worms for the sugar rush.

Giving up alcohol was hard. I tried and failed many times. But within a few months I found that I was no longer plagued by midnight anxiety, morning headaches or afternoon cravings. I gained energy and clarity and revived my relationship with God.

Instead of whispering the same daily prayer to be "free" from the hold of alcohol, I began investigating the root causes of my dependence, including my over-commitment at work, my concerns about my marriage and my anxieties about my patience and wisdom as a mother.

By setting healthier limits in my life, I found I had the space and energy to finish writing my second book, be more present with my children and work through the problems I had spent years mulling with wine, including my insecurity about my body and my fraught relationship with my own parents.

Sobriety requires vigilance. It is an intentional, daily choice. Life is still stressful, and I still sometimes feel that familiar pull toward a bottle of wine around 5 p.m., but I now know to "play the tape forward." I remember how my nights were once filled with desperation and anxiety. I imagine how I would feel nursing a hangover in the morning. I know how that movie ends and, for me, it's just not worth it.

Ericka Andersen's forthcoming book is *"Grace in the Glass: How Women of Faith Wrestle with Alcohol,"* which will be published by InterVarsity Press.



## REVIEW



A scene from the 2022 Mattapoisett Lions Club Triathlon.

## What I Learned From Coming in Last Place in a Triathlon

I didn't want my 16-year-old son to see his dad as the ultimate loser. But maybe not giving up was a more important lesson.

By A.J. JACOBS

**W**hen I signed up to do a triathlon a couple of summers ago, I had one goal. It wasn't to win the race—or even to place in the top half of my over-50 age group. My goal was simple: not to finish in last place.

Second to last? OK. Just so long as I was not the final person to cross that finish line. I wanted to avoid the shame and mockery of the booby prize. I didn't need another participation trophy, like the one I got in fifth grade on the day I peeled my pants during Newcomb and stayed in the corner hoping no one would notice. After all, I was doing the triathlon with my 16-year-old son, Zane. I didn't want him to see his dad as the ultimate loser.

I'm not much of an athlete. I type emails while walking on my treadmill but find lung-burning aerobic exercise deeply unpleasant. A race of any sort was always going to be a stretch. But that summer my concerned wife urged me to get in shape, and my son came up with an alarmingly drastic proposal: Let's do a triathlon together, Dad!

Since it was my son's idea, I felt I couldn't say no. What kind of mes-

sage would that send? So I searched online and found a triathlon a few weeks hence in Massachusetts, a four-hour drive from our New York apartment.

To be candid, the triathlon I found wasn't a hard-core two-mile swim, 100-mile bike ride and 26-mile run. This race was shorter—much shorter. Euphemistically called “a sprint triathlon,” it was in fact the shortest race to technically qualify as a triathlon: a quarter-mile swim, 12-mile ride and three-mile run.

“That's not an Ironman,” a friend told me. “That's barely a Styrofoam man.”

My son and I had four weeks to train. He was in decent shape from school sports teams. I did my best. I forced myself to run around the Central Park reservoir a few times and do some laps at the local Jewish Community Center.

Zane and I drove up the night be-

fore the race. When we wheeled our bikes to the base camp, I looked around and felt queasy. So many sharply defined triceps and quads. So many moisture-wicking socks, buoyant wetsuits and tubes of body glide. So many packs of mango-chia high-calorie energy gels. These folks were prepared.

Don't panic, I told myself, there had to be a few in the crowd even less prepared than I was. Maybe there was someone recovering from a torn ACL.



The author and his son Zane at the race.

We lined up by the shore and splashed into the Atlantic bay two by two. The icy water made me gasp. Zane immediately pulled away with strong freestyle strokes. I resorted to the breaststroke after five minutes. Eventually I rounded the last buoy and made it back to land. I was in the bottom half of the pack but holding my own.

I ran to my bike, strapped on my helmet and started pedaling along the hilly back-road course. Here's what I heard for the next half-hour: “On your left...On your left!...On your left!” These bikers may have tried to sound neutral, but I could hear the glee in their voice as they whizzed by. After 12 miles, I steered my bike through the sensors. I'd dropped lower in the pack, but there were several racers behind me.

The running portion was my least favorite. No equipment to help—just me, my sneakers and the pavement. I huffed and grimaced as runners passed me, but I wasn't in last place. When I glanced back, I saw a woman who looked to be in her 70s, huffing and grimacing as much as I was. I can take her, I told myself. Just keep the feet moving.

Then, in the third and final mile, her sneaker-steps got louder and faster. She'd found a second wind. What the hell? Was it the chia-mango energy gel? I watched her pull away and disappear around a bend.

There I was. Alone. Well, not totally alone. I passed the occasional spectator still lining the street, patiently ringing a cowbell and shouting with condescending kindness, “You got this!” I refused to walk, even though walking would probably have been faster than my foot-dragging facsimile of running. Worse, I was joined by a four-wheeled symbol of shame: the official triathlon ambulance puttering 10 feet behind me in case I collapsed.

Finally, I crossed the finish line. Yes, finally, 121st out of 121 racers. My son was there, recording my ac-

complishment with his iPhone. He hugged and congratulated me. But I was embarrassed and angry.

I reeled off an impressive number of excuses. The bike brake was rubbing against the wheel. My swim goggles kept filling up with water. There were people doing relays, meaning one person swam, another biked, another ran. Come on! That's not a triathlon! Did Hercules finish one labor and then tell his cousin, “OK, now you go slay the Hydra?” I stewed and ruminated and fumed.

But then, over the next five hours, the humiliation ebbed. Maybe it was the postrace plastic cup of

“That's not an Ironman,” a friend told me. “That's barely a Styrofoam man.”

Champagne. Maybe it was my son saying he loved doing a triathlon with me, no matter what the outcome. Whatever the reason, by the time we arrived back in New York that evening, my embarrassment had been replaced by a paradoxical pride. I had achieved something more impressive than finishing a triathlon. I had reframed my last-place finish as a victory.

After all, I told myself, the real victory was that I didn't give up. I finished the race! I'm not a loser. I'm a triathlete and a role model for my son! Persistence and resilience, that's what I displayed. I showed Zane that not winning is OK as long as you try your hardest. And I wasn't really racing against others. I was racing against myself.

Plus, my son did great, placing somewhere in the middle of the pack. I love that he beat me. I'm always confused when I hear stories of dads threatened by their child's talent. I'm happy to have my kids trounce me.

Also, there is something glorious about last place. Think of the Tour de France, where the cyclist who places last gets a special Red Lantern award and is a symbol of grit.

Here's the thing: I may not be a great runner, swimmer or cyclist, but I am a champion at changing the narrative. And that might be more useful than athletic prowess.

A.J. Jacobs's most recent book is *The Year of Living Constitutionally*, published by Crown.



BETH MOON

## EXHIBIT

## Tree Gallery

**EARTH IS HOME** to more than three trillion trees, which supply almost a third of the planet's oxygen. They have also supplied artists with inspiration for millennia. The new illustrated book “*Tree: Exploring the Arboreal World*” (Phaidon) includes a rock painting from Zimbabwe made at least 2,000 years ago, in which human figures mingle with trees. Lucas Cranach the Elder's painting “*The Garden of Eden*” (1526) shows Adam and Eve under that problematic apple tree. More disturbing in appearance are Van Gogh's olive trees, with snakelike trunks and whirling branches.

By contrast, the woods in David Hockney's 2011 painting of spring arriving in East Yorkshire, England, couldn't look more serene, with all their leaves angled toward an inviting path. For her 2023 series “*Stillness in Motion*,” sculptor Olga Ziemska cut off the edges of hundreds of willow branches and assembled them in the shape of a woman, blurring the boundary between species. Photographer Beth Moon camped out on a remote Yemeni island to capture endangered dragon blood trees (at left), which look like giant mushrooms and produce bright red sap.

One traditional form of tree art, however, ought to be avoided. The book explains that cutting your initials into a tree's bark can cause an infection that could kill the tree and, through underground fungal networks, its leafy neighbors. So lovers, think twice.

—Peter Saenger

‘Heart of the Dragon’ (2010) by photographer Beth Moon.

## REVIEW

## OBITUARIES

## SCOTT THORSON | 1959-2024



Thorson (left)  
and Liberace  
at a movie  
premiere, 1979

## Liberace's Lover, Witness in 'Wonderland Murders' Trial

After moving in with the entertainer as a teenager, Thorson got hooked on celebrity and drugs and spent much of his life chasing both.

By CHRIS KORNELIS

**O**ne night in the summer of 1981, Scott Thorson went to the home of Eddie Nash, a Los Angeles nightclub owner and drug dealer. He was going to pick up some money for his companion, Liberace, who was an investor in Nash's clubs, and some cocaine for himself. But Nash had just been robbed.

Recounting the story in court testimony and interviews, Thorson said he heard Nash and an associate beating the porn star John Holmes because they believed he knew where to find the robbers, who lived on Wonderland Avenue. Then Nash gave an order: "Kill everyone that's there." Four people were murdered in a bloodbath that became an emblem for the wild excesses of Los Angeles's Laurel Canyon. The night also mixed the dark themes of Thorson's life: drugs, sex, violence and Liberace.

By the time he died on Aug. 16 at age 65—under the name Jess Marlow, adopted when he entered the federal witness-protection program—his story had been told on the screen numerous times, most famously in HBO's 2013 movie "Behind the Candelabra" based on Thorson's memoir. (In the movie, he was

portrayed by Matt Damon opposite Michael Douglas as Liberace.) Recently, Thorson was featured in "The Wonderland Massacre & the Secret History of Hollywood," a documentary series by Michael Connelly, bestselling author of "The Lincoln Lawyer" and the Harry Bosch novels.

Connelly was long obsessed with the murders and knew Thorson for years. "It is a life," Connelly said in an interview, "that is stranger than fiction."

Thorson was born in La Crosse, Wis., on Jan. 23, 1959. In his memoir, he wrote that his mother suffered from manic depression, left her children alone for days and was hospitalized for mental illness multiple times. Scott was placed in a series of orphanages and foster homes. By age 10, he was working odd jobs to earn spending money. The happiest moment of his youth, he wrote, was when he bought a dog named Leonardo, "a two-hundred-pound St. Bernard and, like me, in bad need of a home."

At 15, Thorson moved in with a brother in San Francisco and attracted the attention of his brother's male companions. "After a couple of fumbling, adolescent sexual encounters with girls...I admitted feeling equally attracted to men," he wrote. "In my brother's home, I would have a chance to explore that attraction."

**'It is  
a life  
that is  
stranger  
than  
fiction.'**

MICHAEL CONNELLY  
Bestselling author



Thorson on NBC's 'Today' show, 2013.

FROM TOP: RON GALELLA COLLECTION/GETTY IMAGES; PETER KRAMER/NBCUNIVERSAL/GETTY IMAGES

## MEL GOODES | 1935-2024

## A Pharma CEO Dedicated To Curing Alzheimer's

By JAMES R. HAGERTY

The former head of Warner-Lambert established a prize to promote research after being diagnosed himself.

**MEL GOODES**, WHO headed Warner-Lambert in the 1990s when it introduced the blockbuster cholesterol-lowering drug Lipitor, relished a vigorous retirement—golfing almost as well as ever and exercising "like a boxer," as he put it. When he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2009, it came as a gut punch.

His wife, Nancy Goodes, recalled a neurologist's message to her as being something like this: "Here's a pill for your husband, good luck and goodbye, and be nice to him." Then a friend introduced the couple to the Alzheimer's Drug Discovery Foundation, founded by brothers Leonard and Ronald Lauder. Mel Goodes decided to fight.

Nancy and Mel Goodes established the annual Melvin R. Goodes Prize for Excellence in Drug Development, providing \$150,000 in further funding for a scientist who has made advances in Alzheimer's drug-development research. At a 2010 event hosted by the foundation, Goodes vowed to "try like hell" to beat the disease. "If I can't beat it," he said, "I'm going to do all I can to make sure it eventually gets beaten."

Several winners of the award have medications or treatments in clinical tri-

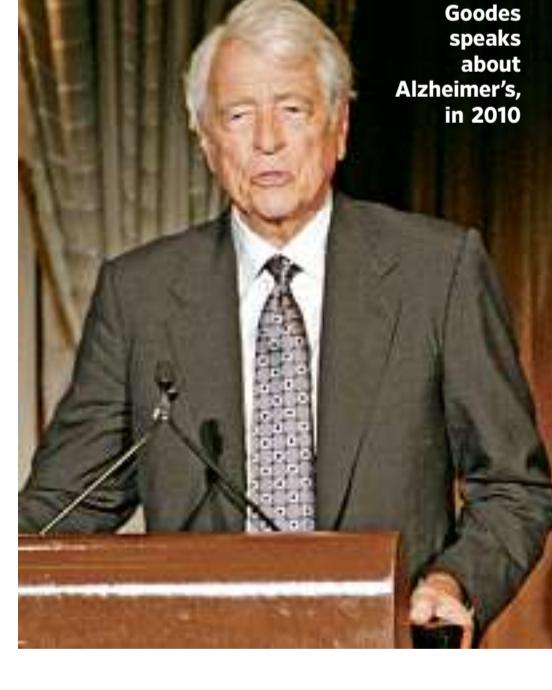
als, according to the foundation.

For more than a decade, Goodes remained upbeat. "He was fun!" Nancy Goodes said. "He would just walk around and say, 'I've got Alzheimer's.'" He performed a duet with another Alzheimer's patient, Glen Campbell, on "Rhinestone Cowboy" at the singer's home in Malibu, Calif. (Campbell died in 2017.) At home, Goodes liked to belt out "La Bamba." His sense of humor was intact, including about disorientation from the disease. "If I want to know what day it is," he said. "I'll read a newspaper."

The last few years were less fun. Unlike many families, however, the Goodes could afford round-the-clock home care. Goodes died Sept. 30 at a hospital in West Palm Beach, Fla. He was 89.

Melvin Russell Goodes was born on April 11, 1935, in Hamilton, Ontario. His father was an accountant for Hamilton's city government; his mother worked for a maker of aircraft parts.

Starting at age 12, Mel Goodes delivered newspapers and worked as a pin-setter at a bowling alley, among other jobs. That work allowed him to contribute to the family budget. In high school, he lettered in basketball and golf.



Goodes once told Business Week that he had golfed in temperatures as low as 15 degrees Fahrenheit. "It's nothing to me," he said. "I'm Canadian."

While studying business at Queen's University in Ontario, he supported himself with a summer job as a gravedigger. Goodes went on to earn an M.B.A. in 1960 at the University of Chicago, where his professors included economists Milton Friedman and George Shultz, a future secretary of state.

After working briefly for Ford Motor and a brewing company, Goodes joined Warner-Lambert, which diversified into a maker of prescription drugs as well as Schick razors, Listerine mouthwash and

Chiclets gum. He had postings in Belgium and Mexico before becoming president and chief operating officer in 1985 and chairman and chief executive in 1991.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, Warner-Lambert's Parke-Davis pharmaceuticals arm was struggling. An Alzheimer's drug called Cognex, approved in 1993, proved a disappointment.

But the company was developing a cholesterol-lowering compound known as CI-981, later known as Lipitor. Some executives were skeptical that the medication would find a profitable place in a crowded market. Goodes authorized further tests, tried the drug himself and told Wall Street analysts about his strong results. Lipitor eventually became the world's top-selling drug.

Warner-Lambert suddenly was a prize sought by bigger companies. Goodes said a takeover would mean huge job losses and insisted on remaining independent. But within a year after he retired in 1999, Pfizer acquired Warner-Lambert for about \$116 billion.

Goodes is survived by his wife, a brother, and three children and eight grandchildren from an earlier marriage, which ended in divorce.

His philanthropic gifts included scholarships and a building for the business school at Queen's University. When the university gave him an honorary degree, he made a point of thanking Canadian taxpayers for supporting access to higher education.

A friend with connections in the entertainment industry introduced Thorson to Liberace backstage at the Hilton in Las Vegas, where the famous showman was performing. At various times, Thorson has given his age at their meeting as 18, 17 or 16½; Liberace was 40 years older. "I think if he would have done it in today's time, he would be jailed for it," he told Rolling Stone in 2021. "But a lot of that happened back then."

Soon, Liberace invited Thorson to move into his palatial Las Vegas home and work for him as his companion. Thorson knew sex would be part of the deal but said he thought it was a bargain, considering that he had lacked money his whole life.

Liberace showered him with gifts—jewelry, furs, cars. Thorson joined Liberace's act, driving him onto the stage in a Rolls-Royce; Liberace introduced him as his "friend and companion."

"To my amazement," Thorson wrote, "his fans never seemed to draw the obvious conclusions."

Liberace introduced Thorson to drugs for keeping him thin and hired a plastic surgeon to make Thorson's face look more like a young Liberace. In a televised interview in 2002, Larry King couldn't get over how much Thorson sounded like Liberace, too. "I guess, when you live with somebody for so many years," he told King, "you get their habits."

In 1982, the relationship unraveled. Thorson said Liberace threw him out, saying that in Thorson he had created a monster. Thorson went to work for Nash, then filed a palimony suit against Liberace and settled in 1986 for \$95,000.

Only years later, when Thorson was arrested in connection with another murder, did he tell police that he had information about the Wonderland killings. He testified against Nash in 1989, but Nash, who died in 2014, avoided conviction on an 11-1 jury vote. The lone holdout later admitted taking a bribe.

Though Thorson entered the witness-protection program and moved to Florida, he didn't keep a low profile for long. He started preaching at an evangelical church, including on television. "The phoniness was getting to me, though," Thorson told the website Air Mail earlier this year. "At least selling drugs to addicts was a more honest racket than hawking Jesus to yodels with these grifters."

Thorson continued to struggle with drugs. In 1991, he was shot several times in a hotel room in Jacksonville, Fla. In 2014, he began serving six years in prison for failing a drug test in violation of his probation for identity theft and burglary.

Although he blamed Liberace for setting him down

the destructive path, Thorson loved the celebrity life and saw the movies and documentaries he was a part of as getting back on stage in a way, Connelly said.

Even in his mid-60s, he says that Thorson was dressing for his old part. He showed up to film his interview for the documentary wearing leather pants and several rings and carrying an ornate cane. As Connelly saw it, "He was still trying to be the Scott Thorson from Liberace days."



**Dream Weaver**  
Hakeem Olajuwon,  
the man who inspired  
a continent C11

READ ONLINE AT WSJ.COM/BOOKSHELF

# BOOKS

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

**Life's a Pour**  
The history of Italy  
told through its  
wine C12



\* \* \* \*

Saturday/Sunday, October 12 - 13, 2024 | C7

## In Search of the Overstory

Today's popular journalism has a besetting flaw: the search for a single pattern to explain divergent phenomenon

### Revenge of the Tipping Point

By Malcolm Gladwell  
*Little, Brown, 368 pages, \$32*

By FRANK ROSE

**M**ALCOLM GLADWELL'S "Revenge of the Tipping Point" begins with three puzzles: How did Los Angeles in the 1990s become, as the author puts it, "the bank-robbery capital of the world"? Why did a respectable nursing-home operator from Chicago turn into one of the greatest fraudsters in Medicare history after he moved to Miami? Why did teenagers in an idyllic community start killing themselves—and were their parents somehow responsible? To which I might add a fourth puzzle: How does Mr. Gladwell tie all this together into anything resembling a coherent whole?

"The Tipping Point," published in 2000, was Mr. Gladwell's first book, written with no clear expectations of success or even, by his own account, a full understanding of what he was doing. Yet it became the kind of bestseller that rewrites people's brains and turns its author into a household name. It not only showed how ideas and trends could "tip" into mass "social epidemics" but fed into the slowly dawning realization that we live in a networked world.

"Revenge of the Tipping Point" essentially asks why we were all so ready to think anything that spreads like a virus could be good for us. In the first book we had connectors, mavens and salesmen. Now we have overstories, superspreaders and social engineering—in addition to Covid-19, which really is a virus, and the opioid epidemic, a for-profit scourge that acts like one. Ideas that a quarter-century ago seemed illuminating and empowering have turned treacherous and dark. The match that so elegantly graced the cover of "The Tipping Point" is now on fire.

Journalists at the New Yorker, where Mr. Gladwell became a staff writer in 1996, used to be known for a certain degree of subtlety; many still are. While never lacking a point of view, they leave some degree of interpretation to the reader. Mr. Gladwell is different. He is never without a thesis. The stories he tells to support it always fit—goodbye to any that don't. And he rarely tells one story when 10 or 20 will do, shuffled like a deck of cards. Invariably he pulls out an ace at the end. Your job as the reader is to be dazzled and to walk away feeling edified if maybe a little lightheaded.

After introducing us to the nursing-home chiseler, for example, Mr. Gladwell revisits a story told earlier in the book about a group of private schools where vaccination rates are oddly low. From there he veers into a discussion of cardiac catheterization—a complicated, expensive and somewhat risky medical procedure that is often performed in Boulder, Colo., but seldom in Buffalo, N.Y. (Don't worry, you'll find out why eventually.) Then it's back to Medicare for a few pages, fol-



**THE MAGIC THIRD** Sunbathers in Lima, Peru, during the Covid-19 pandemic. Malcolm Gladwell suggests that social groups can be deliberately brought to a tipping point via one-third of the population.

laxed by the arrival in South Florida of Latin American drug cartels, Cuban refugees and wholesale money laundering in the early 1980s. Only then, and after a brief digression on Florida's Sen. Rick Scott, do we learn how blatant Medicare fraud has become in Miami

### A quarter of a century later, ideas that seemed illuminating and empowering have turned treacherous and dark.

and its environs. The point of all these repartorial backflips? To demonstrate what Mr. Gladwell calls "the overstory," the unspoken code that governs a culture—in this case, as he puts it, the "abyss of Miami-ness." And that's just chapter 2.

The thing about puzzles is that they dare us to solve them. Mr. Gladwell gives us a sort of interactive nonfiction, not unlike a detective story. The effect is amplified by his habit of speaking directly to the reader. "Let me give you an example," he'll say, or "I think we can

now venture a theory of what happened." He's a tour guide who takes you by the elbow and steers you to his latest find. And what he wants to show you is how everything can be explained by some universal rule.

"When we look at a contagious event, we assume that there is something fundamentally wild and unruly about the path it takes," he writes. But no: "There must be a set of rules, buried somewhere below the surface." Who doesn't want to know the secret rules and where they're hidden—particularly if they can tame the chaos of the world around us? Little wonder his books are bestsellers.

The question is whether his rules actually hold. Toward the end of the book, Mr. Gladwell addresses gay marriage—a goal that even its supporters thought unattainable until, as with the collapse of the Soviet empire, it just happened. To explain why, the author turns to "Will & Grace," the sitcom that was part of NBC's "Must See TV" lineup around the turn of the millennium. Because Will was gay but otherwise perfectly normal, and because television is uniquely seductive, "Will & Grace," we are told, changed the overstory on homosexuality. Change the overstory, Mr. Gladwell says, and you can change anything—in

in this case, the long-held view that homosexuals are predatory and promiscuous by nature and deserve to be outcasts.

Unfortunately, this presumes some degree of social cohesion. Television provided that for decades. But even as "Will & Grace" was rewriting the overstory on gay people, network ratings were collapsing. With the rise of the internet, audiences today seem hopelessly fragmented—and society along with them. More than ever, the overstory is up for grabs.

The bigger problem is that Mr. Gladwell's rules mainly seem to work in hindsight. Was the collapse of the Soviet Union something we could have seen coming, or was it one of many possibilities that might have come to pass? If "Will & Grace" was going to make gay marriage acceptable, why didn't he tell us in his first book? Change is messy. Often it leaves bodies in the street. Mr. Gladwell wants the world to be tidy and predictable. Too bad it isn't.

*Mr. Rose is the awards director at Columbia University's Digital Storytelling Lab and the author, most recently, of "The Sea We Swim In: How Stories Work in a Data-Driven World."*



**WORLDLY** A portrait of Gabrielle Émilie le Tonnelier-de-Breteuil, Marquise du Châtelet (ca. 1735-40), by Nicolas de Largillière.

Janiak shows, was not at all how she saw herself: Du Châtelet was no one's disciple.

In her "Institutions of Physics," Du Châtelet argued that Voltaire had confined himself too narrowly to the role of proselytizing for Newton. She preferred to keep an open mind, promoting an "alternative vision of science as a collaborative endeavor that exceeds the powers of even the greatest genius." This enabled her to under-

stand deep disagreements among Newton's acolytes, who disagreed about what Newton's theory of gravity really meant. Whereas Voltaire saw "a group of English philosophers all reading from the same hymnal," Du Châtelet saw "a dispute about what the gospel really says." "I advise you," Du Châtelet wrote, "not to carry respect for the greatest men to the point of idolatry, as the majority of their disciples."

Is gravity an action, a primary quality, or merely some kind of tendency or motion? Du Châtelet knew that there were disputes about the answers to these questions among Newton's followers, and because she refused to become a disciple, she could openly acknowledge differences of interpretation: "It is precisely the mysterious nature of gravity that Du Châtelet

**What was gravity? How did it really work? She knew that Newton didn't have all the answers.**

acknowledges in her Institutions in a way that Newton's disciples rarely did," Mr. Janiak writes. "From her point of view, the best conclusion that we can reach is this: in all honesty, we do not yet know precisely what to say about the nature of gravity." In other words, Du Châtelet was comfortable acknowledging the limits to knowledge in ways that those who seek a "great man" to follow are not.

Mr. Janiak explains that "in tandem with her rejection of discipleship, Du Châtelet decided to make the avoidance of speculation—something that can be especially difficult for philosophers—into a keystone of her new methodology." She recognized that "hypotheses are made in order to discover the truth; they must not be passed off as the truth itself." Du Châtelet's overall approach to philosophical conflict was to "adopt a middle ground between philosophical extremes." In her view, partisanship was as distorting of the truth as blind discipleship. Should it

*Please turn to page C9*

## From the Shadows of 'Great Men'

### The Enlightenment's Most Dangerous Woman

By Andrew Janiak  
*Oxford, 304 pages, \$29.99*

By RUTH SCURR

**G**ABRIELLE Émilie le Tonnelier-de-Breteuil, known as the Marquise du Châtelet after her marriage at age 18, was a brilliant philosopher in the French Enlightenment, whose reputation has too long been overshadowed by "great men." Born into an aristocratic family in 1706, at a time when women were excluded from the Académie Française and the Royal Academy of Sciences, she had enough privileged access to books and tutors in Paris to shape an intellectual life for herself. After giving birth to three children, she resumed her studies and noticed that no woman had yet written "a good book of physics." She resolved to be the first.

From her château in Cirey-sur-Blaise, in the Champagne countryside, Du Châtelet published her "Institutions of Physics" in 1740, responding to Voltaire's "Elements of the Philosophy of Newton," which had appeared in 1738. Voltaire lived with Du Châtelet in her château. Her husband, busy with his own life in Louis XV's army, knew they were lovers and intellectual companions. Du Châtelet produced transla-

## BOOKS

'The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity.... I will pay more for that ability than for any other under the sun.' —JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER



## FIVE BEST ON CHIEF EXECUTIVES

## Tevi Troy

The author, most recently, of 'The Power and the Money: The Epic Clashes Between Commanders in Chief and Titans of Industry'

## Titan

By Ron Chernow (1998)

**1** John D. Rockefeller built an oil empire by having a singular and relentless focus: "his business." So observes Ron Chernow in "Titan." Although Rockefeller's drive brought him immense wealth, he made the mistake of neglecting his growing unpopularity with the public, becoming a figure who "stood high on the list of bogeymen regularly berated by Populists." That became a problem when trust-busting President Theodore Roosevelt targeted Rockefeller's Standard Oil early in the 20th century. As government threats to his business multiplied, Rockefeller changed tack and began presenting a friendlier face to the world. In retirement, he tried to reinvent himself as a golfer and philanthropist. During the Panic of 1907, Rockefeller helped the U.S. stave off financial disaster while playing his daily round at his Hudson Valley estate in Pocantico Hills, N.Y. "Reporters spilled onto the golf course at Pocantico. When asked if he would *really* give half his securities to stop the panic, Rockefeller replied, 'Yes, and I have cords of them, gentlemen, cords of them.'

## Henry Ford

By Vincent Curcio (2013)

**2** Henry Ford came up with a car so popular that he himself became a celebrity. According to Vincent Curcio's biography, "no other figure of the 1920s, aside from Calvin Coolidge, who was president for six years, received as much newspaper coverage as Henry Ford in the United States." Ford was a ravenous acquirer of Americana and displayed much of his collection at a Dearborn, Mich., compound that included a museum he initially named after the inventor—and his friend—Thomas Edison. In 1929, President Herbert Hoover attended a dedication ceremony for the Edison Institute of Technology among guests such as Marie Curie, Orville Wright, Will Rogers and Walter Chrysler. Ford ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 1918 and later contemplated a White House bid. But elected office proved elusive, in part because he was a poor public speaker. Edison at one point chided his friend for his political aspirations: "What do you want to do that for? You can't speak. You wouldn't say a damn word. You'd be mum."



DRIVER'S SEAT Lee A. Iacocca in his office at Ford Motor Co., 1974.

## Mr. and Mrs. Hollywood

By Kathleen Sharp (2003)

**3** Hollywood über-agent and studio chief Lew Wasserman went out of his way to avoid publicity and urged his subordinates to do the same. "No interviews. No panels. No speeches," he exhorted. "Stay out of the spotlight. It fades your suit." In her double biography of Wasserman and his wife, Edie, Kathleen Sharp charts how Wasserman, with Edie's help, ascended from his modest upbringing in Cleveland to MCA agent to agency head and then leader of Universal Studios. Wasserman wasn't dazzled by actors but assiduously courted politicians. For Edie's 50th birthday in 1965, he hosted scads of movie stars—and raised eyebrows for inviting Sen. Robert F. Kennedy, brother of the slain president, to the party. Wasserman's fame enhanced his power. As the writer Dominick Dunne observed after

Wasserman cozied up to Bill Clinton, then an unknown Arkansas governor, "Edie and Lew could smell power, whether it was in Hollywood, Washington, or Arkansas."

## Iacocca

By Lee Iacocca and William Novak (1984)

**4** In the 1980s, Chrysler chief executive Lee Iacocca was a familiar face across America, appearing in car commercials and even making a cameo on the television series "Miami Vice." In the memoir he co-authored with William Novak, Iacocca lamented his fame's attendant loss of privacy. Initially reluctant to hawk cars on TV, he had to be talked into it by Chrysler's advertising agency. "There was only one aspect of all this that appealed to me," Iacocca writes of the spots. "Unlike some of the spokesmen we had used in the past, I work cheap.

Once I did 108 takes in about 10 hours, and all I got for it was a corned beef sandwich and a cup of coffee!" Iacocca became so famous that there was even a plan for new commercials with a Lee Iacocca Muppet, which the crew tested in front of sample audiences before airing. "The audiences thought the commercials were fun but too cute. Thank God for that," Iacocca writes. His TV appearances stoked misguided speculation that the Chrysler CEO harbored presidential ambitions. "Many people now think I'm an actor. But that's ridiculous," he writes. "Everybody knows that being an actor doesn't qualify you to be president!"

## Atlas Shrugged

By Ayn Rand (1957)

**5** "Who is John Galt?" After this first line of "Atlas Shrugged," novelist Ayn Rand has her characters ask

the question more than two dozen times. The query indicates how well-known Galt's name is in Rand's fictional universe. At some point, the reader learns that there actually is a character named John Galt. He is not only the biggest chief executive of all time but the CEO of all CEOs. He is the one who "would stop the motor of the world" by getting the world's great industrialists to quit in protest of a collectivist government that is taking away their work product and destroying people's innovative spirit. Galt assembles his "men of the mind" in Galt's Gulch, an isolated valley where they can live in a place where their talents are rewarded as they deserve to be. Then he delivers an epic address—"This is John Galt speaking"—that goes on for more than 30,000 words. Everyone has to listen because he has taken over the airwaves. Galt may be fictional, but in this Randian world, he is the most universally known CEO of all time.

## This Tale Starts With DNA

## The Genetic Book of the Dead

By Richard Dawkins  
Yale, 360 pages, \$35

By ADRIAN WOOLFSON

**O**N THE EVENING of Jan. 27, 1922, Franz Kafka arrived by horse-drawn sleigh at the mountain resort of Spindlermühle, in present-day Czech Republic, and immediately began working on what would be his final novel, "Das Schloss" ("The Castle"). Almost two-and-a-half years later, on June 3, 1924, Kafka would die of complications related to tuberculosis before his book could be completed; it ends midsentence on page 275.

In his intellectually sparkling and beautifully crafted "The Genetic Book of the Dead: A Darwinian Reverie," Richard Dawkins argues that, unlike the unfinished works of human literature—specific, deliberate—the genetic manuscript encoding the informational details of human beings was not crafted by a conscious being or Creator, but by a Darwinian process of evolution by natural selection. Like "The Castle," the human genome is an unfinished work, its current state representing a snapshot, a moment of transience and transition that lacks

the completeness of a destination. Unlike a novel, however, the genome is a project of continuous revision, locked in a Nietzschean state of perpetual becoming.

It is a process that may often be whimsical and capricious. As such we have lyre birds that can mimic car alarms, chainsaws and supposedly even the distinct sounds of "Nikon versus Canon camera shutters," and octopuses that have "perfected the art of dynamic cross-dressing." It is also possible, Mr. Dawkins intriguingly speculates, that bats may "hear in color."

The author reminds us that Darwinian authorship has no purpose, directionality or preconception of its end products. A very different type of evolutionary narrative could just as well have substituted for the existing one. Evolution is guided, instead, by a pragmatic mandate to opportunistically utilize the best available options. This lack of foresight, we are told, is nowhere more evident than in cancer cells, whose growth advantage over healthy cells results in a pyrrhic victory that paradoxically accelerates their demise.

In an earlier work, Mr. Dawkins likened the mindless and causally distinct efforts of the natural selection process to the handiwork of a "blind watchmaker," an analogy for evolution's best-guess forecasting of the kind of adaptations a species may require to survive. The success of these strategies, of course, depends on the notion that what happened yesterday is a good predictor of what is likely to happen tomorrow. But while human authors may effortlessly delete and rewrite text, evolution, Mr. Dawkins reminds us, does not have

such luxuries. Instead of wiping the slate clean and restarting, it is compelled to overwrite pre-existing genetic text, tinkering with its letters, sentences and paragraphs, and reshuffling them rather than reimaging their configuration.

A consequence of this is that bad design may become awkwardly cemented alongside optimal features. Mr. Dawkins cites the back-to-front configuration of the human retina as an example and recalls Hermann von

Helmholtz, the 19th-century German scientist who stated that if the human eye had been made by an engineer, he "would have sent it back."

Genetically encoded information is supplemented by information acquired through development, learning and culture. Mr. Dawkins describes the various levels of informational overwriting within and beyond genomes as "evolutionary palimpsests," and considers cultural artifacts to be examples of the "extended phenotype" of our being.

He also reminds us that, at the genetic level, evolution remains deeply historical and referential. While Kafka's arrival in Spindlermühle was captured in a black-and-white photograph that anticipates the dark mood of his unfinished novel, organisms lack such direct records of the environ-

ments in which they originated. Mr. Dawkins suggests that we may one day be able to "read" the complex information lurking beyond the primary sequences of genomes, much like a QR code. This might allow for the reconstruction of the ancient environments in which a species was forged,



UNALIGNED A computer image of DNA base sequences.

the "scanner" in this case being a mathematical process—such as the deep learning of artificial intelligence—that may unleash the muted voices of our ancestors. Genomes and the organisms they compute are in this sense a photographic negative from which prints of ancient worlds may be inferred.

With regard to our own ignominious origins, Mr. Dawkins reminds us that a substantial proportion of our genetic material is made from bugs and viruses. Much of our genome is constructed from remnant sequences reflecting ancient viral infections. Fur-

thermore, the number of bacterial cells associated with the human body outnumbers our own by a factor of at least two. Even the genomes of our energy-producing mitochondria originated from bacteria. Our bodies are a vehicle for their survival.

The fabric through which Mr. Dawkins weaves his ideas is predicated on his unwavering gene's-eye view of evolution that challenges a species-centric perspective. He views the genetic "cartels" of cooperating, protein-encoding genes as the irreducible, causal agents of natural selection. This idea was first popularized in his 1976 book, "The Selfish Gene," which built on the ideas of the biologist W.D. Hamilton as articulated in Hamilton's 1971 paper, "Geometry for the Selfish Herd."

Given that we now know that most of the human genome is transcribed into RNA, the protein-encoding definition of genes may need revisiting. And why restrict the unit of selection to genes at the expense of the non-coding regulatory sequences controlling their expression? Alterations to even single genetic letters may impact gene function.

The final irony of Darwinian evolution may be that the same cooperating set of genes that helped build the human imagination is currently inventing technologies capable of seamlessly designing and synthesizing genomes *de novo*. Like cancer cells, our selfish DNA replicator fragments may unwittingly have created the basis for writing themselves out of history.

Mr. Woolfson is the author of "An Intelligent Person's Guide to Genetics."

## BOOKS

'Our hopes like towering falcons aim / At objects in an airy height: / The little pleasure of the game / Is from afar to view the flight.' —MATTHEW PRIOR



TOP: KARIM SAHIB/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES; INSET: BRITISH LIBRARY/BRIDGEMAN IMAGES

## A Sovereign in the Sky

### The Art of Medieval Falconry

By Yannis Hadjinicolaou  
*Reaktion*, 232 pages, \$25

BY LAURA JACOBS

**W**HAT'S THIS BIRD, this falcon, that everybody's all steamed up about?" asks Humphrey Bogart as the private eye Sam Spade.

The answer comes from Sydney Greenstreet, who plays Kasper Gutman, a criminal on a quest. "In 1539," he says, "crusading knights persuaded Emperor Charles V to give them the Island of Malta. He made but one condition, that they pay him each year the tribute of a falcon in acknowledgment that Malta was still under Spain." So far, so good. "They hit upon the happy thought of sending him for his first year's tribute not an insignificant live bird but a glorious golden falcon crusted from head to foot with the finest jewels in their coffers."

"The Maltese Falcon" is a 1941 film about a glittering statuette that never made it to Spain, but there's something wrong with that last line, which becomes apparent once you've read Yannis Hadjinicolaou's "The Art of Medieval Falconry," a slim, rich entry into the University of Chicago Press's Medieval Lives series. As Mr. Hadjinicolaou makes convincingly clear, it is the living bird that is a jewel beyond price. And it is the relationship between falcon and falconer that was considered glorious. Would Charles V have preferred a gem-encrusted facsimile? He would not.

Mr. Hadjinicolaou is an assistant professor of art history at the University of Bonn, and "The Art of Medieval Falconry" is his second book. Its title can be understood two ways. The first concerns falconry as it's been depicted in art of the Middle Ages—in illustrated manuscripts, frescoes, paintings, sculptures, objects and tapestries, many of which have been handsomely reproduced here—and what these representations, often icono-

graphic, express. The second looks at the practice of falconry itself, an ingenious way to hunt food that eventually transcended, by way of passionate practitioners who tended to be kings, into an Arthurian art form—one with the gravity of religion and the privilege of wings.

The birds themselves were "perceived as precious," Mr. Hadjinicolaou tells us, "even luxurious aesthetic 'objects.'" He writes that during the medieval period, "depictions of falconry were never mere illustrations of the activity itself. Instead, they evoked visual associations and sparked ideas." It's as if these raptors, trained but not tame, circle and stoop within the human imagination.

**The ability to handle a hawk was once seen as an analogy for being able to rule a state.**

The Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II (1194-1250) wrote the Middle Age's definitive treatise on falconry, "De arte venandi cum avibus" ("On the Art of Hunting With Birds"), between 1240 and 1248. It is an illustrated cornerstone of falconry and a touchstone for Mr. Hadjinicolaou, copied, translated and reillustrated through the ensuing centuries. Several themes are bound in the echoing images of royals with their birds in hand or perched nearby: We see the falcon, usually female, as the king's *consigliera*; as a companion and a weapon; as a spirit that stitches nature to culture; and as a symbol of omnipotence and divine right. Louis XII owned a copy of "De arte venandi," demonstrating, Mr. Hadjinicolaou suggests, "the idea of royal power connected to falconry as an imperial gesture."

Early forms of falconry, we learn, developed in parallel in the Near and Middle East, China, India and Central Asia well before the Common Era and did not arise in the West

until the fifth and sixth centuries. Surprisingly, ancient Egypt, a civilization that deified the falcon in all mediums of art, didn't use the bird for hunting. The ancient Assyrians were avid falconers, as depicted, for example, in bas-reliefs discovered at Dur-Sharrukin, in present day Iraq, and dated to the eighth cen-

late-15th-century hood from the collection of Maximilian I is exquisite avian couture with a tassel on top. The gilded leather is embossed with flowers and the emperor's coat of arms—the double eagles of the Habsburgs—giving the falcon the aspect of a majestic chess piece.

"The hawk has her own will, and the falconer must take this fact into consideration," Mr. Hadjinicolaou writes. Theirs is a nonverbal relationship that takes place in a gestural-visual sphere, making man and raptor equals. And so the door opens to allegory. Images in which the falconer wears the same colors as the surrounding landscape make him one with nature. Portraits of the ruler and hawk, face to face, both in profile, see them mirroring each other—mutually reinforcing sovereigns.

In fact, sovereignty—supreme power over a body politic; freedom from control—is an important concept here. No creature is more sovereign than the bird of prey, and therefore no other is such a perfect match for a monarch. "Knowing how to handle hawks was seen as an analogy for being able to rule the state," writes Mr. Hadjinicolaou. Medieval Europe's "high-ranking nobles were trained in the art from childhood, as they were trained in dancing and horse-riding." In artworks and on seals, a king on horseback—one hand holding the reins and the other a falcon—was an image of equilibrium, a balance between earth and air.

Indeed, the raptor's status as an incarnation of political power made it an ideal token of diplomacy. Rulers sought "to influence other courts through the giving of falcons," we are told. "Falcon gifts were also employed to secure certain conditions for territorial claims or favors." Which brings us back to Spain's Charles V, who collected the creatures. The "most precious of the royal falcon gifts," says Mr. Hadjinicolaou, were gyrfalcons, a ghostly, snowy species of the Arctic—a peregrine on steroids. That's what Charles V wanted from the knights of Malta. A gyrfalcon.

*Ms. Jacobs is the Arts Intel Report editor for the weekly newsletter Air Mail.*



**BIRD OF A FEATHER** An illustration of a gyrfalcon by Joseph Wolf, ca. 1853.

tury B.C. "As a trade hub for goods and artifacts, Mesopotamia played a crucial role in the transmission of falconry as a cultural technique," Mr. Hadjinicolaou writes, "between not only Europe and Asia but North Africa and the Arab world."

As falconry evolved from a means of survival to an art of the aristocracy, items of falconry furniture—the tiny eye-covering hood of leather, the leg ring (or vervel), the feathered lure on a line (a kite-like abstraction of a bird)—became works of art themselves. A



**PARTNERS** A portrait of Voltaire and Émilie du Châtelet by Louis de Carmontelle, ca. 1750.

was in a uniquely isolated position: "Her fascinating, acknowledged, but also hidden, role in the dissemination of the philosophical and scientific knowledge of her day ought to be a

**Du Châtelet financially supported Voltaire, not the other way around. Their affair was unique.**

component of every future discussion of the Encyclopedia," Mr. Janiak argues, "and therefore of every discussion of the Enlightenment."

Immanuel Kant began by treating Du Châtelet respectfully in his first ever publication, "Thoughts on the True Estimation of Living Forces" (1749), but then disgraced himself after he became famous by writing in "Observations on the Beautiful and the Sublime" (1764): "A woman who has a

depth for which they strive." Sexism in the academic world continues to this day, and it is blatant in the philosophical canon. Du Châtelet's understanding of the damage that "great men" and their followers do to the pursuit of truth is as relevant to our times as to hers: "Each philosopher has seen something, and none has seen everything," she wrote. "There is no book so bad that nothing can be learned from it and none so good that one may not improve it." Du Châtelet was considered dangerous because she would not play the game of "follow the leader," not even when the so-called leader was Voltaire or Newton.

*Ms. Scurr is the author, most recently, of "Napoleon: A Life Told in Gardens and Shadows."*

## A Female Among the Philosophes

Continued from page C7

not be possible to find the middle ground between two extremes, she advocated, dealing respectfully with each side. She was attempting to remove, or at least mitigate, the distorting effects of conflicting egos on the pursuit of knowledge. Mr. Janiak suggests that "her greatest originality lies in her effort to diagnose the intellectual situation that causes thinkers to adopt extreme positions and to promote conflict in the first place."

Du Châtelet's role in the French Enlightenment has been obscured. Her "Institutions" was used extensively by Jean-Henri Samuel Formey, who began the project of an encyclopedic presen-

tation of Enlightenment knowledge before Diderot became general editor of the Encyclopedia in 1747. According to Mr. Janiak, Formey "did not merely borrow, he copied verbatim" from Du Châtelet in more than a dozen entries. "He employed Du Châtelet's ideas, and often her exact words, when writing the entries on the law of continuity, space, time, the principle of sufficient reason, the principle of contradiction, hypotheses, and God."

Many of these entries appeared without acknowledgment to Du Châtelet in the final published version of the "Encyclopedia," which was presented as the work of a "society of men of letters," with only one contribution from a woman, the Marquise de Jaucourt, who wrote the entry on fashion. Mr. Janiak points out that the encyclopedists borrowed from numerous sources, sometimes with acknowledgement, sometimes without, copying liberally from Montesquieu and Locke; "so Du Châtelet was in excellent company." Yet, unlike those great men, she

head full of Greek, like Mrs. Dacier, or who engages in fundamental disputations about mechanics, like the Marquise du Châtelet [sic], might as well also have a beard; for perhaps that might better express the appearance of

## BOOKS

'Patriotism cannot be our final spiritual shelter; my refuge is humanity.' —RABINDRANATH TAGORE

# Brothers and Rivals



**INDIA'S** Prime Minister Narendra Modi is never identified by name in Devika Rege's auspicious debut, "Quarterlife" (Liveright, 416 pages, \$29.99), but his ascension to power is the catalyst for this scintillating novel of ideas and personal transfor-

mations. Mr. Modi, the son of a tea vendor, was an outsider in India's hierarchical caste system; he rode a populist wave in the aftermath of the 2008-09 financial crash, sweeping into his nation's highest office under the banner of nationalism and economic self-sufficiency. Ms. Rege's novel, which coruscates with ambitions, arguments and tragedy, situates itself at the epicenter of the tectonic political shift and follows its aftershocks across social and familial lines.

Beginning shortly after Mr. Modi became prime minister in 2014, "Quarterlife" centers on two brothers, Naren and Rohit Agashe, and their American acquaintance Amanda Harris Martin. Naren has returned to Mumbai after a disillusioning decade as a financial consultant in the U.S. He views the homecoming as a rebirth, a chance to help steer the country into an age of national prosperity. Rohit, who runs an indie film studio, has become excited by new trends of nativist cultural expression, and, to the displeasure of his urbane colleague, has decided to produce a film about Ganeshotsav, the Hindu festival celebrating Ganesha.

Amanda, a college friend of Naren's, is trying to shake off her own sense of complacency by working for a nonprofit organization devoted to a Mumbai slum.

A sprawling cast of Indians in their 20s and 30s expands outward from the triad, allowing the novel to take in different segments of society. There is Ifra, the Muslim head of Amanda's NGO, who has to balance corporate expectations against the slum's fragile local customs. Kedar, a cousin of the Agashes, is a muckraking left-wing journalist taking on a dangerous mining cartel. Perhaps the most intriguing figure is Omkar the poor, lower-caste filmmaker discovered by Rohit who has been galvanized by the rise of Hindu nationalism.

Ms. Rege captures his contradictions—his rough passion and his eloquence, his dreams, his insecurities and crude bigotries—with a cool dispassion that exemplifies her fully realized characterizations.

The author's ability to put in play clashing perspectives is best shown in a virtuosic extended scene of a

**FICTION**

SAM SACKS



**IMMERSION** An idol of the Hindu deity Ganesha during the final day of the Ganeshotsav festival in Mumbai, India, in 2017.

holiday gathering at the midpoint of the novel. Ms. Rege glides across divergent points of view during a boozy nighttime argument that touches the live-wire of nearly every social conflict imaginable, probing the debates between tradition

powerful climactic section dramatizing the Ganeshotsav festival, which is punctuated by moments of rapturous beauty and frenzied sectarian violence. Throughout, the scope of the book's ideas and the textured rendering of its characters contribute an oceanic feeling of simultaneous scale and intimacy. It is akin to the sensation we experience when immersed in the great Russian fiction of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and Ms. Rege joins Anglophone-Indian writers such as Neel Mukherjee and Vikram Chandra in bringing forth 21st-century novels that seem expressly modeled on that literary golden age.

And as with the Russian classics, the beating heart of "Quarterlife" is the quest for meaning—or, as Rohit thinks, for "the magnet that will bring his scattered filings together." Rohit looks for such a foundation in the concept of heritage and identity. Amanda's search is for purpose, a moral cause greater than herself. Naren, the principled pragmatist, seeks a mastery of the financial markets. All of these journeys are both genuine and deeply compromised, inspired and pur-

blind. If the ending of this novel—by a distance the best debut of the year—is somewhat indeterminate, it's because the era Ms. Rege brings to life is still happening, its outcomes still in flux. We can hope that she will have much more to say about it.

Readers encountering Feurat Alani's "I Remember Fallujah" (Other Press, 240 pages, \$16.99) are likely to think of the city as they knew it during the Iraq War, when it was a stronghold of anti-American insurgents and the site of some of the bloodiest military engagements. But in Mr. Alani's novel, which spans the years between the 1950s and 2019, those battles are simply another chapter in a long history of strife and instability.

The book's narrator is Euphrates Ahmed, who lives in the Paris suburbs but was named for the river that crosses Fallujah, where his father Rami spent his youth. Rami, who worked in France selling postcards to tourists, has kept his years in Iraq a secret, but when he begins to lose his memory his son coaxes his stories out of him. Euphrates retells them, mingled

with his own childhood memories of visiting Fallujah.

Despite the book's nonlinear structure, a sorrowful continuity links the scenes. Rami grows up persecuted by a cruel stepmother. When the Iraqi monarchy is overthrown in 1958 he enjoys a period of hopeful activism, but after the Baath nationalists consolidate power he is imprisoned, tortured and forced into exile. The city's fortunes under Saddam Hussein, through multiple wars and the terror of Stasi-like surveillance, offer little optimism.

Mr. Alani is a French journalist and documentarian who records these miseries with a heavy hand. In Adriana Hunter's translation from the French, clichés are a little too frequent and sometimes, as when we read that the revolutionary year of 1958 "was a year of sound and fury," they are used incorrectly. But when it is not transcribing Fallujah's divisive history, the novel finds quietly touching moments of closeness between Rami and Euphrates, who finally overcome a legacy of frightened silence to "reclaim the lost memories together."

## When Your Number Comes Up

### Here One Moment

By Liane Moriarty

Crown, 512 pages, \$30

**THE 3:20 P.M. FLIGHT** from Hobart, Australia, to Sydney doesn't take off at 3:20. Not even close.

There's a 30-minute holdup in boarding. Then, once everyone has settled down and buckled in, word comes from the pilot that they'll be on their way in 15 minutes, a delay that ultimately stretches into a period longer than the actual flight time.

Passengers will be late for appointments, for dinner and, in one case, for a child's performance in a school production of "The Lion King."

But as Liane Moriarty's terrifically crafted if overlong novel "Here One Moment" unfolds, "late" takes on quite a different meaning. Partway through the flight, an elderly woman with a "pale and blank" face leaves her seat in the fourth row of the main cabin, nervously fingers the silver brooch pinned to her shirt, and begins walking up and down the aisle, first pointing at her fellow passengers, then announcing how and when they'll die.

The 42-year-old workaholic civil engineer with heartburn and

a headache? He can expect to shuffle off the mortal coil in a workplace accident at the age of 43. The jolly, middle-aged emergency-room nurse who's returning with her husband from "a blast" of a trailer trip around Tasmania? She should brace for pancreatic cancer in a very short while. A few rows away, a young mother gets word that her toddler son will drown when he reaches the age of 7.

Many of the passengers laugh or shrug off the prophecies as the ravings of a loon. But, not long after the flight, when one of them dies precisely in the manner and time-frame foretold, then another and another, the prognostications become far less easy to dismiss.

The search is on for the monstrous creature who has become known on social media as "the death lady." In fact, she's the recently widowed Cherry Lockwood, the brilliant if socially awkward daughter of a fortune teller. Whether Cherry, a recent widow, has inherited her mother's talents is not immediately clear.

Meanwhile, passengers who were given particularly gloomy predictions start to evaluate and rethink their life choices. (Chapters following their struggles alternate with chapters that fill in the blanks about Cherry.) In a turn reminiscent of "Appointment in Samarra," some try to come up with a strategy for out-flanking fate.

By turns big-hearted and sardonic, "Here One Moment" ponders such imponderables as free will, providence, love, death—and actuarial tables.

### SHORTCUTS: NOVELS

BY JOANNE KAUFMAN



## A Magical Dip in the Ocean

### The Life Impossible

By Matt Haig

Viking, 336 pages, \$30

**GRACE WINTERS**, a retired math teacher, has long been bent by sorrow and guilt and self-loathing. She's mourning the semi-recent death of her beloved husband (to whom she was briefly unfaithful). And she has never gotten over the death of her 11-year-old son, Daniel, in a bicycle accident some three decades ago. It was a catastrophe that would have been averted, she believes, if only she had forbidden him from going out in the rain.

For longer than she can remember, Grace, the protagonist of Matt Haig's engaging fantasy "The Life Impossible," has been getting through life, not into it. But everything changes when she inherits a rundown house on the Mediterranean island of Ibiza from a former colleague of light acquaintance, Christina Papadakis, who has disappeared under mysterious circumstances. She died at sea, the authorities say, without offering any proof. Perhaps something wicked this way comes.

Uncharacteristically, Grace leaves her small bungalow in a small English town and takes a

leap—a dive, in fact—into the unknown.

A midnight scuba excursion led by Christina's friend Alberto—a mariner of broad knowledge and minimal hygiene—brings Grace, a few days after hitting Ibiza, into underwater contact with a shape-shifting blue light. "La Presencia," Alberto calls it. And when Grace comes up for air she has the ability to predict the future, read minds and move objects, among other useful talents.

It's a skill set that's disconcerting at first. Grace has built her life on the solid ground of numbers, theorems and the Fibonacci sequence. But she comes to embrace the ways this new gift has reawakened her to life's infinite possibilities. "I was drawn to mathematics because of its certainties, because I wanted closed doors and simplicity," Grace thinks. "But life isn't like that. And nor, in fact, is mathematics."

"The Life Impossible," which is framed as Grace's response to a *cri de cœur* email from one of her former students, has a less than compelling subplot concerning the efforts of a pitiless real-estate developer (everybody's favorite villain) to wreak havoc on Ibiza—and the efforts of the newly empowered Grace to stop him and save her adopted community. It feels very Voldemort vs. Harry Potter. And the bromides do pile up.

But it is Mr. Haig's gift to conjure a protagonist so worth rooting for. And there's nothing paranormal about that.

*Ms. Kaufman writes regularly about fiction for the Journal.*

## BOOKS

'There are really only two plays: 'Romeo and Juliet' and put the darn ball in the basket.' —ABE LEMONS

# A Center With Conviction

## Dream: The Life and Legacy of Hakeem Olajuwon

By Mirin Fader  
*Hachette, 400 pages, \$33*

BY JACK McCALLUM

**H**AKEEM Olajuwon, 6 feet 10 inches of choreographed complication for opposing teams throughout his 18-year NBA career, was once a sloucher. In "Dream," Mirin Fader's deeply detailed biography of the Hall of Fame center, the author describes a scene from Olajuwon's youth in Lagos, Nigeria, when his parents found him trying to hide his height (about 6-feet-8 at the time), which had led classmates at his boarding school to refer to him as a *dongo*, the Nigerian word for freak. His father, Salam, a tall man himself, encouraged his son to celebrate his height, to "stand tall" in the Muslim garb that his parents ordered him to wear to mosque. "When robes hang from such a man," Salam told him, "he looks like a king, and is treated with respect."

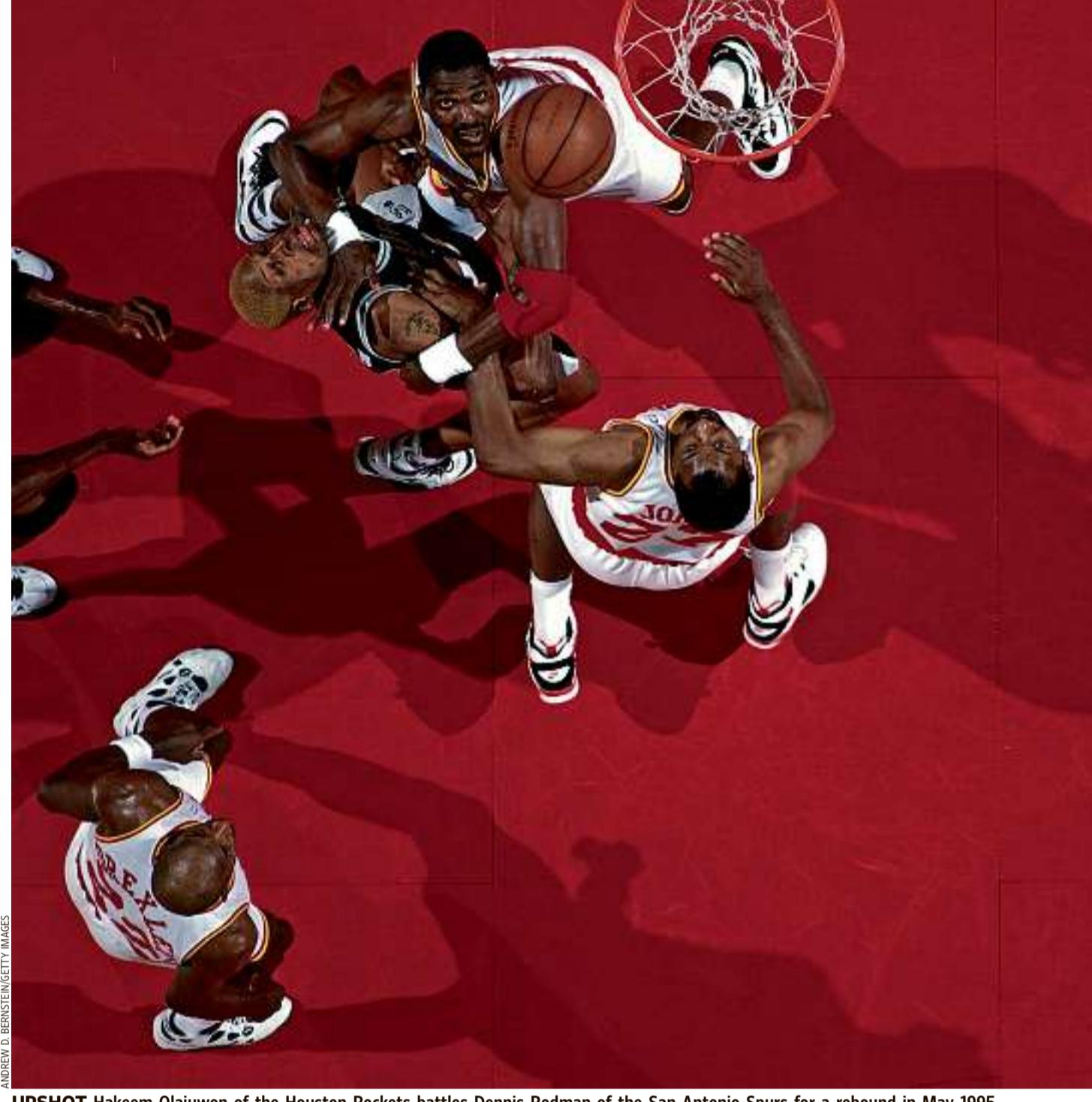
I can attest to that. Over the course of my years at Sports Illustrated, I witnessed dozens of photo shoots, but only once can I remember being reduced to slack-jawed wonder. That was in 1993 when Olajuwon, the subject of a profile I was writing, suddenly appeared in a snow-white *thobe* (a long-sleeved, ankle-length gown) and a *taqiyah* (a traditional Muslim cap). At the time, I wondered: Would

**A towering figure, yet balletic on both ends of the court, Olajuwon was serious about blocking shots—and about his religious faith.**

we use the photo? Few Muslim athletes were then "out" about their religion, and the prominent ones, Muhammad Ali and Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, were rarely photographed in Muslim garb. Without much discussion, we ran the photo, and the world stayed on its axis.

In Ms. Fader's telling, there has rarely been an athlete so dedicated to Islam as Olajuwon. Because of the strictures of his faith, Olajuwon poured the celebratory champagne from his Houston Rockets 1994 and 1995 championships down the drain and ordered that platinum replace gold in his championship rings. ("Islam prohibits wearing gold," Ms. Fader explains.) He has been studying Arabic for years so he can read the Quran in its original language. Ms. Fader leans into these details heavily, writing that Olajuwon "inspired generations of Muslim people to embrace Islam, to build connection and community in the spirit of generosity and grace."

The book is not all about his religion, of course, and captures the essence of a superstar who crept up on the American sports consciousness. Olajuwon was more than a decade ahead of the parade of international players that transformed the NBA into a global game, but that's only partly what made him a curiosity piece, a stranger in a strange land. For the press and public, Africa was (and is) enigmatic. Ms. Fader quotes the Nigerian writer Dipo Faloyin saying that, in the West, the African continent is "treated as a buzzword for poverty, strife, corruption . . . one big safari park." A child of the middle class, Olajuwon complained about people thinking that as a boy he was "naked in the jungle and swinging in the trees."



**UPSHOT** Hakeem Olajuwon of the Houston Rockets battles Dennis Rodman of the San Antonio Spurs for a rebound in May 1995.

Olajuwon didn't start playing seriously until he was a senior in high school in Nigeria—handball and soccer occupied most of his time. "He couldn't do anything," Ms. Fader quotes one of his high-school teammates saying. Even after his athletic potential earned him a University of Houston scholarship, coach Guy Lewis said of him: "He flat out didn't know how to play."

Yet seemingly overnight Olajuwon became a force. A Sports Illustrated story by Curry Kirkpatrick in 1983, when Olajuwon was playing for the University of Houston, introduced him to a wider public. The article described how, during a pickup game at Fondren Recreation Center—a gathering place for Houston's hoop elite—he called out the fearsome Moses Malone (one of his mentors) after Malone had called a foul on him. "Dammit, Mo! Be a mon!" yelled Olajuwon. That from a young man who only a few years earlier had considered basketball too physical.

The tools for Olajuwon's greatness were long there, in part the result of tutoring from Yommy Sangodeyi, a formidable Nigerian-born player who played college basketball in the U.S. and returned to Nigeria for an extended basketball career. It was from Sangodeyi, writes Ms. Fader, that Olajuwon got his off-

sive mojo, which boils down to the Yoruba phrase *gba-bi-ma-gba-be*, translated as "to go this way, not the other."

Interior play was largely gladiatorial combat when Olajuwon made a splash at Houston and became the NBA's first pick in the 1984 draft. (Michael Jordan was third.) The Nigerian was balletic on both ends of the court. He had an uncanny way of appearing out of nowhere to block shots—he retired as the NBA's all-time career leader in blocks with 3,830, a record unlikely to be eclipsed—and on offense he mastered the blink-of-the-eye twists and turns (followed by a soft jump shot) that became known as his "Dream Shake."

He wasn't always a dream to his teammates. Ms. Fader says that he once slapped a fellow player who didn't pass him the ball during a drill. ("Do not disrespect me.") And the rigor with which he followed his religion separated him from his teammates, and much of American culture, from time to time.

By most accounts, Olajuwon is not quite so intemperate these days when he schools the acolytes who journey to his state-of-the-art gymnasium (a converted livestock barn) not far from Houston. But he is still a serious mon. "Again!" the then-48-year-old Olajuwon

shouted repeatedly to LeBron James during their workout in the summer of 2011, a session requested by James in an effort to improve his back-to-the-basket game. The late Kobe Bryant was a pivot pilgrim, and so was Giannis Antetokounmpo, another player of Nigerian heritage and the subject of Ms. Fader's 2021 biography, "Giannis: The Improbable Rise of an NBA Champion."

The subject of African players was thrown into sharp relief with the death last month, at age 58, of Dikembe Mutombo, a native of what is now Zaire, who was the first prominent African player to follow Olajuwon into the NBA and who, also a center, ranks second to him in blocked shots. (The Sudan-born Manute Bol preceded Mutombo by five years.)

But even Mutombo acknowledged the singular importance of Olajuwon. "Hakeem was and still is very much the face of African basketball," he told Ms. Fader before his death. Or as an executive with the NBA's training program in Africa put it: "Hakeem was a dreamer. He gave everybody permission to dream."

*Mr. McCallum is the author of "The Real Hoosiers: Crispus Attucks High School, Oscar Robertson, and the Hidden History of Hoops."*

# A Man on the Inside



**MYSTERIES**

TOM NOLAN

Inspector Rebus is in prison yet still under pressure to solve a murder.

**JOHN REBUS**, the Edinburgh police inspector who has continually pushed the legal envelope over the course of two dozen novels by Ian Rankin, has finally ended up in prison. Convicted of attempting to murder a hoodlum nemesis he says he was only trying to scare, John begins Mr. Rankin's *"Midnight and Blue"* (*Mulholland*, 352 pages, \$29) as an inmate of Trinity Hall in HMP Edinburgh. The inspector, now pushing 70, is hyper-aware of the criminal activities surrounding him. When a small-time crook and possible informant is murdered in his cell one night, John's former colleagues on the police force turn to him. They consider him their "man on the inside."

One cop suggests the prisoner's death may have been ordered by a mob boss who plans to take over Edinburgh's rackets, currently controlled by another Trinity Hall inmate, who runs "the city from a jail cell." Meanwhile, John's old squad is looking for a missing 14-year-old girl who may have been working for a porn website whose owner is found killed. The owner was good friends

with the dead prisoner's son. Is the girl connected to her apparent employer's murder? And is that killing linked to the one in Trinity Hall? If so, as another cop summarizes: "Three inquiries become one."

Despite his new address and unemployed status, John can't stop being a policeman, though he needs to be extra-cautious. "I'm not sure it's wise to trust anyone or anything," he tells a prison guard. But he hasn't lost his innate gift for playing both ends against the middle. The greater question is: Once this case is done, will John Rebus still be stuck in Trinity Hall?

Alison McCoist of the Glasgow police, the heroine of Callum McSorley's formidable debut thriller, *"Squeaky Clean"* (*Pushkin Vertigo*, 416 pages, \$16.95), has little to show for her nearly 20 years of public service. Thanks to the trickery of a mobster who manipulated her into getting an innocent man convicted of murder, she has a reputation at work as a dangerous incompetent and now gets only the lowliest assignments. Her bosses hope she'll quit. All Alison wants is

"to keep her head down and crawl through the decades until early retirement."

Her professional curiosity is piqued when she deals with a complaint against a car-wash operator accused of menacing a customer with a gun: a he-said-she-said matter that leads Ali-

## THIS WEEK

### Midnight and Blue

By Ian Rankin

### Squeaky Clean

By Callum McSorley

### Lemons Never Lie

By Richard Stark

son to keep an eye on the facility. Without the benefit of a warrant, she discovers bloody rags on the site. It seems the car wash has been taken over by a local hood—the same villain who threw a wrench into Alison's career—who uses it to clean vehicles involved in homicidal crimes. She sees an opportunity to make amends with her bosses by nailing the gangster: "This was her chance to get it

all back: her status, her reputation, her self-respect."

The mayhem in *"Squeaky Clean"* is tempered by the mean-eyed humor of its underdog protagonist, and by the rapid-fire dialogue delivered through the burr of Scots dialect. ("Look, that wummin left her wee boay in the motor wae us—two guys she doesnae know fae Adam.") With its wit, terror, guts and gumption, Mr. McSorley's first novel is a smash.

Police officers hardly figure in Donald E. Westlake's *"Lemons Never Lie"* (*Hard Case Crime*, 224 pages, \$16.99), a 1971 work written under the author's pseudonym of Richard Stark and now republished in a new edition. This chronicle centers on Alan Grofield, who lives in a playhouse in a converted barn in Indiana. Stage acting is Alan's passion, but to fund his low-profit avocation, he must occasionally turn to his "second profession" as a freelance heistman pulling off elaborate capers with an ever-changing cast of criminal characters.

Alan's latest assignment takes him to Las Vegas for a meeting with a fellow named Myers, a

"florid-faced man" who sports an ascot and madras jacket. Alan pegs him right away as a "simpleton." After learning that Myers's plan for a payroll job—an elaborate scheme reminiscent of such period-noir films as *"The Asphalt Jungle"* and *"The Killings"*—calls for the murder of several guards, Alan announces: "Count me out." Ditto Dan Leach, the contact who steered Alan to this opportunity. "I don't wanna kill anybody," Dan says. "I steal."

Dan modulates his tune after two masked men rob him of over \$12,000 of casino winnings. Alan intuits the stickup men were Myers and his bodyguard. When they find the henchman in a hotel room with his throat cut, Dan and Alan deduce the "simpleton" has killed his own accomplice and run off with the cash. Dan vows to track Myers down and get his money back, but Alan heads back to his Indiana summer-stock haven. Two unexpected visitors, though, pull him into a violent odyssey—stretching from Indiana to Missouri to Pennsylvania to New York—that should thrill both old and new readers of this hard-boiled master.

## BOOKS

'No poems can please for long or live that are written by water drinkers.' —HORACE

# History Through the Grapevine

**Italy in a Wineglass**By Marc Millon  
*Melville House, 336 pages, \$29.99*

By BRYCE WIATRAK

**T**HE VINEYARDS OF Italy's Cinque Terre are so strenuous and costly to work that their 4,000-year-old history of wine-growing flirts with its end. In a late chapter of his book "Italy in a Wine-glass," Marc Millon treks the dramatic, precipitous slopes of this seaside area and encounters an elderly harvester. "In twenty years, all these vineyards will be gone, turned back to scrubland and woods," she predicts. Mr. Millon does not take her warning for granted. He savors the "heroic" wines being made from the cliffside vines and reflects on the fortitude of generations of Italian vineyard laborers—from ancient slaves and feudal serfs to tenant farmers and cooperative growers—who brought grape to glass. Fortunately, Mr. Millon's hike was three decades ago. Today, winemaking in Cinque Terre continues to thrive, proving his prophetess wrong.

For Mr. Millon, to drink Italy's wine is to drink the nation's history. And so with "Italy in a Wineglass," Mr. Millon embarks on the Herculean task of chronicling the entire history of the Italian peninsula, with wine as his lens. The richness he finds in the subject is also his greatest challenge. The concept of a unified Italy is a relatively recent one; its history is fractured, and local traditions remain distinct and singular. Yet the author nimbly guides the reader through the nation's major historical beats, while taking a pause to demonstrate how these moments can still be tasted through the elements of individual wines.

Mr. Millon begins with the Greeks, Etruscans and Phoenicians over a glass of Vie Cave ("a deep red... Tuscan in character, yet strangely exotic as though from afar") before reaching Roman antiquity, early Christianity and the fall of the empire; the Middle Ages make way for the Florentine Renaissance; the promise of Italian unification darkly transitions into the two world wars and fascist rule, when Italy's idyllic vinelands "witnessed unspeakable tragedies and atrocities." Mr. Millon concludes in the present day, examining the effects of climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic on Italy and its wine industry with a bottle of Etna Rosso in hand, and broaches the final frontier with Italian wines being stored and studied at the International Space Station.

"Italy in a Wineglass" straddles a breadth of genres as the author marches his way through the ages, combining elements of travel memoir, history textbook and wine guide. He opens each chapter with a vinous anecdote. In one, he enjoys a glass of Valpollicella from the Serego Alighieri estate in the company of a direct descendant of Dante; in another, he rests in his Palermo hotel room and takes a nightcap that was cultivated in a vineyard confiscated from a Mafia boss.



CROWN OF VINES Detail of a fresco from Pompeii showing Bacchus, the Roman god of wine, ca. 79.

In no place does Mr. Millon claim his recounting of history to be exhaustive, nor should any reasonable reader expect such depth for any period in the book's quick 300 or so pages. Rather, he paints the story of Italy in broad strokes, touching on the important figures and battles while placing them within the wider context of food and drink. In some chapters wine acts as protagonist, while in others the connection is more tenuous. One

can more readily find wine's central role in the rise of Venice's mercantile class (who imported and traded wines across the Adriatic and beyond, gaining important vinicultural know-how en route) than in the 19th-century campaigns for unification.

It is in the list of recommended wines that concludes every chapter that Mr. Millon offers readers direct insight into Italy's past. Some are fascinating finds. Mr. Millon revels

in a wine from Elba, the island just off the Tuscan coast. Its producer employs an ancient Roman technique in which the Ansonica grapes are plunged into the depths of the Tyrrhenian Sea. Over five days the berries are preserved and penetrated by the salt water before being retrieved and dried under the sun.

In the chapter on the Roman Empire, Mr. Millon ponders a bottle born from the shadows of Mount Vesuvius. The esteemed winery Mastroberardino attempted to re-create the ancient wines of Pompeii, and Mr. Millon is surprised to find the result rather quotidian—"perfectly sound" but "surprisingly underwhelming." That was somewhat the intention, he learns, and delivers a visceral and empathetic response to tasting a wine that would have been familiar to the common Roman citizen. "As I sipped that extraordinary everyday wine from the past, I could not also help but feel... their fear, their pain, their absolute choking terror,"

**The story of winemaking is also the story of the Mediterranean peninsula, where it has been an art for thousands of years.**

Mr. Millon writes. He imagines himself in A.D. 79 and reminds the reader that Pompeii was once a vibrant city where you could enjoy a glass at the *taberna* with a friend. Through this bottle, Mr. Millon tastes the city's tragedy, bringing renewed immediacy and a haunting compassion for those whose demise is often glamorized as doomsday spectacle.

"Italy in a Wineglass" strays from the typical path of wine literature. Mr. Millon's suggestions are not a best-in-class list, and flavor alone does not move the author. Aesthetics are secondary to a wine's unique ability to elicit an emotional response. Those selected linger in Mr. Millon's mind longer than they finish on his palate. He breaks free from the redundant task of naming endless fruits to form humdrum tasting notes. There are no scores or vintage charts. Details on soil type and appellation law and oak regimens do not make the page. Often, he forgets to even specify if a wine is red or white.

Instead, Mr. Millon implores the reader to drink with greater intention. He does not evaluate a wine on its gustatory properties, but rather on its ability to communicate a moment in time from the place in which it was grown. Mr. Millon's first pour in "Italy in a Wineglass" is a measure of Pithos Rosso. "The wine has a distinctive, slightly sour nose and an earthy, stone taste," he writes. "I roll the wine around in my mouth, chewing it, savouring it, and consider how wine, uniquely, has the power to transport us."

*Mr. Wiatrak is a wine journalist and the co-founder of Vinalia.*

## Listen Up For Some Wild Talk

**Eavesdropping on Animals**

By George Bumann

*Greystone, 272 pages, \$26.99*

By JULIE ZICKEFOOSE

**L**ET'S FACE IT. Most of what wild animals have to say about people probably has to do with what a drag we are to be around. They're constantly sounding alarm calls, issuing scolds, taking sudden flight. Envision a squirrel scurrying madly through the leaves, then climbing a tree trunk to bark and flip its tail at us. The brief relationships we build with them tend to be all about their fleeing our presence.

In "Eavesdropping on Animals: What We Can Learn From Wildlife Conversations," George Bumann—artist, sculptor and Yellowstone wildlife guide—gently introduces another concept: peaceful coexistence, even rapport. He encourages readers to develop their own practice of observing and relating to one's local wildlife, whatever may be at hand.

Mr. Bumann started out as a hunter, with a sportsman's motivation to sharpen his craft. He learned the importance of wind, and how its direction and the way it carries scent can make or ruin one's plan to draw close to an animal. He went on to teach himself how to call animals and birds, competing once as an amateur turkey caller; but then he had an epiphany—that these competitions were "built upon a framework of what human beings believed turkeys did and did not do." More than that, Mr. Bumann

realized that "once the trigger is pulled, the learning stops." It was time to sit back and try to disappear, to enter the natural world as a curious but passive observer.

In a book rich with anecdotes and fine storytelling, Mr. Bumann exhibits a deep respect for the sensory capacities of animals. This includes their being able to mark the passing of a week. In one town, crows learned that on Fridays, children at the local elementary school were treated to popcorn on the playground, resulting in delicious spills. Even on those Fridays when there was no school, the birds showed up like clockwork. Crows, ravens and vultures—having learned that when hayfields are mowed, a smorgasbord of displaced animals, birds and insects appears—will come winging to the sound and sight of haying machinery. Such everyday stories show us that animals watch us far more keenly than we watch them.

The author's enthusiasm for discovering more about the natural world is infectious. He describes the summer he truly noticed butterflies, and went from merely noticing them to being able to identify them at a distance, both by wing pattern and the characteristic cadence of their flight. On small wood nymphs and their tendency to keel over sideways as they land, Mr. Bumann writes: "They strike me as over-the-top, fatalistic drama queens of the butterfly world. They seem to be saying, 'Oh, I've fallen. Oh no, now I'm back up, but I'm collapsing over here now. See me flashing to this flower? Oh no, but I've fallen again. Oh, but I'm fine.... Now I'm off!'

Meanwhile, to truly grasp why animal reactions to our presence can be so dramatic, it helps to understand how they perceive us. "Each of us exists in an ever-present cloud of minute fragments that emanate from us like a microscopic ticker-tape parade... partly composed of the roughly two hundred million skin cells we exfoliate

each hour. We all resemble Pigpen, the character from Charles Schulz's 'Peanuts' cartoon with the persistent plume of grime billowing around him... all of us, all the time." Given that we can hardly hide from them, the trick is to ingratiate ourselves to wild creatures by being aware that our

unchallenged. Prey species, on the other hand, most want to be near the happy bustle of other creatures who may act as sentries. A deer may reroute its path to avoid a patch of silence. Simply becoming aware of this concept profoundly changes any human's walk through the forest.



presence is an obvious and overwhelming threat to most. Birds are the most observant and vocal sentries, and it is they who most often sound the alarm for wild communities.

Mr. Bumann offers a number of helpful cues for defusing the threat we present: averting our gaze; making slow, contained movements; subtly signaling our intentions; and, most importantly, giving wild creatures a wide berth when moving through their homes. He describes the intriguing concept of the "honeycomb landscape," as identified by the naturalist Rick Bedsworth; it considers the landscape as a series of patches of normal bird and wildlife activity, interspersed with patches where all is silent—a threatening silence, it turns out. Predators seek out these silent patches, knowing they can move through unheralded and

With a refreshing reverence for the sensory and intellectual abilities of animals, Mr. Bumann recounts stories that defy belief. A cadaver-finding dog, in search of a lost hiker, digs and whines and adamantly signals as if she'd found a human scent; it turns out she had stumbled upon the scent of a Puebloan burial site, estimated to be between 800 and 1,200 years old. In another account, a captive wolf works her way through a large crowd to find and excitedly greet the sister and mother of her favorite handler—without ever having met them. Familial relationships are extremely important to wolves, and she could apparently smell their kinship to her friend.

Perhaps the most seductive passage involves the art of disappearing, something the best wildlife trackers, cinematographers and photographers

are skilled at doing. Mr. Bumann relates how he once, during a walk through sagebrush, entered into a heightened, altered state where his "own physical boundaries seemed to blur." He moved slowly through the habitat, taking perhaps two hours to travel 30 feet, in a relaxed state of awareness where sensations "integrated seamlessly and simultaneously in a liminal space that left little room for thought."

**The woods aren't always a quiet place. Many prey species count on chatty birds to warn of threats.**

In this state, he approached four magpies, the wariest of corvids. They paid him no attention whatsoever, and even placidly sorted through the grass around his feet. Incredulity grew, but as soon as he thought, "I can't believe this!"—all four magpies snapped to attention and swiftly flew away. This, then, was the difference between being in the moment and acutely attuned to the present, and breaking through that mental state to be astounded at what was happening.

This is the core lesson of the book, as Mr. Bumann implores us to "quiet the monkey mind" and the inner dialogue that chatters within, and to become aware of how animals perceive us. "We are continually telegraphing our inner electrical storms to the outside by countless unconscious signals... and animals are at the receiving end." This book is a tantalizing guide to revamping our approach to wild things, in the hope of a deeper communion.

*Ms. Zickefoose is the author and illustrator of "Saving Jemima: Life and Love With a Hard-Luck Jay."*

## PLAY

## NEWS QUIZ DANIEL AKST

From this week's  
Wall Street Journal

**1.** South Korean Han Kang won the Nobel Prize for Literature. Which book is she known for?



A. "The Beet Queen"  
 B. "The Vegetarian"  
 C. "The Ginger Man"  
 D. "The Jungle"

**2.** Hurricane Milton struck Florida—at which key?

A. Devilfish  
 B. Largo  
 C. Siesta  
 D. Medeco

**3.** Who was expected to pay \$3 billion in penalties over charges involving drug-money laundering?

A. TD Bank  
 B. Citibank  
 C. Deutsche Bank  
 D. Wells Fargo

**4.** Disneyland entry fees have gone up. What's the top price for an annual pass?

A. \$749  
 B. \$1,749  
 C. \$2,749  
 D. \$3,749

**5.** A half-century feud divides the Brunkhorsts and the Bischoffs, branches of the family behind which deli business?

A. Niman Ranch  
 B. Thumann's  
 C. Hormel  
 D. Boar's Head

FROM TOP: GEOFROY VAN DER HASSELT/AP/GTY IMAGES; TREVOR COLLENS/AP/GTY IMAGES

**6.** Pity the plight of the HENRYs. Who or what are they?

A. Healthcare Enterprises Not Reporting Yearly  
 B. Hardly Elderly Nor Really Young  
 C. High Earners, Not Rich Yet  
 D. Hens' Eggs, No Rich Yolks

**7.** Who's the eponymous monarch in a new biography titled "The Lost Queen"?

A. Blanche of Castile  
 B. Elisabeth of Austria  
 C. Catherine of Braganza  
 D. Christina of Mamoulian

**8.** Who's selling its bond business?

A. Elmer's  
 B. Ambac  
 C. Pimco  
 D. 3M

**9.** China is expected to lift a ban on rock lobsters—from which country?

A. Vietnam  
 B. Taiwan  
 C. Malaysia  
 D. Australia

## NUMBER PUZZLES

## Cell Blocks

6				2
4	4	3	2	
		4		
		3	3	
		6		
		2	2	
4	2	2	2	

Divide the grid into square or rectangular blocks, each containing one digit only. Every block must contain the number of cells indicated by the digit inside it.

## SOLUTIONS TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLES

## Cell Blocks

4			2
2		2	2
	3		2
4	6	3	4
3			4
		4	2

For previous weeks' puzzles, and to discuss strategies with other solvers, go to [WSJ.com/puzzles](#).

## Killer Sudoku Level 1

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

## Sudoku

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

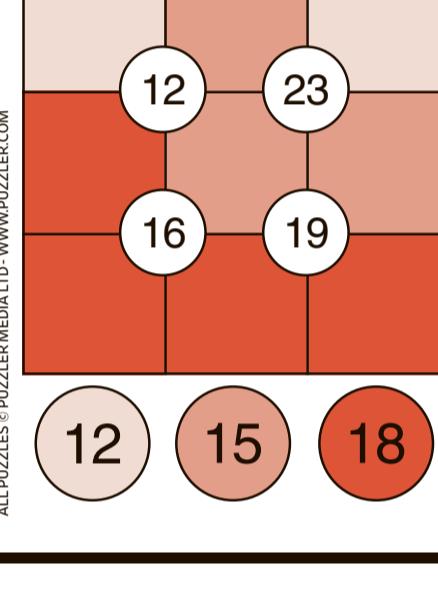
## Gee Whiz!

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

## Acrostic

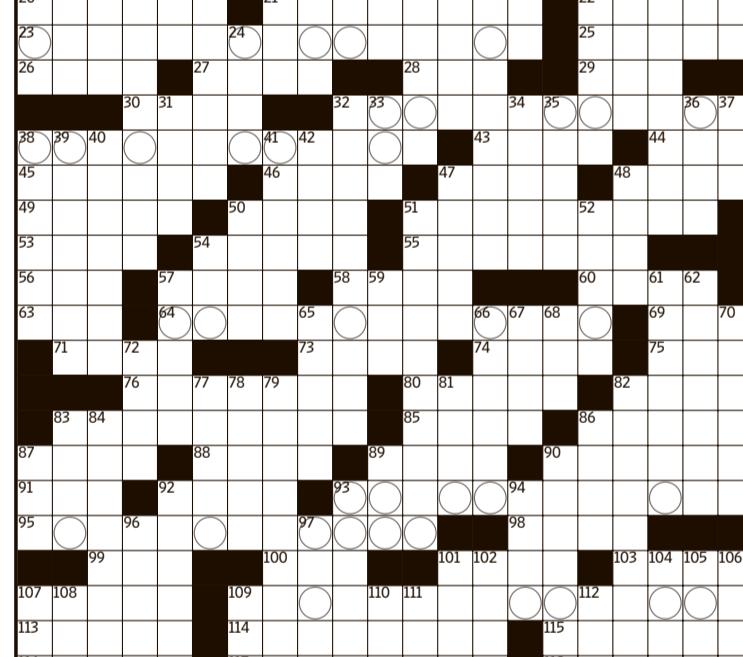
(Jimmy) Carter, "An Outdoor Journal"—"The forests appear much more formidable from outside than within. Often it takes a little...effort...to penetrate the fringe, but the interior woods are surprisingly open, and it is usually easy to walk freely and enjoy this special cathedral-like environment."

- A.** Coniferous; **B.** At rest; **C.** Roller rink; **D.** Typography; **E.** English muffin; **F.** Repartee; **G.** "Ain't She Sweet"; **H.** Naval Academy; **I.** Oubliette; **J.** Unfettered; **K.** Tip O'Neill; **L.** Diet Rite; **M.** Omaha Beach; **N.** On the skids; **O.** Road trip; **P.** Jaws of life; **Q.** Ontario; **R.** Up to snuff; **S.** Rosalynn Smith; **T.** New York Mets; **U.** Athlete; **V.** "Let it ride"



Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the spaces so that the number in each circle is equal to the sum of the four surrounding spaces, and each color total is correct.

## THE JOURNAL WEEKEND PUZZLES edited by MIKE SHENK



## Country Music | by Mike Shenk

Across	50	Animal abodes	89	Currently available	6	First Nations people for whom a city is named	38	Muscular jerks
1	For-profit company?	51	Most resentful	90	Called, quaintly	39	Urges to score, as a runner on third	
7	Ginormous	53	Small denomination	91	Basis of many a riddle answer	40	Daughter of Agamemnon	
15	"Mr. Deeds Goes to Town" director	54	Jeans strengthener	92	Mardi Gras follower	41	Gridiron group	
20	Sulking	55	President Barbe's portr					

## REVIEW



MY MONDAY MORNING | BY LANE FLORSHEIM

## Gracie Abrams Calls Her Mom Four Times a Day

As she tours her album 'The Secret of Us,' the singer talks about training her voice, rereading old journals and opening for Taylor Swift.

**G**racie Abrams has opened for Taylor Swift's Eras Tour dozens of times. But headlining her own tour this fall has demanded a new level of preparation, including regular vocal lessons.

"The songs on this album require less autopilot, and more from me," the 25-year-old singer said. "The Secret of Us," which she released in June, is upbeat; she wrote it knowing she'd be performing it in both theaters and stadiums.

Abrams, who canceled a New York City show over the weekend, citing a vocal injury, said she's felt looser at her headline shows. "There's some comfort in the intimacy of the sizes of the venues that I play right now," she said. But she's excited to help Swift on the final leg of her massive concert experience, starting on Oct. 18 in Miami.

The daughter of filmmaker J.J. Abrams and producer Katie McGrath, Abrams lives in Los Angeles. Here, she discusses her minimalist beauty routine, the importance of drinking a "s-t ton" of water and who she turns to for advice.

### What time do you get up on Mondays, and what's the first thing you do after waking up?

My body clock turns on [around] 6 a.m. The first thing I've been doing recently is going outside as soon as possible. I just feel much better when I'm looking at the sun in the morning instead of my screen.

**How do you like your coffee and breakfast?**  
I'm a black coffee person, and a s-t-ton of water. My breakfast is whatever's easiest and laying around. My roommate and I both eat GoMacro bars often. Or fruit.

### What's your beauty routine like?

While touring, I'm not wearing any makeup until showtime, except for brow gel. I'm the biggest fan of the Rare Beauty brow gels. I have like five of those. Then there's this Victoria Beckham lip balm that has a tint to it that makes me feel 5% more presentable.

### Do you have any pre-show rituals or superstitions?

I've been doing more talking to myself in the mirror ahead of shows than I ever have before. It's a small, quiet sort of meditation.

### What are the biggest differences between headlining a tour and opening for someone else?

I think back to the Eras tour and feeling so in awe of Taylor's fan base and so lucky to have this window into the experience of playing for them. That being said, I'm 99%

sure that like 100% of the people who come to my shows are also part of that fan base. It's this beautiful kind of extension.

**How do you balance writing songs about your life and maintaining a sense of privacy?**  
I'm writing for myself as an outlet. Writing is my first love and where I've continuously returned in every chapter of my life so far. If I were to think about the reception of any of the details I include, it would just censor too much. There have definitely been a small handful of lyrics that I've edited or replaced or made a little more subtle. But at the same time, nothing is ever directly literal. I'm always slightly bending things.

### On the topic of writing, you're an avid journaler. Do you ever reread old entries?

Every once in a while. It's hysterical and delightful and sometimes sad and always a relief. Being 25, you're in this funny in-between place of noticing where aging starts to feel like a thing that you're not exempt from, but you also feel so close and connected to your childlike self. Reading back journal entries, I always find places of growth that I appreciate so much. I also always find details that find their way into songs.

### Do you have any hobbies or habits that might surprise your fans?

I love lifting weights. I love watching survival shows. "Alone" is my favorite show of all time. So maybe the lifting weights is subconsciously prep to end up living in the woods.

### You recorded both of your albums at Aaron Dessner's Long Pond Studio. What's the most special thing about being there?

It feels like a second home now. There's something about how Aaron designed and built the whole place that just invites everybody who comes through there to say exactly what it is they're thinking, everything that comes to mind. There's no ego, never any pressure. In the depths of the woods where it's location is, there's also so much room to go down deep into the well and just pull out some dark s-t.

### Who do you turn to for advice?

I call my mom at least four times a day. My friend Ella [Yelich-O'Connor, best known as Lorde] has been doing this job for longer than I have and has experienced it all at a scale that I can't imagine and is one of the most grounded, rooted in herself people that I will ever know. Aaron is really like family.

### What has been the weirdest part of becoming more famous?

I think the strangest part has been sometimes people lead with physical touching rather than a hello. That's been jarring in the past, and it's typically kind and emotional—girls who I will happily hug back. There have sometimes been moments where I'll have my headphones in, and it's loud enough where I can't acknowledge my surroundings as much as I should, which is on me. But then I'll get grabbed out of nowhere and you're like, "Oh, that doesn't feel good."

### What's a piece of advice that's guided you?

More than anything I think it's important to remember: Just be kind.

*This interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.*

MASTERPIECE | 'NUMBER 2, 1949' (1949), BY JACKSON POLLOCK

## Jackson Pollock's Composed Chaos

BY CARTER RATCLIFF

**ENTERING THE** Munson Museum in Utica, N.Y., you find yourself in an immense atrium. Opposite the entrance hangs a painting that not only "holds the wall," to use a bit of studio jargon; its swirling, surging streaks of white pigment command the atrium's entire, cavernous space. This is Jackson Pollock's "Number 2, 1949" (1949), one of the dripped, poured and spattered canvases that changed the course of art history.

Toward the end of 1946, Pollock's brush lost contact with the canvas. He now poured his pigments from a heavily laden brush or stick, a method he employed on and off until 1955, a year before his death. Appearing toward the end of that short, spectacular run, the Munson's "Number 2, 1949" stands out because of its unusual format. Just over 3 feet high, it is over 15 feet wide: a plank-like canvas amid more than 100 others in his oeuvre displaying more familiar proportions.

Curious about Pollock's way of coping with this odd shape, I visited the Munson and discovered something that reproductions cannot reveal: textures in the white paint that show him accelerating his process, moving from one side of the canvas to the other at higher than usual speed. Encouraging the eye to careen over the surface,

these bursts of white pigment generate a graceful riot of lateral energy. The effect is a touch unnerving but ultimately orderly. Far from the art world, the poured paintings have another life as readymade images of chaos. A profile of a food guru tells of a juicer malfunction severe enough to precipitate "a berry explosion that turned her ceiling into a Jackson Pollock." The equation of Pollock and chaos was made long ago, by Bruno Alfieri, an art critic outraged by the painter's contributions to the Venice Biennale of 1950.

In the drip paintings Alfieri saw an "absolute lack of harmony" and a "complete lack of structural organization." In a word: "chaos." The word reappeared in Time magazine's review of the Biennale, which quoted Alfieri at length. Outraged, Pollock sent a telegram to Time: "NO CHAOS DAMN IT." He was right, of

course. There is harmony in his drip paintings, as well as structural organization, yet few could see that when these works were new.

Ever since the Renaissance, Western eyes have been attuned to the visual order encapsulated in the word "composition": the harmonious arrangement of disparate parts. Whether in Piero della Francesca's paintings or those of Henri Matisse, a proper composition subordinates small parts to large, and the resulting ensemble fits elegantly within the frame. In a Pollock drip painting, there is no stable hierarchy of form or color. All is contingent, remaking itself as you look.

Each dancing streak of white paint in "Number 2, 1949" responds to an adjacent one. A whiplash is answered by a counter-whiplash; a flickering horizontal inspires not a vertical but a pair of angled curves. It's as if Pollock is inviting linear form to display its versatility. Accenting the pattern of white streaks are small flourishes of dark red and a rich chrome yellow; and beneath the swirling surface are equally complex tangles of colors too dark to name with any precision. Never coalescing into a

unified whole, the painting's bursts of energy fill the canvas with intimations of the infinite. In physical fact, the canvas has edges and Pollock must respect them. Still, this enclosure is merely literal. Traces of the painter's gesture charge "Number 2, 1949" with an exultant sense of freedom.

This was a new kind of painting in need of a new name. It received one from the art critic Clement Greenberg, who wrote of "the all-over style." The label caught on and attached itself to everything from Minimalist grids to Chuck Close's gridded paintings of faces and Julie Mehretu's fields of roiling color.

In Pollock's all-over paintings I find reflections of American openness and optimism, a faith in limitless possibility. We feel this faith in the canvases of Thomas Cole, Frederic Edwin Church and other members of the mid-19th-century Hudson River School, landscape painters whose horizons are not enclosures but thresholds guiding the imagination into an endlessly promising New World. A corresponding boundlessness fills the poetry of Walt Whitman, with its long, nonchalantly unfurling lines

and its fondness for such creatures as "the noiseless, patient spider" launching itself into "measureless oceans of space." Comparing the spider to his soul, Whitman persuades us that both spider and soul will arrive in a better place.

Jackson Pollock never joined Whitman in the chorus that sings a hopeful song of America. After his death, at age 44, his everyday misery acquired an aura of myth. Yet it doesn't seem too fanciful to suppose that, as he laid a stretch of canvas on the studio floor and began to paint, he somehow revitalized his faith in himself, in his art, and in the world his art addresses. Toward the end of his life, Pollock told an interviewer that "every good artist paints what he is"—or, in his case, what he became as he poured and slung his pigments from all four sides of the canvas. With a painting as powerful as "Number 2, 1949," Pollock shows us the world—indeed, the universe—at one with an individual bold enough to reshape it in the image of his own best impulses.

*Mr. Ratcliff is a poet and art critic.*



The work is just over 3 feet high but more than 15 feet wide, a unique canvas that captures the energy and individuality of Pollock's broader oeuvre.

CHARLES SYKES/ASSOCIATED PRESS



**From Lazy Looks to Blazer Looks**  
How 'business casual' has sharpened up **D3**

FASHION | FOOD | DESIGN | TRAVEL | GEAR

# OFF DUTY

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.

\* \* \* \*

Saturday/Sunday, October 12 - 13, 2024 | **D1**

**Sure You Can Remain Unruffled...**  
...but you'll miss out on a dining decor trend **D12**



## Can VW's Retro-Modern Electrified ID. Buzz Spark a Renaissance of Minivan Love?

Americans have long believed that minivans are totally uncool. As the ID. Buzz rides in on a wave of #vanlife nostalgia, that might change.



VOLKSWAGEN GETTY IMAGES (FLOWERS: EVERETT COLLECTION (LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE))

BY DAN NEIL

**I**T'S ALL HAPPENING. After eight years of promises and prototypes, second drafts and final revisions, Volkswagen has finally shipped the first of its all-electric retro-modern people-movers to the U.S.—the ID. Buzz. Several hundred should be arriving at ports any day now, longshoremen permitting.

Billed as the smokeless successor to VW's microvans of the mid-20th century, the Buzz claims an obvious kinship to the nearly 6 million buses, microvans and campers built between 1950 and 2013: the breadloaf-like proportions; the panoramic front window and horizontal beltline; the two-tone paint scheme; the short front and rear overhangs; the big VW

roundel on the nose—all connect the neo-bohemian Buzz with its venerated past.

If you feel yourself growing bewitched, my advice is, don't overthink it.

"Of course I want one," said Jennifer Marks, of Raleigh, N.C., one of my neighbors. "It's just stinkin' adorable! And it's electric. I only wish somebody would do the same with the AMC Pacer."

But the Buzz has a problem—a secret, if you will. Beneath its Bauhaus skirts and behind that half-baked grin, it's a minivan. No, really! Note the flexible, foldable seating for six or seven; the enormous top-hinged rear liftgate; and the striking large and square sliding side doors.

The long-wheelbase version coming to North America is especially minivan-y, measuring almost 10 inches longer than the Euro-spec version

in order to fit a third row of seats. The windows in the sliding glass doors are so large they have their own smaller windows built into them.

The problem? Americans have been told over and over that full-size minivans are somehow, in some way, uncool. No matter how high you pile your pompadour—and mine can really get up there—you can't really put out the vibe while piloting the old family hauler.

It's kind of a Foucault thing. To be cool is to

Please turn to page D10

The U.S. version of the ID. Buzz features more efficient motors, a bigger battery, faster charging and longer range than the European model.



The new VW is a successor to the brand's 20th-century microbus, seen here in 'Little Miss Sunshine.'

### Inside



**THE CHILL OF THE NIGHT**  
Why this phenomenally frosty Martini costs a cool \$22 **D7**



**CHOP ART**  
Elevate pork with a cider-vinegar glaze and a fresh parsley salad **D8**



**PUZZLES AWAIT YOU**  
Inspired by escape rooms, immersive getaways make travel trickier **D6**



**THE LATEST FLEX FOR FINANCE GUYS**  
Forget five-figure tickers. The time has come for anti-status watches. **D2**

# STYLE & FASHION

## Anti-Status Watches

The ultimate trading-floor flex? A Snoopy Swatch. Or a Casio calculator. Why finance guys (still) love cheap, novelty tickers.

By CARSON GRIFFITH

**H**OW DO YOU tell the time? Neal W. McDonough, the COO of a finance and policy startup in Ho-Ho-Kus, N.J., looks to Charlie Brown, the lovable, miserable "Peanuts" protagonist. An illustration of the character occupies the exec's watch dial, Brown's stout arms acting as the minute and hour hands.

McDonough, 55, bought the kooky Timex for a Valentine's Day trip about five years ago, along with a matching model depicting Lucy van Pelt (Brown's frenemy) for his then-girlfriend. To his surprise, he kept wearing the \$150-ish ticker after the trip. "It's now my business watch," he said, adding that such a nonluxury model can telegraph that he's under no obligation to be flashy. "I have nothing to prove to anyone," he said. "And the fun thing is, a lot of people notice [my watch]."

Though finance guys famously flaunt Rolexes or Patek Philippes on their wrists, an established subspecies of money men goes the other way entirely. In place of a sleek steel case and elegant ceramic dial? Mickey Mouse. SpongeBob SquarePants. Fanta-orange rubber straps.

Over the years, highfliers have made headlines for sporting Swatches. (See:

Blackstone Group CEO Stephen A. Schwarzman or former Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein.) That "wealthy guy, cheap watch" ethos continues to resonate in boardrooms and on trading floors, with men of all seniority levels embracing plasticky, offbeat designs, from superhero models to calculator Casios. Many resemble something you might win in a claw machine. Priced from \$30 to a few hundred bucks, they're a bit of fun and a different sort of flex, conveying an "I don't need a Rolex" bravado that comes from having made it. Call them anti-status watches.

### 'People need to know there is more than the big job and title.' A fun watch brings levity.

Patrick Lyons, the managing partner of a family office in New York, rotates two contrasting watches: a 1988 Santos de Cartier and a Nickelodeon "SpongeBob SquarePants" model with a tangerine strap.

The Cartier, a family heirloom, is a slice of French sophistication; the Nickelodeon dial features a giant image of a pink starfish named Patrick Star who lives under a rock. Lyons, 35, likes that the sec-



**PLAYTIME** The sorts of fun, kitschy watches beloved by men in finance. Clockwise from top left: Swatch Clearly Gent Watch, \$80; Swatch Mouse Marinière Watch, \$105; Casio G-Shock GWM5610-1 5600 Series Digital Watch, \$150; Casio CA506G-9AVT Calculator Watch, \$70; Timex Standard x Peanuts Snoopy Back to School Watch, \$109

ond watch is idiosyncratic—and that its starfish shares his name. "I wear that more often than my Cartier," he said, adding that he hopes to pass down both models to future offspring.

Leroy Dikito, 42, an executive director at JPMorgan-Chase in New York, chose his \$450 "Avengers" watch from Citizen because it reminds him of his father, who loved comic books. Though its stainless-steel strap reads urbane enough, its cheerfully garish dial slices together images of the Hulk, Iron Man, Captain America and other superheroes. Working in finance, you need to be "serious all the time," so a fun watch brings welcome levity, said Dikito. "People need to

know there is more than the big job and the title."

Since a suit can only inject so much color, a watch offers that rare opportunity to "show off your personality," said Eli Tenenbaum, 36, the director of corporate development for a New York private-equity firm. Plus, he noted, "If you wear a fancy watch, chances are someone else may be wearing the same one." Tenenbaum runs little risk of twinning with a colleague when he straps on his Mickey Mouse or Snoopy Swatches, worn with premium Brioni or Zegna suits.

Evan Vladem, 37, considers his Casio calculator watch a neat "ice breaker" when schmoozing, a professional obligation for the partner at a financial advi-

sory in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. "It came in handy to break up awkward moments," he said of the black, \$30-ish design, a Casio classic.

At a dinner with an insurance partner a few years ago, he recalls, the conversation petered out after an exchange about a client's situation, which involved some financial arithmetic. "I pulled out my wrist and said, with a smile, 'Well, I'm happy I have my trusty calculator watch to help me here,'" said Vladem. "We both laughed. [It] kicked off another conversation."

Even men who have invested heavily in high-end horology seem to be falling for cheap, kitschy designs. Scott Jay Kaplan, 44, a film producer and financier for

Brooklyn company CoverStory, owns pricey models from Rolex and Audemars Piguet. But for daily wear he's currently favoring a super-chunky \$25 watch he bought in Argentina this past winter, a model similar to a G-Shock but by an unfamiliar brand. He says he has received a lot of compliments on it, and it has held up surprisingly well. "I bought it because it looked silly," he said. "Not for clout."

McDonough, the Charlie Brown fan, urges anyone considering a novelty ticker to follow just one rule: Don't splurge. "I think the whole idea of luxury watch brands coming out with 'kitsch' watches is...a little bit absurd," he said. "So anything over, say, \$500 would be out."



## STYLE &amp; FASHION

By EMILY CRONIN

**F**OR YEARS, Anais Fritz hadn't felt the need to deviate from her "standard corporate uniform" of white button-up shirts, black or navy pants and plain lace-up sneakers. That is, until this spring, when Fritz, a London-based legal director for a private-equity firm, walked into a meeting and got a sartorial wake-up call.

"The women around me dress up for work in a way I never noticed before," said Fritz, who realized her peers were showing up in Victoria Beckham dresses with jackets and high heels. Fritz observed an especially pronounced shift toward punchier, more ambitious ensembles among higher-level executives. "The more senior the women's position, the more they dress up." Seeing her counterparts move well beyond complacent takes on "business casual" led Fritz to reconsider her own closet. "It makes me feel like I also need to look sharp."

Since the pandemic's work-from-home norms took hold in 2020, Golden Goose trainers, cashmere hoodies and other pieces barely removed from sweats have become cult staples. A chorus of fashion experts proclaimed suits and stilettos DOA (dated on arrival). After all, who'd

in most cities, women are dressing up for work one step above what was being done before the pandemic," said Sali Christeson, founder and CEO of Argent, a workwear brand based in New York. Some credit the influence of recent runway collections that offered odes to tailoring (notably, the Spring 2025 Saint Laurent looks that the label's designer Anthony Vaccarello based on its namesake founder's iconic suits). After seasons of slouchier skirts and dresses, models at Bottega Veneta, Max Mara and Tove marched out in longline blazers and well-cut pants seemingly designed to cover underlings. Mid-market brands like the Frankie Shop and COS, many led by women, were similarly smitten with traditional blazers and slacks.

"Today, there are more business clothing options for women than ever, and the key is that they're comfortable—you don't have to squeeze into something obnoxiously tight or settle for a stuffy uniform that doesn't speak to your style," said Lisa von Weise, a New York personal stylist. Her most pivotal tip: Invest in a "cool, slightly oversize" blazer. "A structured shoulder will do so much to give you a sense of presence."

Data supports a growing demand for smart workwear: At LTK, an influencer-guided

**'Women want their clothes to reflect their power. When you wear something properly tailored, you can walk into any room.'**

voluntarily revert to pinched waistbands and peaked lapels after years of loungewear?

A lot of working women, it turns out. As they spend more days in the office and designers give tailored staples a needed jolt, they feel the desire to renegotiate (and reinvigorate) the rules of business casual. Result: Workwear is skewing considerably less casual.

"What we're seeing is that

shopping platform, searches for "blazers" jumped 174% over the last 90 days, while those for "office outfits" rose 123% over the same period.

Some high-end tailors report that more women are craving custom suiting. The runway trends "give people more of an idea of what to ask for," said Molly Anderson, a tailor at Savile Row's Richard Anderson, which has made a record 28 bespoke

**CASUALLY FORMAL** Soft knits and silk button-downs paired with sharp tailoring embody a crispier take on office wear. Above: Kallmeyer Blazer, \$865; COS Dress, \$135; Material Good Earrings, \$9,650; Loeffler Randall Boots, \$695; Right: La DoubleJ Shirt, \$590; Argent Skirt, \$325; Mejuri Earrings, \$138; Manolo Blahnik Pumps, \$925; Stylist's Own Belt.

suits for women in the past year and increasingly counts women among its clientele. They "want their clothes to reflect their positions and power. When you wear something that is tailored properly, you can walk into any room."

The look of Karine Schnapp, an executive vice president at Assouline, the New York luxury publishing company, exemplifies the more formal remix of jeans-and-tees style. Now that she's in-office five days a week, Schnapp describes her style as "basics with an element of uniqueness." She might wear decade-old Saint Laurent tuxedo trousers by the designer Hedi Slimane with a white T-shirt, or dark denim with a button-down Sézane shirt and blazer, always finishing the outfit with a red lip. "I feel like business casual has been elevated," she said.

"It's mixed based on industry," noted Christeson, the Argent founder. The tech sector, for one, still relies on pieces like recycled nylon track pants and Bode x Nike sneakers. While Christeson's

New York customers want full suiting looks, in the tech-heavy Bay Area, she's seen more interest in blazers that play well with denim. Still, she said, "women are making bolder choices post-Covid in a way that's really refreshing."

In von Weise's view, this hunger for tailoring is rumbling in today's office because it's no longer an either/or proposition. You can get dressed up and still feel lock-down-level comfortable. "It

has everything to do with women's empowerment."

After her workplace-style awakening, the London-based executive Fritz ordered a made-to-measure suit in a subtle navy tartan from Knatchbull, the first women's tailor with a shop on Savile Row. Fritz says the new formality has turbocharged her confidence. "It just looks so much better than anything I've ever worn to work before."

**BOSS DRESSED / KEY TO THE APPROACH? A POWER BLAZER.**



From Left: The Frankie Shop Dina Double Breasted Blazer, \$289; Blazé Milano Exit Dust Charmer Blazer, \$1,400; The Row Azul Wool Blazer, \$3,250 at Net-a-Porter

# All Sweats Are Off

As return-to-office mandates come face-to-face with a tailoring renaissance, women are rewriting the rules of business casual. Hoodies need not apply.



Saint Laurent,  
Spring 2025

MELISSA ISABEL QUINONES FOR WSJ; STYLING BY CAITIE KELLY; SET BY CATHERINE CAMPBELL; HAIR AND MAKEUP BY ROY LIU; TALENT IS EISHIA BRIGHTWELL FOR MUSE MGMT; ALESSANDRO LUONI (SAINT LAURENT)

**PRADA**



## STYLE &amp; FASHION

# Selling French-Girl Style

This brand has built an empire dressing women in elevated, midmarket basics, Gallic-style. Even Parisians love Sézane.

By CHAVIE LIEBER

**S**ÉZANE HAS spent over a decade selling women on a fantasy: You too can be as chic as the French, if you shop the right way.

At the brand's 20 global pop-ups and stand-alone stores, known as *appartements*, delicate wool cardigans are neatly stacked from floor to ceiling and custom-

Since its founding in 2013, the company has cornered the market on French Girl style, outfitting legions of professional women with sweaters, trench coats and button downs that would fit right in along the Seine. Last year, Sézane's revenue was about \$450 million, according to an estimate from the financial data firm PrivCo. The company declined to share financial figures.

Now, Sézane is at an in-

Parisian styling comes down to the art of mixing high and low, says Morgane Sézalory, Sézane's CEO and creative director.

ers are greeted with the word *bonjour*. On its website, shoppers can find gamine cropped jackets, sweaters with lace trims and a tied neck scarf to complete every outfit. Here, plain white T-shirts and mid-rise jeans aren't wardrobe staples—rather, they're "French Heroes."

While all of that might seem like clever marketing for American shoppers, even Parisians agree: Sézane has a decidedly French allure.

"It looks chic and it is easy," said Maylis de Lacoste Lareymondie, 41, who works at a private-equity firm in Manhattan and is from Paris. "This is why everyone in Paris wears Sézane."

flection point, where it is expanding while trying to maintain its *je ne sais quoi*. The company is opening new stores and looking to grow its American customer base. It recently launched a children's wear line, Petit Sézane. For those hoping to live a French lifestyle, Sézane has become a one-stop shop.

The French Girl at the center of the brand is Morgane Sézalory, its CEO and creative director. She co-founded Sézane with Thibault Lougnon, an entrepreneur who was her husband at the time, and a third partner who is no longer with the brand. She'd spent nearly a decade selling secondhand luxury finds and



C'EST CHIC A rack at the Sézane store in Seattle

vintage treasures. On eBay and a blog, she developed a following for how she styled old pieces from Courrèges, Parisian flea markets and her sister's closet.

After launching as an e-commerce brand, Sézane opened its first store in Paris in 2015, then added stores in cities like New York and London. To fans, Sézalory, who lives in Paris, is the textbook aspirational *mademoiselle*. With over 300,000 followers on Insta-

gram, Sézalory often designs clothes with herself and her team in mind. The secret to nailing Parisian styling comes down to the art of mixing high and low, she says. It's why a typical Sézane look pairs casual jeans with a dressy lace blouse or tailored pinstripe suit pants with an oversize tee. "You don't look overdressed," Sézalory said. "It looks like you don't think about it."

At a time when fast fashion is churning out TikTok trends and luxury labels keep raising their prices, Sézane has grown into a fashion empire by making elevated, midmarket basics. Knitwear sells for around \$140, dresses for \$200 and leather bags for about \$350.

In September, Sézane launched kids clothes—the ruffle-collared blouses and unisex T-shirts are already enticing Francophile moms. The expansion helped round out Sézane into a lifestyle brand; it also sells menswear and home goods.

In 2022, the company sold a minority stake to Téthys Invest, the family office of billionaire L'Oréal heir Françoise Bettencourt Meyers. Téthys declined to comment. Sézane has raised about \$5.4 million in funding, according to PrivCo, from firms including Summit Partners and General Atlantic. Sézane declined to share investor information. Summit Partners did not respond to requests for comment. General Atlantic declined an interview request; in an email, Melis Kahya Akar, Managing Director and Head of Consumer for EMEA, said she believed "Sézane has a long runway ahead."

The brand is now gunning for growth in the U.S., which accounts for about 25% of its business. Most of its business comes from Europe. Sézane spent 39% more on social media advertising in the U.S. from January through September of 2024, compared to the same period last year, according to Sensor Tower, a market intelligence firm.

Danielle Colding, who owns a power equipment dealership in Jacksonville, Fla., started buying Sézane after enough influencers posted about the brand. She now owns about 25 pieces and says she finds the quality and fit exceptional. "When I find brands I like, I go all in on them," said Colding, 35.

Sézane immerses customers in its world-building through its stores and pop-ups, which are stocked sparingly and decorated with



A shot from Sézane's new knitwear lookbook

porate clients wear Sézane because they feel the clothes aren't seen everywhere. "You don't have to worry about everyone showing up wearing the same thing," said Costigan, 34. "It's not the Aritzia pants that everyone has."

The brand offers its "essentials" (such as cardigans, heeled mary janes and suit vests) year-round and releases seasonal collections in small quantities that often sell out. The drop method, popular in streetwear, fuels demand and has inspired superfans like Bri Denis to set her alarm to 3 a.m. in order to shop. "It is such a frenzy to get pieces before they go out of stock," said Denis, a 32-year-old IT director at the College of Charleston. She's a moderator of a Sézane Facebook group that has over 36,000 members who swap outfit photos and shopping advice.

Recently, Denis said she's noticed shoppers on Facebook complain about a decline in quality and the rise in materials blended with polyester. "Now you have to check the materials before you buy something," Denis said. A spokeswoman for the brand said Sézane's use of polyester "is limited to 6% to 8% of the fabrics in our collection" and that three-quarters of the polyester is recycled.

Jenna Fisher, who owns a video production business in Rochester, N.Y., says she used to go all out for Sézane's drops. "They were really good at creating FOMO, but I've come to see through it as faux scarcity," she said, adding that many items come back into stock.

A spokeswoman for Sézane said the brand does "not create fake scarcity" but stocks inventory to "match supply and demand for each product."

Alexandra Daniel likes to wear white linen and bright patterns when she's home in Palm Beach, Fla. But the moment the 34-year-old executive assistant travels, she's eager to whip out her "French girl" wardrobe, which consists of button-down shirts, high-waisted jeans and a big wicker purse, all from Sézane.

"When you comb the Sézane website, you're like, 'This is what I want to dress like. I want to go to Paris right now,'" Daniel said.

Left: Petit Sézane, the brand's new children's line. Below: Sézane CEO Morgane Sézalory



## AGING SPARKS CREATIVITY. NOT MENTAL DECLINE.

Some things come with age.  
Some others don't.

Learn the warning signs of Alzheimer's.

10signs.org

ad COUNCIL

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION®

# Tested for those who test themselves.



AG1<sup>®</sup> delivers  
daily nutrition that  
exceeds even the  
strictest standards.\*

We rigorously test our formula for hundreds of contaminants and impurities to guarantee we're delivering the highest quality nutrients available. And AG1 is NSF Certified for Sport<sup>®</sup>, the gold standard in independent quality and safety certifications. That means athletes who count everything that goes into their bodies can count on us every day. They can't settle for the status quo, so we never will.



DrinkAG1.com

# ADVENTURE & TRAVEL



**THE CURIOUS CASE OF THE HOUSE IN THE DESERT** Staying at Wild Heart Ranch involves unraveling the case of the fictional Hart family.

## Checking In to Crack the Code

Immersive stays, inspired by escape rooms, combine the comfort of a hotel with mysteries to unravel

By MAGGIE DOWNS

**A** DESERT stillness greets me at Wild Heart Ranch in Joshua Tree, Calif., where I'll be staying with my 10-year-old son. As soon as I open the cabin door, we cross into the past: A soft melody drifts from the Victrola turntable, and the living room is bathed in golden light. Dog-eared novels line the shelves, and the avocado-green sofa looks plucked right out of a 1960s Sears catalog.

Within moments of our arrival, my son finds the first clue.

I won't reveal too many spoilers, but our plans to lounge by the pool instantly vanish, as we dive into an hourslong adventure to unravel the secrets of the fictional Hart family. The house, which costs around \$450 a night, is set up like an Airbnb. We have the run of the ranch, and while guests aren't obliged to solve the puzzles, I imagine most would find the temptation too great. My son and I crack codes, stumble upon secret rooms, even venture into the desert on the sprawling, 40-acre property where various outbuildings are part of the puzzle, too.

The unfolding narrative pulls us deeper into the experience, invit-

ing us to both enjoy a vacation and inhabit a story.

The popularity of escape rooms, where participants solve clues to unlock doors and complete other challenges, has, in part, inspired the rise of such story-driven getaways. Among the first to combine escape-room-like puzzles with overnight accommodations, Wild Heart Ranch opened its doors in 2020.

You can find similar experiences all over the world, priced similarly to a hotel room. In Berga, Spain, nightmares lurk in the shadows of every room at the horror-themed Insomnia Hotel. In San Antonio, the three-bedroom Sherlock Home, bookable on Airbnb, offers a steampunk-themed mystery to crack.

Many "stay-and-play" experiences reflect their environment. The MothManor house in Fayetteville, W.Va., is so steeped in the lore of the fabled local Mothman monster, by the end you might expect him to chip in for the Airbnb cleaning fee. Rachel Adkins, who runs the guesthouse with her husband, Nate Adams, says she's fueled by the process of building out the experiences. "If I had billions of dollars, I'd make the world a much more fascinating place," she said.

Inspired by immersive art, Blake

Hodges-Koch and his creative partner, Thomas Meston, took a similar approach with Wild Heart Ranch. They designed the experience so guests have ample time to savor flipping through a character's journal or the family scrapbook for clues. "You don't get that luxury in a traditional escape room, where it's all about beating the timer," said Hodges-Koch.

Neither my son nor I expected to get so drawn into the Hart family's saga. As a violet dusk settled and a coyote howled in the distance, we

followed cryptic instructions found in a hidden box to the "crystalarium," a room with dazzling interactive audio and visual effects.

Dedicated booking platforms for stay-and-plays are rare, but the Morty app, which lists such attractions around the world, is a good place to start. On Airbnb, looking for immersive stays can feel like its own puzzle. "Escape room" isn't a searchable category on the site (yet), so you may find it easier to start with a Google search. Once you find a promising experience,



Actors stage a scene at the overnight Key of Dreams experience in Wales.

check reviews for clues as to how interactive it really is.

For David Spira, co-founder of the escape-room-industry publication Room Escape Artist, truly immersive stays should offer more than novelty, and should counteract the passive aspects of travel, where attractions can feel like items on checklists.

"I often feel like the things I'm told are 'must-sees' could have been skipped," said Spira. "But immersive experiences are different...They're made by small creators who are overflowing with ideas and care."

**Our plans to lounge by the pool instantly vanish, as we dive into an hourslong adventure to unravel secrets.**

Newlyweds might prefer Marty Parker's Ohio-based Romantic Adventure Getaways, which applies that handcrafted approach to couples' retreats. Parker describes his two bed-and-breakfasts as "Scooby-Doo mansions with romantic intrigue." Secret rooms, trap doors and hidden passages seamlessly blend playful exploration with amenities to enjoy with your partner—as long as you're both game to embrace a little kitsch.

Deep in the hills of Wales, the Key of Dreams blends escape-room gameplay and live theater, all in a moody, 17th-century manor. The production features live actors who help guide guests through a Lovecraftian narrative. The 24-hour interactive show can be booked by multiple guests for around \$500 a person. For full immersion, book an on-theme bedroom at the manor too, starting around \$450 a night.

Since designing the experience in 2023, Ivan Carić has made it increasingly elaborate, the better to leave a strong impression. "It's about the stories that people can tell when they leave," Carić said. "We're part of their memories."

At Wild Heart Ranch, the adventure doubled as a bonding experience. My child and I might not always agree on bedtime, but with a game to play, we worked together like Sherlock and Watson—and I felt fully caught up in the wonder my son exhibited. As Spira said, "Adults are terrible at playing. We need help."

Letting your imagination run wild can even spark joy. Immersive stays, like their escape-room progenitors, are about tapping into that. It's the same feeling a reader might experience when they uncover the hidden message I've tucked away in this story.

Like any great journey, my adventure started with just a snippet of a mystery. Clues often hide in plain sight, waiting for those who pay attention to where things begin.

## Leave the Leaves Out of It

Bypass leaf-peeping crowds at these autumnal destinations

**FALL IS HERE** and the leaf peepers are out in force. While the blazing leaves of Vermont and Tennessee attract huge crowds for good reason this time of year, the appeal of many nondeciduous national parks and wilderness areas also peaks right now, with optimal autumn weather and none of the crowds.

Below, some shoulder-season trip ideas for intrepid travelers eager to avoid the foliage frenzy.

### Southwestern Sojourn

**Eastern Utah:** Zion National Park remains thronged in the autumn months, so high-tail it east to the climbers-and-cowboys hub of Moab. Riverfront cabins, red-rock bike trails and complimentary sound healings await at Red Cliffs Lodge, less than an hour from both Arches and Canyonlands National Parks. Highs in the 70s and a generous amount of sunshine make for excellent hiking at the aptly named Grand View Point or for slick-rock mountain biking adventures at Dead Horse Point State Park.

### California Dreamin'

**Eastern Sierra Scenic Byway, California:** While it's true you can find lovely fall colors along this beautiful driving route, especially at Inyo National Forest, few people venture out to this corner of central California between summer hiking season and the ski resorts' opening days. Instead of gawking at trees—hardly the area's biggest draw—circum-navigate Convict Lake, then trek to Rainbow Falls. Worthy side trips include the ghost town at Bodie State Historic

Park and the summit-studded June Lake Loop. Bed down at the mountain-modern Wayfinder Bishop and don't miss Texas-style BBQ at Holy Smoke.

### Undercover Colorado

**Black Canyon of the Gunnison and Mesa Verde National Parks:** Bypass the canary-yellow aspens along the Continental Divide for the state's best-kept secret: Black Canyon of the Gunnison National Park. Two of the least-crowded months to visit this 2,722-foot-deep maw of gneiss and schist are October and November, before snowfall forces its North and South Rim roads to close.

Take the 1.5-mile round-trip stroll to Warner Point for sweeping views of the

San Juan Mountains, followed by a soothing soak at Avalanche Ranch Cabins & Hot Springs.

You can hit both Black Canyon and Mesa Verde national parks in a single long weekend. Moderate daytime temperatures and an utter lack of crowds at Mesa Verde make autumn one of the best times to see the abandoned cliff-side dwellings of the Ancestral Pueblo people. Many of the park's guided tours conclude around Oct. 22, but you can download a self-guided audio tour of the Mesa Top Loop Drive for a rundown (available on Apple Podcasts) as you drive from site to site. Immerse yourself in Colorado's mining past at the nearby 137-year-old Strater Hotel, complete with Durango's premiere Old-West saloon, the Diamond Belle. —Emily Pennington

► For more fall road-trip ideas visit [WSJ.com/Travel](http://WSJ.com/Travel).



**OTHER COLORS** California's Inyo National Forest is at its most idyllic in the fall.

ELIZABETH LOCKE

JEWELS



968 Madison Avenue,  
New York City, 212-744-7878  
[www.elizabethlockejewels.com](http://www.elizabethlockejewels.com)



GETTY IMAGES

## EATING &amp; DRINKING

BAR TAB / A COCKTAIL AUDIT

# This Martini Costs \$22. Here's Why.

Hot spot Hawksmoor touts its take on the classic cocktail as New York's coldest. Drinkers line up for the luxury of a subzero sip.

By ROBERT SIMONSON

**I**N THIS MARTINI golden age we are currently wading through—the one that the pandemic's thirsty early months kicked off—all the old debates of the last century have been reborn.

We argue about gin vs. vodka, stirring vs. shaking, vermouth portions, garnishes, glassware, etc. More recent arguments include dirty vs. dry and the use of myriad alternate spirits and modifiers. But one thing that gets debated far too little, yet remains as critical as anything to the success of a Martini, is the phantom ingredient: temperature.

All cocktails must be cold to be good. But no cocktail depends so much on frigid conditions as the Martini. At Hawksmoor, the Manhattan branch of the London-born steakhouse chain, this is gospel, and the house Martini is billed as the coldest in New York.

"I think with the Martini, it is the most important thing," said Jack Hubbard, bartender at Hawksmoor. "I think a Manhattan and a Vesper need to be cold, but I don't think people would care as much."

**Cold (for) Customers**

There's no chance a patron will mistake the Hawksmoor's Martini as anything other than a denizen of the deep freeze. It fairly smokes when it arrives, like a car warming up on an icy morning.

The Hawksmoor Martini's journey to subzero takes it through several appliances. The first doesn't affect the temperature, but it's so weird that it merits more than a mention. It's a jewelry cleaner, a metal contraption about the size of a small Yeti cooler. Batched Martinis, vacuum-sealed in bags, are "zapped" inside for 45 minutes.

"The best analogy is it's like lasagna," said Hubbard. "Lasagna always tastes better the next day. And it's kind of like that. It would be a great Martini before [this process]."

But the jewelry cleaner "just rounds it out and makes it a better drink. It basically shakes all the molecules and homogenizes it."

On to the chilling. The zapped Martinis go into canisters that are placed in an industrial freezer set to -13 degrees Celsius. (That's 8.6 degrees Fahrenheit. Remember, we're dealing with an English company here.) "We would never be able to stir it down over ice to that temperature," said Hubbard.

The Hawksmoor Martini is five parts gin to one part vermouth. That five-to-one mixture is then mixed with 20-25% water to mimic the

**Hawksmoor Freezer Martini (Home Version)****Total Time** 3½ hours (includes chilling)**Makes** six drinks

**25 ounces** Ford's Gin  
**2 ounces** Dolin Dry Vermouth  
**2 ounces** Little City Dry Vermouth  
**4 ounces** filtered water  
**Olives or lemon twist, to garnish**

1. Place gin and cocktail glass in freezer at coldest setting, and vermouths and water in refrigerator, for at least 1 hour.
2. When all elements are as cold as possible, make the drink: In an insulated thermos, combine liquid ingredients. Place thermos in freezer and let chill at least 2 hours.
3. When ready to serve, remove glass from freezer and pour cold Martini into glass. If garnishing with olives, serve them in a dish on the side. If using a lemon twist, express it over the surface of the drink and discard.

dilution that naturally occurs when a Martini is stirred over ice.

Large amounts are produced this way: Hawksmoor has sold 17,000 Martinis already this year. When the batches hit that sweet spot of -12 degrees Celsius—a tem-



Martini thermoses wait in freezers behind the bar at Hawksmoor.

perature right before ice crystals form, according to Hubbard—the liquid is transferred to small thermoses, stored in freezers behind the bar.

The Hawksmoor Martini hasn't yet completed its quest for cold, however. Time is of the essence once the drink is ordered. Its temperature will normally rise a degree or two during the short trip from bar to table.

Just about everything, in fact, is the enemy of a Martini's coldness. You might call the drink's historical companion, the olive, a frenemy. "The olive definitely does change the temperature," said Hubbard. "It's going to move it up." For that reason, at Hawksmoor olives are served not in the cocktail glass, but on the side in a small dish.

While Hubbard was preparing a Martini for me recently, he whipped out a bright-red digital food thermometer about the size of a box cutter and used it to measure the drink's temperature. I knew what gadget I'd be acquiring next for my home bar.

**An Ice Try**  
In attempting to duplicate Hawksmoor's success with chilling Martinis, I used their recipe of Ford's Gin and two types of dry vermouth, Dolin and Little City—both excellent brands, easily found.

The ingredients must already be cold before you put the mixture in the freezer, because the thermos can't work miracles. So keep your gin in the freezer and your vermouth and filtered water in the fridge before mixing up a batch of freezer Martinis. Put your Martini glass in the freezer, too, at least a half-hour before you intend to use it, and don't take it out until you're ready to pour out your Martinis.

Most home freezers won't let you set a specific temperature. "You can set it to '5,' but what is '5'?" said Hubbard. He also suggested di-



◀ At Hawksmoor, bartender Jack Hubbard takes a Martini's temperature. He's looking for an icy -12 degrees Celsius.

▶ Prebatched and intensely chilled, the Hawksmoor Martini acquires a luxurious viscosity. Olives come on the side, to avoid increasing the temperature by even a degree.

luting the Martini with only 10% water for a colder result. I found this to be true.

A freezer Martini made to Hawksmoor's recipe—i.e., diluted by 20%—achieved a temperature of -11.3 degrees Celsius after three hours in the freezer. One with only 10% dilution plummeted further to -12.2 degrees Celsius. Both were viscous and

poured thickly into the glass.

And the glass itself matters. A greater volume of Martini served in birdbath-size glassware warms up more due to greater exposure to the air and the longer time it takes to consume. Hawksmoor recently changed its Martini glass from a coupe (the vessel cocktail bartenders tend to advocate) to a tra-

ditional conical glass (what customers really want).

The Spiegelau "Perfect Serve" glass the Hawksmoor settled on seems like the ideal compromise between the two styles. The shape is classic Martini glass, but at a more modest capacity: It holds about five and a half ounces. And it looks quite handsome on the home bar, too.

LANA APISUK FOR WSJ (3)



**MADE TO BE WORN**

Shop now at [duckhead.com](http://duckhead.com)



**The Coolest Tools For the Job****THE GLASS**

Spiegelau, a centuries-old German glassmaker, sells this modest-sized Martini glass under its "Perfect Serve" line. It stands five-and-a-half inches tall, holds just over five ounces and is dishwasher-safe. A starburst pattern at the base adds a little flair. \$50-\$60, Set of 4

**THE THERMOMETER**

The ThermoPro TP03H is billed as an "Instant Read Meat Thermometer," but it works just as well for measuring cold. Unfold the metal probe from its place inside the plastic and the digital screen immediately comes alive. Readouts are in Celsius or Fahrenheit. \$15

## EATING &amp; DRINKING

IN MY KITCHEN

# Matty Matheson

The celebrity chef—and ‘The Bear’ co-star—on restaurant drama and the profundity of pho

BY KATHLEEN SQUIRES

**H**E'S THE ONLY cast member of the Hulu hit “The Bear” who is actually a chef, yet Matty Matheson doesn't play one on TV. The Emmy-winning series features Matheson in the role of Neil Fak, a handyman-turned-server at the titular restaurant. In real life he'd rather be cooking. Over the last 20-plus years, it's what took him from line cook to executive chef to restaurateur, with 11 restaurants in his native Canada over the years, including Toronto's acclaimed Prime Seafood Palace. And, sure, it's what he does regularly for nearly 1.5 million subscribers on his YouTube channel, but there he's just being himself. “Acting is the most nerve-racking thing in the world,” he said.

In his third cookbook, “Soups, Salads, Sandwiches” (Oct. 22, Ten Speed Press), Matheson is back on familiar ground. There he shares recipes any home cook can use every day and insights only he would deliver, from why a bowl of pho changed his life to how a salad can be way more than just vegetables. When pressed to choose among the book's three main food groups, however, he doesn't hesitate: “I'm a soup boy. I could eat it every day for the rest of my life.” His Turkey Drumstick and Barley recipe, below, could make a soup person of just about anybody.

We caught up with Matheson at home on his Ontario farm, where he enjoys cooking for (and with) his wife, Trish Spencer, and their three children.

**The thing people notice first about my kitchen is:** how much space it takes up. It's the biggest room in our house. My heart and soul. Every house party ends up in the kitchen. Every morning starts there and every evening ends there. I love that my kids are able to play while I'm cooking. It's very open, with a large cooking island and two full tables. The other thing that people notice is my whole wall of cookbooks.

**The cookbook I always turn to is:** “Nose to Tail Eating” by Fergus Henderson—my bible. I love the writing. I love how loose the recipes are. It's about nuance. It's about the love of cooking. It's about the love of restaurants. As a Canadian, I love the cookbooks from [Montreal res-

taurants] Joe Beef and Au Pied de Cochon. I love Daniel Boulud's “Letters to a Young Chef.” All of the Troisgros books [from the French family of chefs]. And my wife and I are big Ina Garten fans. I recently did a big purge and gave, probably, like 500 books to Niagara College. But that didn't even make a dent in my collection.

**The kitchen tools I can't live without are:** sh—y ceramic knives from Costco. They're so sharp and perfect.



**CRUNCH TIME** Clockwise: Matty Matheson at home on his Ontario farm; cookbooks; his Tiger rice cooker; some of the food he grows; his new cookbook. Inset: the kitchen he calls his ‘heart and soul.’

When I'm at home and I've really sunk into a comfortable place of efficiency, they are great. Why do I need to use the most expensive knife? I'll also use a bread knife for anything. I like good spoons, though—my Gray Kunz spoons, for saucing. And I love our Tiger rice cooker.

**A kitchen feature I can do without is:** a gas stove. I hate cooking on

one. With my kids around, gas stresses me out. My electric stove at home has a glass top, and I love it for cleaning. We use our Breville toaster oven more than our oven. It's such a perfect size.

**My pantry is always stocked with:** different kinds of flour, because my wife is quite a baker. She makes church-basement-style squares and cookies and all those things. And then we have a lot of good olive oil. Not so much vinegar: I'm a white vinegar, malt vinegar guy. I like fish sauce and good soy sauce. I have 13 little cans of cayenne pepper. A lot of good honey. I'm a big fan of foundational pantry items that you can build off.

**My cooking mentor was:** chef Rang Nguyen [at Le Sélect Bistro in Toronto]. I come from a small, rural border town in Canada where there certainly aren't any Vietnamese restaurants. He's the person who introduced me to pho. I'd never had something that was so beautiful. So light and nuanced and deep with flavor. I never loved tripe until then. I loved the beef balls. I loved the broth, the fresh herbs, the lime, the bird's eye chilies. It just blew my mind. That soup was a life-changer for me.

**The food my kids get most excited about is:** chicken nuggets! It's so funny, when kids are young they eat anything, and then they hit a certain age when all they want is chicken nuggets. And it's depressing for a couple years, and then they start to come out of it. Like this morning, my son, who's 8, came into our bed at 6 a.m. and said, “I'm making breakfast today.” So me and Trish came down with our other two children. He had set the whole table, which was really sweet. We went out to the farm and picked lettuce and tomatoes, and then we made BLTs together. He ate it, and he liked it, and I taught him something. It was his first time making one. It was a big thing. It made me so happy.

—Edited from an interview by Kathleen Squires



## Turkey Drumstick and Barley Soup

*Matheson loves the “beautiful texture” of this soup. “I got a sweet spot for barley,” he explained. “There’s something very robust about it. It’s really high in protein, and healthy for you. And drumsticks give a lot of flavor.” He calls this easy-to-make soup, “low risk, high reward, on a lot of different levels.” The recipe is definitely worth keeping in your back pocket for post-Thanksgiving leftovers.*

**Total time:** 2½ hours  
**Serves:** 4

## 2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more as needed

**2 turkey drumsticks**

**1 large yellow onion, finely diced**

**2 medium carrots, diced**

**2 medium celery ribs, diced**

**3 cloves garlic, minced**

**1 cup pearl barley**

**4 thyme sprigs**

**1 teaspoon minced fresh rosemary**

**1 bay leaf**

**6 cups chicken stock**

**Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper**

**Chopped parsley, for garnish**

1. Heat a large pot over medium-high heat. Add olive oil.

Season the turkey drumsticks with salt and pepper, then add to pot. Brown turkey legs on all sides, about 5 minutes per side. Remove and set aside.

2. Keep pot over medium-high heat. Add a little more olive oil if needed, along with onions, carrots and celery. Sauté vegetables until they soften, about 5 minutes. Add garlic and sauté an additional minute. Stir in barley, thyme, rosemary and bay leaf, and cook until the

barley toasts slightly, 2–3 minutes more.

3. Return turkey to pot and add chicken stock. Bring soup to a boil, then reduce heat to low and cover pot. Simmer, stirring occasionally, until turkey is tender and barley is fully cooked, 1½ hours.

4. Remove soup from heat. Remove herbs from pot. Season to taste and garnish with parsley. Serve in soup bowls.

—Adapted from “Soups, Salads, Sandwiches” by Matty Matheson (Ten Speed Press)

**SLOW FOOD FAST / SATISFYING AND SEASONAL FOOD IN ABOUT 30 MINUTES**

## Cider-Vinegar Glazed Pork Chops With Fresh Parsley Salad

**The chef**

Nick Curtola

**His restaurants**

The Four Horsemen and a forthcoming Italian restaurant, both in Brooklyn's Williamsburg.

**What he's known for**

Creating inventive dishes in the tiny kitchen of an ambitious wine bar; Cooking with a hyperseasonal attention to detail; Forging a name for himself alongside a team of celebrity partners.

**Serves:** 4 **Time:** 30 minutes

**4 (10-ounce) bone-in pork chops**

**Flaky sea salt, plus more to finish**

**1¾ cups packed dark brown sugar**

**1 cup apple cider vinegar**

**2 tablespoons fish sauce**

**1 teaspoon ground cinnamon**

**1 tablespoon smoked paprika**

**4 cups loosely packed fresh parsley leaves**

**½ cup thinly sliced radishes or shallots**

**2 teaspoons red wine vinegar**

**1 teaspoon extra-virgin olive oil**

pork chops paired with a bouncy parsley salad—Curtola's debut Slow Food Fast recipe—showcases his meticulous approach and wide-ranging influences. Letting the chops rest and finish cooking off the heat preserves their tenderness, while the sweet-smoky sauce nods to Japanese teriyaki. An accompanying herb salad cuts through the meat's fattiness. The chef calls the side an overt hat tip to British cook Fergus Henderson, who is known for food that's thought-provokingly simple. The same might be said of Curtola. —Kitty Greenwald

**1.** Blot chops dry with a paper towel and season generously with salt. Set aside. Add brown sugar, cider vinegar, fish sauce, cinnamon and paprika to a medium pot. Bring mixture to a boil over medium-high heat, then reduce heat to low. Simmer gently until mixture thickens and turns a rich caramel color, 10–15 minutes. Keep sauce warm while proceeding with recipe, stirring occasionally so it remains loose.

**2.** Meanwhile, heat a grill or grill pan to medium-high. Use tongs to position chops on grill with their fatty edges facing down. Let the fat render until it colors and crisps,

about 2 minutes. Once the fat cap renders, lay the chops flat and continue grilling. Throughout, use a brush to liberally apply glaze to both sides of chops. Keep flipping, about every minute, until chops are golden on both sides, about 8 minutes total. They are done when caramelized in color and the internal temperature reaches about 145 degrees. Let chops rest off heat at least 10 minutes.

**3.** Combine parsley and radishes or shallots in a medium bowl. Toss in red wine vinegar, olive oil and a pinch of salt. Taste and adjust seasonings as needed. Serve chops alongside the parsley salad.



**SLICK MOVE** A cider-vinegar and brown-sugar glaze leaves grilled pork chops smoky sweet, while an herb salad cuts the richness.

CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN FOR WSJ; FOOD STYLING BY SEAN DOOLEY; PROP STYLING BY STEPH DE LUCA; MICHAEL HOEWELER (PORTRAIT)

CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN FOR WSJ; COOKBOOK/RECIPE IMAGE: PHOTOGRAPHS © 2024 BY QUENTIN BACON. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PUBLISHED IN THE UNITED STATES BY TEN SPEED PRESS, AN IMPRINT OF RANDOM HOUSE LLC. NEW YORK



# DAVID YURMAN

SCULPTED CABLE COLLECTION

## GEAR & GADGETS

### The Minivan: A Capsule History

Across the decades, the humble family-mover has seen various design evolutions—from the good to the bad to the downright homely.

1950-1979



**VW Transporter Type 2** | The minivan as we know it today began with VW's cargo vehicle, the Transporter Type 2, which in the 1960s introduced sliding side doors for access to an open cargo hold. The engine was in the back.

1979



**Ford LTD Country Squire** | The donor vehicle for the Griswold Family Truckster in National Lampoon's *Vacation*, the enormous Country Squire epitomized the state of people-moving in the late 1970s—large, long and unwieldy.

1981



**Chrysler K platform** | Chrysler's common vehicle architecture, the K platform, was used in the Chrysler Town & Country, Dodge Caravan and Plymouth Voyager, which together went on to sell many millions of units.

1990-1997



**Toyota Previa** | The first-generation Previa (1990-1997) had an inline-four paired with either a four-speed automatic or five-speed manual transmissions. It also featured family-friendly swiveling mid-row seats, great for school-zone loading and unloading.

2017-PRESENT



**Chrysler Pacifica** | Chrysler's three-row people-mover is currently the best-selling minivan in the U.S., with the Toyota Sienna and Honda Odyssey vying for second place. None offer an all-electric option in the minivan category.

2022-PRESENT



**Kia Carnival** | An attempt to graft a minivan's most persuasive feature—the sliding side doors—onto the form of a family SUV, the Carnival comes close to the perfect split.

2024



**Zeekr 009** | A beyond-swank version of the once-domestic minivan, the Zeekr 009 is an all-electric, three-row hyper-something, sharing drive components with the Lotus Eletre (both brands are owned by Geely in China).

## Can the Much-Mocked Minivan Get its Groove Back?

Continued from page D1

fight the power. To drive a minivan is to be the power, or at least to represent local authority on the ground. You kids shut up back there.

It was low and lazy group-think, but minivan-shaming actually became a sociocultural effect, hastening the rise of the SUV and helping send minivan sales spiraling from a high of around 1.3 million in 2000 to about 300,000 in 2023.

In those years I often found myself recommending minivans to families with young children in car seats. Not infrequently the suggestion was huffily nixed, usually by the female partner. "I wouldn't be caught dead driving a minivan," or something very like. Then they would go out and get themselves an SUV.

It was like *What's the Matter with Kansas?* only with minivans. Not only are they inherently more space efficient, lighter, safer, better-handling and more versatile than the SUV alternative, minivans come with the celestial blessing of two sliding side doors, through which kids, car seats, life itself can more easily pass.

As a father of twins, I too drove a minivan in those days. It never occurred to me



VOLKSWAGEN ALAMY STOCK PHOTO (2); GETTY IMAGES (2); CHRYSLER (PACIFICA); ZEEKR (009); KIA (CARNIVAL)

**SUPPLY PAIN** With only 100,000 units produced annually, availability of the new ID. Buzz (left), seen with an earlier generation microbus, could be an issue.

to feel emasculated. On the contrary, I thought the Honda Odyssey made me look rather good. A casual observer could infer some decent woman would have me.

It isn't a question of whether the Buzz can bring the sexy back to minivans. History is replete with kick-ass minivans, if you don't mind: The Toyota Previa, the Renault Espace Fl, or the

Oldsmobile Silhouette, which you may remember as Chili Palmer's ride in "Get Shorty."

Obviously, sex—awkward, fumbling, uncomfortable sex, often involving sand—has played an essential part in VW buses' appeal from the beginning. What vehicle in history could possibly have as many assignations-per-mile as the microbus? I mean, why the hell would

anyone want to sleep in a van otherwise?

The 1st Edition units have the cabin layout of a typical premium minivan, with optional second-row captain's chairs creating a center pass-through aisle to the rear. However, I note that the Buzz's second- and third-row seats can be folded away in such a way that a typical full mattress

can be laid on top, if you'll pardon the phrase.

These units will also feature 20-inch wheels, a 700-watt Harman Kardon audio system and the delightful electrochromic glass ceiling that can change opacity at the touch of a button, from clear to cloudy.

Oh, it's fancy, all right. Could the arrival of the chic, me-forward Buzz signal the

ID.4 running gear.

The figures of merit for the dual-motor Buzz include an EPA estimated range of 234 miles, out of a 86 kWh (net) pack. The upgraded battery system allows DC charging rates up to 200 kW. The 282-hp permanent magnet motor in the rear is paired with a 107-hp induction motor in the front to produce a

**THE WAVE CUFF**  
22K "VIRGIN" GOLD, \$19,950 EACH

BELPERRON, LLC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

**BELPERRON**  
MY STYLE IS MY SIGNATURE

745 FIFTH AVENUE, SUITE 1210, NYC  
212 702 9040 • BELPERRON.COM

**MaxMara**

NEW YORK: 813 MADISON AVENUE 212 879 6100 / 125 PRINCE STREET 347 758 9274  
MANHASSET: 2102 NORTHERN BOULEVARD 516 365 5567  
MAXMARA.COM

It was low and lazy group-think, but minivan-shaming became a sociocultural effect, hastening the rise of the SUV.

reboot of the minivan as a bourgeois lifestyle platform?

Outside of the U.S., the common MPV (multi-purpose vehicle) is being mutated into all sorts of super-luxury jumbos, catering to the wealthy owners with extra-wide elbows.

Among these sliding-door seagulls are the Lexus LM and the China-built Zeekr 009. Not content to color inside the usual lines, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg just revealed on social media that he had a Porsche Cayenne Turbo GT converted into a three-row minivan, with sliding rear doors.

Is that cool enough for you?

The American release of the Buzz was delayed by more than a year while management sorted out upgrades to the ID. platform's powertrain and to the in-cabin technology. The U.S.-spec Buzz benefits from VW's latest vehicle architecture that is shared with the ID.7 crossover, bringing with it more efficient motors, a bigger and better battery, faster charging and longer range. Euro-spec versions of the Buzz rely on the less capable

system maximum of 335 hp.

With global production in Hanover, Germany, limited to a mere 100,000 units annually, availability will almost certainly be an issue.

VW is advertising three trim levels in the U.S.—from the ID. Buzz Pro S (\$59,995) to the ID. Buzz 1st Edition with 4motion (\$69,995)—with optional all-wheel-drive. I predict the dealer markup on these things will make the Sinaloa Cartel look like charity workers.

What a long, strange trip, etc. VW first pulled the silk off its flower-powered prototype at the 2017 Detroit auto show. Since then the company has struggled to deliver on a series of electric vehicles aimed at the mass market, including the ID.3 sedan and ID.4 crossover.

All but drowned out by #vanlife nostalgia is the fact that, despite its late arrival, the ID. Buzz will be the first all-electric, three-row minivan available in the U.S. market.

That's cool.

Dan Neil's *Rumble Seat* column will return on November 30.

# DISCOVER THE MAGIC OF WINDHAM MOUNTAIN CLUB

Special Advertorial Feature

Nestled in the heart of the Catskills and just a short drive from New York City, Windham Mountain Club (WMC) is a sanctuary for year-round adventurers of all ages that bring families closer in every season. Standing as the preeminent destination for thoughtfully elevated and intentionally uncrowded mountain living, this premiere, public-private mountain community seamlessly blends world-class skiing with exclusive luxury amenities, offering an unparalleled experience for winter weekend guests and private club members.

"Our goal is to provide the best overall skiing and riding experience in the Northeast," says President Chip Seamans. "With uncrowded slopes for the public and our members, our ski racing and development programs, and extraordinary culinary offerings, we aim to create a remarkable end-to-end experience at Windham Mountain Club."

## HONORING TRADITIONS, BUILDING LEGACY

Windham Mountain Club stands on a foundation rich in history, originating in the early 1960s with the establishment of Cave Mountain Ski Area. In 2024, the experienced luxury hospitality families of Sandy Beall and Kemmons Wilson (KWC Management) came on board as new majority owners. With over 100 years of combined industry experience, this experienced team placed emphasis on reshaping the resort into a four-season luxury destination and provided a historic investment of \$70 million. Sandy Beall is Founder of Land Hospitality, a company that brings premier four-season private communities to life for unparalleled experiences, and best known as Chairman and Co-Founder of Blackberry Farm, a Relais and Chateaux and Wine Spectator Grand Award property, and Blackberry Mountain, listed for Vogue's 2024 Top 10 Best Spa Resorts in the United States.

## CELEBRATING LUXURY AND LIFE

Windham Mountain Club is a haven for those who appreciate luxury in every detail and value quality family time. Savvy skiers, diners, and outdoor enthusiasts will take note of improved, automated snowmaking and grooming, six different restaurants to choose from across the mountain (with more concepts on the way), and next up in the development pipeline, year-round luxury residences just steps away from the slopes. At the heart of Windham Mountain Club is a close-knit community that values connection, camaraderie, and shared experiences. Premiere events, social gatherings, annual mountain traditions, and members-only experiences foster a sense of belonging, making WMC not just a destination, but a second home. Whether you're sharing stories over dinner or participating in a group hike, the spirit of community is ever-present. Children at Windham Mountain Club can embark on their own journeys of discovery, from exhilarating downhill skiing adventures to exploring forested trails and marveling at starlit skies. It's clear that

here, young adventurers will create deep connections with nature and forge lasting friendships.

The recent developmental changes have catapulted Windham Mountain Club towards becoming a destination that is worth more than just a visit. Members and guests can embark on extraordinary journeys filled with unexpected delights—whether it's a personalized wine or token of appreciation, every moment is curated to surprise and enchant. What will be obvious to anyone visiting Windham Mountain Club for the first time is that membership provides more than just access, it's an investment in a lifestyle rich with memorable experiences. The transformation from charming local favorite to an elevated, world-class destination is well underway, and those in the know are eager to be a part of Windham's storied evolution.



**"Our focus is creating memorable experiences, from a day on the mountain to an afternoon on the water or fairway, to summer mornings spent in holistic fitness and total rejuvenation. Windham Mountain Club will offer truly special experiences that guests will look forward to year after year."**

Sandy Beall

*Chairman and Co-Founder of Blackberry Farm and Blackberry Mountain*



## THOUGHTFULLY ELEVATED, INTENTIONALLY UNCROWDED.

WMCMEMBERS.COM



### WINTER HERE

The ultimate skiing experience without lift lines or crowds—1,600 vertical feet serviced by a fleet of high-speed chairlifts, advanced automated snowmaking, and world-class Ski and Ride School.

### ADVENTURE HERE

Experience a Fazio-designed 18-hole golf course, watersports and boating, aquatics and racquet sports, premium retail, and bespoke outdoor adventures including hiking, fly fishing, and guided horseback riding.

### DINE HERE

Discover world-class food and beverage across six premium restaurants. Members-only Cin Cin!, located mid-mountain, provides a unique, inventive twist on Italian Alps-style cuisine—complete with a view.

### WELLNESS

Achieve peak performance in a 5,000 square foot fitness facility with individually tailored conditioning, and The Wellness Club, a premiere spa and wellness center featuring signature treatments, light therapy, and more.

### LIVE HERE

Development of 66 luxury residences is underway, with mountain access steps from the front door of residences that overlook picturesque mountain views.

# DESIGN & DECORATING



PETER ARKLE

A MATTER OF LIFE AND DECOR / MICHELLE SLATALLA



## Help: My Husband Really Wants a Japanese Toilet

**SOME ADOLESCENTS** get all their news and information from TikTok. My husband gets most of his from "South Park."

Ever since last year when he saw an episode called "Japanese Toilet" extolling the virtues of smart toilets, he's been desperate to buy one. In the intervening months he's made me watch that episode of the animated series three times, which I finally realized was a subtle campaign to make me think a toilet that sprays water on your butt was "better for the planet." I will not make the obvious pun about which planet he was referring to.

"Don't be a pawn of Big Toilet Paper," he warned.

Finally, I was unable to take the lobbying and agreed to go to Home Depot. My husband was heartbroken that unlike what he saw on "South Park," there was no special Japanese toilet area cordoned off with a red velvet rope, nor someone plying high rollers with Champagne.

In fact, there were no smart toilets for sale at all (although Home Depot offers them online, for prices

ranging from under \$400 for a plug-in toilet with a visible wall cord to \$6,467 for a Kohler model with gold trim on its lid). When my husband approached one of the helpful, orange-aproned salesmen, the man seemed mystified: "Smart toilet? What, does it do math?"

I hope so—because that might explain their sudden surge in popularity in the U.S. A startling (to me) 60% of designers predict that these high-tech fixtures will be the bathroom feature most requested by clients in the next three years, according to the National Kitchen and Bath Association's 2024 trends report. That's a sharp increase from the previous year, when only 16% of designers reported interest from their clients.

It's surprising to me that so many people would consider replacing a foolproof and essential household fixture, which has nothing more complicated to fix than a flapper and chain, with an electronic appliance. "You should check the warranty if you buy one, but in my experience I have not heard of

malfunctions," said Nashville, Tenn., designer Katie Vance, who has installed smart toilets in high-use situations like restaurants.

Many people still find the concept of a toilet that rinses and blow-dries you somewhat confusing. When I googled "smart toilets," one of the top search results was the question "Are you still wet after using a smart toilet?"

room, he said there's no going back. "Heated seat, lights, it's got all the bells and whistles. If I get up in the middle of the night, all I have to do is get to the bathroom—and the lights come on and guide me in."

It also turns out that there is something to the argument that smart toilets—first popularized by Toto in Japan, where more people have them than microwaves—are

**'A few years ago when I moved to Europe, where they are popular, I had to YouTube "How do I even use this thing,'" confessed a Kohler executive.**

"Some people are still scared of it, and a few years ago when I moved to Europe, where they are popular, I had to YouTube 'How do I even use this thing,'" confessed Norbert Schmidt, Kohler's North American kitchen and bath division president.

But now that Schmidt has a top-of-the-line Kohler Numi 2.0—which retails for \$8,625—in his own bath-

environmentally friendly because they obviate the need for toilet paper and employ low-flush technology, which will save water if you don't spend too much time spraying yourself.

Smart toilets have come a long way since 1980, when Toto introduced its first generation of Washlet bidet seats, which sit atop standard toilets and spray water upward

at what has been determined to be a "golden angle" (43 degrees). Fast forward to today, when in addition to the 60 million Washlets (\$350 and up) in use worldwide, Toto's Neorest line of smart toilets (\$6,036 to \$22,078) offers a mind-boggling menu of features, from dual-action sprays with oscillating and pulsating features to memory settings for up to four users.

"For guys who sit down and go, when they lift the seat up, sometimes there's a yellow ring, but we've created a spray mist to actually clean the underside of the seat," said William Strang, president of Toto USA. "And you never have to double flush because we have added features to spray the dry porcelain with a mist before use to improve lubricity and help the toilet flush more cleanly."

I live in a circa-1926 grandma-style cottage. Would the low-slung, minimal silhouette of a smart toilet in the bathroom be attractive?

"Well, I don't know how much you want to use the word 'attractive' for any toilet, but they are becoming statement pieces, kind of like free-standing bathtubs did," said Nar Bustamante, a Sacramento, Calif., interior designer. "The difference is there are people who buy tubs who don't bathe in them. But with a smart toilet, you definitely want to use it."

Miami architect Sandra Diaz-Velasco said smart toilets are an important element for clients who want to make a bathroom feel like a serene spa.

"The way you can control your car for a specific driver, we can integrate smart toilets with smart lighting systems to create an atmosphere—and when you walk into the bathroom, the seat will be a certain temperature, and the water will move in the bidet the way you like it, to create an exquisite experience," she said.

An exquisite experience has hidden costs, however. For one thing, it requires electricity. Washlet owners "often buy extension cords and plug into where the hair dryer goes," according to Strang of Toto. But installing a full-featured smart toilet requires professional help: an electrician to run a power supply through a wall, a plumber to supply adequate water and—if tile needs to be replaced—a contractor.

For that reason, the typical customer is someone who is remodeling, said Dean Camastro, northeast regional sales manager at Duravit USA.

I reported my findings to my husband.

"Memory settings for up to four users," my husband marveled. "That means two of our three daughters could have their own presets! Can we take the plunge?"

"Yes, the next time we remodel," I said. That should buy me another decade—and by then, with artificial intelligence, they'll probably be able to install themselves.



McGee & Co. X Loeffler  
Randall Gardenia  
Ruffle Border  
Tablecloth, \$248

### IN THE AIR

## Ruffles Come to the Table (No, Not the Potato Chips)

Classic crinkles—the latest wrinkle in dining-room decor—bring a frill to everything from linens to your holiday casserole dish



Coton Colors by Laura Johnson Iris  
Blue Drop 13 Casserole Dish, \$73



Ark Elements  
Prima Dinner Plate  
in Daffodil, \$98

Table  
Love The  
Ruffles  
Napkin,  
\$26 each



Hey Moon  
Ceramics  
Ruffled Vase,  
\$58

—Market editor: Maria Neuman

## DESIGN &amp; DECORATING

CHIC TRICK

# We've Got a Runner

A wide strip of rug rolled down a flight of stairs—the sweet spot between bare wood and wall-to-wall carpet—adds just-right style

BY NINA MOLINA

**W**HY DO so many of us overlook the design opportunity of stairs, even if we trundle up and down them constantly? Decorating a set of steps, said designer Deborah Bass, founder of London's Base Interior, lets you take "something that is quite practical" and make it grander.

If the stairs' material has deteriorated or doesn't match the home's other flooring, you might need to carpet the steps

wall to wall, notes Lauren McGrath, co-founder of New York design firm McGrath II. "Otherwise, I think a runner is always preferred," she said, referring to a strip of rug that leaves wood showing on each side. Here, the rundown.

**The Appeal**

As with any rug, stair runners layer in another visual element to boost or balance a design scheme. For the main stairway of a 1920s Dutch Colonial in Montclair, N.J., McGrath rolled out a "not too fussy" sisal runner to calm a sophisticated,

heavily patterned wallcovering by Brunschwig and Fils. Meanwhile, in a Victorian home in London, Bass made a more eventful statement with a flame-stitch runner (Sinclair Till's Peacock). The "rich and punchy" zigzags, in green, purple, tan and red, echo the parquet floor's herringbone pattern and hold their own against the dra-

**Runners help quiet clamor and provide traction underfoot.**

matic mahogany newel post.

On the pragmatic front, runners help quiet clamor and beat smooth boards for providing traction. "Socks and dress shoes on wood stairs are the worst combinations," said Eileen Hunyadi. The co-owner of the Stair Runner Store in Oxford, Conn., says she often gets inquiries from clients whose kids have slipped on stairs or older folks who've done the same.

**The Tips**

Hunyadi suggests you avoid loop-pile carpet such as sisal. "Pets' claws [and use] can yank on it, and those natural fibers will break open," she said. She believes certain materials "simply don't belong on stairs" and sells only woven and cut-pile runners in wool or synthetic fibers.

McGrath, on the other hand, likes that sisal "isn't too precious." In her own home, an 8-year-old sisal run-



**A STEP UP** Flame-stitch carpet elevates a London foyer by local design firm Base Interior.

ner is still going strong. The flame-stitch runner that Bass installed in North London is woven of coir, a fiber from coconut husks so durable it's more commonly found in commercial spaces.

For the standard 36-inch-wide staircase, the "reveals," the exposed part of the steps, should extend no more than 3 to 6 inches. No runner should look too "dinky," says Hunyadi. Bass agrees. "Too-nar-

row runners don't convey the full impact of patterns and colors," she said.

**The Caveat**

It can take a lot of cash to execute this trick. Though Hunyadi says you could doll up a standard one-floor staircase in a synthetic runner for as little as about \$1,000, including installation, McGrath estimates a wool runner for a flight that includes a couple of turns and

landings like the one in Montclair "would probably be about \$15,000 at the low end and top out at around \$30,000 for something very nice." She prefers wool for its durability and stain resistance, but sisal suited her clients' budget. Their runner cost \$1,200, its installation, \$2,100. "Price sisal versus wool," said McGrath. "Consider the aesthetic of the room, durability and your lifestyle."



A bordered sisal runner and bronze stair rods warm up painted steps in a London home by local designer Joanna Williams.

The Wall Street Journal is not compensated by retailers listed in its articles as outlets for products. Listed retailers frequently are not the sole retail outlets.

## MAKE ROOM FOR ALL OF YOU



CALL, VISIT A SHOWROOM, OR GO ONLINE TO SCHEDULE YOUR COMPLIMENTARY DESIGN CONSULTATION 844.295.1402

New York City 26 Varick St | 1629 York Ave  
Nassau 25 Northern Blvd, Greenvale  
Westchester 16 Saw Mill River Rd, Hawthorne  
Rockland 83 S Main St, New City  
Connecticut 565 Westport Ave, Norwalk  
Miami 900 Park Centre Blvd, Miami Gardens

CALIFORNIA CLOSETS.COM



CALIFORNIA CLOSETS®

# TUMI



ALPHA X WITH McLAREN FORMULA 1 DRIVER LANDO NORRIS

VISIT US IN STORE OR [TUMI.COM](http://TUMI.COM)