



Tom Roberts, left, and Aaron Cass flying in a Los Angeles County firefighting helicopter to inspect damage from wildfires last week.

MARK ABRAMSON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Inside Copter 17’s Terrifying Ride Above an Inferno

By THOMAS FULLER
LOS ANGELES — It was already dark when Copter 17 got an urgent call to head to Eaton Canyon. A fire had been reported at 6:18 p.m.
Mike Sagely, one of the most experienced pilots with the Los Angeles County Fire Department, peered through night-vision goggles as he raced the helicopter across the San Fernando Valley.
“There’s the glow,” he told Chris Siok, the battalion chief sitting next to him. Mr. Siok was on an iPad, poring over maps of Altade-

na, the community nearest to the growing fire.
It was the early evening of Tuesday, Jan. 7. Thousands of homes in Altadena and neighboring Pasadena, Calif., that would soon be incinerated were still intact. Sixteen residents who were eventually killed were still alive. Fire pilots like Mr. Sagely still had a chance to make a dent in what would become the second-most destructive wildfire in California history, by dropping thousands of gallons of water before the blaze became unmanageable.
But at 6:36 p.m. — 18 minutes

‘Mother Nature Was in Control That Night’

after the first report of the fire — their plan fell apart.
As they approached the inferno, Copter 17 dropped so violently that the two men were yanked up off their seats, restrained only by their seatbelts. Known for their calm under pressure, they both yelled in shock.
Furious swirling winds were cascading over the mountains and

tossing Copter 17 up and down, left and right. Mr. Sagely was fighting for control over the aircraft.
“We knew we were in big fricking trouble,” Mr. Sagely said.
When an extreme gust of wind sent the helicopter plunging around 100 feet, an emergency light on the dashboard flashed a warning that the transmission box was out of oil. It wasn’t — the aircraft plummeted so fast the oil had flown out of the pump to the top of the casing. In his 11,300 hours of flight time over 38 years, including countless combat mis-

Continued on Page 16

What’s Missing In TikTok Ban? A Viral Protest.

SAN FRANCISCO — So this may be the way TikTok ends: not with a bang, but with a whimper.
Over the past few weeks, as the Jan. 19 deadline loomed for the forced sale of TikTok by ByteDance, its Chinese parent company, I’ve been struck by how few Americans seem concerned about the prospect that one of the nation’s most popular social media apps will simply disappear.
Sure, there are the people calling themselves “TikTok refugees” and joining Xiaohongshu, a Chinese social media app, as a half-joking protest of the U.S. government’s decision to ban TikTok on national security grounds. (The joke part is: OK, Congress, you want to stop us from using a sketchy Chinese social media app? We’ll download an even sketchier Chinese social media app and use that.)
There are the TikTok creators who fear losing their audiences and have been frantically trying to persuade their fans to follow them on Instagram and YouTube, and the e-commerce brands and drop-shippers that are going to have to find other places to sell their stuff.
And there is TikTok itself, which has been fighting to save itself in court, along with a handful of lawmakers, free-speech activists and industry groups that have argued that banning the app would do more harm than good. (On Friday, the Su-

KEVIN ROOSE
THE SHIFT

Continued on Page 17



PORAS CHAUDHARY FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

‘52 Places to Go’ Turns 20

Our destinations include Assam, India, where safaris trek Kaziranga National Park. Special Section.

Gilgamesh, Ponce and the Quest to Live Forever

By JOE KLOC
The longevity industry is coming off perhaps its best run on record. The expected span of an American life has increased by about three decades since 1900 — to around 78 as of 2023. But for many people, even 78 years just won’t do.
The Methuselah Foundation, a biomedical charity, for example, wants to “make 90 the new 50,” and scientists at one biotechnology firm have argued that, unencumbered by disease, the body could potentially make it all the

From Ancient Alchemy to Molecular Biology

way to age 150. Even more optimistic estimates put the number closer to 1,000.
Whatever the maximum human life span may be, people appear increasingly determined to find it — in particular men, who are more inclined to favor radically extending life, maybe even indefinitely. Last year, nearly 6,000 studies of longevity made

their way onto PubMed, a database of biomedical and life sciences papers; that’s almost five times as many as two decades ago.
Along with the creation of dozens of popular podcasts and a sizable supplement industry, that zeal has led to efforts to preserve organs, search out life-extending diets and even try to reverse aging itself. It’s the same mix of solid science, quixotic experimentation and questionable advice that has, for much of recorded history, defined the pursuit.
Continued on Page 23

Gazans Dream Of Going Back, Even to Rubble

An Indescribable ‘Mix of Relief and Grief’

By VIVIAN YEE and BILAL SHBAIR
CAIRO — It is almost over, the end so close they can practically feel the keys they have kept all these months sliding into the locks of their old homes, the doorknobs turning in their hands, the beds they will sink into for their first night’s peaceful rest in more than 15 months — their own beds.
With the first stage of a cease-fire in Gaza about to begin on Sunday, Layan al-Mohtaseb, 15, dreamed of being back in her bedroom in Gaza City, cleaning it as she used to before her family fled during the war.
“This time, it feels like we’re truly going home,” she said.
That may be true only for those whose homes are still standing after months of destruction. And there is always a chance the fighting might resume after the six-week initial truce if talks over a permanent one collapsed. But across Gaza, people were daydreaming of the first moments of peace, the people they would hug as soon as the truce took hold, the graves they would visit. They already knew they would be shedding tears, tears they hardly knew whether to attribute to joy or to grief.
If Wednesday night was for celebrating the news that a cease-fire deal had been struck, the following days were for making preparations. As the Israeli security cabinet convened to approve the cease-fire and hostage release agreement on Friday, Palestinians were calling around for trucks they could rent to move their things back to northern Gaza, or vans, or even donkey carts; they were packing up their tents, wondering where they would live if their houses were no longer there.
Fedaa al-Rayyes, 40, was already buying ingredients to make small festive sweets to welcome the war’s end. But the first thing she planned to do when the bombs and drones fell silent was to search for relatives she hadn’t seen in months, to find out who was still alive and to mourn for those who did not live to see this day.
“It’s impossible to describe this
Continued on Page 13

AMERICANS WARM TO TRUMP’S IDEAS, IF NOT TO TRUMP

NATION TURNS INWARD

Broad Support of Policies on Immigration and Gender, Poll Finds

By JEREMY W. PETERS and RUTH IGIELNIK
Many Americans who otherwise dislike President-elect Donald J. Trump share his bleak assessment of the country’s problems and support some of his most contentious prescriptions to fix them, according to a new poll from The New York Times and Ipsos.
A little more than half of the country expresses some desire to see Mr. Trump follow through with his harshest threat to deal with illegal immigration: deporting everyone living in the United States without authorization.
The poll, which surveyed 2,128 adults from Jan. 2 to 10, found that 55 percent of Americans either strongly or somewhat support such mass deportations.
Americans are more evenly split on whether Mr. Trump should implement tariffs on countries like China and Mexico, which he has vowed to do as a way to reduce reliance on foreign goods. Still, 46 percent say that trade with foreign nations should be subject to increased tariffs.
And a large majority is sympathetic to efforts to strictly limit how doctors can treat children struggling with their gender identity — an issue Mr. Trump and other Republicans made central to their campaigns for office. Seventy-one percent said that no one under 18 should be prescribed puberty-blocking drugs or hormones. The Supreme Court is expected to issue a decision on the matter later this year.
The poll tells the story of a country turning inward, where people are more aligned with Mr. Trump’s “America First” agenda than they were during his first term in office.
For a political figure so divisive — Americans view him more neg-

Continued on Page 20

TRUMP CRYPTO COIN The president-elect’s token surged in value ahead of the inauguration. PAGE 25

Polio Survivors Reject Kennedy And Pin Hopes on McConnell

By SHERYL GAY STOLBERG
WASHINGTON — Their numbers are dwindling now, the faded yellow newspaper clippings reporting their childhood trips to the hospital tucked away in family scrapbooks. Iron lungs, the coffin-like cabinet respirators that kept many of them alive, are a thing of the past, relegated to history books and museums. Some feel the world has forgotten them.
Now the nation’s polio survivors are reliving their painful memories as they watch events in Washington, where the Senate will soon consider the nomination of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a fierce critic of vaccines, to be the nation’s next health secretary. And they are keeping a close eye on one of their own: Senator Mitch McConnell, the former Republican leader.
It has been nearly 70 years since Dr. Jonas Salk’s polio vaccine was pronounced “80 to 90 percent effective” against the paralytic form of the disease. Although the government does not keep official numbers, advocacy groups say there are an estimated 300,000 survivors in the United States. Mr. Kennedy’s nomination has prompted some to speak out.



AUDRA MELTON FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Franklin D. Roosevelt was a backer of a polio treatment center in Warm Springs, Ga.

The movie director Francis Ford Coppola recently recalled being in a hospital ward “so crammed with kids that there were gurneys piled up three and four high in the hallways.” The actress Mia Farrow, infected when she was 9, posted a picture of a room filled with iron lungs on Instagram with the caption: “No RFK Jr. we cannot go back to this. # polio.”
Continued on Page 19

INTERNATIONAL 4-13

South Korean President’s Plight

Yoon Suk Yeol was formally arrested, and instead of a hilltop mansion, his abode will remain a jail cell. PAGE 6

A Diplomat Goes to War

Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken became the face of U.S. involvement in conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza. PAGE 8

NATIONAL 14-25

‘I’m Urging You Not to Run’

Chuck Schumer swallowed concerns about President Biden’s candidacy for months. Then he made a plea for Mr. Biden to drop out of the race. PAGE 22



SPORTS 30-33

A Clash of M.V.P. Candidates

Sunday’s divisional-round playoff game between the Bills and the Ravens could help define the legacies of Josh Allen, left, and Lamar Jackson. PAGE 30

METROPOLITAN

Affording Life in the City

New York residents offer their big ideas to address sky-high living expenses by reducing the cost of housing, child care and transportation. PAGE 6

ARTS & LEISURE

He Won’t Stay on the Sideline

Go ahead and turn a camera on Deion Sanders and his players. The Colorado football coach is finding success going where others haven’t. PAGE 10

SUNDAY OPINION

James Pogue

PAGE 6



SUNDAY STYLES

A Legacy in Biden Blue

Looking back at Joe, Jill and the last four years of their fashions. What will we remember? PAGE 11

Counterculture Oasis Endures

Topanga Canyon lost some landmarks in the Palisades fire, but the close-knit rural enclave still stands. PAGE 1

SUNDAY BUSINESS

Sweet Talk Me, ChatGPT

A 28-year-old woman programmed an A.I. boyfriend to be a flirtatious conversationalist and spent hours chatting with him. Then she told her husband they were having sex. PAGE 4

The Brand Behind Tech Pants

With products that can exist alongside both fashion labels and outdoor gear, Vuori has become a major player in the athleisure market. But, its founder says, Vuori is still in its “early days.” PAGE 1

