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H BIG SPRING HERALD

THURSDAY

DECEMBER 26, 2013



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VOLUME 109, NUMBER 60

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As expected, county to apply for road rehab grants

By **STEVE REAGAN**
 Staff Writer

Sometime in the next 30 days, Howard County officials are expected to formally apply for more than \$3 million in state grants to begin the process of rehabilitating county roads.

Several county roads in this area have been adversely af-

ected by the heavy influx of oilfield-related traffic and officials are looking to the state as a possible way to pick up at least part of the repair bill.

Commissioners this week held a public hearing on plans to participate in a grant program administered by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), which will disburse more than \$200

million to counties whose road infrastructure had been significantly damaged as a result of the recent oil boom.

County Judge Mark Barr said Howard is eligible for between \$3 million and \$4 million in grant money, "so you can see that this is a pretty good deal for us."

Officials anticipate using the money on road repair in

the northern and southwestern parts of the county — areas where oilfield traffic has been the busiest.

"You can't anticipate future traffic," Road and Bridge Administrator Brian Klinksiek said, "so we're only going with roads we can prove have been damaged (by oilfield traffic) right now."

Klinksiek said that \$3 mil-

lion would only pay for a fraction of the total needed to fully repair county roads, but the money would be invaluable nonetheless.

"There's about \$17 million worth of work needed on county roads, but the entire county should see a benefit from this," he said. "This

See **GRANTS**, Page 3



Students from the Dance Gallery entertain Marcy House residents, visitors and staff recently. "The little dancers love showing what they have learned and we really love to see the residents' faces light up," said Stevi McKinnon, Dance Gallery instructor. "Marcy house has enough space for our dancers to spread out and do their routine to the fullest."

Courtesy photos

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 Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. If you miss your paper, please call (432) 263-7331 before 6 p.m. weekdays.



Texas cracks down on overdue book crooks

By **WILL WEISSERT**

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas — Call it throwing the book at the bookworms.

A Texas man who was arrested for failing to return an overdue library book ignited an online flurry of snarky comments and headlines about the Lone Star State extending its tough-on-crime

bravado to books. But such cases aren't unheard of, and many communities faced with shrinking budgets and rising costs have ordinances calling for fines or even arrest warrants when library property isn't returned.

In Texas alone, the issue has cost libraries an estimated \$18 million.

Jory Enck learned that the

hard way. He was arrested for not returning a GED study guide that he checked out three years ago in the Central Texas community of Copperas Cove. Enck declined comment to The Associated Press, but he told the Killeen Daily Herald that he wouldn't set foot in a library again: "I think I will probably just purchase a book from Amazon."

A Texas state law took effect in September that defines the failure to return library books as theft. The law, which doesn't trump stricter community ordinances, mandates up to a \$100 fine per offense.

Other states also call for fines or even arrest warrants

See **BOOKS**, Page 3

By **JENNIFER AGIESTA**

Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Ready to ring in the new year, Americans look ahead with optimism, according to a new AP-Times Square New Year's Eve poll. Their ratings of the year gone by? Less than glowing.

What the public thought of 2013:

GOOD YEAR OR GOOD RIDDANCE?

On the whole, Americans rate their own experience in 2013 more positively than negatively, but when asked to assess the year for the United States or the world at large, things turn sour.

—All told, 32 percent say 2013 was a better year for them than 2012, while 20 percent say it was worse and 46 percent say the two years were really about the same. Young people were more apt to see improvement: 40 percent of people under age 30 called 2013 a better year than 2012, compared with 25 percent of people age 65 or older.

—The public splits evenly on how the year turned out for the country, 25 percent saying it was better than 2012, 25 percent saying it was worse. As with most questions about the state of affairs in the U.S. these days, there's a sharp partisan

Eighteen percent say they're not planning to celebrate on New Year's Eve, and 9 percent say there's no one with whom they'd like to party, preferring instead their pillow, TiVo or their own thoughts."

divide. Democrats are more apt to say the U.S. turned out better in 2013 than 2012 (37 percent) than are Republicans (17 percent).

—Thinking about the world at large, 30 percent say 2013 was worse than 2012, while just 20 percent say it was better.

But the outlook for the new year is positive: 49 percent think their own fortunes will improve in 2014, 14 percent are anticipating the new year to be a downgrade from the old. Thirty-four percent say they don't expect much to change.

WHERE'S THE PARTY?

Most Americans — 54 percent — say they'll be ringing in the new year at home, while 1 in 5 are

See **2014**, Page 3

Blum's JEWELERS
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 Have A Happy New Year!
 See You In 2014!*






Obituaries

Aida I. Sanford

Aida I. Sanford, 92, of Big Spring, Texas, died Wednesday, Dec. 25, 2013, at Lamun Lusk Sanchez Texas State Veterans Home. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Today's Weather

Local 5-Day Forecast

Fri 12/27	Sat 12/28	Sun 12/29	Mon 12/30	Tue 12/31
				
59/35 Plentiful sunshine. High 59F. Winds light and variable.	63/35 A few clouds. Highs in the low 60s and lows in the mid 30s.	44/25 Mix of sun and clouds. Highs in the mid 40s and lows in the mid 20s.	54/31 Abundant sunshine. Highs in the mid 50s and lows in the low 30s.	63/37 Times of sun and clouds. Highs in the low 60s and lows in the upper 30s.
Sunrise: 7:46 AM Sunset: 5:49 PM	Sunrise: 7:46 AM Sunset: 5:50 PM	Sunrise: 7:46 AM Sunset: 5:50 PM	Sunrise: 7:47 AM Sunset: 5:51 PM	Sunrise: 7:47 AM Sunset: 5:52 PM

AmericanProfile

CELEBRATING THE AMERICAN SPIRIT

Fire/EMS

The Big Spring Fire Department and Emergency Medical Services reported the following activity:

- Monday:
- TRAUMA call reported at the 600 block of Bell. One patient transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center (SMMC).
 - MEDICAL call reported at the 1200 block of Pennsylvania. One patient transported to SMMC.
- Tuesday:
- TRAFFIC ACCIDENT was reported at the intersection of Rice and Highway 350. No transport.
 - MEDICAL call reported at the 800 block of East 13th St. No transport.
- Wednesday:
- MEDICAL call reported at the 900 block of Northwest 1st St. One patient transported to SMMC.
 - MEDICAL call reported at the 1900 block of North Highway 87. One patient transported to SMMC.
 - TRAUMA call reported at the intersection of Highway 350 and Hilltop Rd. One patient transported via Air Evac.
 - TRAUMA call reported at the 1800 block of North Highway 87. One patient transported to SMMC.
 - MEDICAL call reported as the 100 block of Washington Boulevard. One patient transported to SMMC.
 - MEDICAL call reported on Pine St. One patient transported to SMMC.
 - MEDICAL call reported at the 1700 block of Owens. One patient transported to SMMC.
 - TRAUMA call reported at the 800 block of West FM 700. One patient transported to SMMC.
 - MEDICAL call reported at the 1800 block of North Highway 87. One patient transported to SMMC.
 - MEDICAL call reported at the 1600 block of Lancaster. One patient transported to SMMC.

To submit a news item,
call 263-7331, ext. 230



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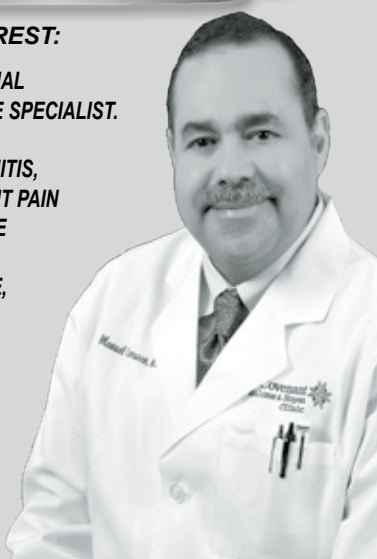
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Charles W. 'Mo' Utley

Charles W. "Mo" Utley, 94, of Big Spring, Texas, died Monday, Dec. 23, 2013, in a local nursing home. Graveside funeral services will be held at 2 p.m. Friday, Dec. 27, 2013, at the Peace Chapel at Trinity Memorial Park with the Rev. Raul Garcia, pastor of First United Methodist Church, Coahoma, officiating. The family will receive friends from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 26, 2013, at the funeral home.

He was born April 10, 1919, in Oran, Mo. and married Jessie Thomas Sept. 15, 1945, in Brownwood, Texas. He served in the United States Air Force for 21 years. During that time, he served as a crew chief on a B-24 during World War II, served in Korea during the Korean War and served in Germany during the Cuban Missile Crisis. After retiring from the Air Force, "Mo" worked for Steer Tank Lines for 22 years.

Marianne Turner

Marianne Turner, 86, of Big Spring, Texas, died Sunday in a local nursing home. Private family funeral services will be held at a later date.

She was born Dec. 31, 1926, in Germany and married James Richard Turner July 19, 1949, in Dallas, Texas. He preceded her in death July 11, 1998.

She worked as a LVN at the Veterans Administration Medical Center in Kerrville for 20 years. She was a Methodist.

Survivors include one son, Jim Turner of Centerville, Texas; five grandchildren; and 12 great-

He was a member of Wesley United Methodist Church, First United Methodist Church in Big Spring and most recently attended First United Methodist Church in Coahoma, Texas.

Survivors include a daughter, Carolyn Sue Keller and husband, John of Big Spring; a son, John L. Utley and wife, Fredye of Paducah, Texas; four grandchildren; eight great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

He was preceded in death by his parents; three brothers; and two sisters.

The family suggests memorials to First United Methodist Church, P. O. Box 50, Coahoma, Texas 79511.

Arrangements are under the direction of Nalley, Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Big Spring. Online condolences may be made at: www.npwelch.com

grandchildren,

She was also preceded in death by her parents, Benjamin and Alma Voland Teubner; one daughter, Mary Jane Melton; and one brother, Jerry Teubner.

The family suggests memorials to the Salvation Army, 511 W. 5th St., Big Spring, Texas 79720.

Arrangements are under the direction of Nalley, Pickle & Welch Funeral Home & Crematory of Big Spring. Online condolences may be made at: www.npwelch.com

Sharon Mathews

Sharon Mathews, 55, of Big Spring, Texas, died Monday, Dec. 23, 2013. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Roy Rodriguez

Roy Rodriguez, 47, of Big Spring, Texas, died Tuesday, Dec. 24, 2013, at Stanton Care Center. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Willie R. Barber

Willie R. Barber, 83, of Big Spring, Texas, died Tuesday Dec. 24, 2013, at her residence. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Norma Jean Woodruff

Norma Jean Woodruff, 48, of Big Spring, Texas, died Monday, Dec. 23, 2013. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Police/Sheriff

The Big Spring Police Department reported the following activity between 7 a.m. Wednesday and 7 a.m. today:

- JAMES LESLIE INGRAM, 45, of 1100 West 2nd St. was arrested Tuesday on a charge of violation of protective order – going to or near residence/employment/school.
- ANTONIO R. GUERRERO, 40, of 600 S. Douglas, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of assault – family violence, threat or offensive touch.
- LORYN REA ESCOVEDO, 20, of 1304 S. Nolan, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of public intoxication.
- RODOLFO HERNANDEZ OLIVAS, 50, of 1206 S. Monticello, was arrested Tuesday on a charge of public intoxication.
- BURGLARY OF A VEHICLE was reported at 1 Courtney Place and the 600 block of Ridglea.
- CRIMINAL MISCHIEF was reported at the 1400 block of Tucson.
- BURGLARY OF A BUILDING was reported at the 600 block of Settles.
- UNWANTED SUBJECT was reported at the 1700 block of West Third St.
- SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY was reported at the 200 block of Dillsworth and the 100 block of East Third St.
- THEFT was reported at the 2700 block of Coronado.
- DOMESTIC DISTURBANCE was reported at the 3300 block of West Highway 80 and the 1400 block of North Highway 87.

The Howard County Sheriff's office reported the following activity:

- Note – Officials with the Howard County Jail reported having 70 inmates at the time of this report.
- RICHARD D. MCCUTCHAN was booked by BSPD on a charge of driving while license invalid with previous conviction/suspension without final resolution.
- SARAH NICOLE DUNLAP was booked by HCSO to begin sentence for theft of property \$500 but less than \$1,500.

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Take Note

• Big Spring Second Chance Rescue (BSSCR) is in need of donations to help spay and neuter rescued dogs, so they can go to a home. The canine rescue organization has incurred a lot of expenses in obtaining its 501c3 status along with trying to obtain a Tax ID and subsequent Texas filling fees. Just to file the 501c3 cost the rescue more than \$500. Any amount is not too small. Make checks payable to BSSCR, P.O. Box 2775, Big Spring, Texas, 79720; by credit card - 432-816-2555; or at Highland Animal Clinic, 3600 S. Hwy. 87, Big Spring, Texas 79720; or <http://www.youcaring.com/pet-expenses/bsscr/74800>

• Big Spring RSVP is celebrating the 2014 Martin Luther King Jr. Day of

Service through Jan. 20 by coordinating a local book drive benefitting the children of West, Texas. RSVP volunteers will collect new or gently used children's books at the Big Spring Senior Center, 1901 Simler Avenue from 7 a.m. to 3 p.m.

• Hangar 25 Air Museum's annual fundraiser is coming up in January. The Silver Wings Ball will be Saturday, Jan. 11, 2014, at the Hotel Settles. Evening events begin at 6 p.m. with a cocktail hour. Join us for a night of fine dining and dancing. Contact Hangar 25 Air Museum to purchase tickets for underwriting and sponsor opportunities. Underwriting opportunities range from \$250 to \$5,000. All underwriters will receive two tickets

to the event and advertisement opportunities. Tickets for the event are \$50. Tickets for a chance to win a nights stay at the Hotel Settles are \$10 or six for \$50.

• The Big Spring Pow Wow Committee meets at 7:30 p.m. on the first Monday of each month at the Sparenburg Building, 309 S. Main. Whether you are a Native American or interested in Native American culture and would like to be a part of the 10th anniversary of the Big Spring Pow Wow, you are invited. For more information, call Richard Lesser at 432-935-0125 or Randy McKinney at 432-267-4843.

• The Big Spring State Hospital Community Relations office is accepting donations of magazines. They should be brought to the Community Relations office on campus.

gram serving victims of all violent crime, including, but not limited to violent crimes of assault, sexual assault and domestic violence. Victim Services advocates are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to provide crisis intervention or accompaniment to the hospital and law enforcement agencies as needed. If you can commit to 30-hour training, an interview process background check and attend training. We need you. For more information, call Linda Calvio at 432-263-3312.

2014

Continued from Page 1

heading to a friend's or family member's house. Only 8 percent say they'll go to a bar, restaurant or other organized event.

—Younger Americans are least apt to spend the holiday at home: 39 percent of those under age 30 will celebrate at home, 33 percent at someone else's home, 13 percent at a bar or other venue.

—Regardless of their own time zone, nearly 6 in 10 say they'll watch at least some of the celebration from New York City's Times Square.

COUNTDOWN COMPANIONS

Wherever they're spending the holiday, most Americans prefer the company of family. Asked with whom they

want to be when the clock strikes midnight, 83 percent name a family member.

—On a holiday often sealed with a kiss, nearly 4 in 10 say they most want to be next to their spouse, and 13 percent cite a significant other or romantic interest as a preferred companion. Parents like to be with their children, more than the children like to be with their parents.

—Less conventional choices: 2 percent cite their pets, 3 percent God, Jesus or their religious congregation, and less than 1 percent said they wanted to ring it in with their co-workers.

—Of course, some opt out altogether: 18 percent say they're not planning to celebrate on New Year's Eve, and 9 percent say there's no one with whom they'd like to party, preferring instead their pillow, TiVo or their own

thoughts.

WHAT MATTERED IN NEWS

The implementation of the health care law topped the list of the most important news stories of 2013, with 26 percent citing it. In an Associated Press survey of news directors and editors, 45 of 144 journalists surveyed called the health care rollout their top story.

In the AP-Times Square poll, the death of Nelson Mandela occurred as the poll was underway. It rose quickly, with 8 percent naming it as the most important news of the year, matching the share citing the federal government's budget difficulties or shutdown.

The budget fight, which led to a partial shutdown of the federal government in October, was rated extremely or very important by

60 percent of Americans, and prompted rare bipartisan agreement. About two-thirds in each major party, 65 percent of Republicans and 63 percent of Democrats, rated it highly important.

A majority said the Boston Marathon bombings were extremely or very important, and 47 percent considered the national debate over gun laws that important.

POP CULTURE: MOSTLY FORGETTABLE MOMENTS

Miley Cyrus's MTV Video Music Awards performance. The launch of "Lean In." Apologies from Paula Deen and Lance Armstrong. Walter White's exit and the entrance of the Netflix series "House of Cards." What do they all have in common? More Americans say these pop culture moments were more

forgettable than memorable.

Just one pop culture moment was deemed more memorable than forgettable: The birth of Prince George to Britain's Prince William and his wife, Kate.

—Among men, 64 percent called the debate on work-life balance sparked by the book "Lean In" and other writings forgettable. About half of women agreed.

—About 1 in 5 younger Americans said the launch of original programming through streaming services like Netflix or Hulu was a memorable moment, about doubling the share among those age 50 and up.

—Residents of the West were more likely than others to consider memorable the San Francisco "Batkid" (31 percent) or the final season of the series "Break-

ing Bad" (19 percent). The AP-Times Square New Year's Eve Poll was conducted by GfK Public Affairs and Corporate Communications from Dec. 5-9 and involved online interviews with 1,367 adults. The survey has a margin of sampling error of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents.

The survey was conducted using KnowledgePanel, a probability-based Internet panel designed to be representative of the U.S. population. Respondents to the survey were first selected randomly, using phone or mail survey methods, and were later interviewed online. People selected for KnowledgePanel who didn't otherwise have access to the Internet were provided with the ability to access the Internet at no cost to them.

BOOKS

Continued from Page 1

in such cases, including Iowa — where an overdue-book offender was jailed for a week — Vermont and Maine.

In Copperas Cove, about 70 miles northwest of Austin, a 2002 ordinance mandates a \$200 fine for each library item that goes unreturned 20 days after a written notice is sent demanding its return. If the fine isn't paid, the municipal court issues a warrant, city spokesman Kevin Keller said. Keller said he didn't know how many people had been jailed on library-related offenses.

"I was a police officer for 12 years, and while it wasn't a regular daily thing, we had maybe a couple of these a year," he said, adding that he didn't know why Enck's arrest in October got so much attention.

In that case, police were called to the 22-year-old's apartment on an unrelated distur-

bance charge, but officers arrested him after finding a past warrant for the study guide. Enck was released on a \$200 bond, requested time-served — and returned the book. He said he couldn't do it earlier because he checked it out before beginning a three-year prison term for robbery.

Being jailed for absconding with library materials "is an uncommon occurrence, but can happen once in a while," said Mark Gould of the Chicago-based American Library Association. But he said there was no accurate count on how many states and communities issue arrest warrants.

It's an issue that has cost libraries a lot of money. Nearly 150 libraries in Texas participated in a survey earlier this year that found 966,000 items were checked out long enough to be considered lost, with the total cost exceeding \$18.2 million, said Gloria Meraz, a spokeswoman for the Texas Library Associa-

tion.

Among the most notable library-related arrests came in 2011, when a man from Newton, Iowa, served more than a week in jail for failing to return 11 library books and six CDs worth \$770. Iowa law classifies failure to return library materials as theft, and the town has a 1993 ordinance, said Sue Padilla, director of the Newton library.

Padilla said she saw a spike in returned overdue materials after the arrest.

"We did notice that some things that had been out for quite a while did suddenly come back," she said.

The library hasn't been back to court since that case, she said. She said going to court was a last resort, but that "we try to be good stewards of those things that were purchased with taxpayer funds."

Other notable cases include police visiting the home of a 5-year-old in Charlton, Mass., last year to collect overdue books. Also last year,

police in Freeport, Pa., called the home of a 4-year-old whose family had racked up more than \$80 in overdue fines for four books.

Back in Texas, two women in Baytown were arrested following traffic stops in 2006 and 2010, after police discovered they had outstanding warrants for unreturned library books.

Indiana-based Unique Management Services is a collection agency that works with more than 1,600 libraries nationwide to recover overdue materials and administer fines and fees. During sluggish economic times, libraries became more anxious than ever to recover unreturned books, said Kenes Bowling, the agency's customer development manager.

"They feel the budgetary pressure, no doubt," Bowling said. "But what we've seen over the years is that, no matter what the library does, there's still a percentage of folks who need third party encouragement."

That includes a woman whose excuse for unreturned books ranks as Bowling's favorite: He said she claimed the leg on her dining room

will free us up to use our existing resources in other areas."

The county must wait at least 30 days from the date of the public hearing to apply for the grant money, Barr said. Once approval is received, an advisory board must be appointed to help oversee the repair work.

If all goes well, the county could receive approval of the grant sometime in either February or March, he added.

Contact Staff Writer Steve Reagan at 263-7331 ext. 235 or by e-mail at reporter@bigspringherald.com

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL
24th & Johnson 267-8288

Margaretta Hudson, 90, died Sunday. Graveside services will be at 3 p.m. Saturday at Sunset Memorial Gardens in Odessa.

Norma Jean Woodruff, 48, died Monday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Sharon Mathews, 55, died Monday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Roy Rodriguez, 47, died Tuesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Willie R. Barber, 83, died Tuesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Aida I. Sanford, 92, died Wednesday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

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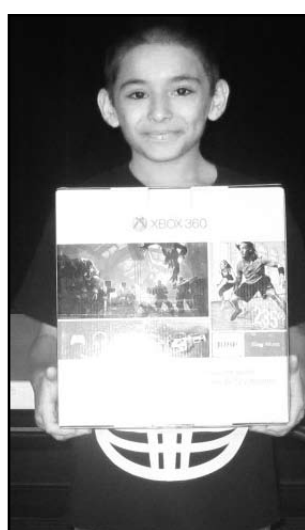
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School News

Washington Elementary School staff celebrate students' perfect attendance



Courtesy Photos

The Washington Elementary School staff ended the first semester by recognizing several students for perfect attendance. Branden Lopez, Antonio Guzman and Shelbie Mayhew had perfect attendance for the semester. Lopez received an X-box donated by the school while Guzman and Mayhew received bicycles donated by Greater Big Spring Rotary Club of Big Spring. Jaymie Rodarte, Cody Thompson, Fayth Myer, Josiah Agüero, Athony Bold and Savera Birdwell had perfect attendance for the six weeks and received scooters.



Courtesy photo

Ms. Sandy Ruiz's Coahoma Junior High School class bringing toys for the Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce Toy Drive on Monday, Dec. 16. Toys are given to Court Appointed Special Advocates of West Texas (CASA), Cossacks Motorcycle Club, Hometown Christmas, Salvation Army and Spring Tabernacle for distribution throughout the community.



Courtesy photo

Coahoma fourth and fifth grade GT students organized a food drive for Isaiah 58 in Big Spring. The group delivered more than 400 pounds of food to Isaiah 58 on Dec. 13. Pictured are (L-R) Back row: Richard Thurman, Kolt Redden, Brynn McJimsey (GT teacher), Colin Daniels, Kaden Myrick, Aubrey Green, Abbie Lopez, Jady Barnes, Tanner Atkins, Paden Reddick, Katelyn Johnson, Kobe Cervantes, Brianna Coskey, Hannah Sivinski. Front Row: JB Mashburn, Maddi Wallace, Seth Brooks, Grayson Jacobs, Vance Ott and Serenity Watts.

Big Spring ISD pride corner

This week BSISD hopes you have enjoyed celebrating the Christmas holiday with your family. We would like to use this time to recognize some of the families that are employees and part of our school family.



MELLISSA MILLER

One family name you might recognize quite easily is the Ritchey family — Mike, high school principal and his wife, Robin, junior high librarian; Phillip, athletic director and his wife Carmen, high school math teacher; they are also joined by their son, Ian, high school math teacher and head boy's basketball coach and daughter-in-law, Kelly, junior high science teacher. Another family team is the Kennedy/Osborn families, Jay Kennedy,

Associate Principal at BSHS and his wife, Connie, retired BSISD teacher are the parents to Taylor Osborn, high school writing teacher who is married to high school social studies teacher, Cody. Linda Battle, high school biology teacher is the mom to Jana McQueary, educational aide at Marcy and her husband Tom, who works in the maintenance department. Interim Superintendent Chris Wigington and his wife, Kelli, Kentwood Early Childhood Center principal, also have their niece, Ashely Phinney, high School English teacher working in the district. Spouse teams are: Pat Ray, special education at the junior high and his wife, Gwen, instruc-

tional aide at Goliad; junior high assistant principal Rebecca Otto and her husband, Bert, high school social studies teacher; Jennifer and husband, Clint Adams are the debate coaches and English and History teachers at BSHS; Russell Mullins, high school math and his wife, Deborah, who teaches Frenach at the high school. Danny Ferrell, assistant superintendent and his wife Donna, who works in the technology department; Nicole Woodard, Goliad teacher and her husband, Mitchell, high school track coach and they are related to Jennifer Chesworth from Kentwood Early Childhood Center; Donny Green, junior high Science Curriculum Coordinator whose parents were both retirees

of BSISD — Don and Betty Lou Green - and his wife, Debbie, the Chief Financial Officer; and Karen Thibeault, daughter to retired employees, Ned and Helen Crandall is married to Lawrence, assistant choir director at the junior high. Mother/daughter teams are: Cecilia Barrera, Kindergarten aide and her mom, Sylvia Two Bear, Marcy nurse; Jannette Westbrook, third grade at Marcy and her daughter Raela Edwards, second grade at Moss — these two worked as aides to get their start in the district and both now have completed their Master's degree while working for the district, Chandra Brooks, high school counselor and her mother, Kelly McBee, high school Career and Technology Education; Joy Horn, DAEP secretary and her daughter, Kami who is a third grade teacher at Washington. Sister-in-laws Kerri Whitehead, fifth grade at Marcy and Candi, Washington library aide. Lana Piercefield,

high school Career and Technology teacher bridges the district to Howard College with her two sisters, Gayla Williams and Lila Adkins, both long-time professors. And lastly, we have some employees who are proud of the fact that their family members are retired, but left a lasting legacy at BSISD. Those include, Kay Cook, athletic secretary whose husband, Don, who is retired after teaching and being a counselor at BSHS; D'Carlton Wilson, high school inclusion teacher is the daughter of Kay Wilson, who retired after 34 years with the district. Marcy Counselor Kristin Tubb is the daughter of Sheryl Gass who retired after 23 years of teaching students at Marcy Elementary. Family is important to the staff at BSISD, and although we realize this is just a representative of the many families who are employed with the district, we recognize them and the many hours they devote to your children. We hope you enjoy the time off from school to celebrate with your family and make special memories.

Melissa Miller is a educational diagnostician at Big Spring High School.

Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker
Happy Ending

West dealer.
North-South vulnerable.

NORTH
♠ 5
♥ A 9 4
♦ 9 8 5
♣ A K Q J 9 3

WEST
♠ A 10 9 8 7 3
♥ Q 2
♦ 10 3
♣ 8 6 5

EAST
♠ Q 6 4
♥ J 10 8 5
♦ A K 7 6 2
♣ 4

SOUTH
♠ K J 2
♥ K 7 6 3
♦ Q J 4
♣ 10 7 2

The bidding:
West North East South
2♣ 3♣ 3♠ 3NT
Pass Pass 4♠ Pass
Pass 4NT

Opening lead — ten of diamonds.
This deal occurred in the 1992 Grand National Teams. North-South ended up in the unusual contract of four notrump after refusing to accept East's attempt sacrifice. Four spades doubled would probably have gone down one trick — meager compensation for North-South's vulnerable notrump game.
West led the diamond ten, hoping his partner could win and return a spade through declarer's spade stopper, most likely the king. West appeared to have struck gold when East put up the king of diamonds and shifted to the spade queen, covered by the king and ace. Declarer won the ten-of-spades continuation with the jack (he could not afford to duck since East's ace of diamonds would score the setting trick) and took stock. **Nine tricks** — six clubs, two hearts and the spade already taken — were readily available, but there seemed no source of a 10th. A diamond could not be conceded to East, since his spade return would then sink the contract.
After long thought, South spotted a distinct possibility: If East started with four or more hearts in addition to the diamond ace he was known to hold, the contract was assured.
Accordingly, declarer ran dummy's clubs, producing this position as the last club was led:

North
♥ A 9 4
♦ 9
♣ 3

West
♥ 9 8
♦ Q 2
♣ 3

East
♥ 4
♦ 10 8
♣ A

South
♥ K 7 6
♦ Q J

The three of clubs destroyed East. He could not afford to part with a heart or a diamond, so he was forced to discard his spade as declarer let go a heart. South then conceded a diamond to bring in his game.

Tomorrow: Test your play.
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sudoku

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 through 9 with no repeats. That means no number is repeated in any row, column or box.

	4		6	1	8			
		3				6		4
		6	3	4				8
9	4	2		6				
3		2		8				
	5	1	4	9		2	6	
4								
				5				7
			9	6	1		3	

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5	4	7	6	1	8	3	9	2
2	8	3	5	7	9	6	1	4
1	9	6	3	4	2	5	7	8
9	7	4	2	3	6	8	5	1
3	6	2	1	8	5	7	4	9
8	5	1	4	9	7	2	6	3
4	1	5	7	2	3	9	8	6
6	3	9	8	5	4	1	2	7
7	2	8	9	6	1	4	3	5

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Area hoops teams return to action

By BRIAN MCCORMACK

Sports Editor

After a brief holiday break, Crossroads basketball will resume this week, with some teams taking the court today.

The Lady Steers will returned to action this morning at the Lubbock Caprock Tournament against the Lubbock Titans. BSHS will begin District 4-3A play Jan. 3 at Sweetwater.

The Big Spring boys will be opening a tournament in Bridgeport against Fort Worth Southwest

Christian on Friday at 10 a.m.

The Coahoma boys and girls are at the Mary Tatum Classic hosted by Reagan County, with both teams slated to play Ballinger today at 3 p.m.

Forsan's teams will play in the Grady tournament Friday. The Buffaloes will start against Klondike, while the Lady Buffs will face 3A Monahans.

The Howard College men are traveling to Phoenix, Ariz. For a three-game stint beginning Sunday against South Mountain Community College and extending through Tuesday.

Also headed to Phoenix, for a lengthy road trip are the Lady Hawks, but they will start their three-game affair Jan. 2 against South Mountain Community College.

Western Junior College Athletic Conference play will resume for both HC teams Jan. 6 against South Plains College in Levelland.

Contact Sports Editor Brian McCormack at 263-7331 ext. 237 or by e-mail at sports@bigspringherald.com

Orton will likely start vs. Eagles

IRVING, Texas (AP) — Kyle Orton and Jon Kitna sat at opposite ends of a couch in the Dallas Cowboys' locker room Wednesday, turned toward each other and started chatting.

They probably were talking about Dallas' offense.

Orton will make his first start at quarterback in his two seasons with the Cowboys on Sunday night, unless Tony Romo can recover from a herniated disc. Dallas will be playing a winner-take-all game at home against the Philadelphia Eagles for the NFC East title and a playoff berth.

Romo was nowhere to be seen in any of the public areas at Valley Ranch. He did not practice, and didn't attend a morning offensive meeting, according to coach Jason Garrett.

"I'm just excited," Orton said. "I think the guys have got a lot of confidence in me. I've got a lot of confidence in myself. I can fall back on my experience. I've played a lot of games in this league. I don't feel I have to do too much with the ball, just get it to 29 (DeMarco Murray), 82 (Jason Witten) and 88 (Dez Bryant)."

Garrett still hasn't ruled out Romo.

"I saw him briefly today. He's fighting through it. He's doing everything he can to get back. He's going through the rehab process.

"We'll evaluate him day to day, the same as most players who are injured."

Asked whether he thought Romo would play Sunday, Garrett said, "We'll have to see. It seems like he is feeling a little bit better."

Orton's most recent start was in Week 17 of 2011 for Kansas City in a 7-3 victory over the Denver Broncos.

He had started the season with Denver, but was released after losing the starting job to Tim Tebow, who led the Broncos to the playoffs.

believes the starters are comfortable with him.

"I was fortunate to get a lot of reps during OTAs (when Romo was recovering from back surgery)," Orton said. "I've been here a couple of years, so I've had plenty of experience with these guys."



Kyle Orton

The 31-year-old Orton has a 35-34 record in 69 starts in nine NFL seasons.

For Dallas, Orton has appeared in three games, completing 12 of 15 passes for 129 yards.

Garrett said even that limited experience was valuable.

"Any time, at any position, it's good to play," Garrett said

Romo has been an active participant in preparing game plans, and Garrett said Orton's input would be welcomed.

"We always want our players to communicate with us," Garrett said. "We have a lot of ideas as coaches. We want our players to be comfortable with us, and we want their feedback."

Orton said until this week he hadn't taken any in-season snaps with the first-team offense, but he

of a back injury.

The 15-year veteran also missed most of the 2008 season because of a herniated disc.

Though he seemed skeptical that Romo could play Sunday, Kitna said, "There are varying levels (of herniated discs)."

Quarterbacks David Carr, Tyler Thigpen, John Skelton, Caleb Hanie and Richard Bartel worked out for the Cowboys on Tuesday, but Garrett said the deciding factor was Kitna's experience and familiarity with Dallas' offensive system.

"I think he was gung-ho. He actually reached out to us," Garrett said.

"My comment back was 'Are you serious?' He said, 'Absolutely.' He spoke to his family about it, and it just made sense."

Kitna arrived back at Valley Ranch on Wednesday, also for the first time in two years, as the No. 3 quarterback or as Orton's backup.

Garrett said Kitna's job would be to run the scout team, simulating the Eagles' offense.

He's familiar with that role, because for the last two years he has been running the scout team for Lincoln High School in Tacoma, Wash., where he is head coach.

The 41-year-old Kitna had retired from the Cowboys after going on injured reserve because

Belichick questions NFL's offseason workout limitations

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y. (AP) — Patriots coach Bill Belichick is blaming recently instituted NFL work shortening offseason practice time for what he claims to be an increasing number of player injuries.

"I'm in favor of total preparation for the players for the season," Belichick said during a conference call with Buffalo reporters this week in leading up to New England's home game against the Bills on Sunday. "And I think that's been changed significantly and, I would say, not necessarily for the better when you look at the injury numbers."

Belichick said players are more vulnerable to being hurt because they're less prepared, and described the limits placed on offseason workouts — including training camp — as being counterproductive.

"Personally, I think that's taking the wrong approach," he said. "You have a gap between preparation and competition level. And I think that's where you see a lot of injuries occurring. We get a lot of breakdowns. We get a lot of situations that players just aren't as prepared as they were in previous years, in my experience anyway."

Belichick was specifically challenging several new rules negotiated into the NFL labor deal that ended an offseason-long lockout in 2011.

Teams were prevented from holding two-a-day practices during training camp. Limits were also placed on how many times players practiced in pads throughout the year. In the spring, offseason team activity time was reduced from 14 to nine weeks (10 if the team changed head coaches).

What's in question is whether injuries are, in fact, on the rise in the NFL, as Belichick suggested.

See **LIMITS**, Page 10

WR Andre Johnson a bright spot for Texans

HOUSTON (AP) — Andre Johnson is having another great season for the Houston Texans.

The star receiver certainly isn't celebrating it with the Texans mired in a franchise-record 13-game skid.

He told The Associated Press this week that dealing with another terrible season after already suffering through the lean times early in franchise history has taken the joy out of playing the game he loves.

"You don't expect to go back through it," said. "You think you're past that stage as a team ... it is no fun at all."

Despite his frustration with this year, Johnson has remained Houston's most reliable leader.

"It's amazing. Andre is just the consummate pro. He's always positive," interim coach Wade Phillips said. "He's always making plays. It's tremendous the number of plays he's made ... that just says so much about him. And if you know him as a person, he's even better."

This has been the most painful season for Johnson because the Texans were coming off consecutive playoff

appearances and were expected to contend for a Super Bowl. Instead, they need a win at Tennessee on Sunday to avoid matching their franchise-worst record of 2-14 from 2005.

If the Texans lose on Sunday, they will be guaranteed the top overall pick in April's draft.

Johnson is the only player remaining on the team from the 2005 season. He has been with the Texans since their second season after being drafted third overall in the 2003 draft.

He went through four losing seasons with David Carr at quarterback before the Texans picked up Matt Schaub and the franchise began to turn around. The Texans won back-to-back AFC South titles and looked to take the next step this season.

But Schaub had the worst stretch of his career and was benched after six games in favor of Case Keenum.

But the losing continued with the undrafted, record-setting University of Houston quarterback running the offense. Now it looks like Johnson is likely to be catching passes

See **TEXANS**, Page 10

Harden, Howard help Rockets knock off San Antonio 111-98

SAN ANTONIO (AP) — James Harden and the Houston Rockets are turning into a big problem for the San Antonio Spurs.

Harden scored 28 points and Dwight Howard had 15 points and 20 rebounds, leading the balanced Rockets to a 111-98 victory over the Spurs on Wednesday.

Each of Houston's starters scored in double figures as the Rockets improved to 2-0 against the Spurs this season, with both victories coming on the road. They also moved within 3½ games of San Antonio (22-7) for the lead in the Southwest Division.

"I think we can be very good," Houston forward Chandler Parsons said. "It's obviously a process, and we're getting better every single day. But when we defend like that, rebound well and get out in transition, we're tough to beat."

points in Houston's 112-106 victory against San Antonio on Nov. 30. The Rockets have won their last three against the Spurs dating to last season and are averaging 108.8 points over the last six games in the series.

"We just didn't give very good performances," Spurs coach Gregg Popovich said. "You can live with that from time to time. Nobody's going to play perfect every night. But you can't combine poor performances with a lack of physicality and a lack of discipline. They whipped us. They whipped us good. That's an embarrassing loss."

Parsons and Terrence Jones each scored 21 points for the Rockets (19-11), who shot 52 percent from the field. Jeremy Lin had 13 points, eight assists, two blocked shots and just one turnover.

The Spurs have dropped two of three

and split their last six games. They are just 3-6 over the last month against teams with a record above .500.

Super sub Manu Ginobili led San Antonio with 22 points, and Tim Duncan added 11 points and 14 rebounds. Kawhi Leonard had 13 points, but Tony Parker was held to six points on his 3-for-11 shooting.

"We didn't play well," Parker said. "Move on to the next one, it's the NBA."

San Antonio never recovered after Houston raced to a 27-9 lead. The Spurs were unable to stop Parsons' long shots, Harden's drives, Howard in the paint or Jones on the boards for follow ups.

"Our guys really came out on fire," Rockets coach Kevin McHale said. "They were excited to play. Really moved the ball; attacked. Terrence had great energy. He was running and

helping the defense. We really set the tone early and rode that the entire game."

Houston led 40-25 after one. It was the most points allowed by the Spurs in the opening period this season, and tied for the most in any quarter. Oklahoma City scored 40 points in the second quarter of its 13-point victory Dec. 21 in San Antonio.

"The first quarter was embarrassing," Ginobili said. "They picked us apart. We were not as aggressive as they were, not as sharp as they were and they scored 40. So it's the second time that happened and that's way too many."

Ginobili slammed the scorer's table with his right palm during a timeout with Houston leading 27-11.

After trailing by 18 points in the first half, San Antonio had

See **ROCKETS**, Page 10

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Tomorrow's Horoscope

Balancing Moon

Attention is a kind of payment. How much focus are you giving to something you don't even want? The Libra moon reminds us that value is not intrinsic. The cosmic scales tilt with our opinions, and each person has his or her own accounting system. Consider that there is no difference between an object of attachment and an object of aversion.



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ARIES (March 21-April 19). When desire is fed, the inner animal is satisfied — but not the greedy human mind, which, once sated, only develops bigger appetites. You'll have to convince the others to relax and be reasonable, and they may not listen.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You really can boost your immune system by thinking positive thoughts. But first you have to neutralize the negativity being offered up by your critical inner voice. It's as easy as saying "shhh..."

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You don't know enough to tackle the project you're considering, but that's not a good enough reason to pass on it. You'll learn. You always do. In fact, you can't help yourself. You prefer to be

constantly learning.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). If you expend extraordinary energy doing a seemingly ordinary thing, you'll elevate this aspect of daily life to the realm of "art form." This is the key to good living these days.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Instinct has led you to your current pursuit. You'll wake up ready to focus on a fresh initiative, though you may not know until after you get to work the significance of what you're doing.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). You have helpers and advisers, but ultimately you're the one who will bring a grand plan to fruition. You are tuned in to everyone and everything that can lead to your success.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You may not be able to remove the forces that oppose you, but once you accept that you are better for having to contend with them, you will start to see the unique advantages of your position.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your encouragement is potent, and those you cheer for will be moved to act confidently and accomplish what they didn't think they could. Use some of that supportiveness on yourself.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Look deeper into the things that intrigue and fascinate you. There's a

reason you are so mysteriously drawn by these pursuits, and they will connect you to good fortune.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You're a cosmic favorite these days, so be sure to want things for yourself and for others. Why not be greedy for love, goodness and health? One of your minor but very fond wishes will come true.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Despite an absence of obvious constraint, impediment or interference, you still may feel that you're not entirely free. Consider exactly why you don't feel at liberty to say and do as you wish, and you'll be closer to freedom.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Get focused, and you'll be astounded at what you can accomplish. With unflagging energy, you'll tackle the primary things you wanted to get finished before the end of the year.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 26). You only dish out what you would like to eat. So your offerings to life are delicious, and life repays you by feeding you all that your heart, mind and body needs. What you learn about your history and family will impact your plans. Something you own will be valued at a high price, and you'll get a chance to cash out. Gemini and Virgo people adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 28, 21, 4, 17 and 13.

ASTROLOGICAL QUESTIONS:

"Other people sound so passionate about their aims, and I haven't ever found anything that motivates me to want to work hard. Can a 36-year-old Cancer be successful without having a passion?"

Some believe that the most successful people are intensely passionate about their interest and it's this passion that motivates individuals to ever higher levels of accomplishment. There are also those who consider passion to be mythological. They note that victory often goes to the person who has the highest tolerance for boredom. In other words, when the work gets hard or tedious, the one who keeps on working anyway ultimately gets the reward.

Ruled by the ever changing moon, Cancer is a sign noted for shifting with the moods of the hour. With that flexible attitude come changing desires and aspirations. Accept that it's just a part of your makeup. The plus side is that it keeps you in the moment. Now you also must develop the emotional muscle tone to keep working in spite of your changing moods and interests. The "what" doesn't really matter as much as your commitment to do what it takes to get to your original goal. Do it, and not because it's your passion, but because you said you would.

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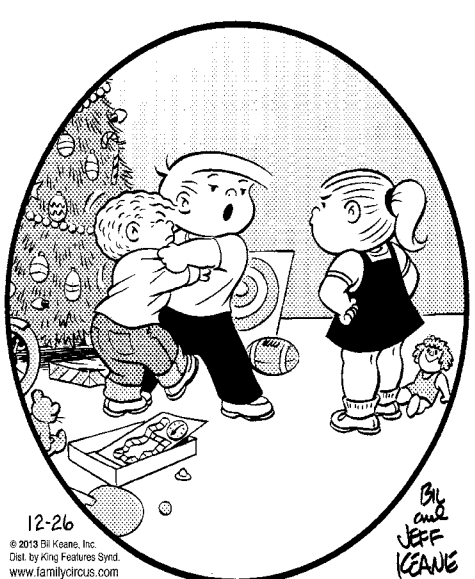
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6:PM	Jeopardy!	Mentir Para	Big Bang	News	Caso Cer-	News	Seinfeld	House	PBS News-	Cleveland	New	James Caan	Cops	Castle	Game	Jessie	SportsCenter	ball: Little
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1:AM	News	Impacto	Mod Fam	Mod Fam	Santa Diabla	Parenthood	Ground	News	Big Bang	Reign	River Mon-	Movie: The	Cops	ball: Grizzlies	Game	Dog	SportsCenter	College

DENNIS THE MENACE



"YOU SHOULDA SEEN THAT ON THE LADY IN THE CATALOG, RIGHT, DAD?"

THE FAMILY CIRCUS

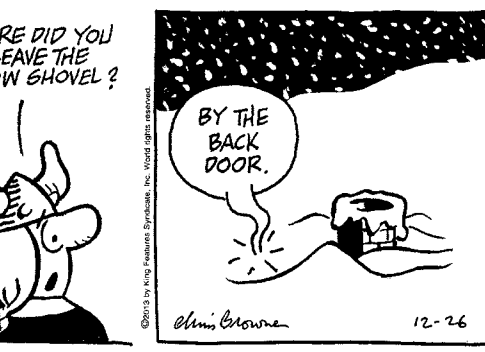


"It's okay to be naughty again. Santa's done watchin' for this year."

HAGAR



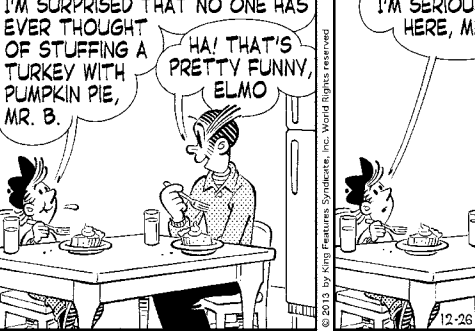
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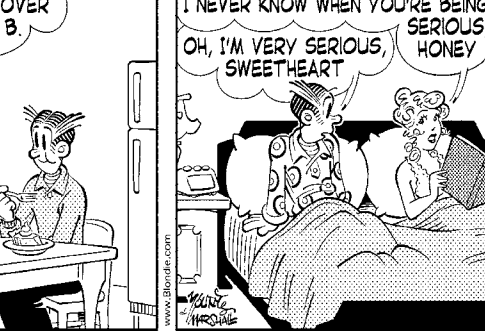
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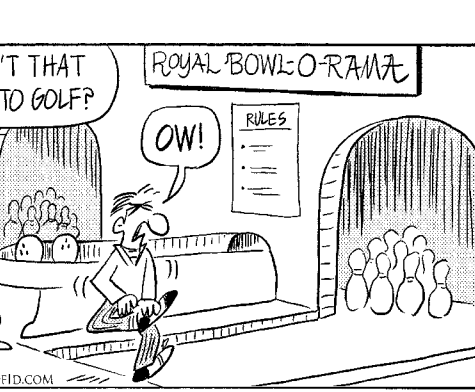
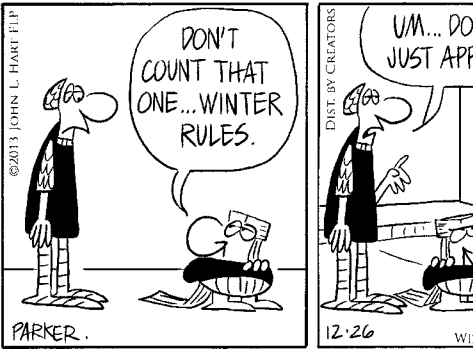
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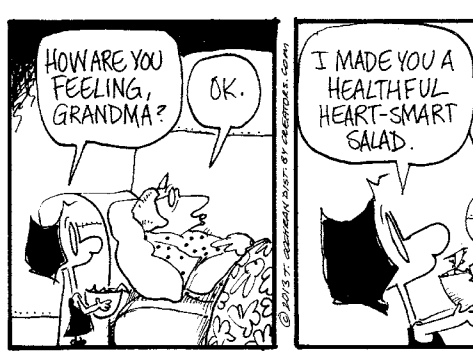
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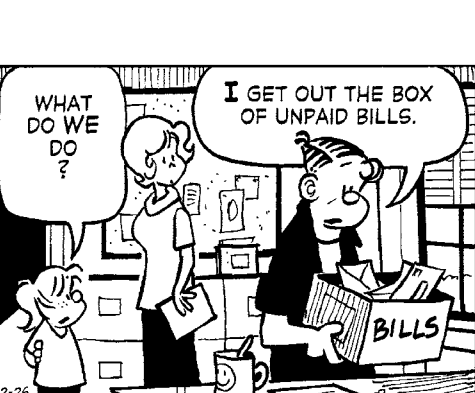
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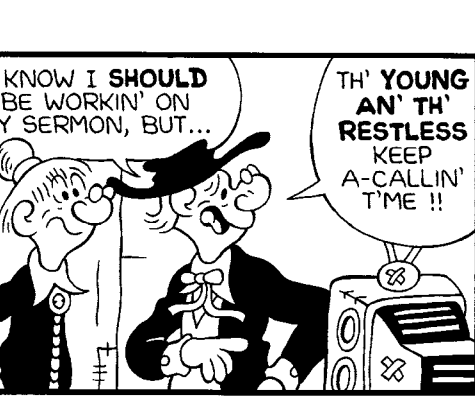
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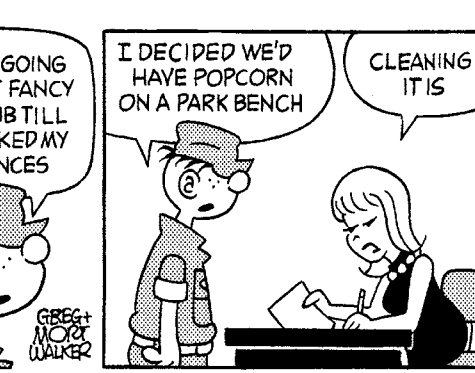
THE OTHER COAST



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This Date In History

Today is Thursday, Dec. 26, the 360th day of 2013. There are five days left in the year. The seven-day African-American holiday Kwanzaa begins today. This is Boxing Day.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Dec. 26, 1776, the British suffered a major defeat in the Battle of Trenton during the Revolutionary War.

On this date:

In 1799, former President George Washington was eulogized by Col. Henry Lee as "first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

In 1862, 38 Santee Sioux Indians were hanged in Mankato, Minn., for their roles in an uprising that had claimed the lives of hundreds of white settlers. The

Civil War Battle of Chickasaw Bayou, resulting in a Confederate victory, began in Mississippi.

In 1908, Jack Johnson became the first African-American boxer to win the world heavyweight championship as he defeated Canadian Tommy Burns in Sydney, Australia.

In 1933, Nissan Motor Co. was founded in Yokohama, Japan, as the Automobile Manufacturing Co.

In 1943, the German battleship Scharnhorst was sunk by British naval forces during the Battle of the North Cape off Norway; only 36 of its crew of more than 1,900 survived.

In 1944, during the World War II Battle of the Bulge, the embattled U.S. 101st Airborne Division in Bastogne, Belgium, was relieved by units of the 4th Armored Division.

In 1966, Kwanzaa was first celebrated.

In 1972, the 33rd president of the United States, Harry

S. Truman, died in Kansas City, Mo., at age 88.

In 1973, the demon-possession horror film "The Exorcist" was released.

In 1996, 6-year-old beauty queen JonBenet Ramsey was found beaten and strangled in the basement of her family's home in Boulder, Colo. (To date, the slaying remains unsolved.)

In 2004, some 230,000 people, mostly in southern Asia, were killed by a tsunami triggered by the world's most powerful earthquake in 40 years beneath the Indian Ocean.

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Answer to previous puzzle

ELF	CRAIG	SNIT
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THERE	ACAPPELLA	
SOUNDAS	ABELL	
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TIED	SHED	WED
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TORAH	LIT	
FITASA	FIDDLE	
ORATORIS	AAAC	
COKE	IRIS	NAACP
TEAR	OSLO	WRY

Newsday Crossword

- ACROSS
- 1 OH neighbor
 - 4 Touchdown predictions
 - 8 Until today
 - 13 Farm female
 - 14 High-calorie
 - 15 Rallying cry
 - 17 Peeve
 - 18 Reverse, as an action
 - 19 On-off switch
 - 20 Wit's responses
 - 23 Gold standard
 - 24 Grey's Anatomy sets
 - 25 Go bad
 - 26 Overwhelm with humor
 - 27 Suppress
 - 30 Greet the crowd
 - 31 Long ago
 - 32 Poll goer
 - 33 Audiophile's annoyances
 - 39 Reaches out to
 - 40 Green space
 - 41 Fisher of *The Great Gatsby*
 - 42 In a huff
 - 44 Not that great
 - 48 NBA stats
 - 49 Dallas ailer
 - 50 *The Mikado* locale
 - 51 Brunch selections
 - 56 It's ENE of Cleveland
 - 57 Nile beast
 - 58 "___ likely!"
 - 59 Anticipate, with "with"
 - 60 Airborne predator
- DOWN
- 61 Mia in *Pulp Fiction*
 - 62 Peanut-butter cup inventor
 - 63 Airborne predators
 - 64 According to
 - 9 Mess makers
 - 10 Class with mats
 - 11 Mattress-pad style
 - 12 Discuss
 - 16 Fledglings
 - 21 Be worthwhile
 - 22 Roundup sound
 - 27 Irreverent NBC show
 - 28 Cool and refreshing
 - 29 Nissan Leaf competitor
 - 30 Lo-mein cooker
 - 31 Declares acceptable
 - 32 Airport shuttle
 - 33 Cheerful
 - 34 Museum specialist
 - 35 Caribbean cuisine staple
 - 36 Deduction expert
 - 37 Light touch
 - 38 Farm female
 - 42 Absurd
 - 43 Numbered rd.
 - 44 Lose resilience
 - 45 Speak frankly
 - 46 Biblical dancer
 - 47 Auto tracking system
 - 49 Printing problems
 - 50 Poker pair
 - 52 Dog from China
 - 53 Resound
 - 54 Do a sketch
 - 55 Cereal serving

CEREAL-IZATION by S.N. Edited by Stanley Newman www.stanxwords.com

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Tannehill, Miami fighting for playoff berth

DAVIE, Fla. (AP) — Reeling from their worst loss of the year, the Miami Dolphins can still make the playoffs. Whether they deserve to is open for debate.

Miami can clinch the AFC's final wild-card berth Sunday with a little help and a win over the New York Jets. But a 19-0 loss at Buffalo cost the Dolphins control of their destiny.

"There's no question we laid an egg as a team, — coaches, players, everybody," offensive coordinator Mike Sherman said.

On a cold, windy, rainy afternoon, the Dolphins hardly looked like a team worthy of playing in January. They gained only 103 yards, their lowest total since 1999, and allowed 203 yards rushing, their worst such showing in six years. Beleaguered quarterback Ryan Tannehill limped out of the game with a left knee injury in the fourth quarter, then returned to be sacked for a seventh and final time.

"The problems that popped up in the game and things that need to be

fixed, we have to address," coach Joe Philbin said. "We have to play our best game of the year. It's a great way for us to finish the regular season. We've got a great opportunity."

And perhaps Miami (8-7) will bounce back. Even by NFL standards for unpredictability, the Dolphins have been a roller-coaster team.

They defeated three teams that have clinched AFC division titles. They also lost twice to Buffalo and once to Tampa Bay, both last-place teams.

Tannehill beat Tom Brady, Ben Roethlisberger, Andrew Luck, Philip Rivers, Andy Dalton and Matt Ryan. He's 0-2 against Bills backup Thad Lewis.

That's fodder for discussion in the offseason, which the Dolphins hope to delay. They're tied with the Baltimore Ravens and San Diego Chargers in the race for the sixth and final AFC playoff spot, and none of the three teams can clinch a berth without help.

The Dolphins will make the playoffs if they win, and if the Ravens lose or the Chargers win. The reason: Miami

wins the tiebreaker if all three teams finish 9-7, but loses if it's a two-way tie with the Ravens, because they beat the Dolphins in Week 5.

The Dolphins, Ravens and Chargers would all miss the playoffs if they lose and the Steelers win, which would give the final AFC spot to Pittsburgh. So the Dolphins' latest loss ensures they'll do some scoreboard-watching Sunday.

"That's the worst part — we had everything in front of us," safety Jimmy Wilson said. "We knew how important that game was, and to drop it like that without getting points or making impact plays or giving ourselves a chance to win is a big letdown."

Miami earned its most lopsided victory of the season against the Jets in Week 13, winning 23-3. That started a three-game winning streak that had the season headed in the right direction — until Sunday.

Familiar bugaboos resurfaced at Buffalo, including woeful pass protection, questionable play-calling and soft run defense.

"In every aspect of the game we failed to step up to the plate," Tannehill said.

The Dolphins have allowed 58 sacks, a franchise record and the most in the NFL.

Tannehill was knocked down by the Bills a dozen times and was forced to miss a snap for the first time this season, but afterward said he felt fine and would be able to play against the Jets.

Guard Sam Brenner was benched, the latest change for a patchwork line that lost two starters when a bullying scandal threatened to sink the season in November.

Run blocking also was poor, and the Dolphins netted 14 yards rushing, the third time they've totaled 20 or less. They tried 40 pass plays and only 12 runs, which renewed a recurring debate about Sherman's play-calling.

Meanwhile, the Bills' running attack wore down Miami. The front seven is considered the Dolphins' strength, but they rank 25th against the run.

TEXANS

Continued from Page 5

from another quarterback next season.

Johnson isn't spending time worrying about Houston's quarterback

situation, especially because the Texans don't know who their coach will be in 2014 after Gary Kubiak's recent firing.

"You just have to wait and see what happens," he said. "You don't necessarily know if it's going to be a rookie quarterback or a veteran guy. We don't even have a coach yet."

Johnson is second in the NFL with 103 receptions in 2013 and his 1,358 yards receiving

are fifth in the league. He tied an NFL record for most seasons with at least 100 receptions on Sunday, reaching the mark for the fifth time in his career.

This Sunday he has a shot at setting another NFL mark. Johnson needs 142 yards to become the first player in NFL history to have at least 100 receptions and 1,500 yards receiving in four seasons. This is Johnson's seventh season with at least 1,000 yards receiving and he surpassed 12,000 yards

for his career earlier this year.

"I think the ultimate goal is to win and win the championship," Johnson said. "So I think the records and stuff like that is something you'll look at once your career is over to see what you've accomplished since you've been in the league."

Johnson will turn 33 this summer, raising the question how much longer he'll be able to play at this level, and if time is running out for him to reach his goal of

winning the Super Bowl. But this tough season hasn't dampened his optimism that Houston will turn things around next year.

"You can make moves and put yourself into contention," he said. "There are going to be some decisions made this offseason with the new coach and everything like that. Hopefully, as an organization, we'll make some moves to put us in contention where we can go out and compete to hopefully win that Super Bowl."



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ROCKETS

Continued from Page 5

a couple solid stretches in the second half but couldn't make the plays it needed to complete the rallies.

"We toughened up," Parsons said. "We understand that this is a great team playing on their floor, and we have to get some big stops. Everyone collectively bought into that, we got some huge stops and we didn't stop running, either."

Leonard's three-point play on Howard's fourth foul pulled San Antonio to 71-64 with 4:47 left in the third. The

Spurs closed to 73-71 before Harden and Lin began draining long jumpers to help the Rockets pull away again.

Harden closed out the victory, scoring 16 points in the final quarter after missing the previous two games with an ankle injury. His second 3 of the game made it 100-90 with 5 minutes remaining.

"No, I just was getting the feel the first three quarters of who's making shots," Harden said when asked if he was waiting on the fourth quarter. "I missed two games. I wanted to get a feel for who was playing well. Coming into the game, I wanted to keep them involved and keep them going and try to get mine towards the end."

LIMITS

Continued from Page 5

Though he didn't cite specific numbers, Belichick said he was citing "a matter of record not opinion," in saying injuries league-wide have been on the rise over the past three years.

League spokesman Michael Signora disputed Belichick's assertions. "We carefully monitor player injuries," Si-

gnora said. "There is no evidence that the new work rules have had an adverse effect on the injury rate or that injuries have in fact increased."

The NFL declined to release its numbers. But according to STATS, the number of NFL players finishing a season on injured reserve has risen significantly over the past 14 seasons.

From 2000-06, there was an average of 239 players on IR. That average has jumped to about

314 over the past seven years.

The low over that span was 192 in 2001, with the high being 353 in 2010, but that was before the new offseason rules came into effect.

As of Monday, there were 288 players on IR, the lowest total since 287 in 2008.

Those figures, however, don't include players who have been on injured reserve and released by their teams during the season.

It has also been difficult to measure how many regulars have missed games due to injury.

The Patriots (11-4) have been beset by a rash of injuries to key contributors this season. They have six starters on IR, including tight end Rob Gronkowski (right knee), offensive tackle Sebastian Vollmer, linebacker Jerod Mayo, defensive lineman Vince Wilford (Achilles tendon) and safety Adrian Wilson.

Belichick insists injuries are up. "When you see the number as high as they are, then I don't think that's a randomness that's been two years in a row," Belichick said. "I've got to think there's some correlation there."


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