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BIG SPRING

VOLUME 110, NUMBER 60

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Fear not for I bring you good tidings of great joy

nd it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. (And this taxing was first

made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) And all went to be taxed, everyone into his own city. And Joseph

See **JESUS**, Page 3







Herald **Photos** by reporter Lyndel Moody courtesy one photo (top left).









Inside The Spring Town Plaza HOURS: Open Daily Until Christmas 10:00am - 6:00PM 12/29

53/32

Clouds aiv-

ing way to

sun . Highs

in the low

lows in the

50s and

low 30s

Sunrise:

Sunset:

Houston

Brownsville

40 sunnv

31 sunnv

36 sunny

41 sunny

38 sunny

36 sunny

37 sunny

34 sunny

32 sunny

27 cloudy

42 mst sunny

54 rain

46 rain

38 rain

51

32 mixed

Mon

12/29

Moderate

11

35 mst sunny

mst sunn

51

49 34

49

53

52

63

56

58 37 sunny

57

48 34

50

49

49

55

62

59

46

40

35 mst sunny

35 mst sunny

pt sunnv

56/35

San Antonio

Kingsville

Livingston

Longview

Lubbock

Lufkin

Midland

Raymondville

Rosenberg

San Antonio

San Marcos

Sweetwater

Weatherford

Wichita Falls

Minneapolis

San Francisco

Washington, DC 62

Sun

12/28

New York

Phoenix

Seattle

St Louis

Tyler

Sulphur Springs

7:46 AM

5:49 PM

Today's Weather

Local 5-Day Forecast

12/26

63/42

Mostly

sunny and

in the low

lows in the

60s and

low 40s

Sunrise:

Sunset:

Texas At A Glance

46/31

36 sunny

35 sunny

52 35 mst sunny

43 sunny

43 sunny

34 sunny

35 sunny

35 sunny

33 sunny

37 sunny

33 sunny

40 sunny

38 t-storm

31 mixed

49 29 mst sunny

40 sunny

69 49 mst sunny

First

Dec 28

Sat

12/27

Moderate

Fri

12/26

Moderate

The UV Index is measured on a 0 - 11 number scale with a higher UV Index showing the need for greater skin protection.

©2010 American Profile Hometown Content Service

82 70 pt sunny

52 52 rain

50 35 sunny

37

48 33 sunny

46 31 sunny

52 33 sunny

56

64

59

50

50

58

51

52

47

7:45 AM

5:47 PM

windy. Highs

12/27

67/35

Sunshine.

upper 60s

and lows in

the mid 30s

Sunrise:

Sunset:

7:45 AM

5:48 PM

// CELEBRATING THE AMERICAN SPIRIT //

Highs in the

12/28

45/32

Hiahs in the

mid 40s and

lows in the

low 30s

Sunrise:

Sunset:

7:45 AM

5:49 PM

Cloudy.

12/25

52/37

Sunny skies

Winds WNV

at 10 to 15

Sunrise:

Sunset:

7:44 AM

5:47 PM

Area Cities

Abilene

Amarillo

Beaumont

Brownsville

Brownwood

Corsicana

Dallas

Del Rio

El Paso

Fort Stockton

National Cities

Gainesville

Greenville

Houston

City

Boston

Chicago

Dallas

Denver

Miami

Houston

Los Angeles

Moon Phases

New

Dec 22

UV Index

Thu

12/25

Moderate

263448

Corpus Christi

Austin

mph

High 52F

BIG SPRING HERALD Thursday, December 25, 2014

- Calling it "a child safety measure," Scenic Mountain Medical Center will no longer publicize the first baby of the New Year. "Like many hospitals around the country, we've based this decision on guidance provided by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, which has cautioned against these kinds of announcements because of the potential risk of abduction or identity theft." said a SMMC spokesperson. "The birth of a baby is a joyous event and we know there is always interest in the first baby of the new year, but our first obligation is to the safety and privacy of our patients, which is why we have made this decision."
- Crossroads Hospice needs volunteers for patient care. Contact Eva at 263-5300.
- Scenic Mountain Medical Center will be hosting two public forums on re-enrollment to the Health Insurance Marketplace. Representatives will be on hand to answer any questions you might have and to set up appointments for enrollment. The first event will take place at the YMCA at 5:30 p.m. Jan. 14 and the second event will be at the Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club on Jan. 20 at 6 p.m. Both events are free to attend and open to the public. Refreshments will be provided. For more information or to RSVP, call Amanda Duforat at 268-4699.
- · Reservations are being taken for shirts and transportation for Howard County Day in Austin. The one-day event is meant to highlight the economic importance of Howard County to Texas law makers. Howard County Day in Austin is set for Feb. 10, 2015. Reservations are now being taken for a seat on a bus leaving from the Dorothy Garret Coliseum to attend the event. The charge is \$40 per person and the deadline to register for a seat is Feb. 2. Shirt order deadline for a Howard County shirt is Jan. 7. The cost is \$29. For more information, contact Teresa Darden at the Big Spring Economic Development at 264-6032.
- A hungry child cannot learn. Food2Kids Big Spring was created to provide nutrition for hundreds of children who do not get a substantial meal on the weekends. F2K began last November and this volunteer program now serves more than 300 children weekly. Once the need has been identified, F2K fills a sack of food to send home each Friday during the school year. You can help. Volunteers are needed and donations can be sent to Food2Kids - Big Spring, P.O. Box 1641, Big Spring 79721. Find us on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/ Food2Kids
- Order of the Eastern Star Big Spring Chapter 67 meets the third Thursday of each month at 219 Main St. Dinner begins at 6:30 p.m. Lodge meeting begins at 7:30 p.m. Everyone is welcome. For more information, contact Jimmy Ruth at 270-7263.
- The Cross Roads Young Marines are taking applications for another boot camp. For more

information, call 432-517-4791. Young Marines welcomes boys and girls ages 8 to 18 who are still attending school.

Take Note

263-5300.

- Crossroads Hospice is looking for volunteers. Come and be part of our team. Contact Eva at 432-
- The Big Spring Senior Center dance is open to all ages. No alcohol or smoking. Our parking lot is now well lit, and we are handicapped-accessible. Cost is \$8 per person.
- Victim Services is a non-profit independent community-based program serving victims of all violent crime, including, but not limited to, assault, sexual assault and domestic violence. Victim Services advocates are available 24 hours of 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 and a background check, we need you. For more information, call Linda Calvio at 432-263-3312.
- Big Spring and surrounding counties are in need of foster families. Foster parents are the caretakers for the children in the community who have been abused or neglected. For more information on becoming foster parents or adoptive families, call the Children's Protective Services office at 432-263-9669.
- The mission of CASA of West Texas is to promote and support quality volunteers who speak for the best interest of abused and neglected children in court in an effort to find each child a safe, nurturing and permanent home. We need your help. If you're interested in volunteering, contact Sara visit Basaldua at 1-877-316-8346 or www. BecomeaCASA.org or www.casawtx.org.
- Mobile meals is in need of volunteer delivery drivers. If you donate one hour per week to help deliver meals to the elderly, call Macaria Cantu at 263-4016.
- Spring Tabernacle Ministries, 1209 Wright St., has a brief, inspirational message before giving away food and clothing on Thursday mornings. It's a great way to work off community service and get help, too. Be there at 9-11 a.m. and get two for one, plus a rehab meeting.
- The Homeownership Preservation Foundation (HPF) is an independent national nonprofit dedicated to helping distressed homeowners navigate financial challenges and avoid mortgage foreclo-

If you want to stop mortgage foreclosure and are need of help, the time to call 888-995-HOPE is now. HPF can provide counseling free of charge, in English and 170 other languages, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. For free foreclosure help, call the hotline.

Support Groups at 7 p.m.

FRIDAY

- •7 p.m. The Stepping Stone Group of Narcotics Anonymous meets at Spring Town Plaza (inside the mall, across from the movie box office, next to Sears).
- AA open discussion meeting from noon until 1 p.m. at 605 Settles. Open Big Book study meeting, 8 p.m. until 9

SUNDAY · Alcoholics Anony-

mous closed meeting from 11 a.m. to noon at 615 Settles. Open meeting 7 p.m. until 8 p.m.

MONDAY

- · VA Alcoholics Anonymous support group, 7-8 p.m., Veterans Healing Center.
- · Reformers Unanimous International is a faith-based addictions program helping people find freedom from addiction.

Meetings begin at 7 p.m. Mondays at Trinity Baptist Church in Big Spring. Enter at the main entrance of the church.

• Stepping Stone Group

of Narcotics Anonymous meets at Spring Town Plaza (inside the mall, across from the movie box office, next to Healing Center.

Sears). Open meeting at 7 p.m.

TUESDAY

• Big Spring and Snyder Parkinsons Support Group meeting at the Big Spring Senior Center at 10:30 a.m. the second Tuesday of the month.

This is a group for all Parkinson's disease patients, spouses and caregivers.

For more information about the support group about Parkinson's Disease, contact Jo Bidwell at the Lubbock

APDA office at 806-785-

- VA Alcoholics Anonymous support group, 7:30-8:30 p.m., Veterans
- Alcoholics Anonymous, 615 Settles, noon to 1 p.m.; closed discussion meeting 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.
- Al-Anon, 615 Settles for family members and friends of alcoholics meets at 8 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

· RSD (Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy, a chronic pain disease), a new support and informative group meets at 213 Circle. Call Lucy at (432) 517-9207 for more information.

SATURDAY

Alcoholics Anonymous open discussion meeting, 615 Settles, noon to 1 p.m. Open podium/speakers meeting 8 p.m. until 9 p.m. Open birthday night, no smoking meeting the last Saturday of each month at 8 p.m.

Covered dish supper

Big Spring Refinery

To all our friends and neighbors, for giving us so much to celebrate this season!



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JESUS

Continued from Page 1

also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them,

bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward And it came to pass,

as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard Fear not: for, behold, I it wondered at those



Photo by Bruce Schooler

things which were told things, and pondered them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these

them in her heart. And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and

seen, as it was told unto

Odds & Ends

Salvation Army jewelry gifts spread beyond Boston

BOSTON (AP) — The Salvation Army says a holiday phenomenon in Boston — anonymous gifts of expensive jewelry — has spilled over to the suburbs.

The charity says unidentified donors dropped wedding and engagement rings into a red donation kettle in Weymouth, south of Boston. And a bracelet, diamond ring and diamond pendant were given in the central city of Fitchburg.

Both donors asked the items to be sold to help the poor and addicted.

The latest gifts come after a widow gave her wedding rings in memory of her husband, and another widow redeemed them with a gift of \$21,000. Then an Australian woman who recently moved to Boston gave a diamond cross pendant.

Salvation Army Major David Davis said Wednesday the organization is "overwhelmed by all that has taken place."

Small dog keeps mail carrier away in Spokane

SPOKANE, Wash. (AP) — A Spokane woman can't believe her small dog is so dangerous it's preventing Postal Service carriers from delivering her mail.

The 5-year-old Shih Tzu named Lucky is a little larger than a football. Owner Sun Moon tells KREM, "He's not a monster" and never bit any-

Moon received a notification letter earlier this month that said her dog was a danger. It said she won't get home deliveries unless she moved her mail box to the front of her fence.

Robbin Darst with the Postal Service in Spokane says the problem with the dog is not viciousness but being loose. Darst says all dogs have to be restrained from reaching the mail box.

Moon doesn't want to move her mailbox or rent a P.O. box.

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

Thelma Banks Manuel

Money, 93, died Saturday. The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m. Friday at Myers & Smith Funeral Home. Funeral service will be at 1 p.m. Saturday at Myers & Smith.

2015 Norman Rockwell Calendars are in!

Woman reunited with car stolen nearly 30 years ago

SALINAS, Calif. (AP) - A California woman was reunited with her classic Ford Mustang would see it again," she tried to register the car nearly 30 years after it told the Herald, stand- he had for 23 years. in the central California was stolen, when a man ing in a Salinas tow yard Authorities were inves- valley town of Hollister, tried to register the muscle car at a Department of Motor Vehicles office.

Lynda Alsip said she couldn't ask for a better Christmas present than the return of her forestgreen 1967 Mustang, the Monterey County

Herald Monday

"I never thought I next to her car. "It's like winning the lottery."

She bought the car for \$800 in 1985 when she was 17 years old. About a year later, it was stolen outside her Salinas apartment complex.

Police say the vehicle found at the

reported Department of Motor Vehicles in Salinas in September when a man tigating whether the man knew it was sto-

"It had been out of the system for so long that it came back with no California Highway Patrol Officer Jaime Rios said. "The officer did some digging

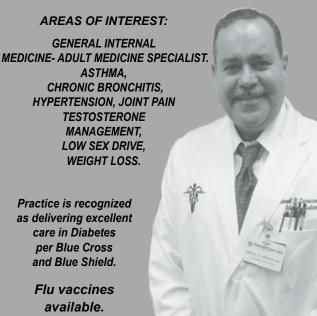
and found out the car was stolen in 1986 from Salinas."

Alsip, who now lives in the central California plans to have some work done on the car then show off her original personalized license plate, "LYNDA67."



MANUEL R. CARRASCO, MD

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JACKIE

GINGRICH

CUSHMAN

Jpinion

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

-FIRST AMENDMENT

Opinions expressed on this page are those of the Editorial Board of the Big Spring Herald unless otherwise indicated.

Yes, Virginia, there really is **a Santa Claus**

EDITOR'S NOTE: "Is there a Santa Claus?" is the question Virginia, daughter of Dr. and Mrs. Phillip F. O'Hanlon, put to the editor of the (New York) Sun in September, 1897. Her letter was received by Edward P. Mitchell, who turned it over to his associate, Francis Pharcelius Church, to answer.

With some reluctance Mr. Church undertook the assignment. The product of his fine nature, mellow wisdom and sound craftsmanship was the editorial article "Is there a Santa Claus?" most famous editorial article that has ever been written. It first appeared in the New York Sun in 1897 and has since been produced in every conceivable form, in every quarter of the globe.

The publication of Virginia's question and Francis Pharcelius Church's response is an annual tradition at the Herald. We hope you enjoy it.

'e take pleasure in answering at once and thus prominently the communication below, expressing at the same time our great gratification that its faithful author is numbered among the friends of

"Dear Editor:

I am 8 years old.

Some of my little friends say there is no Santa

Papa says 'If you see it in the Sun it's so."

Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?

Virginia O'Hanlon, 115 West 95th Street"

Virginia, your little friends are wrong. They have been affected by the skepticism of a skeptical age. They do not believe except they see. They think that nothing can be which is not comprehensible by their minas. All minas, virginia, whether they be men's or children's, are little. In this great universe of ours man is a mere insect, an ant, in his intellect, as compared with the boundless world about him, as measured by the intelligence capable of grasping the whole of truth and knowl-

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have no enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Not believe in Santa Claus! You might as well not believe in fairies. You might get your papa to hire men to watch in all the chimneys on Christmas Eve to catch Santa Claus, but even if they did not see Santa Claus coming down, what would that prove? Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see. Did you every see fairies dancing on the lawn? Of course not, but that's no proof that they are not there. Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unsee able in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what make the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, not even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding.

No Santa Claus! Thank God he lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Daily Prayer

celebrate this very special day.

her arm and foot on command. A

Reflections on the Christmas story

lmost four decades ago, when I was in Mrs. Carmichael's Sunday School class, I memorized Luke Chapter 2, (the King James version of course). It took hours of practice

and study, but the words still come when prompted by the line before. Below is the

King James Version with my comments for reflection.

"And it came to pass in those days that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed."

The world revolves around government and money.

"(And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria." Provides us with a place in

time for the story.

"And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city." No one escapes taxes or death.

"And Joseph also went up from Galilee out of the city of Nazareth into Judea, unto the City of David which is called Bethlehem (because he was of the house and lineage of David)."

It is important to know from whence we come.

"to be taxed with Mary, his espoused wife, who was great with child."

Family stays together through thick and thin.

"And so it was that while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered." Babies come when they want.

"And she brought forth her

firstborn Son, and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

You do the best you have with what you've got.

"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night."

While some are sleeping, others are working.

"And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them, and they were sore afraid."

We are often afraid when receiving a message or a messenger from God. "And the angel said unto them,

'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Don't be afraid of God's mes-

senger or God's message. "For unto you is born this day

in the City of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." A Savior came for me and you.

"'And this shall be a sign

unto you: Ye shall find the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." Where you live is not who you

"And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying,'

Messengers from God come with backup.

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!'

Praise God, and love others.

"And it came to pass, when the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, 'Let us now

go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which has come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us."

We have to check out God's message.

"And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the Babe lying in a manger.'

Sometimes we have to see it to believe it.

"And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child."

Once you believe, you must share with others.

"And all those who heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.'

Many will not believe you, but some will.

"But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart."

Keep God's message safe in your heart.

"And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them,"

Praise God for the messengers and messages he sends.

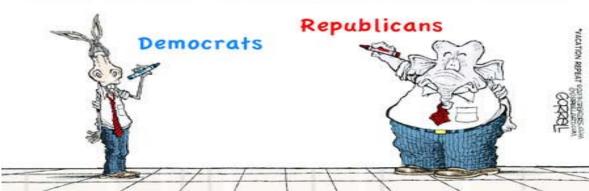
This Christmas season, stay keenly aware of God's messengers and messages, and acknowledge that you too may be God's messenger for someone else.

May you enjoy a very merry Christmas and a happy New

To find out more about Jackie Gingrich Cushman, and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit www.creators.com.

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CE C



Jahi McMath's incredible journey

ahi McMath is ALIVE." The very first column I filed in 2014 exposed the plight of a beautiful young girl, the same

age as my daughter, whom medical experts declared "brain dead" after a routine tonsillectomy gone wrong. Are you ready for the rest of the

story? Doctors told Jahi's mom, Nailah Winkfield, that her child's organs would "shut down" and her

brain would "liquefy" if kept on life support. Hostile hospital administrators in Oakland moved to pull the plug on Jahi. Medical officials callously referred to Jahi as "dead, dead, dead" and dismissed the child as a "body." Smug critics mocked and hounded the family to give up and let go. Jahi's life, they concluded, was worthless.

MICHELLE

MALKIN

But the experts and naysayers were wrong.

As Winkfield recently described in an open letter to supporters, "Jahi is physically stable. All of her organs are fully functional [and] her skin is flawless." After inspecting her latest medical records, two respected neurologists testified in sworn declarations that she is not brain dead. Video released by her family shows her moving

damage, "but it also shows brain structure and blood flow," Wink-

field noted. "I was told previously that it would be liquefied or have holes in it because it had been with out blood flow and oxygen for 9 months," she recounted. "That is not the case with my daughter. Every person is different and every person heals differently."

One year after callous and overconfident members of the medical and media establishments wrote Jahi's life off, the now 14-year-old girl is surrounded by the love and care of her mom, dedicated medical professionals and vigilant advocates

Lawyer Christopher Dolan continues to battle the state of California to reverse the "brain death" designation in court.

Volunteers maintain a Facebook page to share updates on Jahi's progress. And with the help of the Terri Schiavo Life & Hope Network, Life Legal Defense, Angela Clemente & Associates, The Wrongful Death & Injury Institute, New Beginnings and others who helped transfer her away from deathwish docs in California, Jahi will mark Christmas this year at a long-term care facility in New

Bobby Schindler, head of Terri's Network, told me this week that Jahi's family "has been blessed with countless numbers of well-wishers, letting the family know they are constantly praying for Jahi." The detractors and haters are

still out there. But as Schindler

observes, "Unfortunately, this is nothing new — my family experienced the same with [sister] Terri. In fact, it's been almost 10 years since Terri's death, and we continue to receive similar types

of mean-spirited comments.' Thankfully for society's most vulnerable members who are medically dependent, disabled incapacitated or potentially facing life-threatening situations, Bobby Schindler and Nailah Winkfield are keeping the faith. "Jahi's life is worth the fight," her mom insists. And that noble fight deserves far more support from those who've been sloganeering recently about how Lives

"The Bible tells us of Mary's great joy at Christ's conception and birth," Schindler reflects. "It also tells us of her great sadness at his unnatural suffering and death. This Christmas let us pray that God's will be done in 2015 for all his children — those in the womb and those judged not worthy of end of life care and protection.'

In an age where suicide advocate Brittany Maynard earned widespread praise and admiration for giving up on life, Terri and Jahi's families stand as pow erful seasonal reminders about my true heroes: those who fight tirelessly for the sanctity of life no matter how hard the journey

Michelle Malkin is the author of "Culture of Corruption: Obama and his Team of Tax Cheats, Crooks and Cronies" (Regnery 2010). Her email address is malkinblog@gmail.com.

Let us always remember, dear Lord, why we

recent MRI showed severe brain

Cat love is truly genuine

Because it's 10 percent devotion and 90 percent frustration and betrayal

SUE MANNING

Associated Press

LOS ANGELES (AP) The felines are fighting back — on the book-

Cats outnumber dogs in the U.S., but in bookstores, dog titles reign, the American Pet Products Association says. Fans insist felines are

getting more popular as they ride the coattails of Internet sensations like Grumpy Cat, Lil Bub and Nora, the pianoplaying cat.

For the cat lovers on your holiday list, several books challenge the notion that pooches get more play.

"A Letter to My Cat"

Actress Rosanna Arquette, model Kathy Ireland and animal behaviorist Jackson Galaxy of "My Cat From Hell" are among the celebrities who pen love notes to their cats in this col-

Dr. Betsy Kennon of Pittsburgh also contributes the story of Scooter, who was almost killed by a car but now brings joy to people also dealing with disabilities.

"The kitten was never going to walk," Kennon said. "I can't tell you why I didn't put him to

sleep."

As the cat struggled to pull himself along, one of Kennon's workers stuck a plastic bowl under his rump to help smooth the way. The cat became known as Scooter, and the bowl gave way to a kitty wheelchair.

In the six years since, Kennon and Scooter have visited thousands of patients at hospitals and nursing homes.

"For him, it's not a handicap," Kennon said. "This is the way life is and people take inspiration from him."



Leading the pack of popular cat books is one from down-in-thedumps Grumpy Cat — "The Grumpy Guide to Life."

The kitty celebrity, whose permanent downturned expression is caused by a medical condition, has another book, wrapped a TV movie called "Grumpy Cat's Worst Christmas Ever" and has her sad mug plastered on magnets, T-shirts, calendars and a host of other prod-

The latest book is full of Grumpy insight such as: "People are like balls of yarn. For the most part, they're boring and useless, but I still get a lot of pleasure out of watching them unrav-

"67 Reasons Why Cats are Better than Dogs"

With a few good reasons and dozens of wacky ones, this book supposedly explains why cats are better than dogs. For example, did you know cats are better companions, surfers and chess players?

Arguments are often deliberately outrageous or puzzling. Take surfing: Pictures show a dog on a longboard and a cat on a keyboard, showing both "surfing." **Author Jack Shepherd**

of BuzzFeed also claims cats are faster, smarter and take the best selfportraits. But Shepherd also

keeps it real, telling readers to get a dog if they want slavish devo-

Cat love is genuine, he says, because it's 10 percent devotion and 90 percent frustration and

"So what if they break your heart every now and then? That's how love is supposed to feel," Shepherd writes.

A few assertions might ring true to a cat lover, but the book hardly solves the age-old pet debate.

"Chicken Soup for the Soul: The Cat Did What?"

The leader in heartwarming stories rounds up 101 anecdotes from cat owners.

Contributor Jan Bono writes that a veterinarian told her it's normal for cats to eat plastic but most will quickly grow out of it.

After a year and a half, Bono is still waiting. Sandwich bags, plastic wrap, fake Easter grass, toothbrushes, combs if any part of it is made of plastic, her cat Simon will munch on much of

The book was published in tandem with "The Dog Did What?" and highlights Chicken Soup for the Soul's work with animals, including donating its brand of dog food to shelters and rescues, publisher and author Amy Newmark

'12 Days of Christmas' items cost more than \$116K

SEAN CARLIN

Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA—The cost of six geese-a-laying spiked considerably this year, while most of the items in the carol "The Twelve Days of Christmas," saw little to no in-

crease, according to the 31st annual PNC Wealth Management Christmas Price Index.

A set of gifts in each verse of the song would set you back \$27,673 in stores, an increase of less than \$300 — or 1 percent — from last year. But shoppers turning to the Internet would see a bigger bump of about 8 percent over last year's online prices, bringing the set of gifts in each verse to \$42,959. Buyers looking to purchase all the items each time they were mentioned in the song -364 that is -

would spend \$116,273, a mod-

est 1.4 percent increase from a year ago.

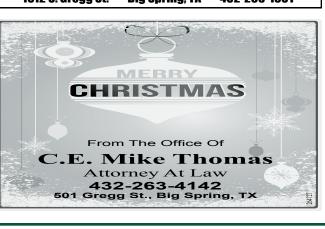
PNC's sources for the Christmas Price Index include retailers, the National Aviary in Pittsburgh, Philadelphia-based PHILADANCO and the Pennsylvania Ballet Company.

Here is a look at the full set of prices from PNC Wealth Management:

— Partridge, \$20; last year: \$15

See 12 DAYS, Page 6















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Jerry and Debbie Read, Owners

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263-6663

Bad Santa? Five tips on returning Christmas gifts

(AP) — As anyone who's received a drugstore cologne gift set well knows, even Santa Claus gets it wrong sometimes.

Friends and relatives? Yes, them too.

Hence the throng of customers who flock to shopping malls soon after the holidays to exchange or return lessthan-ideal presents. Retailers generally try to accommodate their wishes, or provide store credit. But it's not always easy.

A recent National Retail Federation survey of 60 merchant loss-prevention executives estimated that fraud related to returned items this holiday season will cost the industry \$3.8 billion. That's one reason many retailers are increasingly asking for identification and restricting how long a customer has to return an item, among other measures.

Likely to end up on the gift return queue in a few days? Here are five tips to consider before you head over to the mall or attempt to swap out that unwanted item purchased online:

1. KEEP GIFTS IN GOOD **CONDITION**

Retailers will resist taking back a purchase that's not in good condition or in the original packaging.

Whether it's clothing or consumer electronics, make sure the item is free of wear, and that you have all of the parts.

"The biggest problem is when you don't have accessories like a remote control or a battery," said Mike Abt, co-president of Glenview, Illinois-based Abt Electronics, one of the largest independent retailers of electronics and appliances in the country.

But what if you lost part of an item and want to return it? Try offering to pay for the lost accessory. That'll make it more likely that the merchant will take the item back and issue you a refund or credit, Abt said.

And don't think a retailer won't open the box



and take an inventory of the parts. Abt notes he's had customers bring back a box that looks like a recent purchase, but the contents were different.

"One time we found a bottle of Windex and a tomato soup can," he

2. DON'T STRESS THE RECEIPT

Having a gift receipt

handy in case it's needed for a return is ideal. But don't worry if you've misplaced it. Odds are your ID will do. Nearly 71 percent of retailers now require customers who are returning an item without a receipt to show identification, according to the NRF.

Target requires a receipt for all returns and exchanges, but in most cases, within 90 days,

it can verify purchases made using credit, debit cards and other electronic payment meth-

If you're being met with resistance, ask to speak with a manager. Often pleading your case to a store manager in person will be enough.

"Most retailers will comply with wishes to return merchandise." Abt said.

RETURN HEED DEADLINES

Be aware of how much time you have. It's not uncommon for certain items, like cameras and other electronics, to have a limit of 15 days for refunds or exchang-

That's partly because some consumers will buy some items, like a GoPro camera or a TV, for a one-time use. Then they will attempt to return it for a refund. The practice is known as "wardrobing," which alludes to a similar scenario: When someone buys clothing to wear for one night and then returns the item in exchange for a refund.

"Retailers can't afford to be too lenient with certain products," said Kathy Grannis, a spokeswoman for the National Retail Federa-

Check the store's policy online or the gift receipt for details on when the return window closes.

SELL THAT UNWANTED GIFT CARD

Got a Starbucks gift

card? Not a big coffee drinker? Several websites will pay for your gift card in cash. There's a catch,

though: You'll receive

less than the face value of the card. During a recent look at Giftcardexchangeday. com, a \$25 gift card for Starbucks brought up cash offers from companies such as GiftCards. com, Cardpool.com and eBay, among others. The offers ranged from \$17.25 to \$18. At best, that's a 28 percent fee to

5. ONLINE PURCHASE? **GO TO THE STORE**

wring some of that cof-

fee credit into cash.

If you received a gift that was purchased online, the return process typically means mailing back the item and waiting for a response, whether it's to give you a credit, cash or a re-

placement item. For presents bought online, but through a merchant with a brickand-mortar store nearby, skip the shipping and take the item to the

Most will accept items that were originally delivered by mail.

12 DAYS

Continued from Page 5

- Pear tree, \$188; last year: \$184
- Two turtle doves, \$125; last year: same
- Three French hens, \$181; last year: \$165
- Four calling birds (canaries), \$600; last year: same
- Five gold rings, \$750; last year: same
- Six geese-a-laying, \$360; last year: \$210
- Seven swans aswimming, \$7,000; last year: same
- Eight maids a-milking, \$58; last year: same
- Nine ladies dancing (per performance), \$7,553; last year: same
- performance), \$5,348; last year: \$5,243

10 lords a-leaping

- 11 pipers piping (per performance), \$2,635; last year: same
- 12 drummers drumming (per performance), \$2,855; last year: same

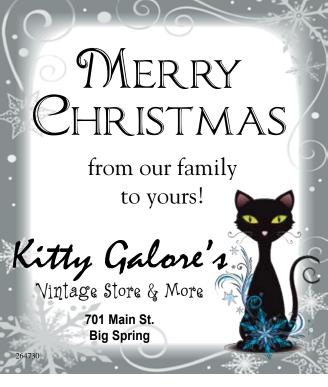
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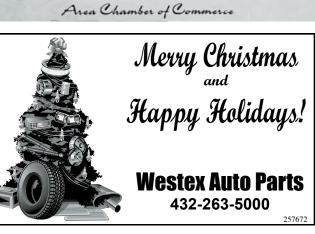
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bers earned a chair at All-Region Middle Band auditions held recently in Lamesa, six of those

BSJHS band nabs six first chair placing on All-Region Middle Band.

Fifty-three Big Spring Junior High Band mem-

section.

students earned first place chairs. The band had 62 students participate.
Students are group by their instrument

Honor Band Flute: Kaycee Regan, 1st chair (1st over all); Gabriella Medina, 3rd chair; Alexis Mojica, 5th chair; Alison Flores,

8th chair; and Abigail Flores, 10th chair.

Big Spring ISD

Clarinet: Kasondra Williams, 1st chair (1st over all); Jayden Torres, 2nd chair; Karleigh Moore, 3rd chair; Mariah Chavarria, 4th chair; Andrea Melendez, 5th chair; Brian Carroll, 6th chair; Mikayla Rober-

son, 7th chair; Katie Humphires, 14th chair.

Bass Clarinet: Madison Compean, 2nd chair; and Madison Kuykendall, 3rd chair. Alto Saxophone: Emily Hendricks, 2nd chair.

Tenor Saxophone: Armando Martinez 1sh chair (1st over all). Baritone Saxophone: Ethan Yarbrough 1st

chair (1st over all). Cornet: Mason Kirby, 3rd chair; Francisco Zermeno, 6th chair; Gabby Lopez, 7th chair and

over all); Zachary Whitehead, 2nd chair; Mateo Rodriguez, 3rd chair; and Kenra Thibeault, 4th chair.

Trombone: Robert Setalo, 2nd chair: Casay

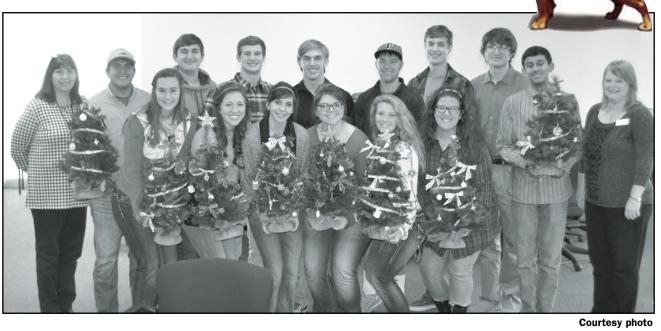
French Horn: Anisa Cervantes; 1st chair (1st

Trombone: Robert Sotelo, 2nd chair; Casey Shubert, 3rd chair; Tomas Tino, 5th chair; and DJ Molina, 8th chair.

See **BSJHS BAND**, Page 8

Chris Grisham, 9th chair.





The Coahoma National Honor Society spread Christmas cheer to Compass Hospice Patients by donating and delivering Christmas trees recently. Pictured on the front row are Kelli Schadel, Rylie Jacobs, Kaeli Yager, Erin Fontana, Alex Gibbs and Anna Harrison, back row, NHS Sponser Mrs. Brantley, Joseph Melendez, Richie Ewing, Braxton Iden, Christian Van Wey, Caleb Daniels, Cameron Crabtree, Chris Biddason, Omkar Sukhtankar, and Compass Hospice Volunteer Coordinator Kara Daniels. NHS members not pictured are Heather Goodger, Ashley Luce, Tara Robinson, and Faith Parum

FHS band sends two on to Area Band tryouts Herald Staff Report bone. Hardin, Elizabeth Long,

Herald Staff Report Forsan seniors

Zachary Long, Travis Ballard and Ethan Rocha earn spots at Area West Band tryouts recently.

Area tryouts are

Jan. 10, at Idalou
High School which
lead to membership in
the A.T.S.S.B. Texas
All-State band. The AllState Band performs
at the annual T.M.E.A.
Convention held in San
Antonio in February.

The three Forsan students advance after strong performances

at high school region band tryouts for Region

6 which were held at

Greenwood High School on Monday, Dec. 8. Forsan band students earning a chair on the

Honor Band — Zachary Long, trumpet and Travis Ballard, trom-

All-Region Band are:

one. Symi

Symphonic
Band — Alysa
Le, flute; Nina
Ortiz, clarinet;
Mackenzie
Kennedy,
alto clarinet;
Elizabeth Long,
trombone; Ash-

lea Hardin, trombone; Dalton Taylor, tuba; and Ethan Rocha, percussion.

Students participating for Forsan High School were: Alysa Le, Mackenzie Kennedy, Nina Ortiz, Zachary Long, Travis Ballard, Ashlea



Dalton Taylor, Ethan

Rocha, Jacob Valdez,

Hannah Thompson,

Mila Wright, Dalton

Vaughn, Nick Wilson,

We Hope You Have A

Merry Christmas

L

Happy New

Year!





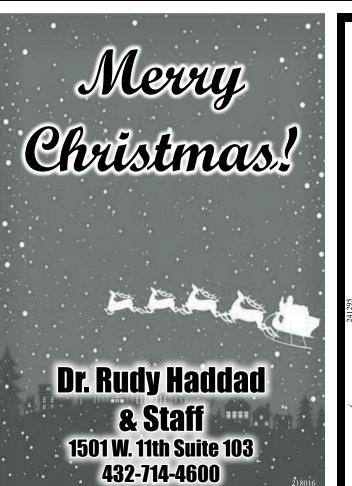
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Farewell, love Forsan ISD





Courtesy photo/Forsan ISD Mrs. Donna Cunningham is retiring after 19 and a half years of teaching. She taught Reading and Technology at Forsan Jr/Sr High for $12 \frac{1}{2}$ of those years. At left, Mrs. Cunningham holding her retirement cake. Pictured with her is her

granddaughter, Rhian Cunningham, and grandson, Cade Cunningham. Above, Mrs. Cunningham is pictured receiving a plaque from FHS **Principal Terry McDonald as she was** recently recognized for her service. She is surrounded by some of her students.



BSJHS BAND

Continued from Page 7

Baritone: Rocky Ramirez, 3rd chair; Mark Sanchez, 4th chair.

Tuba: Jeremy Gonzales, 1st chair (1st over all); Christian Roberts, 2nd chair.

Percussion: Cory Cotton, 3rd chair; Amber Martinez, 4th chair; and Theran Sealy.

Concert Band

Flute: Keila Yanez, 1st chair.

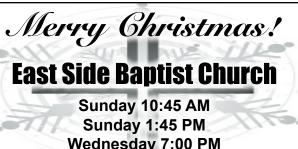
Clarinet: Marisa Salazar, 1st chair

Cornet: Gabe Gomez, 2nd chair; Presley Giles, 4th chair; Kayleigh Rodriguez, 6th chair; Ed Urias, 8th chair; and Corey Rogers, 9th chair.

Trombone: Adolfo Salazar, 3rd chair; Nancy Pope, 4th chair; and Chance Carroll, 7th chair. Tuba: Chris Castillo, 1st chair; and Evan Adles-

perger, 3rd chair.

Percussion: Augustin Hernandez, 1st chair; Dadrian Moore, 2nd chair; Carlos Garcia, 3rd chair; McKenna Alsobrooks, 6th chair; and Ryan Fite, 8th chair.



It's kinda pretty...



HERALD photo/Lyndel Moody

Seven-year-old Marcus Rios, 5-year-old Don Diego Rios, and 5-year-old Kalie'MaNay Banks (all pictured center) won the Heritage Museum's ugly sweater held in Decemberm. The sweaters were created by the children. Also pictured are Gale Pittman giving the \$100 prize to the children and museum curator Tammy Schrecengost.







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BIG HERALD

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Page 9 Thursday, December 25, 2014

Keenum, Texans remain in NFL playoff hunt

HOUSTON (AP) — Just a year after going 2-14, the Houston Texans are still in the playoff hunt entering the final week of the regular season

Houston (8-7) has to beat Jacksonville and have Baltimore lose to the Browns and the Chiefs beat the Chargers to secure the third postseason berth in franchise history.

"I said at the beginning of the year, I thought we could contend for the playoffs and that's what we're doing," team owner Bob McNair said. "But very few other people felt that way, so yeah it's a big change."

After the struggles of last

season left the Texans with the NFL's worst record after they made the playoffs the previous two seasons, this success is especially sweet.

"It's incredible, especially coming from last year, losing 14 straight and knowing that you're out of it," safety D.J. Swearinger said. "Just taking care of business one game at a time and knowing that you may get in there is good."

Coach Bill O'Brien, who is in his first season in Houston and first as a head coach in the NFL, is excited for his team's opportunity this week.

"You want to be in this position where the game means something," O'Brien said. "I

think the guys will be focused even though it is Christmas (week). This is a very meaningful game."

They beat the Ravens 25-13 with fourth-string quarter-back Case Keenum and a defense led by J.J. Watt which forced three turnovers.

Keenum, whom the Texans released in training camp, was signed from the St. Louis practice squad on Monday when Ryan Fitzpatrick and rookie Tom Savage were both injured a day before with Ryan Mallett already on injured reserve.

Houston players and coaches were impressed with Keenum's performance with

less than a week to prepare for the start.

"It is crazy," left tackle Duane Brown said. "You don't see that. Especially with an offense as complex as the one we run. It asks a lot from the quarterback position. He was here for a while and got to learn a lot of it. His recall was great. He came in and didn't skip a beat."

O'Brien said Keenum will benefit from having a little more time to prepare this week, but that the extra time won't help that much since preparing for Jacksonville is completely different than getting ready for the Ravens.

He's also focused on making

sure his team doesn't take the Jaguars lightly despite their 3-12 record.

"The most important thing about this week is the Jacksonville Jaguars and that we are very, very focused on them," O'Brien said. "Our guys should really not look at their record at all. It's a very tough football team in all three phases."

Quarterback isn't the only place where Houston has dealt with injuries. Top overall pick Jadeveon Clowney, expected to boost Houston's pass rush, missed most of the season because of a knee injury, top cornerback Kareem

See NFL on Page 15

Alabama has seen its share of tight spots

By JOHN ZENOR

AP Sports Writer

TUSCALOOSA, Ala. (AP) — Alabama hasn't steamrolled opponents with quite the same relentless regularity as some of its recent national championship teams.

Instead, the top-ranked Crimson Tide has survived fourth-quarter threats against the likes of Mississippi State and Auburn, beaten LSU in overtime and eked out a one-point victory over Arkansas.

It's a different, more treacherous path into contention than Alabama took in winning three of the last five national titles. That kind of experience in nail biters could come in handy on New Year's Day against No. 4 Ohio State in the College Football Playoffs, or in the championship game if the Tide makes it that far.

"We've just been saying we're not going to leave that field not getting what we want, we'll not be denied," Alabama quarterback Blake Sims said. "We're going to convert on third down as an offensive team, on defense we're going to convert on third down. An offensive player goes to every defensive player and says get the ball back for us and if you do, we're going to get a touchdown and I think our defense believes in that."

Alabama is 6-1 in games decided by 14 points or less this season, with the lone loss coming 23-17 against No. 9 Mississippi on Oct. 4.

Last year's team, which fell short of the BCS championship game, went 2-2 in such close games. The 2012 title team only had three games come that close, going 2-1.

In 2009, Alabama won all four close calls.

The 2011 team didn't sweat out any of its victories, winning 12 games by an average of 29.2 points. The only tight game was a 9-6 overtime loss to LSU, and Alabama avenged that with a 21-0 win in the national championship game rematch.

Tide safety Landon Collins feels a loss to, say, LSU or Arkansas could have "broke our season right there." But winning those games made for an interesting ride.

"This has been totally fun," Collins See **ALABAMA** on Page 15

Sands tournament to tip off on Dec. 29

Crossroads area basketball fans won't miss out on the holiday basketball happenings next week. The Sands Invitational Basketball Tournament will make sure of that.

The tournament will get under way on Dec. 29 with teams from throughout the area competing. Among the local teams set to play in the two-day event ar Sands boys and girls and the Forsan Lady Buffaloes.

Lady Buffaloes.

In other action, the Coahoma boys' and girls' teams will be traveling to Big Lake for the Reagan County tournament on Dec. 29-31.

War Stands Still



AP Pho

British and German troops involved in trench warfare in World War I fighting called a Christmas truce on Dec. 24, 1914 to play a soccer game in Ploegsteert, Belgium. For a day, the two soldiers competed in a soccer match. The Fritzes defeated the Tommies, 3-2.

A century later, mythic thud of game that halted WWI still heard

By RAF CASERT

AP Sports Writer

LOEGSTEERT, Belgium (AP) — On the side of a wind-swept field covered with scorpion weed, a simple wooden cross marks a unique event in football history.

At its base, amid wreaths of poppies, lie a smattering of balls and various club pennants, all in remembrance of the Christmas Truce of 1914.

A century ago on Christmas Day, German and British enemies left their World War I trenches and headed into no man's land in a few scattered locations on the Western Front for an unofficial truce among soldiers. Some eyewitness accounts say they were highlighted by something as remarkable as a few football kick-abouts.

"Suddenly a Tommy came with a football," wrote Lt. Johannes Niemann of Germany, referring to a British soldier. "Teams were quickly established for a match on the frozen mud, and the Fritzes beat the Tommies 3-2."

If not fully-fledged matches, other soldier's diaries and various reports also spoke of balls being kicked about in friendship.

"A huge crowd was between the trenches. Someone produced a little rubber ball so of course a football match started," Lt. Charles Brockbank of Britain's Cheshire Regiment wrote in his diary, which is part of "The Greater Game" exhibit at the National Football Museum in Manchester.

The proponents of the sport have

The proponents of the sport have cherished that day as historic proof that there is little that can better bridge man's differences than football.

than football.

This Christmas, the British supermarket chain Sainsbury's has taken the idea and turned it into a blockbuster ad, showing opposing

soldiers living the truce amid a

football match at the center of the

heart-tugging, some say sanitized,

It is that unique mood of brotherhood that Michel Platini, the president of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), plans to underscore on Thursday. He plans to unveil a Christmas truce monument on the former battlegrounds known as Flanders Fields in western Belgium, scene of some of the most horrendous

"

Together, they performed simple acts of reconciliation, culminating in the discovery of a shared language: football.

7

Michel Platini UEFA President

killing

"Together, they performed simple acts of reconciliation, culminating in the discovery of a shared language: football," Platini wrote to European Union leaders early this year.

this year.

For those involved, it was most of all a yearning for a sense of normalcy, however momentarily, that pushed them over the edge of their translage unarmed.

normalcy, however momentarily, that pushed them over the edge of their trenches, unarmed.

The war had started on Aug. 4 when the German invasion of Belgium kicked off a series of events which quickly pitted the German

and Austro-Hungarian empires

against Britain, France, Russia

and several allies.

Germany swept into most of Belgium and northern France and even threatened Paris before the frontline was settled. Armies entrenched themselves for most of the next four years. At the time, though, the prevailing expectation on both sides had been to be

home for Christmas.

When that didn't happen, an early sense of euphoria quickly made way for unrelenting gloom. It set the stage for the Christmas truce and those magic kick-abouts.

Football players themselves had been involved in the fighting from the early days. Of the 5,000 professional players at the time, about 2,000 joined the armed forces. Sometimes whole lineups signed up at the same time to create what became known as the Footballers' Battalions. London club Clapton Orient, now known as Leyton Orient, alone had about 40 players and staff joining the war effort, all following the steps of their team captain.

Scotland's top team at the time, Edinburgh club Hearts, had its whole team join the British army one month ahead of that Christmas, a move which inspired others to join, said Peter Francis of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. Seven members of that team were killed in the war.

One of the first footballers killed in the war was Larrett Roebuck, a Huddersfield defender. After playing for his team in a 1-0 victory at Leicester Fosse early in the 1914-15 season, he left for the Western Front and was killed in action on the eve of the first Battle for Ypres, a few kilometers from that patch of land in Ploegsteert.

"The story is that he set off running across the field with the machine guns going," said Roebuck's grandson, Frank Wood. "His friend saw him go down but he couldn't stop to help him. With the fight like that, you couldn't stop."

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_									
	1	2	8	7	4	9	6	3	5
	6	5	7	00	3	1	4	2	9
	5	1	6	2	9	4	7	8	3
	4	9	2	3	8	7	5	6	1
	8	7	3	1	5	6	2	9	4
	3	6	9	4	7	8	1	5	2
Н	3	6	9	4	7	8	9	5 7	2
Н	-		-	4 5 9	-	-	_		-
Н	-	4	1		6	3	9	7	8

By Steve Becker The Feline Philosophy

West dealer. Both sides vulnerable **NORTH** ♠ A K J ♥ 7 2

♦ АОЈ8 **♣**K J 8 2

107652

SOUTH **♦**Q94 **♥**AK6

♦ 10 9 7 2 The bidding: West Pass 1 ♦ 3 NT Pass

"There's more than one way to skin a cat" can be applied to many situations that arise at the bridge table (even though few cats actually play the game). South would have done much better had he applied this

Opening lead — five of hearts.

today's hand. He took the opening heart lead with the ace and then had to decide whether to take a diamond finesse, hoping West had the king, or a club

well-known adage to the play of

1 NT

EAST

♥QJ10984

finesse, hoping West had the queen.

the king and South's remaining heart stopper was dislodged, the contract was doomed, since East was sure to regain the lead with the club ace before South could score nine tricks. Among other things, declarer failed to take into account that East was very likely to have both the king of diamonds and ace of clubs for his vulnerable overcall. More importantly, though, South failed to appre-

ciate that if he had chosen the club

finesse instead of the diamond

finesse and lost the ten to the queen,

he would still have the diamond

Eventually, declarer decided that

the straightforward diamond finesse

offered as good a chance as any to

succeed. But when the finesse lost to

finesse to fall back on Trying the club finesse at trick two thus gives South two chances to succeed instead of just one. If West does have the queen, repeated finesses will produce three club tricks, rendering the diamond finesse unnecessary.

It is true that East might have the club queen as well as the club ace and diamond king, but in that case the contract cannot be made. It is also true that if East held the A-O of clubs without the king of diamonds, he could lead declarer astray by taking the first club with the ace - but that's another story.

Tomorrow: Bidding quiz.

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Tomorrow's Horoscope

Merry Christmas

The excitement of the season is upon us. Astrologically, we are

coming off of a new moon in Capricorn and a reversal of Uranus. The Aquarius moon leads us into the spirit of giving. For all who find themselves



MATHIS

fortunate position, there are so many others who don't. Look around. It shouldn't be difficult to see on whom you'll bestow gestures of kindness.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Be loose and flexible -- they won't take advantage. In fact, you will feel more respected and valued than before. Your optimism is eternally strong, which makes for a brilliant overall mood.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The world is your oyster as long as you choose to see it that way. You still may have to fight for what you want, but at least you can readily see the opportunity so you can assess what is worth fighting for.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). One minute you can't wait to open the next door, and the next minute you dread what might be on the other side. This mix of anticipation and apprehension makes for a strange experience.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Your health will be robust, and your confidence will be high. What more is there to want? Giving to others will be the chief mission. What is your best gift?

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Your best solutions will come when you're not actively trying for them. While thinking of something else -- or more likely thinking of nothing in particular -- the perfect fix will pop to mind.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Because what you have is so desirable, it needs to be protected. This takes time and energy. Is it worth it? The same assets that put you in a sticky situation will get you out of it, too.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You will be at your best today. You'll present yourself in a way that's unexpected. You'll turn heads and make people smile, laugh and think. The world is more exciting because you're in

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Your dreams may be big, but they don't need downsizing. Make a commitment to yourself to grow, no matter what others are doing. A mentor (Pisces is ideal!) helps you develop a winning strategy.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Big spenders are a much more common personality type than big savers. You are both, depending on the day. Right now your saving techniques will help you when you hit your spending spree later this month.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You know the right people. Namedropping is therefore hard to avoid. You can't be blamed. You must first impress people in order to influence them and get them to follow you.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). All you need to do is be yourself. Relax and maintain your sense

Sudoku Answer On Page 10

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

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

www.sudoku-puzzles.net

of humor through this afternoon's mishaps. Later these so-called "mistakes" will make you richer.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). There's a discrepancy between the way you see yourself and the way the rest of the world sees you. Close the gap by being objective, realistic and unconcerned about what people think.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 25). Whatever seems complicated doesn't have to be. All that's necessary is a little distance from the problem so you can see the simple truth. Friendship and love follow a simple rule: You get what you put into it. Your ideas are sound. Sagittarius and Leo people adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 5, 11,

14, 29 and 50.

ASTROLOGICAL **QUESTIONS:** "What is a mandala? I have been drawing symmetrical geometric pictures obsessively lately, and my sister told me that what I'm really doing is drawing mandalas, which are very closely associated with magic. Is this true, and why would I be drawing these things? Have I slipped off the deep end? I find it very relaxing. I am a Pisces.' Mandala is the word for

"circle" in Sanskrit, a language that has origins in both Hindu and Buddhism, two religious traditions that consider mandalas to be sacred. Various versions of mandalas are found in the symbols of other religions, as well, such as the Celtic cross of Christianity or the stone bora rings used in the ceremonies of some native Australians. The beautiful symmetry in a mandala leads the eye and focuses the mind in such a way that this art is commonly used in meditative practice. Carl Jung, the founder of analytical psychology, believed that mandalas are a representation of our unconscious landscape. Whether or not the shapes you are drawing have magical powers largely depends on you and the significance you give your art. Intent is 9/10ths of the law in such

CELEBRITY PROFILES: "American Idol" host Ryan Seacrest is a media king and an exemplary Capricorn. Born in the sign of hard work, Seacrest is a traditionalist who will stick to the program. Capricorn individuals love an elegant system and will stick to what they learn.

matters.

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MA

Annie's Mailbox ®

Dear Readers: Merry Christmas. We hope you are fortunate enough to be with family and friends

Those who can volunteer their time in nursing homes, hospitals or soup kitchens, please do so. For the past few years, we have printed the annual PNC

today.



MARCY SUGAR

Christmas Price Index, which we find interesting

"The Twelve Davs of Christmas"

and amusing. Enjoy:

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On the second day of Christmas my true love gave to me, two turtledoves (\$125, the same price since 2012) and a partridge in a pear tree (another \$207.68).

On the third day of Christmas my true love gave to me, three French hens (\$181.50, up 10 percent over last year), two turtledoves (\$125) and a partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

On the fourth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, four calling birds (\$599.96, the same as last year), three French hens (\$181.50), two turtledoves (\$125) and a partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

On the fifth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, five gold rings (\$750, the same price two years in a row), four calling birds (\$599.96), three French hens (\$181.50), two turtledoves (\$125) and a

partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

On the sixth day of

Christmas my true love gave to me, six geese-a-laying (\$360, a whopping increase of 71.4 percent), five gold rings (\$750), four calling birds (\$599.96), three French hens (\$181.50), two turtledoves (\$125) and a partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave to me, seven swansa-swimming (\$7,000, still pricey, but no more than before, unless you order them online, in which case, they went up 30 percent), six geese-alaying (\$360), five gold rings (\$750), four calling birds (\$599.96), three French hens (\$181.50). two turtledoves (\$125) and a partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

On the eighth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, eight maids-amilking (\$58, still at minimum wage, the same price for the past three years), seven swans-aswimming (\$7,000), six geese-a-laying (\$360), five gold rings (\$750), four calling birds (\$599.96), three French hens (\$181.50), two turtledoves (\$125) and a partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

On the ninth day of Christmas my true love gave to me, nine ladies dancing (\$7,552.84, same as last year), eight maidsa-milking (\$58), seven swans-a-swimming (\$7,000), six geese-a-laying (\$360), five gold rings (\$750), four calling birds (\$599.96), three French hens (\$181.50), two turtledoves (\$125) and a partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

On the 10th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, 10 lords-aleaping (\$5,348.24, a 2 percent salary hike), nine ladies dancing (\$7,552.84), eight maids-a-milking (\$58), seven swans-aswimming (\$7,000), six geese-a-laying (\$360), five gold rings (\$750), four calling birds (\$599.96), three French hens (\$181.50), two turtledoves (\$125) and a partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

On the 11th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, 11 pipers piping (\$2,635.20, same as before), 10 lords-a-leaping (\$5,348.24), nine ladies dancing (\$7,552.84), eight maids-a-milking (\$58), seven swans-a-swimming (\$7,000), six geese-a-laying (\$360), five gold rings (\$750), four calling birds (\$599.96), three French hens (\$181.50), two turtledoves (\$125) and a partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

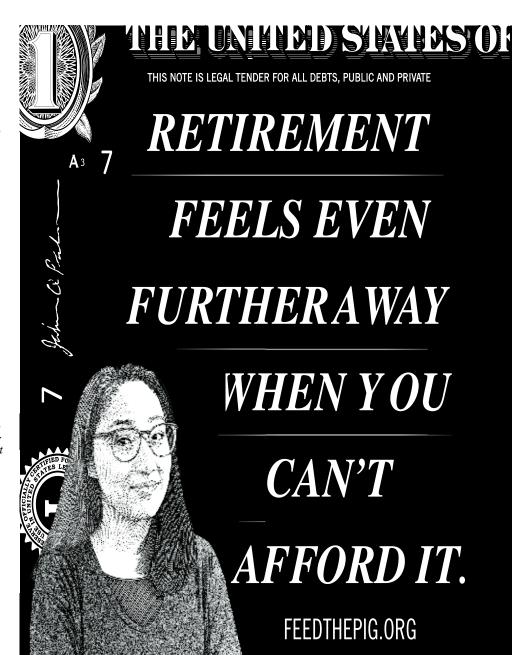
On the 12th day of Christmas my true love gave to me, 12 drummers drumming (\$2,854.50, no increase), 11 pipers piping (\$2,635.20), 10 lords-a-leaping (\$5,348.24), nine ladies dancing (\$7,552.84), eight maids-amilking (\$58), seven swans-a-swimming (\$7,000), six geese-a-laying (\$360), five gold rings (\$750), four calling birds (\$599.96), three French hens (\$181.50), two turtledoves (\$125) and a partridge in a pear tree (\$207.68).

The total cost of these gifts would be \$116,273.06, plus shipping. Have a happy holiday. Don't buy your swans online.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar. longtime editors of the Ann Landers column. Please email your

questions to anniesmailbox@comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 737 3rd Street Hermosa Beach, CA 90254. To find out more about Annie's Mailbox and read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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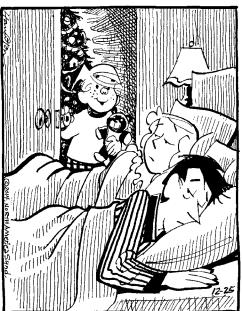






BRING ME!





'Santa knows when I'm Awake, so I THOUGHT YOU WOULD WANT TO KNOW, TOO." BC



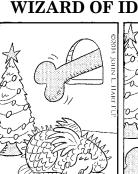
"Look, Daddy! Santa Claus DID come to town!"















AGNES







This Date In History

Today is Thursday, Dec. 25, the 359th day of 2014. There are six days left in the year. This is Christmas Day. Today's Highlight in History: In A.D. 336, the first known commemoration of Christmas on Dec. 25 took place in Rome. On this date: In 1066, William the Conqueror was crowned king of Eng-

land. In 1776, Gen. George Washington and his troops crossed the Delaware River for a surprise attack against Hessian forces at Trenton, New Jersey. In 1818, "Silent Night (Stille Nacht)" was publicly performed for the first time during the Christmas Midnight Mass at the Church of St. Nikolaus in Oberndorf, Austria. In 1868, President Andrew Johnson granted an unconditional pardon to all persons involved in the Southern rebellion that resulted in the Civil War. In 1926, Hirohito became emperor of Japan, succeeding his father, Emperor Yoshihito. In 1931, New York's Metropolitan Opera broadcast an entire live

opera over radio for the

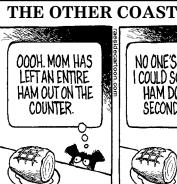
Humperdinck. In 1941, during World War II, Japan announced the surrender of the British-Canadian garrison at Hong Kong. In 1961, Pope John XXIII formally announced the upcoming convocation of the Second Vatican Council, which opened in Oct. 1962.

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Answer to previous puzzle

HI AND LOIS











SNUFFY SMITH







BEETLE BAILEY





YOU CAN SKIP THE PADDING, WELL,WE'RE SUPPLYING HE COMES KNOW THE SUIT



Newsday Crossword

ACROSS

- 1 Artist friend of Degas
- 6 Irish dramatist 10 Ponder, with "on"
- 14 Kitchen
- enticement
- 15 Carpet surface
- 16 In fine fettle
- 17 Shogun's
- 18 Get the pot
- 19 Verdi heroine
- 20 Disagreed 23 Caustic alkali
- 29 Superman's
- foster parents
- 32 Was in the red
- 33 Bookstore
- category
- 37 Took needless
- 41 Street often nea
- 42 Naughts
- side dish
- 45 Fusses at a
- mirror
- 50 Slapstick
- 51 Observed
- 58 Sponge
- 59 Schnitzel meat
- formation

- **63** A single time **64** Short literary work 65 Mixes in
- 66 Essential thing
- 67 Dinner reservations

DOWN

subject

3 "Forget it"

4 Cyberzine

5 Snarly mess

7 Something

8 Range of

10 Abrades

6 Trowel cousin

dropped orally

9 Herbicide target

some flutes

subordinate

2 Typical emirate

1 Col.'s

- domain
- going
- 24 Creeps up on
- 25 Chem-class expense

- 34 Droid download
- risks
- Maple and Oak
- 43 Barbecue
- 44 Write-ins.
- for example
- 47 Dam on the Nile
- projectile
- furtively
- openina
- 60 Splendid
- **62** Young male zebra

SCROUNGY by Fred Piscop Edited by Stanley Newman

40 Play for a sap

44 Paid parkers

45 Membership

symbol

46 Postgame

48 Tolerated

49 Pulitzer's

50 Blanched

52 Revlon rival 53 DNA segment

54 Irish export

approval

55 Lake that feeds

Niagara Falls

56 House painter's

summaries

47 Org, with online

Pets of the Week

New York paper

- www.stanxwords.com 11 City north of 39 Showery
- Tel Aviv **12** Church dignitary
- 13 Becomes
- tiresome 21 Needle feature
- 22 Opening
- remarks 25 Earring support
- 26 Delinquent GI
- 27 Road shoulder
- 28 Portrait on a
- dime 29 Acclaim
- **30** First responders:
- Abbr. 31 Likewise not
- 33 In this very place
- **34** Fit for duty
- 35 Think ahead
- 36 Seats that hold
- hymnals
- 38 Greenhouse gas

- 61 Shout of
- calculation 57 Savoir-faire

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Chiefs' Houston setting sights on NFL sacks record

KANSAS CITY, Mo. Quarterbacks would be faring a whole lot better against Justin Houston this season if they avoided him as deftly as the Chiefs' star linebacker dodges reporters.

It doesn't matter that Houston is the NFL's sack leader heading into the final week of the regular season.

Nor does it matter that he's just two sacks shy of 20, which would match Hall of Famer Derrick Thomas for the singleseason franchise record. He'd rather let others

vouch for him than speak in front of a camera.

"It starts physically, a guy that's extremely

ALABAMA

Continued from Page 9

said.

times."

NFL

close contests.

"We've

through a lot of adversity

and it just made us closer.

I mean, you get closeness

like that, you can just talk

about anything and be fa-

miliar with each other. It

definitely made us closer

and we had tremendous

Alabama found differ-

ent ways to prevail in the

A blocked extra point

and late interception

helped the Tide preserve

a 14-13 win over Arkan-

sas, overcoming four

Continued from Page 9

Jackson missed three

games with a sprained

knee and linebacker

Brian Cushing sat out

two games because of a

"We just keep it go-

ing," safety Kendrick

Lewis said. "No matter

who is out, it's the next

man's turn. We've been

doing a great job all sea-

son of the next man step-

ping up and not skipping

has played its best two

games of the season in

knee problem.

a beat."

Houston's

physically talented," Chiefs quarterback Alex Smith said, "but the thing about Justin is how smart he is. He knows situations, sees tendencies, splits, things like that. He has a good understanding of the game."

Smith is speaking from experience having faced Houston in training camp, when coach Andy Reid unleashes the firstteam defense against the No. 1 offense. But even then, Smith

usually has on the yellow jersey that is supposed to keep defenders from laying a lick on them.

Philip Rivers, Tom Brady and Ben Roethlisberger have no such luxury.

special teams fumbles

and a season-low 227 total

Adam Griffith's 27-yard

field goal with three sec-

onds left in the fourth

quarter against No. 22

LSU forced overtime after

a swift drive downfield.

A short game-winning

touchdown pass from

Sims to DeAndrew White

in overtime finished off a

Against then-No. 1 Mis-

sissippi State, the Tide

picked off Dak Prescott

three times and sum-

moned a decisive fourth-

quarter touchdown drive

with several big third-

down plays. The result: A

the past two weeks and

allowed a season-low 33

yards rushing on Sun-

day. Watt said he thinks

the group is starting to

excel now that it has had

time to adjust to defen-

sive coordinator Romeo

"When you have a new

staff in place it takes a

little bit of time to get

everybody on the same

page and get an under-

standing of what you

want to accomplish,"

"Obviously we want to

go out there again next

week and do a good job

and play another game

Watt said.

like (Sunday)."

Crennel's new system.

20-13 win.

"He's just relentless," Smith added. "Plays such good football in all situations. That's the thing I see. Those guys only get noticed for sacks and deservedly some of that, but certainly how he plays on first and second down, plays the run — an all-down player." When he was coming

out of Georgia, Houston had a reputation for being far better at getting to the quarterback than dropping into coverage or stopping the run.

These days, he's just as adept at bringing down a ball carrier or batting down a pass as he is pummeling a quarterback.

25-20 win.

Alabama won a 55-44 shootout over No. 19 Auburn in the regular-season finale with 28 points over the final 18 minutes. The Tide had trailed by as many as 12 points, its largest deficit of the year.

Alabama did make a costly last-minute mistake that haunted them in a 23-17 loss to No. 8 Mississippi. Sims was intercepted in the end zone.

That was the only really big misstep in all those tight games. The high number of such games by Alabama standards is a mixed bag for coach Nick

The unit has been helped by forcing a franchise-record 34 takeawaysthis season, which are the most in the NFL. Those takeaways have resulted in 123 points, which are also the most

American Conference East WLTPct PF PA 123 0 .800 459 296

FOOTBALL

National Football League

8 7 0 .533 364 336 Buffalo 8 7 0 .533 326 280 3 120 .200 246 377 South WLTPct PF PA y-Indianapolis 10 5 0 .667 431 359 Houston 8 7 0 .533 349 290 120 .200 232 389 Jacksonville 2 130 .133 244 411

North WLTPct PF PA x-Cincinnati 104 1 .700 348 317 x-Pittsburgh 105 0 .667 409 351 9 6 0 .600 389 292 7 8 0 .467 289 317 West

W L T Pct PF v-Denver 11 4 0 .733 435 340 9 6 0 .600 341 329 Kansas City 8 7 0 .533 334 274 120 .200 239 405 Oakland **National Conference** East

W L Pct v-Dallas 11 4 0 .733 423 335 9 6 0 .600 440 374 Philadelphia N.Y. Giants .400 354 366 4 11 0 .267 284 394 South WLTPct PF 6 8 1 .433 305 371

Carolina Atlanta 9 0 .400 378 383 New Orleans 6 9 0 .400 378 404 Tampa Bay 2 13 0 .133 257 387 North

WLTPct PF PA 11 4 0 .733 301 252 x-Green Bay 11 4 0 .733 456 328 6 9 0 .400 312 334 5 100 .333 310 429 West WLTPct PF PA

11 4 0 .733 374 248 11 4 0 .733 293 279 x-Seattle x-Arizona San Francisco 7 8 0 .467 286 323 6 9 0 .400 318 334 x-clinched playoff spot y-clinched division

Sunday, Dec. 28 Indianapolis at Tennessee, 1 p.m. Jacksonville at Houston, 1 p.m. San Diego at Kansas City, 1 p.m. Chicago at Minnesota, 1 p.m. Cleveland at Baltimore, 1 p.m. Dallas at Washington, 1 p.m. N.Y. Jets at Miami, 1 p.m. Buffalo at New England, 1 p.m. Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants, 1 p.m. New Orleans at Tampa Bay, 1

Arizona at San Francisco, 4:25

St. Louis at Seattle, 4:25 p.m. Oakland at Denver, 4:25 p.m. Detroit at Green Bay, 4:25 p.m. Carolina at Atlanta, 4:25 p.m. Cincinnati at Pittsburgh, 8:30 p.m.

BASKETBALL NBA Development League **East Conference** Central Division

	w	L	Pct	GB
Fort Wayne	8	7	.533	_
Grand Rapids	6	6	.500	1/2
Sioux Falls	6	7	.462	1
lowa	5	7	.417	11/2
Atla	ntic D	ivisio	on	
	W	L	Pct	GB
Maine	11	2	.846	_
Canton	9	6	.600	3
Erie	6	8	.429	51/2

in team history.

Scoreboard

West Conference Southwestern Division W

Austin Rio Grande Valley 6 .400 8 Oklahoma City West Division Santa Cruz Bakersfield .455

Reno Los Angeles 10 .231 Wednesday's Games No games scheduled Thursday's Games

Rio Grande Valley at Sioux Falls, late

BOXING Fight Schedule

At Tokyo, Omar Narvaez vs. Naoya Inoue, 12, for Narvaez's WBO super flyweight title; Akira Yaegashi vs. Pedro Guevara, 12, for the vacant WBC World junior flyweight title; Jorge Linares vs. Javier Prieto, 12, for the vacant WBC World lightweight title. Dec. 31

At Ota City General Gym, Tokyo, Israel Perez, vs. Takashi Uchiyama, 12, for Uchiyama's WBA super featherweight title; Kohei Kono vs. Norberto Jimenez, 12, for Kono's WBA junior bantamweight title; Alberto Rossel vs. Ryoichi Taguchi, 12, for Rossel's WBA junior flyweight title. Jan. 9, 2015

At Chumash Casino Resort, Santa Ynez, Calif. (ESPN2), Darleys Perez vs. Jonathan Maicelo. 12. for Perez's interim WBA lightweight title; Francisco Santana vs. Sebastian Lujan, 10, wel-

Jan. 16

At Turning Stone Resort & Casino. Verona, N.Y. (ESPN2), Petr Petrov vs. Juan Carlos Burgos, 10, lightweights. At the MGM Grand, Las Vegas

(SHO), Bermane Stiverne vs. Deontay Wilder, 12, for Stiverne's WBC World heavyweight title. Jan. 23

At Manchester, England, Richar

Abril vs. Anthony Crolla, 12, for Abril's WBA lightweight title. Feb. 21 At Monte Carlo, Monaco, Gennady

Golovkin vs. Martin Murray, 12, for Golovkin's WBA Super World-WBC World-IBO middleweight tiles; Lee Haskins vs. Omar Lamiri, 12, for the vacant EBU bantamweight title. March 14

At the Bell Centre, Montreal, Sergey Kovalev vs. Jean Pascal, 12, for Kovalev's WBO-IBF-WBA light heavyweight

BASEBALL

Remaining Free Agents NEW YORK (AP) - The 89 re maining free agents (q-did not accept \$15.3 million qualifying offer from for-

AMERICAN LEAGUE

inf; Nick Hundley, c; Kelly Johnson, 2b; Johan Santana, Ihp; Joe Saunders, lhp; Delmon Young, of.

BOSTON (3) — Burke Badenhop, rhp; Craig Breslow, Ihp; Ryan Demp-

CHICAGO (3) — Paul Konerko, 1b; Matt Lindstom, rhp; Felipe Paulino,

CLEVELAND (1) - Jason Giambi,

DETROIT (4) — Joba Chamberlain, rhp; Phil Coke, lhp; Joel Hanrahan, rhp; q-Max Scherzer, rhp. HOUSTON (3) — Matt Albers, rhp;

Jesse Crain, rhp; Jose Veras, rhp. KANSAS CITY (4) - Nori Aoki, of, Raul Ibanez, of; q-James Shields, rhp; Josh Willingham, of.

LOS ANGELES (4) — Sean Burnett, Ihp; Jason Grilli, rhp; John Mc-Donald, ss; Joe Thatcher, lhp. MINNESOTA (1) - Jared Burton,

. NEW YORK (5) — Stephen Drew,

ss; Rich Hill, Ihp; Derek Jeter, ss; Hiroki Kuroda, rhp; Ichiro Suzuki, of. OAKLAND (3) - Jonny Gomes, of; Hiroyuki Nakajima, ss; Geovany

SEATTLE (6) - Joe Beimel, Ihp; Endy Chavez, of; Chris Denorfia,

of; Franklin Gutierrez, of; Humberto Quintero, c; Chris Young, rhp. TEXAS (2) - Scott Baker, rhp;

TORONTO (4) — Casey Janssen

rhp; Munenori Kawasaki, inf; Dustin McGowan, rhp; Colby Rasmus, of. NATIONAL LEAGUE ATLANTA (4) - Emilio Bonifacio 2b; Ryan Doumit, c; Aaron Harang,

CHICAGO (1) — Carlos Villanueva, CINCINNATI (3) — Jack Hannahan, 3b; Ryan Ludwick, of; Ramon

rhp; Gerald Laird, c.

COLORADO (4) — Brett Anderson, Ihp; Matt Belisle, rhp; Nick Masset, rhp; Franklin Morales, Ihp.

LOS ANGELES (7) - Josh Beckett, rhp; Chad Billingsley, rhp; Kevin Correia, rhp; Roberto Hernandez, rhp;

Paul Maholm, Ihp; Chris Perez, rhp; Jamey Wright, rhp.

MIAMI (4) — Rafael Furcal, ss; Kevin Gregg, rhp; Reed Johnson, of;

MILWAUKEE (4) - Tom Gorzelanny, Ihp; Lyle Overbay, 1b; Francisco Rodriguez, rhp; Rickie Weeks, 2b.

NEW YORK (1) — Bobby Abreu, PHILADELPHIA (3) — Mike Adams, rhp; Kyle Kendrick, rhp; Wil Nieves, c.

ST. LOUIS (2) - Mark Ellis, 2b; A.J.

SAN DIEGO (1) - Josh Johnson,

SAN FRANCISCO (1) - Ryan Vogelsong, rhp.
WASHINGTON (4) — Asdrubal

Cabrera, ss; Scott Hairston, of; Nate



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