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A year of change



The top 10 stories of 2014

Big Spring City Council member Carmen Harbour, left, listen to her colleague, Justin Myers, address the audience during an August meeting that resulted in the council dismissing the Big Spring Economic Development Corporation's board of directors.

EDC board, political incumbents ousted during the year

By **STEVE REAGAN**
 Staff Writer

Contests — of wills and the polls — dominated the local landscape in 2014.

As is usually the case, there was plenty of news, both good and bad, that occurred in the past 12 months. We had success on the football field and failure in the cotton fields. We felt hope for better economic times and sadness at the pass-

ing of a local icon. Lakes rose and political incumbents fell. But a showdown between the directors of the local economic development corporation and the city council that appointed them figuratively stood above everything else that happened in 2014.

Here are the top 10 stories of the past year, as voted upon by the Herald editorial staff:

EDC board ousted

The innocuous-sounding

phrase "policies and procedures" became a major bone of contention between the EDC board of directors and the Big Spring City Council and eventually led to the board's dismissal.

The board's insistence on implementing new policies — which it claimed would increase transparency on how public money was spent at the EDC — took up most of its time throughout the first several months of the year and

led many to believe the body could no longer function effectively.

Things began reaching the boiling point in July when the city council unanimously passed a resolution calling on the board to use the policies and procedures already in place. In defiance of that resolution, the EDC passed new guidelines in August.

That, as it turned out, was the tipping point in the controversy. On Aug. 26, the

city council, by a 5-to-2 vote, removed the five directors — Don Avant, Nati Saldivar, Frances Hobbs, Jim DePauw and Scott MacKenzie.

"The EDC board works under the arm of the city council," Mayor Larry McLellan said. "In July, this council passed a unanimous resolution ... telling the EDC what we expected of them — that they should use the policies

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Dignitaries participate in groundbreaking ceremonies at McMahon-Wrinkle Airpark in April for the Highway 87 reliever route.

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Happy New Year!

Take Note

• 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 IS taking applications for another boot camp. For more information, call 432-517-4791.

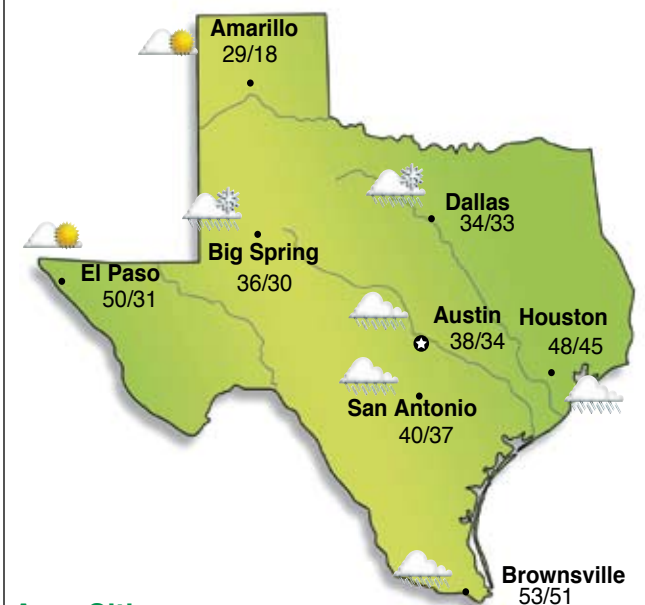
Today's Weather

Local 5-Day Forecast

Thu 1/1	Fri 1/2	Sat 1/3	Sun 1/4	Mon 1/5
36/30 Light freezing rain in the morning...continued cloudy in the afternoon.	38/31 A wintery mix to start, then changing to rain.	53/27 Mainly sunny. Highs in the low 50s and lows in the upper 20s.	43/29 Abundant sunshine. Highs in the low 40s and lows in the upper 20s.	54/33 Sunshine. Highs in the mid 50s and lows in the low 30s.
Sunrise: 7:47 AM Sunset: 5:52 PM	Sunrise: 7:47 AM Sunset: 5:53 PM	Sunrise: 7:47 AM Sunset: 5:53 PM	Sunrise: 7:47 AM Sunset: 5:54 PM	Sunrise: 7:48 AM Sunset: 5:55 PM



Texas At A Glance



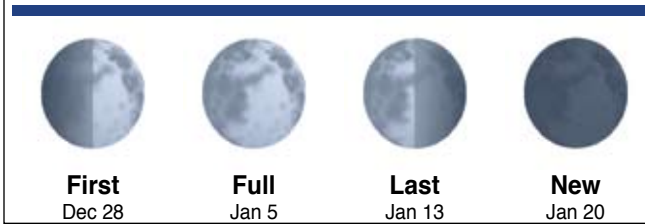
Area Cities

City	Hi	Lo	Cond.	City	Hi	Lo	Cond.
Abilene	32	29	frz rain	Kingsville	45	42	rain
Amarillo	29	18	pt sunny	Livingston	39	37	rain
Austin	38	34	rain	Longview	33	32	frz rain
Beaumont	48	43	rain	Lubbock	30	25	cloudy
Brownsville	53	51	rain	Lufkin	39	36	rain
Brownwood	34	30	frz rain	Midland	38	32	frz rain
Corpus Christi	52	48	rain	Raymondville	51	48	rain
Corsicana	34	33	rain	Rosenberg	48	45	rain
Dallas	34	33	frz rain	San Antonio	40	37	rain
Del Rio	41	39	rain	San Marcos	38	35	rain
El Paso	50	31	pt sunny	Sulphur Springs	33	32	frz rain
Fort Stockton	43	35	cloudy	Sweetwater	32	28	frz rain
Gainesville	31	32	frz rain	Tyler	34	33	frz rain
Greenville	32	32	frz rain	Weatherford	32	32	frz rain
Houston	48	45	rain	Wichita Falls	29	26	frz rain

National Cities

City	Hi	Lo	Cond.	City	Hi	Lo	Cond.
Atlanta	54	39	pt sunny	Minneapolis	25	8	cloudy
Boston	33	28	mst sunny	New York	37	32	sunny
Chicago	31	22	mst sunny	Phoenix	47	33	pt sunny
Dallas	34	33	frz rain	San Francisco	58	41	sunny
Denver	29	9	pt sunny	Seattle	41	31	sunny
Houston	48	45	rain	St. Louis	39	32	pt sunny
Los Angeles	57	39	windy	Washington, DC	43	34	mst sunny
Miami	80	70	pt sunny				

Moon Phases



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YEAR

Continued from Page 1

and procedures they already have in place.”
A new slate of directors were appointed in September.

Incumbents defeated

It was not a good year for Howard County politicians seeking reelection to office. At both the city and county level, incumbents were denied new terms in office.

In the March primary election, Howard County Judge Mark Barr and Prec. 2 Commissioner Donnie Baker were defeated by challengers. County Republican voters denied Barr a third term as county judge, selecting instead former Justice of the Peace Kathryn Wiseman to be the party's standard-bearer. In the Prec. 2 contest, Craig Bailey handily defeated Baker.

The trend continued in May, when both Big Spring City Council incumbents up for reelection — Marcus Fernandez and Glen Carrigan — were defeated. Fernandez fell to challenger Raul Marquez Jr. in the District 1 race, while Justin Myers bested Carrigan in the race for the District 3 seat.

Reliever route groundbreaking

A ground breaking ceremony for the largest construction project in the history of the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) Abilene District to date — the US 87 Truck Relief Route — was held April 25 at the Hangar 25 Air Museum.

Local, state and federal dignitaries celebrated the moment by speaking of the project's history, economical importance and the collaborative effort by West Texas communities to bring the bypass to fruition. Yet, of all the eloquent words spoken at the podium Friday morning, one long-time advocate of the Ports-to-Plains trade corridor said it best.

“Today is one of those I can't really believe this is happening days,” said Bill Crooker, a long time former Howard County Commissioner and an original member of the Ports to Plains Trade Corridor Coali-

tion who left the board in 2011.

Rains resurrect Lake Thomas

Rainfall associated with the remnants of a Pacific hurricane dumped more than 10 inches of rain over parts of this area in September, and a lot of that precipitation found its way into Lake J.B. Thomas, the oldest and driest of the Colorado River Municipal Water District reservoirs.

Lake Thomas, which was below 2 percent full before the storm system passed through the area, was then approaching levels CRMWD officials hadn't seen in decades.

At the time, Lake Thomas had risen 33.8 feet and was 42.9 percent full. More than 26 billion gallons of water poured into the lake in one week.

The last time Lake Thomas had that much water was in November 1987, according to officials.

VA, SMMC investigated

Both the West Texas VA Healthcare System and Scenic Mountain Medical Center came under auditor scrutiny in 2014.

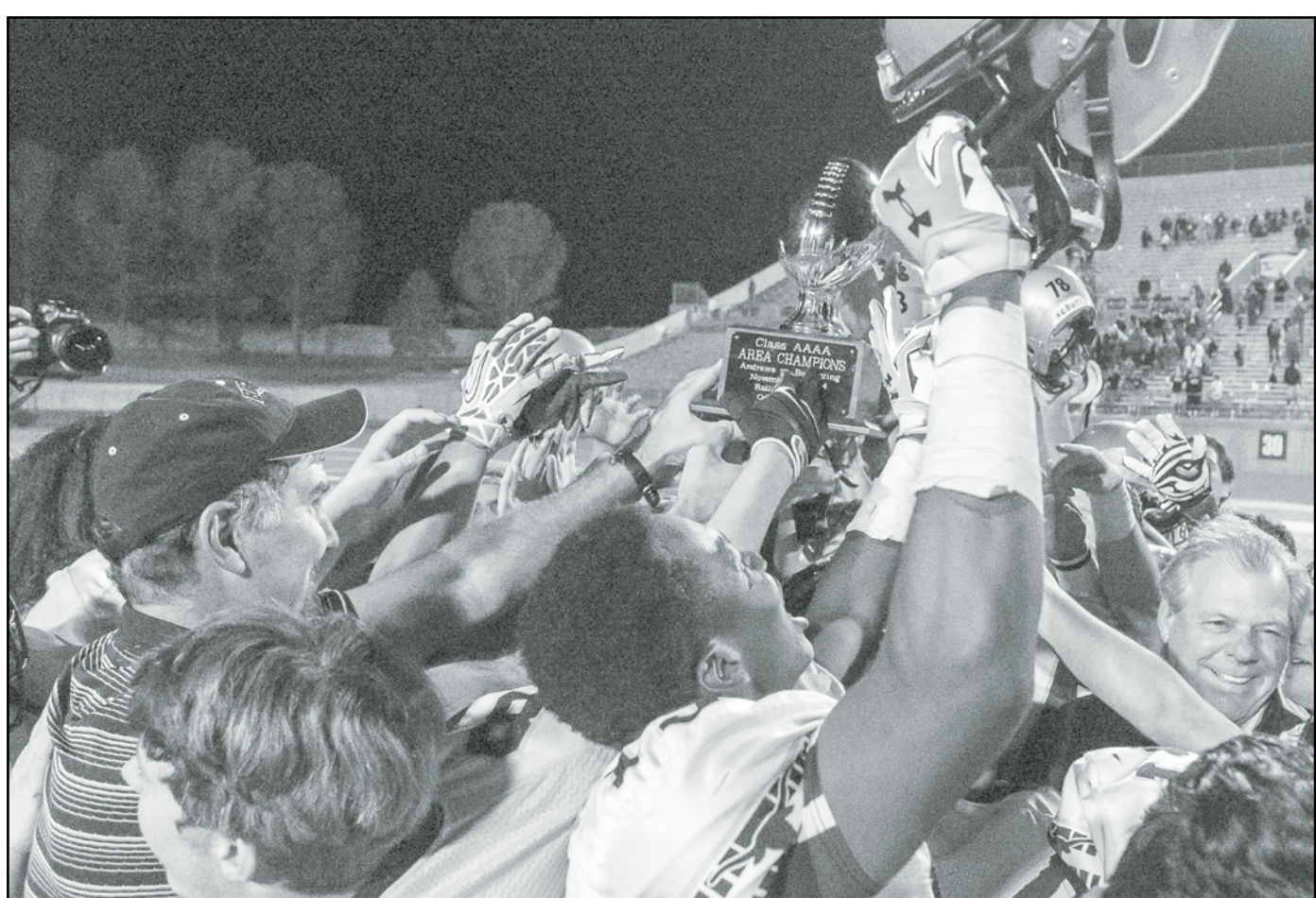
At the VA, a federal audit showed unacceptable wait times for veterans awaiting appointments, while another audit focused on infection issues at SMMC.

Both facilities were cleared in subsequent audits.

Rodeo legend passes

Howard County started the New Year by mourning the loss of one of its community pillars. Quail Dobbs, a Hall of Fame rodeo clown, good will ambassador for this community and all-around good guy, died in January after battling a lengthy illness. He was 72.

Dobbs was born Aug. 27 1941, in Albany, but lived most of his life in Coahoma, where he was revered not only as a top-flight professional rodeo performer (he was inducted in the Texas Rodeo Cowboy Hall of Fame in 2002), but as a



File photo

The Big Spring High School football team celebrates after its victory in a Class 3A area playoff game against Andrews.

long-time justice of the peace, community advocate and organizer.

“He was a blessing to everyone he met,” said Coahoma Mayor Warren Wallace at the time of his death. “It's amazing how much good he brought to the world and to all the kids he met. This is just a great, great loss.”

Cotton comes a cropper

While this area experienced a boom in the oil sector, cotton — another of this area's economic mainstays — went through a down cycle in 2014.

In many cases, Howard County cotton farmers were experiencing yields that are lacking in both quantity and quality, and experts pointed their fingers at the weather as the main culprit. Experts estimated that the double whammy of dry and wet conditions at the wrong time forced about 65 percent of county farmers to simply call it a year and file crop insurance claims. Those who harvested didn't see much of a return on their investment.

BSISD rating below par

Big Spring Independent School District continued to struggle state muster in student test scores, ending the year with a rating of “needs improvement.”

This marked the third

straight year the district received a sub-par rating from the Texas Education Agency, which installed a monitor to help shepherd the district back into the state's good graces.

“I think we are moving in the right direction,” said Big Spring ISD Superintendent Chris Wigington. “We had some increase, and we hope to continue to go that way.”

BSHS athletic, band success

The year was anything but below average for Big Spring High School athletic squads.

On the football field, the Steers enjoyed one of their best seasons in

memory, riding a high-scoring offense to a 9-3 record and a spot in the Class 3A regional semifinals.

Big Spring was successful in volleyball, as well, as the Lady Steers made their second consecutive trip to the Region I-3A tournament.

Success wasn't limited to athletics, however. The BSHS Band — “The Pride Drive of Big Spring High School” — qualified for the Class 3A state marching contest for the first time since 2001.

Forsan ISD groundbreaking

Forsan ISD residents got a glimpse of the future, so to speak, as construction began on a new elementary school.

The new building, which will replace Elbow Elementary, will be located adjacent to the junior high/high school campus and is slated to open for the 2015-2016 school year.

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Milton “Sonny” Anderson, 73, died Saturday. Memorial service will be at 10 a.m. Monday at Myers & Smith Chapel.

Carroll C. Turlington, 88, died Sunday. Funeral service will be at 1:30 p.m. Saturday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Burial with Military Honors will follow at Trinity Memorial Park.

2015 Norman Rockwell Calendars are in!

NOTICE OF SCHEDULED ENTRY INTO FIELDS

Pursuant to Tex. Agric. Code, Sec. 74.117, cotton producers in the Permian Basin Boll Weevil Eradication Zone, which consists of Dawson, Ector, Howard, Martin, and portions of Borden and Midland counties are hereby notified that Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation personnel will be conducting eradication activities in and around their fields, beginning January 16, 2015. All cotton fields will be mapped, and treatment will begin during the cotton-growing season. For notification prior to any chemical treatment, call 1-800-687-1212 with the exact location of your field and appropriate telephone numbers. Field entry and treatment is expected to last until all cotton is harvested in the zone. For more information regarding this program, please call the Texas Boll Weevil Eradication Foundation at 1-800-687-1212.

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Opinion

“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.

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- By fax at 264-7205
- By e-mail Managing Editor Bill McClellan at newsdesk@bigspringherald.com.
- By mail at P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721

LETTER POLICIES

The Herald welcomes letters to the editor.

- Sign your letter.
- Provide a daytime telephone number, as well as a street address for verification purposes.
- We reserve the right to edit for style and clarity.
- We reserve the right to limit publication to one letter per 30-day period per author.
- Letters that are unsigned or do not include a telephone number or address will not be considered.
- Letters should be e-mailed to editor@bigspringherald.com or mailed to Editor, Big Spring Herald, P.O. Box 1431, Big Spring, 79721.

DAILY PRAYER

May we remain diligent about reading Your word, Lord, for our life.

Amen

A biased screed against bias

Newsweek has outdone itself in its pre-Christmas issue with a vitriolic assassination of the Bible, under the title “The Bible: So Misunderstood It’s a Sin,” by Kurt Eichenwald.

This isn’t, by any measure, a balanced piece. It doesn’t approach fairness. Eichenwald doesn’t even attempt to hide his bias, though he seems oblivious to how it compromises his own fairness and objectivity and how hypocritical he is in condemning Bible believers for allegedly allowing their biases to influence them.

It is an unusually long article, by which one might infer that Eichenwald and the magazine consider the subject a matter of major importance that must be addressed.

The piece contains far too many misguided assertions to attempt to refute in a short column. For the opposite viewpoint about the integrity and authority of the Bible, I shamelessly refer you to my book “Jesus on Trial,” wherein I cover, in detail, a great percentage of the arguments he makes. My limited purpose here is to illustrate that Eichenwald is woefully guilty of that for which he condemns us Bible thumpers.

The thrust of Eichenwald’s screed seems to be that many Christians are an evil and ignorant lot who distort the Bible to justify their alleged hatred and bigotry. He’s bothered by Christians cherry-picking Scripture, yet his entire diatribe is a barely disguised clinic in cherry-picking.

Read the article for yourself and see whether you come away with the impression that Eichenwald has much firsthand familiarity with actual Christians — as opposed to the knuckle-dragging caricature he obviously envisions.

He tells us that Christians “wave their Bibles at passersby, screaming their condemnations of homosexuals.”

Let me ask you fellow Christians: How many Christians have you ever seen engaging in such behavior, other than, say, those in a rerun of an old television series, such as “Kojak” or “Starsky & Hutch,” shot in New

York City?

He says, “They are God’s frauds, cafeteria Christians who pick and choose which Bible verses they heed with less care than they exercise in selecting side orders for lunch.”

I have attended many church services over the years, and I can attest that the more the church respects the Bible as the word of God the less it chooses passages selectively to support messages. Pastors at my church and countless others often preach on passages that might seem problematic at first glance. They don’t cherry-pick Scripture. They tackle it and do their very best to explain it to their engaged congregations.

It seems Eichenwald’s real beef is with political conservatives, who he apparently believes put too much stock in certain passages to justify their barbarian beliefs and practices. They are people who “fall on their knees, worshipping at the base of granite monuments to the Ten Commandments while demanding prayer in school.

They appeal to God to save America from their political opponents, mostly Democrats. They gather in football stadiums by the thousands to pray for the country’s salvation.” Horrors! They believe “creationism should be taught in schools.”

He insists that Newsweek’s purpose is not to advance a certain theology but “to shine a light on a book that has been abused by people who claim to revere it but don’t read it, in the process creating misery for others.”

What does he mean by this, you ask?

He writes, “When the illiteracy of self-proclaimed Biblical literalists leads parents to banish children from their homes, when it sets neighbor against neighbor, when it engenders hate and condemnation, when it impedes science and undermines intellectual advancement, the topic has become too important for Americans to ignore.”

Talk about unsubstantiated smears — the very kind Eichenwald seems to be indicting. Where do Christians banish children from their homes for any reason, much less based on Bible verses? How does so-called biblical illiteracy turn neighbors against each other? If people are following Scripture, they will behave precisely the opposite of this description, and I know of

no serious Christian who will argue otherwise.

Neither the Bible nor any authentic Christians I know use Scripture to engender hate and condemnation. Christians are admonished to hate sins, not sinners — and we are all sinners. Every last one of us.

And the glib slander that we employ Scripture to impede science and undermine intellectual advancement is as fraudulent as it is outrageous.

Perhaps some Christians advocate that public schools teach biblical creationism. But it is obvious to me that Eichenwald is deliberately conflating them with those of us who believe that public schools should teach information about scientific discoveries that point to intelligent design and that we ought to let the science and facts speak for themselves, not selectively exclude scientific information if it happens to coincide with the biblical worldview.

Eichenwald really ought to get out more if he believes that Christians have a desire to undermine intellectual advancement. The Bible — the actual Bible, not the mythical one to which Eichenwald alludes — exhorts us to love the Lord with all of our minds. It emphasizes the importance of our acquiring wisdom. It teaches that we are created in the image of an infinitely intelligent God, whose wisdom we are to endeavor to plumb.

I hope that readers of this article will see through Eichenwald’s bias and agenda and discover for themselves the abundant information that flatly contradicts or strongly refutes most of the assertions he makes and conclusions he draws.

It is most ironic that Eichenwald’s own biases irredeemably blur the lens through which he seeks to expose the biases of others.

David Limbaugh is a writer, author and attorney. His latest book is “Jesus on Trial: A Lawyer Affirms the Truth of the Gospel.”

Follow him on Twitter @ davidlimbaugh and his website at www.davidlimbaugh.com. To read features by other Creators Syndicate writers and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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David Koch loves Manhattan

One may start the day at New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art. On the way in, you’ll pass through the new David H. Koch Plaza — the result of a \$65 million gift from David H. Koch.

After lunch, cross Central Park to the American Museum of Natural History, and marvel at the giant stegosaurus of the tiny brain. You will find him and other prehistoric remains in the David H. Koch Dinosaur Wing, funded with a \$20 million check penned by David H. Koch.

Yes, that’s the same David H. Koch who, with his famous brothers, finances right-wing campaigns against environmental laws, taxes and really any public obligation that might inconvenience the heirs to the Koch Industries fortune. David does sprinkle a few million on think tanks that spread the word. And he pays for parties in red states to train the tea party troops to curse government and quietly submit to being polluted upon by the various subsidiaries of Kansas-based Koch Industries.

But personally, he’ll take Manhattan, where he lives in the grand style surrounded by liberals. There he talks up his fairly progressive views on social mat-

ters that don’t impact his bottom line. Neighbors running the cultural and scientific institutions are delighted to have him on their boards and thank him profusely for his contributions.

Some humorless New York liberals may grumble at Koch’s ubiquity while basking in his munificence. About which, the night is still young.

Cocktails and then off to the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center. Home of the New York City Ballet, the building ceased to be called the New York State Theater after a fix-up funded with \$100 million from David H. Koch.

Should you slip on the theater’s magnificent inlaid marble floor and fracture bones, you may be rushed to the David H. Koch Pavilion at the Hospital for Special Surgery, overlooking the East River.

The billionaire gave the hospital \$25 million.

Soon you won’t have to leave Manhattan’s Upper East Side for superb outpatient care. The future David H. Koch Center is being built by New York-Presbyterian Hospital. Koch’s gift of \$100 million is the largest in the hospital’s history.

Nearby, at the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, state-of-the-art treatments are being supported by a \$67 million gift from David H. Koch.

Not all the charity stays in Manhattan, though. For example, the David H. Koch Institute

for Integrative Cancer Research at MIT in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is the fruit of a \$100 million gift from you-know-who.

Now, Koch Industries’ oil-coal-chemical empire is considered one of the nation’s worst polluters, its leaks, spills and chemical explosions visited mostly in the red states. But when wind turbines were proposed for his yachting grounds off Massachusetts, Bill complained they would cause “visual pollution.”

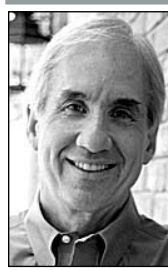
The conservative crusade to shrink government has already slashed federal spending on science and culture, with interesting results.

Federal funding traditionally spreads to all regions. The more these budgets are cut the more nonprofit organizations must depend on the generosity of billionaires.

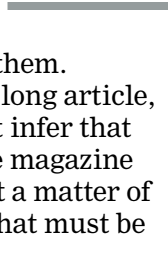
Billionaire giving tends to favor elite institutions, which are concentrated in New York, California, Massachusetts and a few other progressive states. That’s also where the billionaires are concentrated and where they receive invitations to party and give.

So in the end, the strangle-governor movement enhances the competitive advantage of the liberal powerhouses. Another irony of red-state politics to throw on the pile.

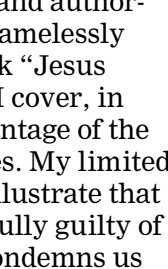
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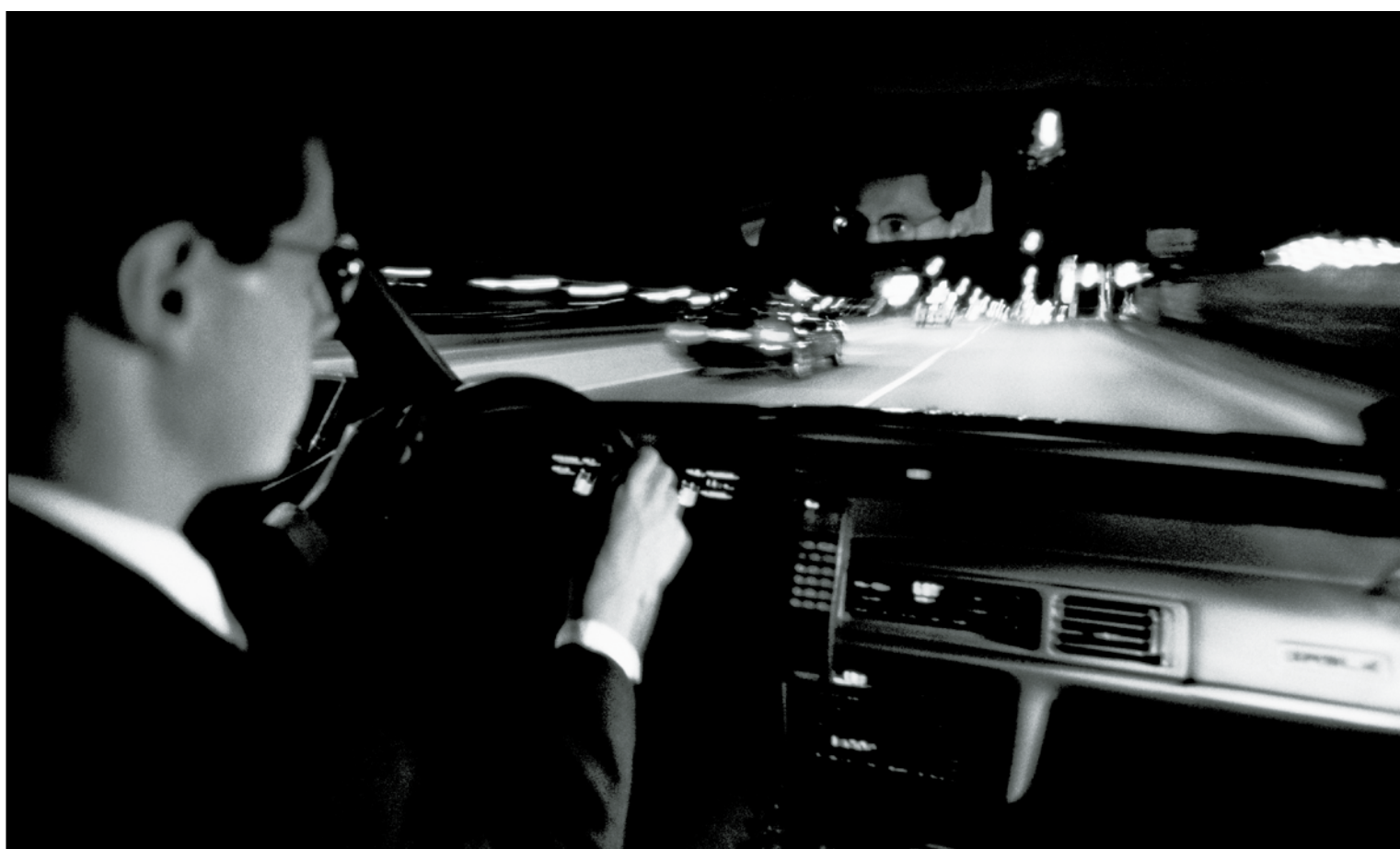
DAVID H. KOCH



FROMA HARROP

DRIVING IN THE DARK

Tips and tricks for navigating at night



ents zeaxanthin and lutein. Zeaxanthin and lutein are carotenoids that make up the macular pigment — the area of the eye responsible for protecting vision.

Trace amounts can be found in foods like leafy greens, corn, eggs, and red, orange and yellow peppers, but because it is difficult to get enough in the average American diet, optometrists recommend a nutritional supplement.

EyePromise visual EDGE is a once-daily softgel that features high levels of dietary zeaxanthin and is guaranteed to improve vision quality within three months.

Learn more about the impact vision has on night driving safety at www.eyepromise.com/nightdrivingvision.

Common night driving pitfalls

Low light: Low-light conditions make it harder for the eyes to see contrast and thus identify objects and gauge their distance. It is much more difficult for a person to make out an object or person in the street or to accurately measure how fast they are moving or how far away they are at night versus during the day.

See **NIGHT DRIVING**, page 6

(Family Features) — Although a lack of confidence while driving at night is most commonly associated with older drivers, new survey results reveal that drivers as young as 40 feel uncomfortable driving in dark, nighttime conditions. This time of year, when darkness falls earlier, means more low-light driving time for drivers of all ages, so it's important to understand the factors that contribute to this discomfort, including one surprising culprit — your nutritional intake.

Night driving is characterized by low-light conditions and glare from oncoming headlights that impact a driver's vision and can have serious safety implications. The AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety reports that vision provides as much as 85 percent of the information drivers need to make safe decisions behind the wheel.

Results from a survey conducted by Toluna and EyePromise reinforce the importance of quality vision: with nearly one in four respondents report-

ing that if they could see better they would feel safer driving at night.

A problem with real consequences

Concerns about safe driving at night and in low-light conditions are valid. According to the National Safety Council, traffic death rates are three times greater driving at night versus day. However, for many people, driving at night is not a choice. In the survey, one in five respondents said that, despite feeling anxious, they continue to drive at night out of necessity.

Protect yourself behind the wheel

The first step toward night driving safety is being aware of the issues that may disrupt a driver's confidence behind the wheel. The vision issues related to night driving can be organized into three categories: low-light conditions, which affect contrast and the ability to gauge distance; glare, which may cause a period of

blind driving; and reaction time, which is reduced when visibility is hampered.

You can also enhance your safety behind the wheel by adopting smart driving behaviors such as driving slower at night and watching the white line on the road. The National Safety Council recommends drivers clean their headlights, taillights, signal lights and windows (inside and out) at least once a week.

Research reveals there is an additional solution proven to directly address the major night driving vision concerns: protecting your vision quality at its source.

Scientific studies show that nutrition has a significant impact on visual performance, specifically the nutri-

Vegas snow on New Year's Eve is a roll of the dice

BY KIMBERLY PIERCEALL

Associated Press

LAS VEGAS (AP) — One fireworks coordinator has a request of Mother Nature in this city of glitzy shows: If you're going to let it snow on New Year's Eve, let it fall at the perfect moment — right before midnight when his show launches from the Las Vegas Strip.

Phil Grucci, president and creative director of Fireworks by Grucci, talked about the frosty forecast as he stood Tuesday atop the Treasure Island casino-hotel, one of seven hotel rooftops where 70 workers have been readying the displays since the day after Christmas.

And if it's going to snow, it would be great if it stopped shortly after the show ends, he said.

Like large swaths of the Western U.S., Las Vegas is bracing for unusually cold weather as 2014 ends and 2015 starts — the low in the desert city on New Year's Eve is forecast to be 32 degrees when about 340,000 people were expected to pack the Strip and Las Vegas' downtown Fremont area for festivities.

The suburb of Henderson reported trace amounts early Wednesday, and snow flurries fell in the Las

Vegas valley, but there were no reports of it sticking. But a layer of dry air was absorbing much of the precipitation before it reached the ground in the heart of Las Vegas, according to National Weather Service meteorologist Justin Pullin, and there was only a negligible chance of snow at night.

But snow was heavy enough in California to strand more than 180 motorists traveling in the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mountains northeast of Los Angeles. They were rescued by early Wednesday. The storm also dropped powder on very low elevations across inland Southern California and packed winds that toppled trees.

In Las Vegas, tourists walking the Strip on Tuesday took the cold snap in stride, especially those from the Midwest and Northwest.

"I think we brought the snow from Ohio," said Lisa Richey, 38, who along with her sister and longtime friend came prepared for the chilly holiday.

Jared Corriveau, 24, also of Ohio, wore a T-shirt as he walked with his family outside and past people in coats

with hands shoved deep into pockets, including Marcio Berri, 26, of Brazil.

"Who would expect snowing in Vegas?" Berri said.

He said he'd likely buy some new scarves and gloves before New Year's Eve night, when he still planned to stand outside on the Strip with the masses.

"We're gonna be in the street. It doesn't matter how cold it is," Berri said.

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NIGHT DRIVING

Continued from Page 5

Glare disability and recovery: Glare and blinding light from an oncoming car's headlights not only disables vision in the moment, but there is a period of time before the eyes recover where people are left driving blind. In fact, glare is one of the most common night driving vision issues, with one out of four respondents reporting that they feel unsafe driving at night due to glare, according to a survey by Toluna and EyePromise.

Reaction time: Reaction time is slower at night. The National Safety Council reports that 90 percent of a driver's reaction depends on vision, which is limited at night, so a person's ability to spot danger and react is compromised. When considering the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety's assertion that a typical driver makes 20 decisions per mile and has less than half a second to act to avoid a collision, it's clear that hampered night vision poses serious danger.

Take steps to improve your safety

There are numerous ways you can proactively improve your safety while driving at night. The experts at EyePromise offer these suggestions:

Practice safe driving

- Make sure the windshield and headlights are clean.
- Leave more distance between cars.
- Use "night" setting on your interior rearview mirror.

Schedule regular eye exams to monitor for vision issues

A professional will be able to identify any issues with the aid of routine examinations.

THE "EYE-OPENING" TRUTH ABOUT NIGHT DRIVING

Traffic death rates are

3X

GREATER driving at night versus during the day¹

Vision provides as much as

85

PERCENT of the information we need to make safe decisions behind the wheel²

By age 40

40%

of people feel discomfort with driving at night³

MAJOR NIGHT DRIVING VISION CONCERNS

LOW LIGHT

Harder for your eyes to distinguish contrast and gauge objects and accurate distance

More difficult to identify a pedestrian or pot hole in the road ahead

GLARE DISABILITY & RECOVERY

Harder to see in glare and takes longer for eyes to adjust after glare

1 IN 4 DRIVERS feel unsafe due to glare³

REACTION TIME

Harder to react quickly and make safe decisions

90% of a driver's reaction depends on vision¹

A typical driver makes 20 decisions per mile, with less than **half a second** to act to avoid a collision² and this only gets more difficult at night

PRACTICE SAFE DRIVING TIPS

- Make sure windshield and headlights are clean
- Leave more distance between cars
- Use "night" setting on interior rearview mirror
- Schedule regular eye exams to monitor for vision issues

IMPROVE YOUR EYES WITH NUTRITION

Research proves nutritional supplements high in dietary zeaxanthin (10mg or above) and lutein protect and promote eye health to directly address major night driving vision issues

The nutrients dietary zeaxanthin and lutein

IMPROVE CONTRAST

REDUCE GLARE

IMPROVE RECOVERY TIME

Trace amounts of these nutrients found in foods like leafy greens, eggs, corn and orange and yellow peppers but best option is natural supplement like *EyePromise vizual EDGE™*, which features the highest levels of dietary zeaxanthin (14mg) and lutein in a once-daily softgel.

EyePromise Learn more at www.EyePromise.com/seebetter

1 National Safety Council, http://bit.ly/1gbsrF0
2 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, http://bit.ly/1MwvG9
3 Results from a May 2014 study by market research firm Toluna and EyePromise

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Photo/WPA Pool/Getty Images

Queen Elizabeth II talks to Joan Collins at reception at Buckingham Palace on in February 17.

'Dynasty' dame: Joan Collins honored by queen

BY JILL LAWLESS

Associated Press

LONDON (AP) — The diva of "Dynasty" is now a dame.

Joan Collins, who played scheming, shoulder pad-wearing Alexis Carrington in the hit 1980s TV show, was made the female equivalent of a knight in Queen Elizabeth II's annual New Year's honors list.

The star of potboilers including "The Stud" and "The Bitch" was recognized for her services to charity. Collins, 81, is a longtime supporter of nonprofit groups helping children.

London-born Collins said Tuesday it was "humbling to receive this level of recognition from my queen and country, and I am thrilled and truly grateful."

Actress Kristin Scott Thomas, who is due to play the British monarch in stage play "The Audience" next year, was also made a dame, and said she initially didn't believe the news.

"I am thrilled, astonished and worried that I might suddenly wake up," said Scott Thomas, who received an Academy Award nomination in 1997 for "The English Patient."

Fashion designer Mary Quant, who made the miniskirt synonymous with 60s style, was also named

a dame, as were television presenter Esther Rantzen, who founded the ChildLine telephone service for neglected and abused young people, and British poet laureate Carol Ann Duffy.

Veteran actor John Hurt, star of "The Naked Civil Servant," "The Elephant Man" and "Alien," was made a knight.

And it will be "Arise, Sir Simon" for chemist Simon Campbell, part of the team that created erectile dysfunction drug Viagra.

Comic actor James Corden, incoming host of "The Late Late Show" on CBS, was named an Officer of the Order of the British Empire, or OBE. The same honor went to his ex, actress Sheridan Smith.

Actress Emily Watson, who was Oscar nominated for "Breaking the Waves" and "Hilary and Jackie," also received an OBE.

Music producer Peter Asher, half of 1960s pop duo Peter and Gordon, was named a Commander of the Order of the British Empire, or CBE. So were comedian Meera Syal, a star of groundbreaking sketch comedy show "Goodness Gracious Me," and Scottish writer Ali Smith, whose novel "How To Be Both" was shortlisted for this year's Booker Prize.

sea of ceramic poppies that filled the moat of the Tower of London in tribute to the war dead. They were made Members of the Order of the British Empire, or MBEs, for creating the work, which was visited by 5 million people, including the queen.

Britain's honors are bestowed by the monarch, but recipients are selected by committees of civil servants from nominations made by the government and the public.

In descending order, the main honors are knighthoods, CBE, OBE and MBE. Knights are addressed as "sir" or "dame," followed by their name. Recipients of the other honors have no title, but can put the letters after their surnames.

The honors are used to reward long-serving politicians, diplomats, civil servants and royal courtiers, but the list also includes a smattering of celebrities and many people unknown outside their communities or specialist fields.

The list of more than 1,100 recipients includes an MBE for Britain's leading arrowsmith, while others were honored for services to tax policy, libraries and English-language teacher training in North Korea.

The oldest recipient was 103-year-old Fauja Singh, who took up marathon running at the age of 89 and continued well past his century. He received a British Empire Medal for services to sport and charity.

Follow Jill Lawless on Twitter at <http://Twitter.com/JillLawless>

A century after the start of World War I, ceramic artist Paul Cummins and stage designer Tom Piper were recognized for creating a

5 things about Americans' slipping sense of duty

BY CONNIE CASS

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Americans are a little less likely to ask what they can do for their country these days.

An Associated Press-GfK poll found that the sense of duty has slipped since a similar survey three decades earlier. Civic virtues such as staying informed or serving on a jury don't seem as important as they once did — especially among the younger generation.

The findings fit with research that's been worrying many experts who study civic engagement or advocate for teaching more about civics in school.

"I don't see any recovery," said Rutgers University Professor Cliff Zukin. "The people who were 40 two decades ago aren't as engaged as the people who were 60 two decades ago. This generational slippage tends to continue."

Here are five things to know about Americans' sense of civic duty:

CITIZENSHIP'S NOT WHAT IT USED TO BE

Americans' commitment to some traditional obligations of citizenship has slipped.

An Associated Press-GfK poll repeated questions asked in 1984 about six civic-minded activities: voting, volunteering, serving on a jury, reporting crime, knowing English and keeping informed about news and public issues.

Of the six, only voting and volunteering were embraced about as strongly as three decades ago, when NORC at the University of Chicago posed those questions to Americans on the General Social Survey, but volunteering doesn't rank very high on the list for many.

While just 28 percent say volunteering is "a very important obligation" that a citizen owes the country, three-fourths of Americans consider voting central to citizenship.

Nonetheless, only about 36 percent of eligible voters turned out for November's midterms, according to University of Florida Associate Professor Michael P. McDonald's analysis. That's the lowest since World War II.

See, CIVIC DUTY, page 8



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CIVIC DUTY

Continued from Page 7

BUT BIG MAJORITIES STILL FEEL AN OBLIGATION

Despite some sliding, Americans still think U.S. citizenship carries some duties as well as rights.

About 9 out of 10 say that reporting a crime you witness, voting in elections, knowing English and serving on a jury when called are at least "somewhat important" obligations.

And each of those is still rated "very important" by a majority. It's just that, except in the case of voting, those majorities have slipped by an average of about 13 percentage points.

"There are a lot of arguments about how our society has shifted toward a rights focus instead of an obligation focus," said Scott Keeter, director of survey research at the Pew Research Center. But Keeter isn't convinced there's enough evidence to support that conclusion.

"It's a little early to pull the alarm bells about the demise of our civic culture," he said.

SENSE OF DUTY LOWEST IN THE YOUNG

Young people are feeling less dutiful, or maybe just showing their libertarian streak.

In every category except volunteering, adults under 30 were less likely than their

elders to see any obligation, and also felt less obliged than young people of the past.

In 2014 about a fourth of them said there's no duty to keep informed, volunteer or speak English.

Young adults felt the most responsibility about reporting a crime: two-thirds said that's "very important," and the rest were divided between "somewhat important" and "not an obligation."

Still, in 1984, their parents' generation was much more devoted to maintaining law and order — 86 percent of young adults then called reporting crime "very important."

YET VOLUNTEERING GAINED GROUND AMONG UNDER-30 CROWD

Compared to the 1984 survey, Americans' sense of obligation fell across every category and age, save one.

Today's young people are more likely than their parents' generation to consider giving their time for community service "very important."

Nineteen percent said that three decades ago, 29 percent think so now.

"That's partly the fact that we have built up our institutions for volunteering," said Peter Levine, associate dean for research at Tufts' Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service. "Something like 30 percent of high schools have service learning programs. They didn't have that in the 1980s."

At the same time, the importance of volunteering declined among adults 50 and over compared to their age group 30 years ago.

IS ANYBODY READING THIS?

Americans don't feel much pressure to keep up with news and public issues anymore.

Only 37 percent think that's very important, down from a majority — 56 percent — in 1984.

In fact, a fifth say there's no obligation at all to stay fully informed.

The young are even less likely to feel citizens ought to know what's going on, despite having unprecedented amounts of information at their fingertips.

The AP-GfK Poll of 1,044 adults was conducted online July 24-28, 2014, using a sample drawn from GfK's probability-based KnowledgePanel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.4 percentage points.

Respondents were first selected randomly using phone or mail survey methods and later interviewed online. People selected for KnowledgePanel who didn't otherwise have access to the Internet were provided access at no cost to them.

Follow Connie Cass on Twitter: <http://www.twitter.com/ConnieCass>

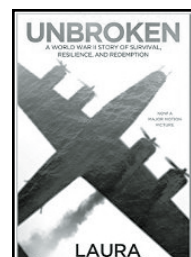
The top 10 books on Apple's iBooks-US

By The Associated Press

iBook charts for week ending December 29, 2014:

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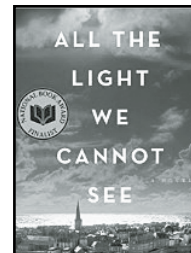
1. Unbroken by Laura Hillenbrand - 9780679603757 - (RandomHousePublishing Group)



1. Gone Girl by Gillian Flynn - 9780307588388 - (Crown Publishing Group)

3. American Sniper (Enhanced Edition) by Chris Kyle, Jim DeFelice & Scott McEwen - 9780062190963 - (William Morrow)

4. All the Light We Cannot See by Anthony Doerr - 9781476746609 - (Scribner)



5. Fifty Shades of Grey by E L James - 9781612130293 - (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group)

6. Divergent by Veronica Roth - 9780062077011 - (Katherine Tegen Books)



7. Wild by Cheryl Strayed - 9780307957658 - (Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group)

8. Big Little Lies by Liane Moriarty - 9780698138636 - (Penguin Group US)

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Photo courtesy of Getty Images

Show your heart some love

(Family Features) — Each day offers new opportunities to make choices that impact your health and overall wellness. Though hectic schedules can cause many of us to let healthy habits fall to the wayside, it is important that we give our bodies the attention and care they deserve.

Consider these small steps to gradually improve your whole body and heart health, which can help you enjoy a happier, longer life:

- Strike a balance. Take a simpler approach to the traditional idea of "dieting." Balance calories in versus calories out with a combination of good food choices, such as fruits, vegetables and whole grains, and regular exercise, such as walking or hiking.

Incorporate low-calorie, naturally fat-free foods into your diet, such as new Dole Red Grapefruit Sunrise Fruit Bowls, which bring all-natural fruit together with 100 percent juice.

They are a great way to start the day or just enjoy as a delicious snack. Grapefruit naturally offers a plentiful

source of nutrients, including phosphorus, potassium and vitamins A and C.

- Watch the middle. According to the Mayo Clinic, that extra weight you carry around the mid-section can cause serious health problems, including cardiovascular disease, diabetes and certain cancers. Work to keep this common problem area in check by reducing caloric intake and increasing physical activity.

- Skip the stress. While a little stress is part of being human, too much can be taxing on the heart. Find activities that engage your mind and naturally relieve stress such as knitting, crafting or working on a puzzle.

- Dine in the a.m. Don't let a rushed morning routine get in the way of enjoying a heart-healthy breakfast. A complete morning meal includes a combination of whole grains, protein, and fruits or vegetables. For a convenient, on-the-go option, throw an individually-sealed cup of Dole Red Grapefruit Sunrise in your laptop bag or purse. Each cup contains peak-of-ripeness, wholesome, peeled grapefruit and allows you to enjoy grapefruit

all year around. Plus, they're gluten free, contain no GMOs (genetically modified or engineered ingredients) or artificial sweeteners, and feature BPA-free packaging.

- Drink more water. For your body to function properly, it needs the right amount of hydration.

According to the Institute of Medicine, the average required intake for a male is about 13 cups, while a female requires about 9 cups. Switch out sodas and sugary drinks with water to reap its benefits, and to shave off extra "empty" calories that may contribute to weight gain.

- Get routine exams. A yearly doctor's examination keeps you more informed of your body's ever-changing status, and it keeps your health care provider in the loop, too. Educate yourself and understand the import numbers for your heart, including blood pressure, cholesterol and triglycerides.

A happy life starts with the right mindset and a few easy routines. For more ways to boost your body's wellness and healthy snack ideas, visit www.Dole.com.

Big 12 can back up claim as top hoops league

By **STEPHEN HAWKINS**

AP Sports Writer

DALLAS (AP) — The Big 12 has plenty of positive statistics, and winning teams, to back up its claim as the nation's top basketball conference.

This is a league with its only undefeated team unranked, having fallen out of the Top 25 this week despite a 44-point win.

Still, no other league can claim six Top 25 teams. There was a league-record seven before TCU (13-0) was replaced in this week's poll by Georgetown.

After No. 13 Kansas and Oklahoma State won Tuesday night, the Big 12 has seven teams with at least 10 wins and an overall record of 101-20 (.835 winning percentage). That is the nation's best. No. 11 Texas,

No. 17 West Virginia, No. 22 Baylor and Texas Tech also have won 10 games or more, with No. 9 Iowa State possibly joining that group Wednesday.

The Big 12 is on track to win at least 80 percent of its non-conference games for the first time in league history, and there was a two-week stretch earlier in December when its teams won 28 consecutive games.

There is a 24-14 record (.632) against the ACC, Big Ten, Pac-12 and SEC, helping push the Big 12 to No. 1 in RPI for conferences.

Almost every Big 12 team should be strong this season.

Iowa State went into this season confident of replacing Big 12 player of the year Melvin Ejim and DeAndre Kane, an

	Big 12 Conference			All Games		
	W	L	Pct.	W	L	Pct.
TCU	0	0	.000	13	0	1.000
W. Virginia	0	0	.000	12	1	.923
Baylor	0	0	.000	11	1	.917
Iowa St.	0	0	.000	9	1	.900
Texas	0	0	.000	11	2	.846
Kansas	0	0	.000	10	2	.833
Oklahoma St.	0	0	.000	10	2	.833
Texas Tech	0	0	.000	10	3	.769
Oklahoma	0	0	.000	8	3	.727
Kansas St.	0	0	.000	7	5	.583

honorable on the All-America team. The Cyclones (9-1) are the Big 12's highest-ranked team and have five players averaging double-figure scoring. Junior forward Georges Niang leads the way with 16.9 points, 5.5 rebounds and 4.2 steals a game.

After going winless in its 18 Big 12 games last season, TCU is off to the best start in school history after going 13-0 in its

non-conference games. The Horned Frogs last week got into the Top 25 for the first time since January 1999, when Billy Tubbs was their coach and the season after their last NCAA tournament appearance.

Kansas had a 32-point loss to No. 1 Kentucky a week into the season, then lost by 25 points at Temple in its last game before Christmas. The young Jayhawks have won their other 10 games. "That's one great thing about youth. They don't know. They can't remember," coach Bill Self said. The Jayhawks are led by junior Perry Ellis, but their next seven top scorers are sophomores or freshmen. The Jayhawks, still No. 2 in the latest RPI ratings.

Baylor lost more than half of its scoring and rebounding from another Sweet 16

team, and senior point guard Kenny Chery was bothered at times this season by a foot injury, but the Bears (11-1) have dropped only an eight-point game against Illinois. They will get an early test in Big 12 play, opening Saturday at Oklahoma before facing Kansas in its Big 12 home opener next week.

While there are plenty of talented young players in the Big 12, the upper classmen dominated the league's top scorers going into this week. Oklahoma State senior Le'Bryan Nash led the Big 12 with 17.6 points a game.

Of the top 13 scorers, six are seniors, six are juniors and the only sophomore is Kansas State's Marcus Foster, whose 15 points a game ranked seventh in the league.

Petty says Bears moving past playoff snub

By **JOHN WERNER**

AP Writer

DALLAS (AP) — Baylor quarterback Bryce Petty would love to be preparing for a College Football Playoff semifinal game this week.

But after the Bears were snubbed by the selection committee, he's put it behind him and is focused on Michigan State in Thursday's Cotton Bowl. "This game is not about revenge on the committee or anything else," Petty said. "It's only about representing Baylor and showing we're a national power. This isn't Baylor from 10 years ago, you have to understand that. Hopefully people will accept for who we are and what we do on the field."

The Bears finished fifth in the playoff standings behind No. 1 Alabama, No. 2 Oregon, No. 3 Florida State and No. 4 Ohio State. Those national semifinals will also take place Thursday.

"Some people want big money schools, and that's fine," Petty said. "But we're going to go out here and play football, and we're going to be dang good at it."

Baylor will be facing a tough Michigan State squad.

The Spartans' defense is one of the best in the Big Ten and has been especially good against the run, allowing 97.5 yards per game.

It will be a major challenge for the Baylor offensive line to carve out holes for running backs Shock Linwood, Devin Chafin and Johnny Jefferson.

"They're one of the best if not the best defensive line in the Big Ten," said Baylor All-America offen-

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Thursday, Jan. 1, 2015
Outback Bowl
At Tampa, Fla.
Wisconsin (10-3) vs. Auburn (8-4), Noon (ESPN2)

Cotton Bowl Classic
At Arlington, Texas
Michigan State (10-2) vs. Baylor (11-1), 12:30 p.m. (ESPN)

Citrus Bowl
At Orlando, Fla.
Minnesota (8-4) vs. Missouri (10-3), 1 p.m. (ABC)

Rose Bowl
At Pasadena, Calif.
Playoff semifinal: Oregon (12-1) vs. Florida State (13-0), 5 p.m. (ESPN)

Sugar Bowl
At New Orleans
Playoff semifinal: Alabama (12-1) vs. Ohio State (12-1), 8:30 p.m. (ESPN)

sive tackle Spencer Drango. "So it's definitely going to be a challenge for us.

"They're similar in mindset to Kansas State where they're very disciplined and don't make many mistakes. They've got big bodies up front, but they're quick."

Michigan State will be just the second Big Ten school to play in the Cotton Bowl since its inception in 1937.

Ohio State beat Texas A&M, 28-12, on Jan. 1, 1987. While the Spartans have an appreciation of history, defensive end Marcus Rush said they can't think of anything else except preparing for Baylor.

"You don't really sit there and think about it right now especially with the game ahead of you," Rush said. "Baylor is a great team and beating them would be huge. And you know losing would be terrible."

Meyer expects Braxton Miller back at Ohio State

NEW ORLEANS (AP) — Ohio State coach Urban Meyer says he expects quarterback Braxton Miller to return to the Buckeyes next season.

Meyers says he's addressed the matter with Miller, who has missed this season because of a shoulder injury. Miller has graduated, making

him eligible to transfer and play at a new school immediately.

Miller's place at OSU is in question because of the emergence of J.T. Barrett, who started most of this season, and Cardale Jones, who's performed well since Barrett broke his ankle in the regular season finale.



AP Photo

Running back Joseph Randle and the Dallas Cowboys will face off against Detroit in the first round of the NFL playoffs on Sunday.

Garrett floors it even with Cowboys in playoffs

By **SCHUYLER DIXON**

AP Sports Writer

IRVING (AP) — Tony Romo took all but one snap for a regular-season finale that had little chance of meaning anything for the playoff-bound Dallas Cowboys.

DeMurray Murray got his 20th carry late in the fourth quarter with a 10-point lead, not long after Dez Bryant made his final catch of the day.

Sure enough, a 44-17 win over Washington didn't change Dallas' postseason position. Not that coach Jason Garrett cares. "We have been playing well as a football team the last few weeks and that's certainly an important part of it," Garrett said. "But I think as much as anything else is to take advantage of an opportunity to get better as a football team. Guys embraced the opportunity to play. I think we saw that in the spirit and demeanor we played with."

The team that couldn't win big games in December went 4-0 this time, zooming past Philadelphia to win the NFC East and earning a first-round home game against Detroit (11-5) on Sunday.

Now the question is whether keeping to the routine over resting Romo's surgically repaired back will make a difference against the Lions, or if matters that Murray missed a chance to

Wild-card Playoffs	
Saturday, Jan. 3	
Arizona at Carolina, 4:35 p.m. (ESPN)	Baltimore at Pittsburgh, 8:15 p.m. (NBC)-x
Sunday, Jan. 4	
Cincinnati at Indianapolis, 1:05 (CBS)-x	Detroit at Dallas, 4:40 p.m. (FOX)

ease up at the end of by far the NFL rushing leader's busiest season as a pro.

Two things have already broken the Cowboys' way.

They got a Sunday playoff slot — and extra day for Romo after even he admitted that the much shorter Thanksgiving week was a problem.

Needless to say, players were on board with Garrett's plan to play to win.

"I think everybody was serious and just to hear that come out of his mouth, it motivated us even more," Bryant said. "We know what we have to do and we did exactly what we wanted to do. We just have to keep fighting, have to keep playing together."

The Cowboys are one of five teams that tied for the best record in the NFL at 12-4. They averaged more than 40 points per game in their December victories and won four straight by double digits. Dallas last did that in the first four games of 2007, finishing the season as the top seed in the NFC.

Dallas' last two trips to the

playoffs offer glimpses of each approach. Seven years ago, they pulled the starters in an uninspiring loss at Washington to finish the regular season, then had the bye before losing to the New York Giants in the divisional round.

Two years later, the Cowboys had to beat the Eagles in the finale to win the NFC East and secure a home game, then turned around and beat them again in the first round. That's the only playoff win for Dallas since 1997.

"I don't think '07 really was (a comparison), just because we had the bye and worked hard to get to that position," Witten said. "I know in '09 we played well, finished the season and then come back in the playoffs and kind of that momentum, you kind of ride that into the playoffs. I think that's good."

If nothing else, the Cowboys feel like they're playing as well as any team in the NFL.

"I just think we're gelling," said Murray, who finished with 1,845 yards rushing, broke all-time NFL leader Emmitt Smith's franchise record from 19 years ago and tied for the league lead in touchdowns rushing with 13. "We're executing the pass game and running it well. I think we're playing good, situational football. Our defense is playing good, our specials teams is playing well."

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Tomorrow's Horoscope

Welcome to 2015

An opposition of Mars and Jupiter creates a fascinating tension. There's a fair amount of personal doubt that comes with Jupiter's retrograde, and Mars in Aquarius will push those buttons from a philosophical standpoint, asking, "What do you really deserve out of life?" A better question may be, "What would you wish for the others around you?"



HOLIDAY MATHIS

ARIES (March 21-April 19). Your favorite people are the ones who can express themselves sincerely and briefly. Your day will be filled with the other kind, so you'll do well to develop the conversational means of getting to the point.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Whoever told you that you have to be an expert before you start? Start now, and if you stick with it a while, you'll become an expert through the process.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). You are reticent to stand out because that means you'll have to field a lot of mixed feelings about what you're doing. Be brave. Field the feedback. It's better to be envied than to be ignored.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). Maybe you'd prefer that the people in your life didn't make mistakes, but you do appreciate a person who can own up to responsibility when mistakes happen. In fact, this is how trust is built today.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Since you are feeling particularly impressive today, place yourself in the company of the people you want to be like and in the environments you aspire to inhabit regularly.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Planning will trump discipline. Think of your day like an obstacle course that you know

well, and outfit yourself with all that's needed to sail through each hurdle.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). If you needed an excuse to lie around and watch comedies on television, here it is: Sometimes it's enough just to take care that your spirit isn't broken.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). The best indicator of right and wrong will be your feelings. Right will probably feel difficult before and during but peaceful after. Wrong will feel easy before and during but terrible after.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). You never have to seek new interests, because one naturally leads to another. If you find yourself searching, it's because you're not being curious enough about what's right in front of you.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Memories make up stories, but that doesn't mean your memories are mistaken. The stories, true or false, are yours. You remember them a certain way for a reason.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). The games of the day will involve risk, and there's no way to get around this. If you're not risking, you're not playing, and if you're not playing, you're not having fun.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). You'll be inspired to create today. This happens in part because wherever you go there are lovely things to look at. Appreciating beauty makes you beautiful.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 1). This year you possess the rare gift of being able to see yourself as others see you. You'll cultivate a new image. In January, you'll sell an idea or product for top dollar. Your live-and-let-live attitude will attract colorful friends. In March, you'll keep your cool in the midst of upheaval, and for this reason you'll be made a leader. Leo and Libra people adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 40, 11, 22, 47 and 9.

ASTROLOGICAL QUESTIONS: She's a Taurus -- and I'm starting to think that she's not a good friend for me. She always wants to see new places, travel, go to parties, try new restaurants and the like. I thought I was broadening my horizons by doing those things with her. But I always wind up spending way too much money and time, and honestly, I don't have that much fun. It's like she's on a constant mission of pleasure, but it always seems so brief. I'm thinking of distancing myself, but part of me worries that I'm just being a stick in the mud. What do you think? -- Virgo Workaholic

We each have our own set-point for pleasure tolerance, and it sounds like yours is considerably lower than your friend's, which is typical of your respective signs. Honor who you are. If so-called "pleasure" is making you bored or irritated, doesn't that defeat the point? Perhaps this quote from 18th-century writer Oliver Goldsmith will resonate:

"None has more frequent conversations with a disagreeable self than the man of pleasure; his enthusiasms are but few and transient; his appetites, like angry creditors, are continually making fruitless demands for what he is unable to pay; and the greater his former pleasures the more strong his regret, the more impatient his expectations. A life of pleasure is, therefore, the most unpleasing life."

CELEBRITY PROFILES: Two American heroes were Capricorns born on the first day of the year: war hero Paul Revere and American flag-maker Betsy Ross. Revere was born under the warrior moon of Aries and had Mercury, Jupiter and Uranus in adventurous Sagittarius. Ross was born when the moon was in Cancer, the sign of America and patriotism.

If you would like to write to Holiday Mathis, please go to www.creators.com and click on "Write the Author" on the Holiday Mathis page, or you may send her a postcard in the mail. To find out more about Holiday Mathis and read her past columns, visit the Creators Syndicate Web page at www.creators.com.

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SAVE A LIFE. DON'T DRIVE HOME BUZZED. BUZZED DRIVING IS DRUNK DRIVING.



Annie's Mailbox



KATHY MITCHELL MARCY SUGAR

Dear Readers: Welcome to 2015! My, how time flies. Our New Year's wish for you, our readers, is for this year to be one of health and happiness. Do your best to make this year better than the last. Be kinder. Be more patient. Be more tolerant. Help someone in need. Vow to look after your health, work out

more, eat less junk, meditate, get a massage, give up smoking. Smile more. Put more effort and energy into your relationships, and tell the people you love how much they mean to you. You never know what tomorrow will bring. Please start this year off right.

Dear Annie: A couple of years back, a reader asked you to reprint some pieces you had previously printed on New Year's Day. She said she used one of them as the basis for her New Year's resolutions. I remember liking both pieces and wondering whether you might reprint them every year. You didn't do it last year, but will you consider doing it now? -- Hoping for Inspiration in Texas

Dear Texas: We'd be happy to. These two pieces have proved to be extremely popular, and we hope you enjoy seeing them in print once again:

Just for Today (author unknown)
Just for today I will live through the next 12 hours and not tackle my whole life's problems at once.
Just for today I will improve my mind. I will learn something useful. I will read something that requires effort, thought and concentration.
Just for today I will be agreeable. I will look my best, speak in a well-modulated voice, be courteous and considerate.
Just for today I will not

find fault with friend, relative or colleague. I will not try to change or improve anyone but myself.

Just for today I will have a program. I might not follow it exactly, but I will have it. I will save myself from two enemies -- hurry and indecision.

Just for today I will exercise my character in three ways. I will do a good turn and keep it a secret. If anyone finds out, it won't count.

Just for today I will do two things I don't want to do, just for exercise. Just for today I will be unafraid. Especially will I be unafraid to enjoy what is beautiful and believe that as I give to the world, the world will give to me.

Dear Readers: Here's one more:

Golden Rules for Living by Miriam Hamilton Keare

1. If you open it, close it.
2. If you turn it on, turn it off.
3. If you unlock it, lock it up.
4. If you break it, admit it.
5. If you can't fix it, call in someone who can.
6. If you borrow it, return it.
7. If you value it, take care of it.
8. If you make a mess, clean it up.
9. If you move it, put it back.
10. If it belongs to someone else, get permission to use it.
11. If you don't know how to operate it, leave it alone.
12. If it's none of your business, don't ask questions.

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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Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

Dynamic Defense

North dealer. Both sides vulnerable.

return a heart at trick two to establish the setting trick in that suit.

NORTH
♠ A 8
♥ Q 4
♦ A K J
♣ K J 10 9 8 4

WEST
♠ 5 4 3
♥ J 8 7 6 5 3 2
♦ 9 3
♣ 2

EAST
♠ K 2
♥ 10 9
♦ Q 8 6 4 2
♣ A Q 7 6

SOUTH
♠ Q J 10 9 7 6
♥ A K
♦ 10 7 5
♣ 5 3

There are other possibilities for East to consider, but the problem is to select the play that offers the greatest chance of success. It is a tough problem to solve, but there is a standout solution that covers practically every case.

East should cash the ace of clubs. This has, first of all, the great advantage that if West has the king (or ace) of hearts, he can signal by discarding a high heart, and East will still have time to shift to a heart.

If West discards a low heart instead, East can then play a club and hope to build up an extra trump trick. **But in the actual hand,** the ace-of-clubs play defeats the contract for an entirely different reason. It allows West to discard the nine of diamonds, and when East plays another club and declarer ruffs, West discards his remaining diamond.

Then, as soon as East gains the lead with the king of spades, he gives West a diamond ruff to score the setting trick.

Tomorrow: Bidding quiz.
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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.

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

www.sudoku-puzzles.net

sudoku

ANSWERS

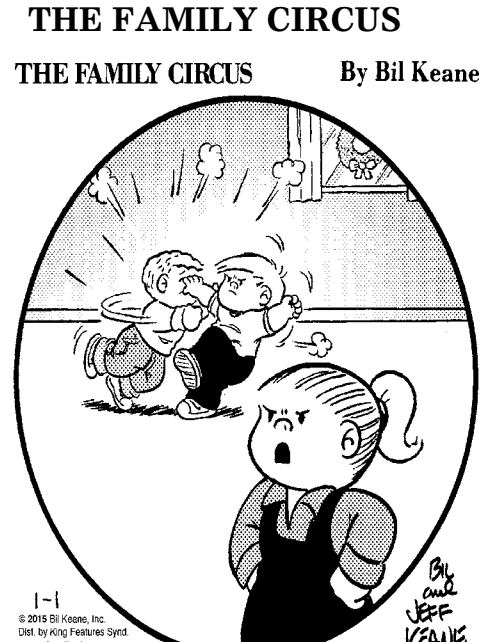
7	8	3	2	9	4	6	5	1
2	6	5	3	7	1	4	8	9
4	9	1	5	8	6	2	7	3
3	4	8	1	6	9	7	2	5
1	2	9	4	5	7	8	3	6
6	5	7	8	2	3	9	1	4
5	7	6	9	3	8	1	4	2
9	1	2	7	4	5	3	6	8
8	3	4	6	1	2	5	9	7

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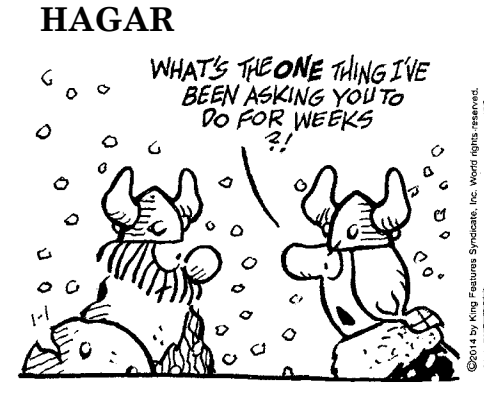
	KMID (3)	UNI (4)	KPEJ (5)	KOSA (7)	KTLE (8)	KWES (9)	WTBS (11)	KMLM (12)	KPBT (13)	KWWT (14)	DISC (20)	AMC (21)	SPIKE (22)	TNT (23)	BET (26)	DISN (27)	ESPN2 (28)	ESPN (29)
	Midland	Spanish	Odessa	Odessa	Telemundo	Midland	Atlanta	Odessa	Odessa	Odessa	Discovery	Classics	Spike TV	Atlanta	Black Ent.	Disney	Sports	Sports
5:PM	News ABC	P. Luche	Two Men	News	Tele	News	(.45) Movie: The Hang-over Part II (DVS)	Yohanan	Global	CHIps	Alaskan Bush	The Walking Dead		(LVS)	Husbands	Jessie	SportsCenter	Slate vs. Oregon.
6:PM	Jeopardy!	La Gata (SS)	Big Bang	News	Pelicula: Furry Vengeance (SS)	News	News	Messiah	Business	M*A*S*H	Alaskan Bush	The Walking Dead		Castle (DVS)	Husbands	Jessie	SportsCenter	
7:PM	The Taste	Mi Corazon Es Tuyo	Bones (DVS)	Big Bang	Ent	The Biggest Loser	Chronicles of Narnia: Dawn Treader	Uppd	Great Performances	Make R'm Griffith	Alaskan Bush	The Walking Dead	Movie: Scarface, Steven Bauer	Castle (DVS)	Husbands	Jessie	SportsCenter	Pregame
8:PM	Away-Murder	La Malquerida (SS)	Mod Fam	Elementary	Mod Fam	Bad	Fam. Guy	Light of the Southwest	Call the Midwife Holiday	Heroes	Alaskan Bush	The Walking Dead	Castle (DVS)	Husbands	Austin	Movie	SportsCenter	(7:50) Allstate Sugar Bowl: Alabama vs. Ohio State.
9:PM	News	Impacto	Cleveland	News	Tele	News	Conan	McGee	Charlie Rose	Cheers	Alaskan Bush	The Walking Dead	Castle (DVS)	Nellyville	Girl	Dog	SportsCenter	
10:PM	Jimmy Kimmel Live	La Que No	How I Met	Letterman	Titulares	Tonight Show	Cougar	Called	T. Smiley	Alaskan Bush	The Walking Dead	Movie: Carillo's Way, Penelope Ann Miller	Hawaii Five-0	Nellyville	Good	Good	SportCtr	
11:PM	Nightline	Amorito	Friends	Insider	Decisions (SS)	Seth Meyers	Conan	Israel	T. Smiley	McMillan and Wife	Last Frontier	The Walking Dead	Hawaii Five-0	The Real	Deck	Deck	College Football: Outback Bowl	
12:AM	Extra	Corazon	Friends	Insider	Decisions (SS)	News	Office	BAS	Gallery	Last Frontier	The Walking Dead	CSI: NY	Husbands	Wizards	Wizards			
1:AM	Paid	P. Luche	Law & Order: SVU	Paid	Paid	Movie: Due Date (DVS)	Light of the Southwest											



DENNIS THE MENACE
"THE THING WRONG ABOUT NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS IS MRS. WILSON ALWAYS REMEMBERS MINE."



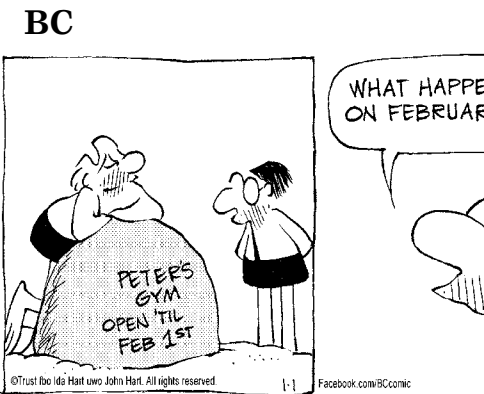
THE FAMILY CIRCUS By Bill Keane
"Mommy, Billy and Jeffy aren't startin' the new year off right!"



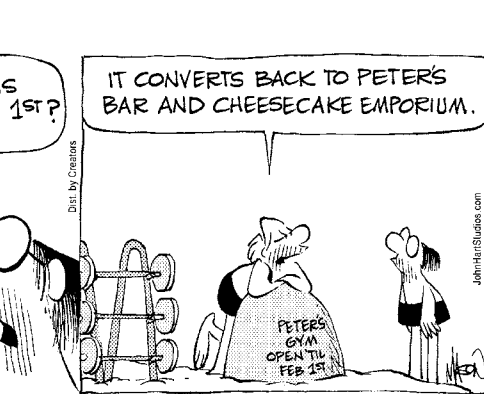
HAGAR
WHAT'S THE ONE THING I'VE BEEN ASKING YOU TO DO FOR WEEKS?!



BLONDIE
ALL SET FOR BOWL DAY, DEAR?
TODAY IS THE CULMINATION OF MONTHS OF HARD WORK, SKILLFUL PRECISION, AND FLAWLESS EXECUTION!
BUT ENOUGH SAID! ABOUT THE SNACKS!
PIPE DOWN! IT'S STARTING!
MUNCH MUNCH
AHHH, THERE'S THE KICKOFF!!



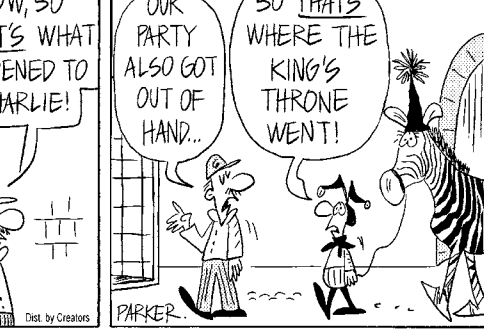
WIZARD OF ID
PETER'S GYM OPEN TIL FEB 1ST
WHAT HAPPENS ON FEBRUARY 1ST?
IT CONVERTS BACK TO PETER'S BAR AND CHEESECAKE EMPORIUM.



AGNES
HAPPY NEW YEAR, AGNES!
WHAT?! NEW YEAR? WHAT?!WHY WASN'T I INFORMED? I DIDN'T PARTY LAST NIGHT! I CAN'T HAVE A NEW YEAR WITHOUT A PARTY! NOW THE WHOLE YEAR IS PREFACED WITH REGRETS AND DISAPPOINTMENT!
WE NEED TO GO BACK IN TIME... NOW!
...AAAND HERE COMES THE FIRST DISAPPOINTMENT OF THE NEW YEAR



HI AND LOIS
IT'S A WHOLE NEW YEAR.
A FRESH START.
A NEW BEGINNING.
ONE MORE CHANCE TO MAKE UP FOR PAST MISTAKES.
DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH



THE OTHER COAST
MY DEBT COUNSELOR FORCED ME TO ENCASE MY CREDIT CARDS IN A BLOCK OF ICE IN THE FREEZER.
GREAT, LARRY. NOW MAYBE YOU CAN CURB YOUR EXCESSIVE SPENDING HABITS.
I'D LIKE THAT SIXTY-INCH PLASMA-SCREEN TV AND A BLOWTORCH.



SNUFFY SMITH
I LOVE TH' SOUND OF RAIN ON TH' ROOF, PAW !!
YEP, ME TOO, MAW !!
BLOOMP! BLOOMP!... BLOOMP!...
ON TH' BLANKETS... NOT SO MUCH !!
BLOOMP!... BLOOMP!... BLOOMP!...



BEEBLE BAILEY
HOW DO I LOOK THIS MORNING?
AS USUAL.
GOOD, I HAVE A BAD HANGOVER AND I WAS AFRAID IT SHOWED.
LIKE I SAID "AS USUAL"

This Date In History

Today is Thursday, Jan. 1, the first day of 2015. There are 364 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History:

On Jan. 1, 1975, a jury in Washington found Nixon administration officials John N. Mitchell, H.R. Haldeman, John D. Ehrlichman and Robert C. Mardian guilty of charges related to the Watergate cover-up; a fifth defendant, Kenneth Parkinson, was acquitted, and Mardian's conviction for conspiracy was later overturned on appeal.

On this date:

In 1515, Louis XII, King of France, died; he was succeeded by Francis I.

In 1660, Englishman Samuel Pepys (peeps) began keeping his famous diary.

In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that slaves in rebel states shall be "forever free."

In 1913, the U.S. Parcel Post system went into operation.

In 1935, The Associated Press inaugurated Wirephoto, the first successful service for transmitting photographs by wire to member newspapers.

In 1945, France was admitted to the United

Nations.

In 1953, country singer Hank Williams Sr., 29, was discovered dead in the back seat of his car during a stop in Oak Hill, West Virginia, while he was being driven to a concert date in Canton, Ohio.

In 1959, Fidel Castro and his revolutionaries overthrew Cuban leader Fulgencio Batista, who fled to the Dominican Republic.

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Answer to previous puzzle

B	A	N	J	O		P	R	I	M		F	W	D
A	L	I	E	N		R	A	D	I	O		O	H
N	O	N	E		T	O	O	S	I	O		R	O
S	E	A	P	O	R	T		E	G	G	O	N	
								L	E	G		F	A
C	R	O			S	O	M	E	T	I	M	E	A
H	O	P	S	I	N	L	O	B		T	H	E	N
A	D	E	P	T		A	C	E		M	E	E	T
R	E	N	O		C	I	A			D	I	L	A
M	O	S	T		H	E	L	P	F		U	L	
													D
F	R	A	I	S						I	N	S	I
L	E	S								A	L	L	
U	N	O								T	B	A	L
B	E	N								S	M	E	E

Newsday Crossword

STORM CHASERS by Bruce Venzke
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

- ACROSS**
- 1 Symphonic reeds
 - 6 Huge production
 - 10 Check out quickly
 - 14 Odometer increment
 - 15 Island near Venice
 - 16 Physically fit
 - 17 Entertainer Midler
 - 18 Change course suddenly
 - 19 Stuck in ___ (bogged down)
 - 20 Glass-enclosed light source
 - 23 Epoch
 - 25 Take a stance
 - 26 Ital. erupter
 - 27 Mideast capital
 - 29 Nursery cry
 - 30 Two cents' worth
 - 31 Advanced math class
 - 32 Magic word
 - 35 Chain-link dividers
 - 40 Warhol works
 - 41 Heidi's home
 - 43 Ft. Myers summer setting
 - 46 Tent anchor
 - 47 Chip in
 - 49 "Moon River" lyricist
 - 51 Having the resources
 - 53 Ask too many questions
 - 54 Disney World water park
 - 57 Gospel writer
 - 58 Nautilus captain
 - 59 Arteries with shoulders
 - 62 Corporate officer

- DOWN**
- 1 Wagering venue
 - 2 Royal-jelly producer
 - 3 Surreptitiously
 - 4 Caesarean question
 - 5 Himalayan guide
 - 6 "Teddy Bear" singer
 - 7 Recital rendition
 - 8 It may be half-baked
 - 9 Farm's tourist draw
 - 10 Oil source
 - 11 Lapidarist's measures
 - 12 Wellesley graduate
 - 13 Salary-check amount
 - 21 Utter nonsense
 - 22 One of the Coen brothers
 - 23 Mad Men broadcaster
 - 24 Nacho topper, for short
 - 28 Letters on Gagarin's helmet
 - 29 Float gently
 - 32 Fly in the ointment
 - 33 "And I Love ___" (Beatles tune)
 - 34 Exam for aspiring drs.
 - 36 American Idol judge

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14					15				16			
17					18				19			
		20			21				22			
23	24			25					26			
27				28				29			30	
31						32	33			34		
		35			36	37					38	39
					40						41	42
43	44	45		46				47	48			
49			50					51	52		53	
54						55				56		
57						58				59		60
62						63				64		
65						66				67		

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