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H BIG SPRING HERALD

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2017



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Sharyland-Oncor customer transfer to start Dec. 11

By **ROGER CLINE**
 Staff Writer

Beginning Dec. 11, customers of Sharyland Utilities electric delivery company will begin transitioning over to receive electricity from Oncor Electric Delivery Company instead.

The changeover, which affects all of Sharyland's approximately 54,000 electric delivery customers, will occur throughout the rest of the months of December and

early January; the transfer is scheduled to be complete by Jan. 8.

Following the transition, Sharyland will be out of the retail electric delivery business, focusing instead solely on electric transmission service.

The agreement between the two companies was announced July 24 of this year. In exchange for the 54,000 customers and a "general plant and regulatory assets", Sharyland Distribution and

Tranmission Services LLC will receive about 258 miles of 345 kilovolt transmission lines from Oncor, plus about \$26.5 million in cash.

"We're always looking for new opportunities to grow our business. This transaction allows us to acquire new customers and continue to expand our growing and vibrant service territory," said Oncor CEO Bob Shapard. "Oncor will be welcoming thousands of new customers, many of which are located

in areas that have seen significant load growth, like the Permian Basin."

David A. Campbell, CEO of Sharyland Utilities and InfraREIT Inc., said the deal will save Sharyland customers money.

"This provides significant rate relief for our retail distribution customers," Campbell said. "This transaction is the right thing to do for our customers and the communities we serve. We would like to thank the staff of the

Public Utility Commission of Texas, the Texas Office of Public Utility Counsel, and the other parties for working diligently and constructively with the companies to reach these agreements."

Hunter Hunt, Sharyland Utilities Chairman, said Oncor is a good fit for Sharyland's customers.

"Since our inception, Sharyland Utilities has been strongly committed to

See **ONCOR**, Page 3

KBEST hosts inaugural holiday light contest

By **ERIN STEPHENS**
 Staff Writer

In an effort to help spread a little holiday cheer throughout Big Spring neighborhoods, KBEST Media has decided to start a new Christmas tradition. During the month of December, some local residents will be participating in the KBEST inaugural Big Spring Christmas Lights Contest. According to KBEST Media Operations Manager Mark

Richardson, the contest will be for anyone located within one of the six Big Spring city council districts.

One of the residential property owners or tenants must be over the age of 18 years old and fill out an entry form, which can be found at kbst.com or their station located at 608 Johnson in Big Spring. Christmas lights must include traditional bulbs, LED bulbs, or projected lights. Decorations can be in a yard or apartment balcony and participants can decorate alone or use the help of friends, relatives, or even a company if applicable.

"We will allow all types of residences, including apartments, to enter our contest," said Richardson. "We want to encourage Christmas spirit across the board."

Contest applicants must abide by all city codes and rules and respect their neighbors' property boundaries. A panel of judges will judge each entry address from the street between 7-10 pm on Friday Dec. 15, so lights must be on during this time period. Judges will focus on four criteria: lights, creativity, design, and overall presentation. Religious, non-traditional, and whimsical decorations are all welcome. Bonus points will be given to anyone who includes lighted poinsettias in their theme, since Big Spring is known as the "lighted poinsettia capital of Texas."

"Within three days of starting this contest, we already have 25 applicants but our goal is to get at least 100," said Richardson.

Winners must be available to be contacted by phone by KBEST Media, LLC employees on Dec. 16 and 17. On Dec. 18, KBEST will announce a first, second, and third place

See **LIGHTS**, Page 3

Spreading Christmas cheer



HERALD photo/Amber Mansfield

Big Spring Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Debby Valverde and Adrian Calvio, with the help of some H-E-B employees, load a basket of toys into a car. Seven baskets in total were filled thanks to SM Energy's donation to the Chamber's toy drive. The Chamber's toy drive benefits CASA, The Salvation Army, and the Cossacks Motorcycle Club. Toy donations and monetary donations will be accepted for the toy drive until Dec. 15.

Tree lighting at SMMC tonight

By **AMBER MANSFIELD**
 Staff Writer

Another local entity is getting into the Christmas spirit. Scenic Mountain Medical Center (SMMC) is inviting the community out to their Tree Lighting Ceremony today, Dec. 5.

This past year, SMMC has been busy and undergoing lots of different changes. The Tree

Lighting Ceremony is open to the general public, and serves as a way for SMMC to say thanks to the community and to show their appreciation.

"We want to take the time and give back to the community who has supported us in all of our efforts," said CEO Emma Krabill. "This year has included building new service lines, enhancing health care options and access for

our community and during this holiday season."

Some other changes that SMMC has gone through this year are the renovation of the West Texas Medical Plaza, and the opening of Scenic Mountain Medical Center's Wound Healing Center.

The Tree Lighting Ceremony will begin at 6:30 p.m. on the front lawn today at SMMC, located at 1601 W 11th. SMMC

encourages the people and families of Howard County to come and stop by to enjoy the Tree Lighting and partake in some traditional Christmas ongoings the hospital has provided during the ceremony. The public can join in on some Christmas carols that will be performed by three local school organizations, the Coahoma

See **SMMC**, Page 3

Big Spring Herald's
Christmas Countdown



Megan says
 "Only **20 Days**
 'til Christmas!"
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Southern California fires forces thousands to flee homes

SANTA PAULA, Calif. (AP) — Ferocious Santa Ana winds raking Southern California whipped explosive wildfires Tuesday, prompting evacuation orders for thousands of homes.

The biggest blaze broke out Monday in Ventura County and grew wildly to more than 48 square miles (124 sq. kilometers) in the hours that followed, sheriff's Sgt. Eric Buschow said.

Another fire erupted on the north edge of Los Angeles, threatening the Sylmar and Lakeview Terrace neighborhoods, where residents scrambled to get out.

At least 150 structures had burned so far in Ventura County, officials said. Officials did not immediately say what type of buildings burned, but TV reports showed homes in flames as well as Vista del Mar Hospital, a facility that treats patients with mental problems, chemical dependency

and veterans with post-traumatic stress syndrome.

More than 27,000 people have been evacuated and one firefighter

See **FIRE**, Page 3



Obituaries

Jeannie Cunningham



Jeannie Cunningham, 74, of Sand Springs died Monday, Dec. 4, 2017, at Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 6, 2017, at Myers and Smith Funeral Home. Funeral services will be at 2 p.m. Thursday at Myers and Smith Chapel, with Dr. Michael Seay, pastor of Midway Baptist Church, officiating. Burial will follow at Trinity Memorial Park.

Jeannie was born Dec. 8, 1942, in Pioneer, Texas, to Doris Ruth Sheehan Fleener and Robert Ellis Fleener. She grew up in Levelland, Texas, before coming to Big Spring to attend Howard College in 1960. She married Don Cunningham in Big Spring

on Jan. 18, 1963. Don had passed away in May of 2012. Jeannie was a homemaker. She had also worked at Scenic Mountain Medical Center, Woolworths Soda Shop, and owned Santa Fe Sandwich & Grill in the Big Spring Mall for 13 years. The love of her life was her grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Jeannie is survived by two daughters, Jill Ringener and Jancy Cunningham, both of Sand Springs; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; one sister, Jo Ogle (Chuck); one brother, Richard Fleener; six nieces; six nephews; one brother-in-law, Ron Cunningham (Mary Sue); and one sister-in-law, Martha Fleener.

In addition to her parents and husband, Jeannie was preceded in death by one brother, Robert Fleener; and one nephew.

Arrangements are made by Myers and Smith Funeral Home. Pay your respects online at www.myersandsmith.com.

Police blotter

The Big Spring Police Department reported the following activity:

- **ANDREW WAYNE ARMSTRONG**, 45, of 700 S. Aylesford St. was arrested on an outstanding warrant.
- **STOLEN VEHICLE** was re-

ported twice in the 3600 block of West Highway 80.

- **THEFT** was reported in the 500 block of South Birdwell Lane and the 2600 block of Wasson Road.

- **BURGLARY OF A HABITATION** was reported in the 600

block of Caylor Drive and the 100 block of East Second Street.

- **MINOR ACCIDENT** was reported in the 1600 block of Avion Street and at the intersection of Main and 10th streets.

Take Note

The Emergency Services Chaplains Corps is seeking volunteer chaplains. The corps provides spiritual services to Howard County residents and visitors in crisis situations.

Prospective chaplains don't require any specific experience or education to qualify for the position, just a calling from God and a willingness to devote time to the program, which requires a 24- to 30-week training program and dedication of one day per week for emergency call-outs. Those interested should contact Senior Chaplain Joel Miller at 432-213-1221.

Big Spring's Centennial Lions Club is holding a drive to collect books for the Salvation Army Boys and Girls Club.

Books for kids in kindergarten through about 10th grade will be accepted, with special preference for books for younger children in kindergarten through third grade.

Cash donations to allow the Lions to purchase additional books are also appreciated. Books or donations can be taken to the Salvation Army, 811 W. Fifth St., or to the home of Lions member Ken Lawhon at 1707 E. 15th St.

For more information, contact Lawhon at 214-998-9716 or Lions member David Stives at 432-270-2251.

Food 2 Kids Big Spring needs you! It is time to start sacking food for Big Spring elementary students who do not receive adequate food over the weekends. Members of the community can be a part by volunteering to sack the food.

It just takes a couple hours of your time and the work is very rewarding. To volunteer, just show up at the time and dates listed. For more information, call, 432-935-3998.

If you want additional information about getting your child on this program please contact your child's school.

Each week Kindred offers free health checks from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. at the Corner House Coffee Shop, 1701 Scurry St.

Seniors and mature adults are invited to a dance on the first, third and fifth Friday of each month at the Dora Roberts Community Center.

Dances are from 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. with live bands. No alcohol or smoking permitted. There will be a pot luck as well so bring a dish if you want to eat.

Cost has dropped to \$5 per person thanks to a sponsor Marcy House, 2301 Wasson Road.

Howard County Republicans meet the second

Monday of each month. Club members meet in the Cactus Room at Howard College at 11:30 a.m. for Dutch treat lunch and meeting at 12 p.m.

- The Big Spring Art Association meets the third Tuesday of each month a 7 p.m. in the basement of the Howard County Library.

- Big Spring Centennial Lion's Club meets twice a month at the Big Spring TA Truck Stop.

They meet on the first Tuesday of the month at noon and the 3rd Thursday of the month at 7 p.m. Visitors are welcome.

- The Christensen-Tucker Post-2013 Veterans of Foreign Wars meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7 pm at 500 Driver Road. For more information, contact David Leonard, Post Commander, at 432-816-6004. All combat veterans of foreign wars are invited to come.

- The Life Center-Big Spring offers free pregnancy testing and advocate support for all women in Big Spring and the surrounding areas.

We are open Tuesday - Thursday 9:00 - 5:00 and Friday 8:00 to 3:00. You may come by The Life Center at 1801 S. Main or call 432-606-5041 for more information or to make an appointment.

- The Big Spring Symphony Board of Directors meets every first Tuesday at 5:30 p.m. at the symphony office, 808 Scurry Street.

- Order of the Eastern Star Big Spring Chapter 67 meets the third Tuesday 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 432-271-2138.

- Staked Plains Masonic Lodge No. 598 meets the second Thursday of each month at 7 p.m. (dinner is at 6 p.m.) at 219 1/2 Main St. All Masons are welcome.

- Membership to the Big Spring Native American Association is open to the public. People interested in Native American culture are encouraged to find out more about the organization by calling Richard "Indio" Lesser at 432-935-0125,

- Scenic Mountain Medical Center Auxiliary Group is looking to expand. Positions are available for the Auxiliary group and the Teen Volunteer program. Must be 15 years of age to take part in the teen volunteer program. If you would like to volunteer please contact Heath White at 268-4850.

Jeffrey Carter

Jeffrey Carter, 54, of Big Spring died Monday, Dec. 4, 2017, at Big Spring Center for Skilled Care. Services are pending at Myers and Smith Funeral Home.

Charles Mitchell

Charles Mitchell, 69, of Big Spring, died Saturday, Dec. 2, 2017, at his home. Services are pending at Myers and Smith Funeral Home.

Charlie A. Smith

Charlie A. Smith, 82, of Stanton died Monday, Dec. 4, 2017, in a Stanton hospital. Services are pending with Gilbreath Funeral Home in Stanton.

Sheriff

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

Note - Officials with the Howard County Jail reported having 69 inmates at the time of this report.

- **ANDREW WAYNE ARMSTRONG**, 45, was booked by BSPD on a motion to revoke probation for possession of a controlled substance (1 to 4 grams).

- **JAMES MICHAEL INGRAM**, 62, was booked by HCSO on a charge of driving while intoxicated (third or more).

- **JESSE REY NUNEZ JR.**, 22, was booked by BSPD on a motion to revoke probation for driving while intoxicated.

- **AARON CHRISTOPHER VERA**, 25, was booked by BSPD on a warrant for theft of service (\$100 to \$750).

Fire/EMS

Big Spring Fire Department/EMS reported the following activity:

- **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 1900 block of Hilltop Road. One person was transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

- **TRAUMA CALL** was reported in the 800 block of Creighton. One person was transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

- **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 1700 block of Lancaster. One person was transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

- **MEDICAL CALL** was reported in the 1000 block of East 16th Street. One person was transported to Scenic Mountain Medical Center.

Support Groups

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 or about Parkinson's Disease, contact Jo Bidwell at the Lubbock APDA office at 806-785-0942.

- Alcoholics Anonymous, 615 Settles, noon to 1 p.m.; newcomers meeting 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.

- A six-week course in Wellness and Quality of Life with Chronic Pain will be held at Spring Creek Fellowship located in the Spring Town Plaza, 1801 E. FM 700. There is no charge for the course, and a workbook will be provided. Contact Steve Purdy at 432-517-4840 for more information.

WEDNESDAY

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

- Alcoholics Anonymous, 615 Settles, noon to 1 p.m.; open 12 & 12 study meeting 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.

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FIRE

Continued from Page 1

was injured in Ventura County. There was no word on the extent of the injuries. After initial reports of a fatality, county fire Capt. Steve Kaufmann said a dead dog but no person was found in an overturned car. The winds were pushing

the fire toward Santa Paula, a city of some 30,000 people about 60 miles (97 kilometers) northwest of Los Angeles. Many of the evacuated homes were in that city.

However, evacuation orders were expanded to houses in Ventura, which is 12 miles (19 kilometers) southwest and has 106,000 residents.

"The prospects for containment are not good," Ventura

County Fire Chief Mark Lorenzen said before dawn. "Really, Mother Nature is going to decide."

Thomas Aquinas College, a school with about 350 students, has also been evacuated, with students going to their own homes or to those of faculty and staff, the college said in a statement.

The fires were being driven by Southern California's no-

torious gusty and dry Santa Ana winds, which have been linked to some of the region's worst wildfires.

Typical of fall, the Santa Anas are spawned by high pressure over the Great Basin that sends air flowing toward Southern California where it speeds up as it squeezes down through mountain passes and canyons and blows out toward the coast.

Wind speeds at some locations in Ventura County were well over 60 mph (96 kph) early Tuesday. Forecasters said winds would continue through Thursday. Nearly 180,000 customers in the Ventura County area were without power, Southern California Edison said on Twitter. All schools in the Ventura Unified School District will be closed Tuesday.

LIGHTS

Continued from Page 1

winner for each of the six city council districts. First place winners will receive \$500, second place winners receive \$250, third place winners receive a gift card or check in the amount of \$15 for the purchase of a Butterball turkey or other groceries, as well as a certificate for a Pillsbury Mini Pie. Additionally, one overall grand runner-up and grand prize winner will be named. The grand runner-up prize called the "Six Flags Holiday in the Park" package, includes two tickets to Six Flags Over Texas, two tickets to Ripley's Believe it or Not!/Madam Tus-

saud's Palace of Wax, Laser Race, \$20 gift card to the Mellow Mushroom restaurant, and one hotel room/one night's stay at the Sheraton Arlington. The grand prize package, called "Christmas with the Cowboys" includes four tickets in the 100 level seating area of the AT&T Stadium in Arlington, TX to Dallas Cowboys vs Seattle Seahawks game on Christmas Eve, Dec. 24. Two hotel rooms/two night's stay at the Renaissance Hotel in Downtown Fort Worth, private transportation from the hotel to the game and from the game back to the hotel following the game, VIP access at the Bill Bates Ultimate Tailgate Party located at the Fishbone Grill across from AT&T Sta-

dium, and a meet & greet with Dallas Cowboy Hall of Fame member Bill Bates will also be part of the package.

"Employees, owners of KBEST Media, LLC, contest judges, sponsors, owners of sponsor businesses, any immediate family members of any of these people, and businesses in the city of Big Spring are not allowed to participate in the contest," said Richardson. "A couple well-known residences in town, belonging to the Partee and Moore families, will not be part of the contest this year."

Contact Staff Writer Erin Stephens at 432-263-7331 ext. 232, or by email at citydesk@big-springherald.com.

ONCOR

Continued from Page 1

serving as a community-centric utility, providing our customers with safe, reliable, affordable power," he said. "We believe the most community-centric action we can take is to give our customers access to a world-class utility like Oncor with the lowest rates in the state, and focus our forward strategy in support of the transmission infra-

structure necessary for our communities to continue to grow and prosper."

Sharyland is a Texas-based electric transmission utility that is fully regulated by the Public Utility Commission of Texas. The company's headquarters is located in Dallas.

Oncor is a regulated electric transmission and distribution service provider that serves nearly 10 million customers across Texas. Oncor is also based in Dallas.

SMMC

Continued from Page 1

Elementary Choir, Forsan Honor Choir, and Big Spring Rhapsody, with a special appearance made by Santa Claus during the event. After the Tree Lighting Ceremony children will have a chance to visit with the big man himself, Santa Claus.

"This tree lighting is one of the small tokens of appreciation that we can share with the community, as we enter this holiday season," said Krabill. "We are excited about 2018 and look forward to sharing new service lines, new providers and overall a better healthcare experience with the community."

Tribes: Trump's monument order disrespects native people

By MICHELLE L. PRICE and BRADY MCCOMBS

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — President Donald Trump's rare move to shrink two large national monuments in Utah triggered another round of outrage among Native American leaders who vowed to unite and take the fight to court to preserve protections for lands they consider sacred.

Environmental and conservation groups and a coalition of tribes joined the battle Monday and began filing lawsuits that ensure that Trump's announcement is far from the final chapter of the yearslong public lands battle. The court cases are likely to drag on for years, maybe even into a new presidency.

Trump decided to reduce Bears Ears — created last December by President Barack Obama — by about 85 percent and Grand Staircase-Escalante — designated in 1996 by President Bill Clinton — by nearly half. The moves earned him cheers from Republican leaders in Utah who lobbied him to undo protections they considered overly broad.

Conservation groups called it the largest elimination of protected land in American history.

The move comes a week after tribal leaders decried Trump for using the name of a historical Native American figure as a slur.

On Nov. 27, Trump used a White House event honoring Navajo Code Talkers to take a political jab at Sen. Elizabeth Warren, a Massachusetts Democrat he has derisively nicknamed "Pocahontas" for her claim to have Native American heritage.

"It's just another slap in the face for a lot of us, a lot of our Native American brothers and sisters," Navajo Nation Vice President Jonathan Nez said. "To see that happen a week ago, with disparaging remarks, and now this."

Trump also overrode tribal objections to approve the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines.

The Navajo Nation was one of five tribes that formed a coalition that spent years lobbying Obama to declare Bears Ears to preserve lands home to ancient cliff dwellings and an estimated 100,000 archaeological sites. Native Americans visit the area to perform ceremonies, collect herbs and wood for medicinal and spiritual purposes, and do healing rituals.

A lawsuit from the coalition of the Hopi, Ute Indian, Ute Mountain Ute, Zuni tribes and Navajo Nation was filed late Monday night.

Earlier Monday, Earthjustice filed the first of several expected lawsuits, calling the reduction of Grand Staircase-Escalante an abuse of the president's power that jeopardizes a "Dinosaur Shangri-la" full of fossils. Some

of the dinosaur fossils sit on a plateau that is home to one of the country's largest known coal reserves, which could now be open to mining. The organization is representing eight conservation groups.

Trump, in a speech at Utah's Capitol with the governor and other politicians, said the state's lands should not be managed by "very distant bureaucrats located in Washington."

"Your timeless bond with the outdoors should not be replaced with the whims of regulators thousands and thousands of miles away," Trump said. "I've come to Utah to take a very historic action to reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens."

The decision marks the first time in a half century that a president has undone these types of land protections.

Trump's move followed months of lobbying by Utah's mostly Republican officials who said the two monuments closed off the area to energy development and other access.

Environmental and tribal groups say the designations are needed to protect important archaeological and cultural resources, especially the more than 1.3 million-acre (2,030-square-mile) Bears Ears site featuring thousands of Native American artifacts.

Navajo Nation Attorney General Ethel Branch said only Con-

gress, not the president, has the power to reduce a national monument, something that the tribal coalition argued in its lawsuit.

Additional legal challenges were expected from environmental groups and outdoor clothing company Patagonia.

Outside Trump's announcement Monday, roughly 3,000 protesters lined up near the State Capitol. Some held signs that said, "Keep your tiny hands off our public lands," and they chanted, "Lock him up!" A smaller group gathered in support, including some who said they favor potential drilling or mining there that could create jobs. Bears Ears has no oil or gas, Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke told reporters, though Grand Staircase-Escalante has coal.

Bears Ears, created nearly a year ago, will be reduced to 201,876 acres (315 square miles).

Grand Staircase-Escalante will be reduced from nearly 1.9 million acres (nearly 3,000 square miles) to 1 million acres (1,569 square miles). Both were among a group of 27 monuments that Trump ordered Zinke to review this year. Democrats and environmentalists accuse Trump and Zinke of engaging in a secretive process aimed at helping industry groups that have donated to Republican political campaigns.

Zinke accompanied

Trump aboard Air Force One, as did Utah's Republican U.S. Sens. Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee. Hatch and other Utah Republican leaders pushed Trump to launch the review, saying the monuments designated by the former Democratic presidents locked up too much federal land.

Trump framed the decision as returning power to the state, saying, "You know and love this land the best and you know the best how to take care of your land." He said the decision would "give back your voice."

"Public lands will once again be for public use," Trump said to cheers.

Hatch, who introduced Trump, said that when "you talk, this president listens" and that Trump promised to help him with "federal overreach."

No president has tried to eliminate a monument, but some have reduced or redrawn the boundar-

ies on 18 occasions, according to the National Park Service. The most recent instance came in 1963, when President John F. Kennedy slightly downsized Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico.

MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

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Virginia Louisa Cansino, 48, died Thursday. Funeral Mass was at 10 a.m. this morning at Holy Trinity Catholic Church. Burial was at Mount Olive Memorial Park.

Jeannie Cunningham, 74, died Monday. The family will receive friends from 6 p.m. until 7 p.m. Wednesday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Funeral services will be at 2 p.m. Thursday at Myers & Smith Chapel. Burial will follow at Trinity Memorial Park.

Charles Mitchell, 69, died Saturday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Jeffrey Carter, 54, died Monday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

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Congressman pledges to repay public funds that settled claim

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Republican U.S. Rep. Blake Farenthold of Texas is promising to pay back taxpayer money used to settle a sexual harassment claim brought by his former spokeswoman.

The four-term congressman told KRIS-TV in Corpus Christi, "I didn't do anything wrong but I also don't want the taxpayers to be on the hook for this."

Lauren Greene, a former communications director for Farenthold, alleged in a 2014 federal lawsuit that she was sexually harassed and fired soon after complaining of a hostile work environment.

Politico first reported Friday that Farenthold used \$84,000 in taxpayer funds from the House Office of Compliance to settle the claim.

Farenthold said he's taking out a personal loan to cover the settlement's costs and promised to "hand a check" this week to House Speaker Paul Ryan "or somebody."

President: Racist flyers contradict Texas school's values

DALLAS (AP) — The president of a Methodist university in Dallas says racist banners and flyers posted around campus don't reflect the school's values.

One flyer found at Southern Methodist University reads: "Reclaim America. No more tolerance, no more diversity."

Another says gays and lesbians have "misplaced pride."

The white supremacist group named on the flyers also posted photos online of masked men giving the Nazi salute while standing in front of one of the banners.

University President R. Gerald Turner on Sunday sent an email to students and staff saying the school supports the freedom of speech and expression, but that the group promotes "an abhorrent message that is opposite to SMU values."

The local chapter of the group has already posted similar messages this year at SMU and other Texas campuses.

Arrest in Houston in 2008 Fort Worth-area slaying

MANSFIELD, Texas (AP) — Authorities in North Texas say a 24-year-old man has been arrested in Houston for a slaying near Fort Worth nearly a decade ago.

Police in Mansfield, about 20 miles (32.19 kilometers) southeast of Fort Worth, say the man in custody was 15 when Danny Lee Ramsey III was found unresponsive in a shopping center parking lot in June 2008. The medical examiner determined Ramsey, from Alvarado, had been shot in the chest.

Mansfield police say recently developed new information led to the arrest last week by their detectives and Texas Rangers. The man in custody isn't being identified because he was a juvenile at the time of the killing.

The Fort Worth Star-Telegram reports he's held on \$1 million bond and is awaiting transfer to the Tarrant County Jail.

Austin man flees mental health facility, sets home on fire

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — An Austin man who told authorities he escaped from a mental health facility is charged with arson after investigators say he set a fire in his family's home.

Police say when firefighters arrived, they heard crashing sounds and found 28-year-old Edward Avalos inside the house with a shovel. Court documents show the blaze was confined to a bedroom but was intentionally set.

The Austin American-Statesman reports Avalos told authorities he fled a mental health facility after spending about three weeks there, became angry when his mother was upset to see him back at home and wasn't pleased to see his brother was staying in his room.

Avalos was taken to the Travis County jail where he was being held on \$30,000 bond.

No baloney. Woman caught trying to smuggle bologna into US

EL PASO, Texas (AP) — Customs and Border Protection agents in El Paso say a woman who initially told inspectors she had nothing to declare as she was entering the country from Mexico was found carrying 227 pounds of contraband bologna in her car.

The discovery last week was made at a secondary examination station and after the woman amended her declaration statement.

The 23 tubes of meat were hidden under the rear seats of her car.

The bologna contains pork and isn't allowed into the country.

Officers seized and destroyed the bologna and the driver was given a \$1,000 fine.

Supreme Court lets stand Texas ruling on gay spouse benefits

By WILL WEISSERT

Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The U.S. Supreme Court on Monday let stand a Texas ruling that gay spouses may not be entitled to government-subsidized workplace benefits — a potential victory for social conservatives hoping to chip away at 2015's legalization of same-sex marriage.

In June, the Texas Supreme Court overturned a lower court's decision favoring spousal benefits for gay city employees in Houston, ordering the issue back to trial. That was a major reversal for the all-Republican state high court, which previously refused to even consider the benefits case after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the landmark Obergefell v. Hodges decision that the Constitution grants gay couples who want to marry "equal dignity in the eyes of the law."

The Texas court changed its mind and heard the case amid intense pressure from Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick and Attorney General Ken Paxton, as well as dozens of other conservative elected of-

ficials, church leaders and grassroots activists. They argued that the case may help Texas limit the scope of the Supreme Court ruling, especially in how it is applied to states.

Monday's U.S. Supreme Court decision to reject Houston's appeal of the Texas court decision came without dissent or comment. The case began with a coalition of religious and socially conservative groups suing America's fourth-largest city in 2013 to block a move to offer same-sex spousal benefits to municipal employees.

Sarah Kate Ellis, President and CEO of the civil rights group GLAAD, said the U.S. Supreme Court "has just let an alarming ruling by the Texas Supreme Court stand which plainly undercuts the rights of married same-sex couples."

"Today's abnegation by the nation's highest court opens the door for an onslaught of challenges to the rights of LGBTQ people at every step," Ellis said in a statement.

But other advocates said Monday's action simply shows the Texas case is not fully concluded, rather than indicating how the U.S.

Supreme Court will ultimately rule on the larger issue.

"There was high hope that the Texas decision was so wrong that the court wouldn't sit by and let it go," said Kenneth Upton, a Dallas-based attorney for the prominent LGBT-rights group Lambda Legal. "That's not how it works with the Supreme Court."

Houston has been paying same-sex benefits amid the case's developments and will continue to do so while it progresses through lower Texas courts. The city argues that the 2015 legalization of gay marriage meant all marriages are equal, so anything offered to opposite-sex couples must be offered to same-sex ones.

Conservative groups counter that the U.S. Supreme Court didn't declare spousal benefits a fundamental right of marriage two years ago, and that it should be up to states to decide. They also see a chance for Texas to defend religious liberty under a state gay marriage ban that voters approved in 2005.

Jared Woodfill, a Houston attorney and conservative activist at the center of the case, called Monday's action

by the nation's high court, "A nice early Christmas present."

"The U.S. Supreme Court could have taken the case and used it to further expand Obergefell. They chose not to," he said. "It's confirmation that the Texas Supreme Court got it right."

Woodfill said that religious liberty groups in two other states had contacted him in years past, seeking information about Texas' legal challenge.

"It obviously has precedential value, not just for Texas but the entire country," Woodfill said. However, the court has said on several occasions that the denial of such petitions "without more has no significance as a ruling."

In August, three Houston city employees and their spouses sued the city in federal court, concerned that the civil case could force the city to stop paying same-sex benefits. A federal judge dismissed that case last month, saying it was too early since the civil case was still proceeding. Upton, who represented the city employees, said they were ready to sue again depending on what happens in Texas courts.

Doctors: Over a year to see if uterus transplant successful



AP photo

In this undated photo provided by Baylor University Medical Center the first baby born as a result of a womb transplant in the United States lies in the neonatal unit at Baylor University Medical Center in Dallas.

DALLAS (AP) — It took well over a year to determine if a woman who received a womb transplant would become the first in the U.S. to give birth, transplant surgeons in Dallas said Monday.

Baylor University Medical Center officials said at a news conference that the mother has returned home and her newborn son is fine. He remains hospitalized for monitoring.

It took months to ensure that the transplanted uterus would be functional and then many more to determine if the implanted embryo would prove viable, Dr. Tiffany Anthony said.

Officials on Friday confirmed the birth. They have declined to identify the mother, who was born without a uterus.

A birth from a transplanted uterus is a milestone for the U.S. but one achieved several years

ago in Sweden.

Baylor officials said Monday that eight transplants have been performed and that one of those women currently is pregnant as a result.

Dr. Giuliano Testa, principal investigator for the uterine transplant clinical trial at Baylor, said there were lessons in the number of women who have sought to undergo the procedure.

"We are very humbled by understanding the depth of the desire of these women to carry their own pregnancy," he said.

Baylor has had a study underway for several years to enroll up to 10 women for uterus transplants. In October 2016, the hospital said four women had received transplants but that three of the wombs had to be removed because of poor blood flow.

A doctor in Sweden, Mats Brannstrom, is the first in the

world to deliver a baby as a result of a uterus transplant. As of last year, he had delivered five babies from women with donated wombs.

There have been at least 16 uterus transplants worldwide. Last month, Penn Medicine in Philadelphia announced that it also would start offering womb transplants.

Womb donors can be dead or alive, and the Baylor study aims to use some of both. The first four cases involved "altruistic" donors — unrelated and unknown to the recipients. The ones done in Sweden were from live donors, mostly from the recipients' mother or a sister.

The transplanted uterus can be removed after birth or could remain if the woman wants another pregnancy.

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1963 church bombing echoes throughout Alabama Senate race



AP photo

In this Monday, Sept. 25, 2017, file photo, former Alabama Chief Justice and U.S. Senate candidate Roy Moore speaks at a rally, in Fairhope, Ala. In the face of sexual misconduct allegations, Moore's U.S. Senate campaign has been punctuated by tense moments and long stretches without public appearances. Moore faces Democrat Doug Jones for Alabama's U.S. Senate seat in the Dec. 12 election.

By JAY REEVES

Associated Press

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. (AP) — Convicted of murder in the deadliest attack of the civil rights era, the one-time Ku Klux Klansman glowered when the judge asked if he had anything to say before going to prison for the 1963 church bombing that killed four black girls. Bobby Frank Cherry pointed at a prosecution table that included Doug Jones.

"This whole bunch lied all the way through this thing," Cherry said in a deep Southern drawl. "I told the truth. I don't know why I'm going to jail for nothing."

Fifteen years after Cherry snarled at Jones, the bombing is echoing in Alabama's

fractious Senate race. Now the Democratic nominee, Jones is touting a record that includes the prosecutions of Cherry and another one-time Klansman, Thomas Blanton Jr., as he asks voters in Republican-run Alabama to turn on GOP nominee Roy Moore and give him a try.

"I still believe that those cases were on the right side of history," he told reporters after a stop in Montgomery. "I believe that this campaign is on the right side of history, and that people are ready to move forward rather than backward."

Moore and his supporters are depicting Jones as an out-of-touch, Obama-loving liberal who is soft on issues including crime. The tactic could work based on the

state's history: Conservative white Republicans dominate the electorate in Alabama, no Democrat holds statewide office and President Donald Trump carried more than 60 percent of the state vote last year.

The president offered up his unwavering support of Moore in a tweet Monday, despite the sexual assault allegations that have rocked Moore's campaign.

Jones touts his leading role in closing the books on an act so cruel it helped open the nation's eyes to the depth of racial hatred in the Jim Crow South. While Jones is appealing to voters on what he calls "kitchen table issues" including health care, jobs and education, the church bombing prosecution is always in the

background.

Jones supporter Michelle Summers-Hines said she learned about the Birmingham church bombing growing up in Chicago, so the black woman was all the more inclined to back the one-time U.S. attorney for Senate.

"When I came here I knew about the four little girls," said Summer-Hines, 47, of Montgomery.

The bombing happened during a year when deeply segregated Birmingham was the epicenter of the campaign to end racial segregation across the South.

Months after protests in which police and firefighters used dogs and fire hoses to turn back black demonstrators trying to march on downtown streets, KKK members under cover of darkness planted a bomb outside the thick, brick wall of the 16th Street Baptist Church, a leading black congregation in a deeply segregated city.

The bomb went off on the morning of Sept. 15, 1963, a Sunday, and blasted a huge hole in the church at almost the exact spot five young women were in a restroom getting ready for worship. The explosion killed 11-year-old Denise McNair and 14-year-olds Addie Mae Collins, Carole Robertson and Cynthia Morris, also known as Cynthia Wesley. Collins' sister, Sarah Collins Rudolph, was seriously injured.

Investigators soon had a list of Klan suspects that included Cherry and Blanton, plus Robert Chambliss and Herman Frank Cash. All were active in a Klan group with a reputation for violence, and Chambliss had a nickname to match — "Dynamite Bob."

The investigation went cold for years until then-Alabama Attorney General Bill Baxley reopened the probe and led the prosecution of Chambliss, who was convicted in 1977

and died in prison in 1985.

The case went dormant again, and the fact that other known suspects were never prosecuted became an increasingly sore point within Birmingham's black community. Then-FBI agent Robert Langford heard complaints during a meeting with black pastors in 1993, and a renewed investigation was underway by the time then-President Bill Clinton appointed Jones as U.S. attorney in Birmingham in 1997.

Blanton and Cherry, who had moved to Texas from Alabama, were indicted on state murder charges in 2000, and Jones received a special appointment to oversee the prosecution. He led a team of federal and state attorneys during trials that resulted in the convictions of Blanton in 2001 and Cherry the following year.

Prosecutors used both of the men's own words to convict them. Cherry had talked about the bombing throughout the years, evidence showed, and secretly recorded FBI tapes from decades earlier captured Blanton talking about the bombing with his then-wife and a Klan buddy who turned informant.

Cherry denied that he participated in the bombing. He died in prison within three years of being convicted. Blanton remains behind bars — Alabama's parole board refused to release him in August 2016 after a hearing that included Jones advocating for Blanton to remain incarcerated. Cash died in 1994. He was never charged.

That "fifth little girl" who survived the bombing, Sarah Rudolph, is now among Jones' most ardent supporters, and so is her husband.

"We're going to vote for him. Absolutely. He convicted the church bombers," said George Rudolph.

Trump takes rare step to reduce 2 national monuments in Utah

By CATHERINE LUCEY and DARLENE SUPERVILLE

Associated Press

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — President Donald Trump on Monday took the rare step of scaling back two sprawling national monuments in Utah, declaring that "public lands will once again be for public use" in a move cheered by Republican leaders who lobbied him to undo protections they considered overly broad.

The decision marks the first time in a half century that a president has undone these types of land protections. Tribal and environmental groups oppose the decision and are expected to go to court in a bid to stop Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke.

Trump made the plan official during a speech at the State Capitol, where he signed proclamations to shrink the Bears Ears and Grand Staircase-Escalante

national monuments. Both monuments encompass millions of acres of land.

State officials said the protections were overly broad and closed off the area to energy development and other access.

Environmental and tribal groups say the designations are needed to protect important archaeological and cultural resources, especially the more than 1.3 million-acre (2,030-square-mile) Bears Ears site featuring thousands of Native American artifacts, including ancient cliff dwellings and petroglyphs.

Trump argued that the people of Utah know best how to care for their land.

"Some people think that the natural resources of Utah should be controlled by a small handful of very distant bureaucrats located in Washington," Trump said. "And guess what? They're wrong."

Roughly 3,000 demonstrators lined up near the State Capitol

to protest Trump's announcement. Some held signs that said, "Keep your tiny hands off our public lands," and they chanted, "Lock him up!"

A smaller group gathered in support, including some who said they favor potential drilling or mining there that could create jobs. Bears Ears has no oil or gas, Zinke told reporters, though there is coal in Grand Staircase-Escalante.

"Your timeless bond with the outdoors should not be replaced with the whims of regulators thousands and thousands of miles away," Trump said. "I've come to Utah to take a very historic action to reverse federal overreach and restore the rights of this land to your citizens."

Bears Ears, created last December by President Barack Obama, will be reduced by about 85 percent, to 201,876 acres (315 square miles).

Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, designated

in 1996 by President Bill Clinton, will be reduced from nearly 1.9 million acres (nearly 3,000 square miles) to 1,003,863 acres (1,569 square miles).

Both were among a group of 27 monuments that Trump ordered Zinke to review this year.

Zinke accompanied Trump aboard Air Force One, as did Utah's Republican U.S. senators, Orrin Hatch and Mike Lee.

Hatch and other Utah Republican leaders pushed Trump to launch the review, saying the monuments designated by the former Democratic presidents locked up too much federal land.

Trump framed the decision as returning power to the state, saying, "You know and love this land the best and you know the best how to take care of your land." He said the decision would "give back

your voice."

"Public lands will once again be for public use," Trump said to cheers.

Hatch, who introduced Trump, said that when "you talk, this president listens" and that Trump promised to help him with "federal overreach."

Patagonia President and CEO Rose Marcario said the outdoor-apparel company will join an expected court fight against the monument reduction, which she described as the "largest elimination of protected land in American history."

No president has tried to eliminate a monument, but some have reduced or redrawn the boundaries on 18 occasions, according to the National Park Service.

The most recent instance came in 1963, when President John F. Kennedy slightly downsized Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico.

Trump's move against Bears Ears, covering lands considered sacred to tribes that long pushed for protections, marks his latest affront to Native Americans.

Trump overrode tribal objections to approve the Dakota Access and Keystone XL oil pipelines.

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1. Contest open to children ages 3-12
2. Limit one contest submission per person
3. Contest entries may be completed using markers, crayons, or colored pencils.
4. Adults may assist in completing entry form information, but NOT in coloring pictures.
5. All entries must be received by the Big Spring Herald by 5 pm on Monday, December 11, 2017.
6. Winners will be published in the Sunday, December 17, 2017 edition.
7. Decision of judges is final.
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Watt and Altuve share SI's Sportsperson of the Year award

By KRISTIE RIEKEN
AP Sports Writer

HOUSTON — J.J. Watt raised more than \$37 million for Hurricane Harvey relief efforts and Jose Altuve led the Houston Astros to their first World Series title, both giving hope to the city as it picked up the pieces from the devastating storm.

On Monday night the two were honored by Sports Illustrated when they were given the magazine's prestigious Sportsperson of the Year award. Sports Illustrated executive editor Steve Cannella said they chose the pair because Watt and Altuve perfectly embodied the Houston Strong slogan the city adopted in the wake of the August hurricane and its catastrophic flooding.

To celebrate the award, given annually since 1954 to honor a player, coach or team who has best exhibited athletic achievement and sportsmanship on and off the field, the players share this month's Sports Illustrated cover. Looking dapper in matching dark-colored suits and white dress shirts, they are pictured smiling broadly, with their arms slung over other's shoulders and a headline that declares: 'Houston Strong.'

"I grew up in Wisconsin and I remember when I was in school I saw Brett Favre as the SI Sportsperson of the Year and I thought that was awesome," Watt told The Associated Press. "So now to be able to be on myself and share it with Jose and have it represent the city of Houston and everything we've been through I think it obviously holds a little bit of extra meaning."

Altuve, the American League's Most Valuable Player, said the Astros felt a responsibility to bring the championship to Houston to give the city a

boost as it recovered.

"I think the World Series gave the people a big smile and hope during the tough time they were getting through," he said. "And I feel really happy that we did it because they really deserved it."

Watt, a three-time Defensive Player of the Year with the Houston Texans, became the face of Harvey's relief efforts with his fundraiser. He began the campaign in the days after the storm with the goal of raising \$200,000. But he kept upping the target as donations poured in from more than 200,000 people.

He deflected credit for the huge sum he raised, saying that the real acclaim should go to those who pledged money.

"It was incredible to see how people from all over the country, people from all over the world, people from all different backgrounds, all different communities came together to support a city and a people that were having the toughest time of their life," Watt said. "I think that's the message that I took from it all and I hope people take from this all is how when everybody has one common goal and everybody comes together and puts all their differences aside we can accomplish some truly incredible things."

Watt has had a tough couple of years, playing just three games last season before having season-ending back surgery and breaking his left leg this year in Houston's fifth game. In the last few days he's begun visiting some of the people his contributions have helped and it's given him some perspective on his setbacks.

"Having a chance ... to be able to see some of the stuff that's going on and being able to focus on some of these

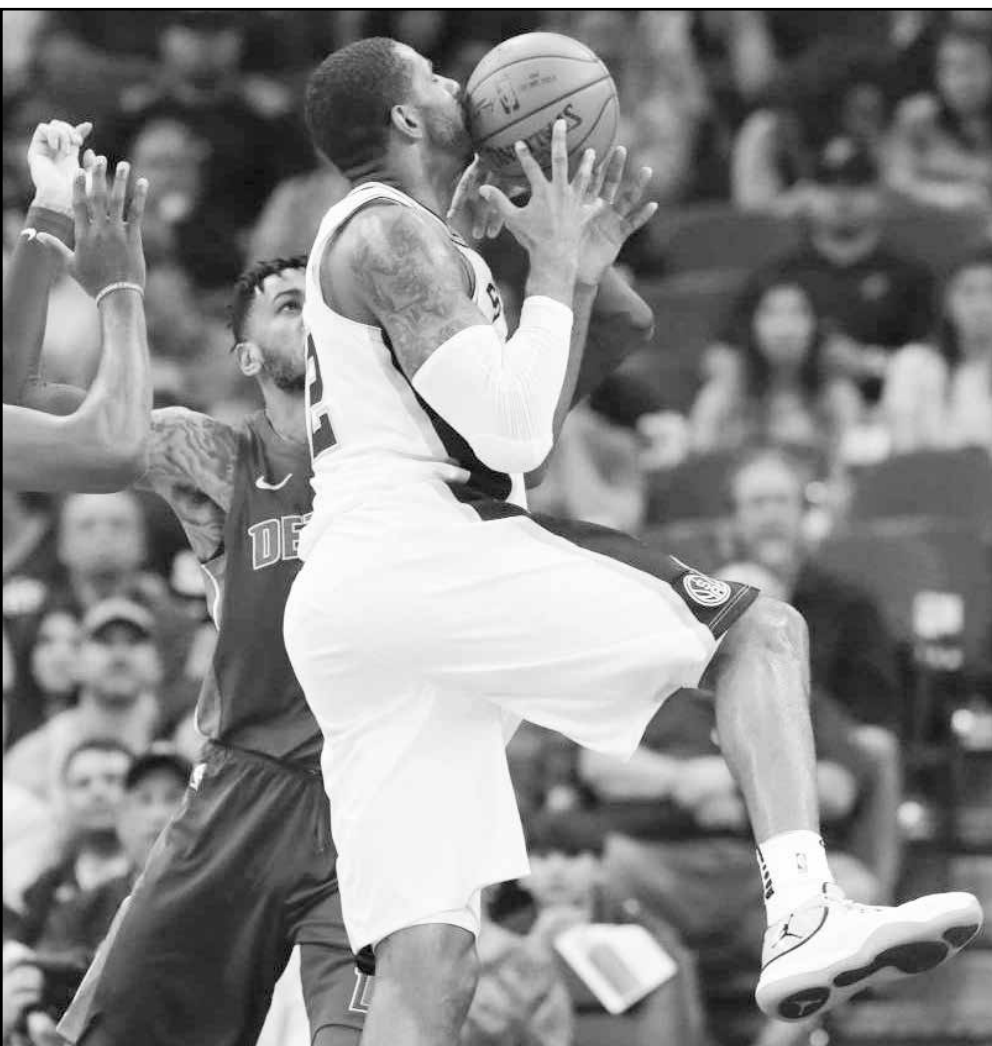
See **AWARD**, Page 13



Sports Illustrated via AP

This image provided by Sports Illustrated shows the cover for the December issue of the magazine, featuring Houston Astros' Jose Altuve, left, and Houston Texans' J.J. Watt. On Monday, Dec. 4, 2017, the two were honored by Sports Illustrated when they were given the magazine's prestigious Sportsperson of the Year award.

Aldridge's double-double rallies Spurs past Pistons 96-93



AP photo

San Antonio Spurs forward LaMarcus Aldridge (12) is fouled by Detroit Pistons forward Eric Moreland (24) as he drives to the basket during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 4, 2017, in San Antonio.

By RAUL DOMINGUEZ
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — The Spurs fought through another injury and the second game of a back-to-back to beat the Detroit Pistons and earn some rare praise from coach Gregg Popovich.

LaMarcus Aldridge had 17 points and 10 rebounds and San Antonio rallied to beat Detroit 96-93 on Monday night.

"I thought the guys in a tough back-to-back did a heck of a job to hang in there, keep playing and trusting each other," Popovich said. "We made some great plays down the stretch from a lot of people. A lot of people participated. It was a good, physical game.

I'm just really pleased with their effort. I thought they did a wonderful job."

Reggie Jackson had 27 points for Detroit, which led by as many as nine points before dropping its third straight. Jackson was held to seven points in the second half on 3-for-10 shooting as San Antonio clamped down defensively to win after falling to Oklahoma City on Sunday.

The Spurs were without Kawhi Leonard and Kyle Anderson, who has started in place of Leonard all season. Anderson will miss two to three weeks after spraining his left knee

See **SPURS**, Page 13

Mavericks lead wire-to-wire to beat Nuggets 122-105



AP photo

Denver Nuggets forward Wilson Chandler (21) is forced to pass the ball out as Dallas Mavericks' Dwight Powell (7) defends beneath the basket in the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Dec. 4, 2017, in Dallas.

By DAVE JACKSON
Associated Press

DALLAS — After a tough start to the season, the Dallas Mavericks are starting to find their identity with consecutive wire-to-wire wins.

Harrison Barnes scored 22 points and Dennis Smith Jr. added 20 to lead six Mavericks in double figures as Dallas beat the short-handed Denver Nuggets 122-105 Monday night. The Mavericks never

trailed once again after beating the Clippers by 26 on Saturday. Dallas had its highest scoring game of the season and has won five of eight since starting 2-14.

"Our identity just happens to be very gritty on defense and have each other's backs, and then ball security on offense," Smith said. "If we do both of those things, we're gonna win a lot of games."

Dallas did both on Monday, building a

25-point, first-half lead as they held Denver to 35 percent shooting before the break. And the Mavericks had only seven turnovers.

Will Barton led Denver with 23 points, Jamal Murray added 22 and Gary Harris had 21.

Denver played without two-thirds of its starting frontcourt as Paul Millsap (left wrist injury) and Nikola Jokic (sprained left ankle) re

See **DALLAS**, Page 13

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Items for Sale

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Co-ed Sleepovers

Dear Annie: Our daughter, husband and family moved in to a small house next door to us as they both work, and their living close to us enables us to keep an eye out for their three daughters, ages 11, 11 and 15. Until they get two bedrooms built on the cottage, the 15-year-old and one of the 11-year-olds will use our spare bedroom to sleep in. My husband gets upset over their bringing friends home and doing the typical stuff children this age do. He really gets upset if their friends are of the opposite sex.

When my (now adult) son was a teenager, my husband allowed him to have girls stay in his room, yet he would throw a fit if his sister (the mother of these girls we are talking about)

even had a boy over watching a movie. He would actually call her derogatory names. Now we have a 16-year-old son, whom he lets do whatever he wants. I'm the only disciplinarian for him, but even then, my husband will override me.

Now my question is to your readers. Do parents let their teens stay the night at the house of someone of the opposite sex? It seems to be the norm around this area nowadays. My daughter lets the girls have mixed company and requires that the boys sleep in one area and the girls in another. My husband says this is not so. So I want to hear opinions from your readers on this.

I am not comfortable with either my 16-year-old son or my granddaughters sleeping in the same room with members of the opposite sex, but separate rooms

and nightly checks by adults are fine with me. -- Not Comfortable

Dear Not Comfortable: Let me get this straight: Your husband called your daughter a derogatory name because a boy watched a movie with her at your house and then went home, but he let your son do anything he wanted? You need to have a serious private talk with him and set down guidelines for your grandchildren that treat boys and girls equally. As for co-ed sleepovers, I'm in agreement with you. Until they are 18 and living on their own, I would say that sleepovers should

stay single-sex. However, you asked for opinions and facts from our readers, so I am as curious as you to see the feedback.

Dear Annie: I just read the column about the woman who compulsively looks at men. She describes going into a kind of trance in which she becomes totally unaware of others, much to her distress and her husband's dismay.

For many years, I was a practicing psychotherapist, and I have seen many people experience profound changes as a result of their work with a therapist. However, I think this woman needs to have a neurological

work-up. What she is experiencing reminds me of a client of mine who had a seizure disorder. When it was treated, my client was able to manage her life extremely well and use therapy to enrich it even more. -- Hoping Help Is on Its Way

Dear Hoping Help Is on the Way: Thank

you for the medical insight. Perhaps it will save a life.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com. To find out more about Annie Lane and read features by other Creators Syndicate columnists and cartoonists, visit the Creators Syndicate website at www.creators.com.
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NOTICE OF PUBLIC SALE

Pursuant to the Decree and Order for Partition by Public Sale entered in Cause No. 7104 in the 118th District Court in Martin County, Texas, the following property will be sold by public auction:

THE SURFACE ONLY OF SECTION 43, BLOCK 37, TOWNSHIP 1 NORTH TEXAS & PACIFIC RAILROAD COMPANY SURVEY, ABSTRACT NO. 233, MARTIN COUNTY, TEXAS, CONTAINING 640.81 ACRES OF LAND, MORE OR LESS.

Such sale will be for cash, which may also be in the form of certified funds. The public auction will 288613 take place in front of the northeast corner of the Martin County Courthouse on the 2nd day of January, 2018 between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m.

For information about the property, please contact Brent Preston at (806) 470-0464.

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Contract Bridge

By Steve Becker

A necessary assumption

South dealer.
Neither side vulnerable.

NORTH
♠ K 7
♥ 10 7 2
♦ A K Q 4
♣ K J 8 2

WEST
♠ 10 8 2
♥ A K 6 4
♦ 10 9 5
♣ Q 9 5

EAST
♠ J 3
♥ Q 9 3
♦ 8 7 6 2
♣ 10 7 6 3

SOUTH
♠ A Q 9 6 5 4
♥ J 8 5
♦ J 3
♣ A 4

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

Opening lead — king of hearts.

This deal shows what kind of effort is sometimes required to find the best method of defense.

West leads the king of hearts, on which East signals encouragingly with the nine. West continues with the ace and another heart, won by East with the queen. The defenders have thus collected the first three tricks, but South makes the rest

regardless of what East does next.

However, the contract can be defeated by a different defense. If West leads a low heart to the queen at trick two and East returns a heart to his partner's ace, South is in trouble.

West returns his last heart, and whatever declarer does, he goes down. He may discard from dummy or ruff with the seven, but in either case, East ruffs with the jack, and West later scores a trump trick to sink the contract.

It is a difficult line of defense to find, but there are good grounds for West to defend in this fashion. First, West should realize — since declarer surely has the ace of clubs for his opening bid — that it is impossible for the defense to win any tricks in the minor suits.

Second, when East signals with the nine of hearts, West should reason that if the nine indicates a doubleton, the contract cannot be defeated by continuing with the ace and another heart for East to ruff. That would surely be the last trick for the defense.

West's only real chance of stopping the contract, therefore, is to find East with the Q-9-x of hearts and either the queen or jack of trumps, and defend accordingly.

Tomorrow: Solution to a dilemma.
©2017 King Features Syndicate Inc.

Tomorrow's Horoscope

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS



Conversation Hack for Mercury Retrograde

Conversation gets rickety these first days of the Mercury retrograde, so pull out your advanced skills. A spirit of openness and curiosity will be better than inquisition-style questions, which tend to focus on what you're interested instead of what the other person would like to express. When in doubt, "Tell me about..." is a good start to the sentence.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). If you can manage to delay the usual knee-jerk verdicts that humans love to form in the first 10 seconds of another's presentation, you'll set off a series of sweet events, all made possible by your act of listening.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). Make sure you're on the same track with the other person; that way, you'll avoid the problems that come with making assumptions. Tonight you'll get the chance to show the team that you play fair.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). With most things you tackle today, the result will be better if you delay the payoff for as long as possible. It will work in everything from relaying information to governing your own willpower.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's so much you could say on matters, but since you're all too aware of the short attention spans that most people have, you'll aim your words toward a particular destination and leave out anything that doesn't fit the bill.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). You'll come across those who've yet to discover their own depths. Maybe they are afraid or haven't had any reason to dig deep. Or maybe they've lacked role models. Regardless, the relationship can only go as deep as the shallowest person.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-

Sept. 22). To suspect that you're the underdog isn't exactly an uplifting feeling, although you can take heart in the fact that everyone loves an underdog. Go forward in full faith that you have a chance at victory.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Humans love to assign reasons for things that happen, to bridge the gaps of logic and close every case. The trouble is that what follows is often praise or blame. And sometimes there really is no definitive "responsible party."

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). No one ever influenced the world by being the same as everyone in it. But if you don't seem at least somewhat like the others, they'll mistrust you. Group acceptance will be required. Start with what you all have in common.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). It's as if you were designed for adventure. When the others are afraid to go first, your trailblazing nature takes over. March forward and the others will follow.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). It's fun to be in unfamiliar places when you have a guide. But today there probably won't be a clear model, and you'll have to make due by observing the people around you who seem to know what they're doing.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Like a nice neighborhood that wants to preserve the peace, your life could use a few speed bumps -- constructs you've put in place specifically to slow yourself down, thus preventing accidents.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). The

scenario is fresh, and you're still deciding who you want to be. Consider what each role requires. For instance, winners take chances. Heroes take risks to help others. VIP's make others feel important.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Dec. 5).

Your cosmic gift is one of determined and exclusive focus on the things that are going to make your life better. You'll be freeing yourself of an anchor of sorts over the next three months. In March, family works together and all are lifted. In 2018 you'll take pleasure in the sale of something that helps people. Leo and Pisces adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 6, 10, 23, 40 and 11.

PUPPY PROFILE: If you know when your pet was born, check out his or her sun sign and the personality that goes with it.

VIRGO: Neatness and order are the trademarks of Virgo people and dogs alike, making both a pleasure to live with. This Mercury-ruled puppy learns the rules of the house quickly, and a more considerate dog would be hard to find. Bonus: This pooch doesn't share the bad habits of some of his canine counterparts, and you won't find him digging in the garbage unless there's truly no other food around.

Impeccable grooming is important to this pretty dog, who is happiest when smelling fresh with a shiny trimmed coat and good breath. You might not think such things matter to a mutt, but they are essential to the Virgo dog's self-esteem. A healthy diet and regular exercise will contribute to the happiness of any dog, but for Virgo it's an absolute must.

To write to Holiday Mathis, visit www.creators.com/author/holiday-mathis and click "Contact."
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SUDOKU

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

Level: Beginner

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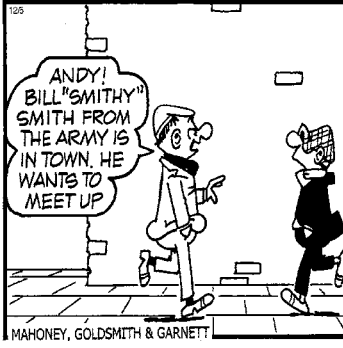
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9	7	1	6	4	8	3	5	2
8	6	3	8	6	7	1	4	9
6	9	8	3	1	7	5	4	2
7	2	4	8	6	9	3	1	5
1	6	9	8	5	3	2	7	4
3	8	2	6	1	7	4	9	5
5	9	6	2	4	8	3	7	1
8	9	8	3	4	7	5	2	1
4	3	8	2	6	9	7	5	1

ANSWER:

	KMID (3) Midland	UNI (4) Spanish	KPEJ (5) Odessa	KOSA (7) Odessa	KTLE (8) Telemundo	KWES (9) Midland	KMLM (12) Odessa	KPBT (13) Odessa	KWWT (14) Odessa	KWES2 (15) Midland	WTBS (33) Atlanta	TNT (34) Atlanta	ESPN (35) Sports	ESPN2 (36) Sports	FSN (38) Sports	USA (55) New York	A&E (58) New York	DISC (60) Discovery
5:30	Local 2 ABC	P. Luche Noticiero	Broke Girl Mom	CBS 7 CBS	Tele Noticias	News News	Shofar Perspect	Focus Business	Hawaii Five-0	American American	Fam. Guy Fam. Guy	Bones Bones	SportsC. GameDay	Around SportsC.	Football Power of	NCIS (DVS) NCIS (DVS)	The First 48 The First 48	Moonshiners Moonshiners: Outlaw
6:30	Jeopardy! Wheel	Enamorán- dome	Big Bang Big Bang	CBS 7 ET	Caso Cer- rado	News News	Our Mess House	PBS News- Hour	M*A*S*H M*A*S*H	Fam. Guy Fam. Guy	Big Bang Big Bang	Bones Major Crimes	College Basketball: Villanova vs Gonzaga.	College Basketball: Texas at VCU.	Rangers Tennis	WWE SmackDown!	The First 48 The First 48	Moonshiners Moonshiners
7:30	Middle Fresh-	Rosa de Guadalupe	Lethal Weapon	NCIS (DVS) Jenni Rivera	The Voice	News News	Finding Your Roots	Griffith Griffith	The Flash The Flash	Big Bang Big Bang	Major Crimes Major Crimes	College Basketball: Syracuse vs Connecticut.	College Basketball	College Basketball	World Poker World Poker	Law & Order: SVU	Who Killed Tupac?	Bushcraft Build-Off
8:30	Kevin (Prob- ably)	Caer en tentación	News TMZ	Bull	El Señor de los	Chicago Med Chicago Med	Light of Southwest	Frontline Frontline	Heroes Heroes	Page Six Seinfeld	Jokers Drop/Mic	(:01) Major Crimes	(:02) Law & Order	SportCtr NFL Live	World Poker World Poker	Law & Order: SVU	Who Killed Tupac?	(:03) Moon- shiners
9:30	Local 2 ABC	Impacto	Mom Mom	CBS 7 CBS	Tele	News News	Creation To Be An- nounced	C. Burnett Perry Mason	Seinfeld Seinfeld	Conan Conan	(:02) Law & Order	(:02) Law & Order	SportsCenter W/Van Pelt	World Poker World Poker	Law & Order: SVU	Who Killed Tupac?	(:03) Moon- shiners	
10:30	Jimmy Kim- mel Live	Contacto Deportivo	How I Met James Corden	El Señor de los	Daly	Inspired Inspired	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember	King Movie: A Walk to Remember
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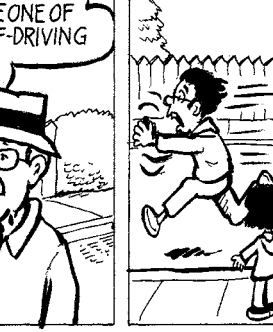
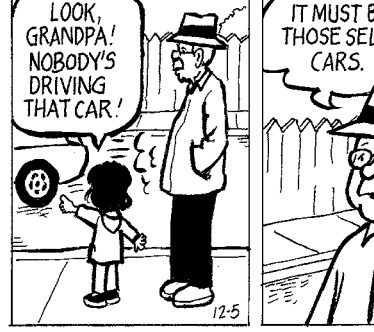
AGNES



ARCHIE



ONE BIG HAPPY



NEST HEAD



MOMMA



This Date In History

Today is Tuesday, Dec. 5, the 339th day of 2017. There are 26 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Dec. 5, 1952, the Great Smog of London descended on the British capital; the unusually thick fog, which contained toxic pollutants, lasted five days and was blamed for causing thousands of deaths.

On this date: In 1782, the eighth president of the United States, Martin Van Buren, was born in Kinderhook, New York; he was the first chief executive to be born after American independence.

In 1791, composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart died in Vienna, Austria, at age 35.

In 1792, George Washington was re-elected president; John Adams was re-elected vice president.

In 1831, former President John Quincy Adams took his seat as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1916, British Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith resigned (he was succeeded by David Lloyd George).

In 1933, national Prohibition came to an end as Utah became the 36th state to ratify the 21st Amendment to the Constitution, repealing the 18th Amendment.

In 1945, five U.S. Navy torpedo bombers mysteriously disappeared after taking off from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, on a training mission with the loss of all 14 crew members; "The Lost Squadron" contributed to the legend of the Bermuda Triangle.

In 1967, pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock and poet Allen Ginsberg were among more than 260 people arrested during an anti-Vietnam War protest outside an armed forces induction center in lower Manhattan.

In 1977, Egypt broke diplomatic relations with Syria, Libya, Algeria, Iraq and South Yemen in the wake of criticism that followed President Anwar Sadat's peace overtures to Israel.

In 1988, a federal grand jury in North Carolina indicted PTL founder Jim Bakker and former aide Richard Dortch on fraud and conspiracy charges. (Bakker was convicted on all counts; Dortch pleaded guilty to four counts and cooperated with prosecutors in exchange for a lighter sentence. Bakker was

initially sentenced to 45 years in prison; the term was eventually reduced to eight years, and he served a total of about five.)

In 1994, Republicans chose Newt Gingrich to be the first GOP speaker of the House in four decades.

In 2013, Nelson Mandela, the anti-apartheid leader who became South Africa's first black president, died at age 95.

Ten years ago: A 19-year-old gunman went on a shooting rampage at the Westroads Mall in Omaha, Nebraska, killing six store employees and two customers before taking his own life. President George W. Bush, in Omaha for a fundraiser, called on Iran to "come clean" about the scope of its nuclear activities or else face diplomatic isolation (Bush left the city about an hour before the mall shooting).

Five years ago: Port clerks ended an eight-day strike at the ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach after winning guarantees against the outsourcing of jobs. Jazz composer and pianist Dave Brubeck died in Norwalk, Connecticut, a day before he would have turned 92. Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer died in Rio de Janeiro at age 104.

One year ago: President-elect Donald Trump chose retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson to be secretary of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. A judge in Marietta, Georgia, sentenced Justin Ross Harris to serve life in prison without the possibility of parole after a jury found that he intentionally left his 22-month-old son, Cooper, in a hot SUV to die. A South Carolina judge declared a mistrial after a jury deadlocked in the murder trial of a white former police officer charged in the shooting death of an unarmed black motorist. Cindy Stowell, 41, of Austin, Texas, who competed on the TV game show "Jeopardy!" while battling terminal cancer, died eight days before her first episode aired. (Stowell, who won six games and \$105,803, had pledged her

winnings to cancer research.)

Today's Birthdays: Singer Little Richard is 85. Author Joan Didion is 83. Author Calvin Trillin is 82. Actor Jeroen Krabbe (yeh-ROHN' krah-BAY') is 73. Opera singer Jose Carreras is 71. Pop singer Jim Messina is 70. College Football Hall of Famer and former NFL quarterback Jim Plunkett is 70. World Golf Hall of Famer

Lanny Wadkins is 68. Actress Morgan Brittany is 66. Actor Brian Backer is 61. Pro and College Football Hall of Famer Art Monk is 60. Country singer Ty England is 54. Rock singer-musician John Rzeznik (REZ'-nihk) (The Goo Goo Dolls) is 52. Country singer Gary Allan is 50. Comedian-actress Margaret Cho is 49. Writer-director Morgan J. Freeman

is 48. Actress Alex Kapp Horner is 48. Rock musician Regina Zernay (Cowboy Mouth) is 45. Actress Paula Patton is 42. Actress Amy Acker is 41. Actor Nick Stahl is 38. Actor Adan Canto is 36. Rhythm-and-blues singer Keri Hilson is 35. Actor Gabriel Luna is 35. Actor Frankie Muniz is 32. Actor Ross Bagley is 29.

Thought for Today:

"All our dreams can come true, if we have the courage to pursue them."

Walt Disney
American movie producer
(born this date in 1901, died 1966).

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Newsday Crossword

OVER YOUR HEAD by Billie Truitt
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS

- 1 Wild hog
- 5 Performed a dramatic role
- 10 Sit (down) heavily
- 14 Well-qualified
- 15 Durable pants fabric
- 16 Fury
- 17 It's above the attic
- 18 Typical New Delhi worshiper
- 19 Night-flying birds
- 20 Minor obsession
- 23 Prefix meaning "recent"
- 24 Boy king of Egypt
- 25 Mannerism
- 28 Small sample of soup
- 31 "Is that too much ___?"
- 35 Sports officials, for short
- 36 Three-color housecat
- 38 ___ Beta Kappa
- 39 On very short notice
- 42 Opposite of post-
- 43 How dishes are often sold
- 44 Droop, as flowers
- 45 More achy
- 47 Altitudes: Abbr.
- 48 In an inept way
- 49 24-hr. cash dispenser
- 51 Source of acorns
- 52 Achievement to be proud of
- 61 Weak, as an excuse
- 62 Like skim milk, as on labels

- 63 ___ Scotia, Canada
 - 64 At any time
 - 65 Rob, informally
 - 66 Larger-than-life tale
 - 67 Declare untrue
 - 68 Autumn flower
 - 69 Cubicle furniture
- DOWN
- 1 Unkind remark
 - 2 Woodwind instrument
 - 3 Moisturizer ingredient
 - 4 Give a shiny new surface to
 - 5 Sound of a sneeze
 - 6 Place for a goatee
 - 7 Fork prong
 - 8 Brings to a close
 - 9 Be uncertain about
 - 10 "On the double!"
 - 11 Grassy front yard
 - 12 Stare at
 - 13 Nuisance
 - 21 Take-home pay
 - 22 Needing to reorder
 - 25 Golf course hazards
 - 26 Fashionably nostalgic
 - 27 Later on
 - 28 Wife of Abraham
 - 29 "You defeated me"
 - 30 Plumbing conduits
 - 32 Rose garden insect
 - 33 Fully intends to
 - 34 Young pet that purrs
 - 36 LP successors
 - 37 Foldaway bed
 - 40 Astronauts' final destination
 - 41 Roused from sleep
 - 46 Casual restaurant
 - 48 Scrooge's cry
 - 50 High-IQ club
 - 51 River mammal
 - 52 Ran away
 - 53 Roof overhang
 - 54 Prayer conclusion
 - 55 Uses oars
 - 56 "___ ain't broke . . ."
 - 57 Back of the neck
 - 58 Manage somehow
 - 59 Hertz competitor
 - 60 Fill one's suitcase

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Answer to previous puzzle

RAPT	AMASS	ACID
SLUR	LETUP	PAPA
VANE	ALLEY	PRAY
PIT	ABREAD	CARDS
TAMES	LILY	
TAPINS	GETLOST	
ACHED	CHASE	NEA
CEOS	COOPS	ABET
KIT	SARGE	BLAME
STORAGE	MEAGER	
ALONE	BRONC	BLE
SALAD	POOL	TABLE
EBBS	CLOUD	TOAR
ABOUT	PASTE	TOUR
TAMS	ANTIED	ENDS

SPURS

Continued from Page 7

against the Thunder.

Rudy Gay, making his first start in place of Anderson, had 12 points, 10 rebounds and four assists. His final points came on a three-point play that gave San Antonio an 88-86 lead with 3:39 remaining.

Detroit trailed 94-93 when Gay failed to hit the rim on a 3-point attempt as the shot clock expired with 5.2 seconds remaining, but the Pistons' Tobias Harris committed a foul prior to the violation. Aldridge made two free throws to give the Spurs a 96-93 lead.

Gay blocked Harris' 3-point attempt at the buzzer to preserve the victory.

"It's great, just having another guy who can create," Spurs veteran Tony Parker said. "He had some very nice passing off the pick-and-roll. He knows how to play."

Pau Gasol added 15 points and 10 rebounds for the Spurs, who had seven players score in double figures and had three with double-doubles.

San Antonio had 30 assists and a 51-42 edge in rebounding to win for the fifth time in six games.

"It was tough," said Spurs guard Danny Green, who had 11 points and three blocked shots. "They are a very good team. They've been playing good basketball in the East and they are one of top teams in the East. They've been playing well against everybody."

Andre Drummond finished with 11 points and 15 rebounds for his 17th double-double in Detroit's 23 games this season.

Jackson had 20 points in the first half and Detroit shot 48 percent against the league's second-best defense statistically through two quarters. The Spurs held the Pistons to 33 percent shooting in the second half, including 7 for 20 in the fourth.

"I think we go a little too much just one-on-one isolation," Detroit coach Stan Van Gundy. "We've got to be able to sustain our offensive energy better. I probably over-

played guys tonight, but our bench just struggled, I mean they just struggled."

TIP-INS
Pistons: Drummond averaged 16 points and 16 rebounds against San Antonio last season. ... Detroit is 6-2 against Western Conference teams. . Van Gundy has 498 career wins. . Jon Leuer missed the game with a sprained left ankle. . The Pistons have lost six straight to the Spurs.

Spurs: San Antonio had three players with double-doubles for the first time since 2014 when Leonard, Green and Tim Duncan did so against Brooklyn. . The Spurs are 36-0 since 2015 when they have 29-plus assists. . San Antonio is 4-0 when Parker plays. . Reserve forward Joffrey



Lauvergne missed the game with an injured right middle finger. . Patty Mills joined Manu Ginobili and Matt Bonner as the only reserves in franchise history to make 500 3-pointers.

LEONARD RETURNING 'SOON'
Leonard said prior to the game he is feeling healthy and will return "soon" from a quadriceps injury that has kept him out all season, but he does not have a target date for his debut.

BLIND LUCK
Green had a critical block against Drummond with 3:19 remaining that led to a reverse layup by Ginobili for a 90-86 lead.

"It was pure luck," Green said. "I mean, if he knew I was coming, I'm sure he probably would have dunked the ball but I don't think he saw me weakside. When you're a guard, you can sneak up on bigs sometimes and I got lucky."

UP NEXT
Pistons: Visit Milwaukee on Wednesday night in their third game against the Bucks this season.

Spurs: Host Miami on Wednesday night in the second of a three-game homestand.

DALLAS

Continued from Page 7

mained out.

The Nuggets started the second half making their first six shots and got within 88-80 on Barton's 3 with 2:13 left in the third quarter. It was the first time Denver had been within single digits since trailing 16-8 early on.

"I think we had enough gas in the tank to come back, but the first quarter was such a big deficit on the road, it's going to be very tough," Murray said.

Barnes hit a long jumper to restore a 10-point lead, and Dallas maintained a double-digit lead throughout the fourth quarter.

"We shot it well. We moved it well. We had low turnovers," coach Rick Carlisle said. "There were a lot of good things."

SOLDIERING ON
Dallas held its annual Seats for Soldiers Night, where the team's season-ticket holders provide their courtside seats to more than 100 wounded U.S. service members. Former president and first lady George W. and Laura Bush were also in attendance. The Mavericks improved to 11-2 in these games since starting the tradition in 2004.

"Coming out of halftime I told some of them that I personally appreciate everything that they do," Smith said. "Their



sacrifice — some of the guys and women were missing limbs — they made sacrifices a lot of people wouldn't make. That was a little added motivation for everybody tonight."

ROAD WOES
Denver fell to 3-8 on the road against 10-2 at home as they began a six-game road trip.

"They hit us first and we hit back too late," Murray said. "We can't afford that on the road."

TIP-INS
Nuggets: Kenneth Faried had 13 points and 11 rebounds, his fifth-straight double-figure scoring game while starting in place of Millsap. ... The Nuggets got starting forward Wilson Chandler back, but Chandler scored just four points in 27 minutes after missing the last three games with lower

back pain.
Mavericks: Yogi Ferrell scored 12 of his 16 points in the second half. Other Mavs scoring in double figures: Wesley Matthews (15), Devin Harris (14) and Dwight Powell (11).

UP NEXT
Nuggets: At New Orleans on Wednesday night. Denver scored an NBA season-high 146 in beating the Pelicans on Nov. 17.

Mavericks: At Boston on Wednesday night to start a three-game trip. The Celtics beat the Mavs in overtime on Nov. 20.

AWARD

Continued from Page 7

efforts, yeah it's been really cool," he said. "And it does (help). It goes to show you that there's so much out there beyond football. And I can't wait to get back on the field and to be able to put on a show on the field. But in the meantime it's been very cool to be able to see everything that's happening outside of the field."

It's impossible to quantify just how many people the

money Watt raised will help. But he said they will be rebuilding more than 1,000 day-care centers and hundreds of homes as well as providing donations of food and medical care.

"It's tough to put exact numbers on it, but there will obviously be many, many people that will benefit from all the generous people who donated," he said.

The Astros placed a Houston Strong patch on their jerseys in the days after the storm and it remained a tangible reminder of what the city lost in the storm as they

defeated the Los Angeles Dodgers to win the title. Altuve said he thought about that slogan and what it meant each time they moved closer to their goal of bringing the city that elusive championship.

"When I see that I see the proof," he said. "I know for a fact that our city is really strong because after the hurricane they tried to come back and they tried to get better every, single day and that's what strong people do. That's why I feel like the strong patch and the Houston Strong was a good name

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QUEEN SET	\$697
KING SET	\$897

Plush

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QUEEN SET	\$277

Pillowtop

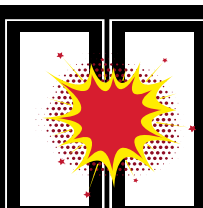
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Syria says it shot down 3 Israeli missiles near Damascus

BEIRUT (AP) — Syrian air defense units shot down three Israeli missiles that were targeting a military post near the capital, Damascus, only days after the Jewish state hit a military position nearby, Syria's state news agency SANA reported on Tuesday.

SANA did not say whether some of the missiles hit the target and did not give any word on casualties. It said the attack occurred around midnight on Monday. There was no immediate Israeli comment.

Elsewhere in Syria, an explosion ripped through a van near the central city of Homs, killing at least eight people. The Islamic State group claimed Tuesday's attack in Akarma, a government stronghold south of the city.

IS says it targeted a bus carrying Syrian soldiers, but the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said those killed were civilians, including six women.

Syrian state TV has aired images of the van's charred body, as well as damaged vehicles nearby. State news agency SANA said eight people were killed and 18 wounded.

Homs, Syria's third largest city, is frequently hit by bombs. The city was known as the "capital of the revolution" following the 2011 uprising against President Bashar Assad, but is now under government control.

The alleged Israeli missile attack came three days after Syria said Israel fired several surface-to-surface missiles at a military post near Damascus, causing material damage but no casualties.

"Our air defense units confronted an Israeli aggression with missiles on one of our military posts in the countryside of Damascus and shot down three of them" SANA said.

The Observatory said the attack was an Israeli airstrike on the Damascus suburb of Jamraya, which is home to a government research center.

Media reports said Saturday's missile attack near the Damascus suburb of Kiswa targeted an Iranian military position. The Observatory said at the time that the area had an Iranian and Hezbollah presence, but said it was not clear if they were targeted.

Though Israel has mainly stayed out of the conflict in neighboring Syria, it has carried out a number of airstrikes against suspected arms shipments believed to be bound for Lebanon's Hezbollah militant group, which is fighting alongside President Bashar Assad's forces.

Israel has struck several Syrian military facilities since the conflict began, mostly near the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. In September, Israeli warplanes hit a military position near the Mediterranean coast, killing two soldiers and causing material damage.

Last month, the Israeli military said it shot down a drone above the Golan Heights that tried to infiltrate its airspace from Syria. It said the drone was operated by the Syrian government and was shot down in the demilitarized zone between the two countries. In September, Israel said it shot down an Iranian-made drone sent by Hezbollah in the same area. Iran has also backed Assad in Syria's nearly seven-year civil war.

Israel is deeply opposed to any permanent Iranian or Hezbollah military presence in Syria.

EU puts 17 nations on tax avoidance blacklist

BRUSSELS (AP) — The European Union has put 17 countries on a blacklist of those it deems guilty of unfairly offering tax avoidance schemes.

EU Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis said after Tuesday's meeting of the bloc's finance ministers that beyond the 17, some 40 more were put on a "grey-list" to be kept a close eye on.

The EU said those blacklisted had refused to cooperate and change their way after almost one year of dialogue.

The full list was not immediately published.

The issue resurfaced earlier this year when reports dubbed Paradise Papers showed how the rich and famous stash their wealth in shell companies in small nations to avoid paying taxes at home.

Higher-tax countries like France have pushed for the blacklist and a Europe-wide crackdown on tax havens. Lower-tax countries like Ireland and the Netherlands argue that will hurt Europe's competitiveness.

Romania's ex-king Michael, who ruled during WWII, dies at 96

BUCHAREST, Romania (AP) — Former Romanian King Michael I, who was forced to abdicate by the communists in the aftermath of World War II, died on Tuesday. He was 96.

Michael, who played a pivotal role in Romania's switch to the Allied cause following a coup in 1944, spent decades in exile working as a chicken farmer and aircraft pilot. He finally got his citizenship back in 1997, eight years after the collapse of communism.

Michael's death leaves only two people alive who headed their nations during the war — former King Simeon II of Bulgaria, and the Dalai Lama of Tibet, both of whom were children at the time.

In a statement, the Romanian royal house said Michael died in his residence in Aubonne, Switzerland. Michael had been suffering from leukemia and another type of cancer and last year withdrew from public life, handing over his responsibilities to his oldest daughter.

President Klaus Iohannis declared "days of mourning," saying Michael "wrote the history of Romania."

British Ambassador Paul Brummell said in Romania that Michael "fought against communism; he fought against fascism."

Michael's body will be flown to Romania and will



In this Tuesday, Oct. 25, 2011, file photo, former Romanian King Michael waves after delivering a speech in the country's parliament in Bucharest, Romania. Romania's royal house says former King Michael, who ruled Romania during WWII, has died, Tuesday, Dec. 5, 2017, in Switzerland aged 96.

lie in state for two days at the Royal Palace in Bucharest. No funeral plans were immediately available.

Michael, a great-great grandson to Britain's Queen Victoria, acceded to the throne in 1927 when he was six years old after his father Carol II eloped with his mistress and abdicated. After three years Carol returned to the throne and stayed there until abdicating again in 1940 and Michael became king for a second time.

Michael reigned for seven years until he was forced to abdicate.

Polish prime minister's tweet hints she might be replaced

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo sent a tweet early Tuesday that seems to read like a farewell and comes amid rumors in Warsaw that she might be replaced by Finance Minister Mateusz Morawiecki next week.

If the change takes place, the ruling Law and Justice party would take the political risk of unseating one of the country's most popular leaders, the 54-year-old coal miner's daughter and mother of a priest whose patriotic and conservative image found wide acceptance in this mostly Catholic country.

In her place they would gain a younger former banker with less folksy appeal but with the languages and international corporate experience that could help ease tensions with the European Union.

There had been rumors for weeks in the Polish media that party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski could become the next prime minister though now Polish reports suggest the most likely new leader will be Morawiecki, a deputy prime minister who is also the minister for development and finance.

Kaczynski is widely seen as the real power behind the government, guiding its decisions from his party headquarters in Warsaw and from his seat in parliament where he serves as one of 460 members of the lower house, or Sejm. It is not clear if Morawiecki could take an independent path or if he would also largely follow the direction Kaczynski sets.

Szydlo said on Twitter shortly after midnight: "Regardless of everything the most important thing is Poland. One that takes care of family and values (and is) safe. That grew from the foundation of Christian values, tolerant and open. Modern and ambitious. That is my country. An example for Europe and the world. That's who we Poles are."

The daily newspaper Rzeczpospolita reported

Tuesday, citing unnamed sources, that Kaczynski has presented to party members his plan for Morawiecki to take the helm of the Cabinet next week.

Morawiecki, 49, has won praise for overseeing an economy that has boomed in the two years since the Law and Justice party took power. He is widely considered one of the government's most competent members and has the trust of Kaczynski.

He is a former international banker who ran a local bank controlled by Spain's Santander before Law and Justice won power, in many ways an unlikely background for someone who now has a leadership role in a nationalist party that seeks to limit foreign influence and global capitalism in the country.

While the ruling Law and Justice party and Szydlo herself are both popular among Poles, Morawiecki could be better prepared to represent the country internationally as Poland faces off against the EU over legal changes seen as attacks on the rule of law.

Sunday, December 17!

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