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# BIG SPRING HERALD

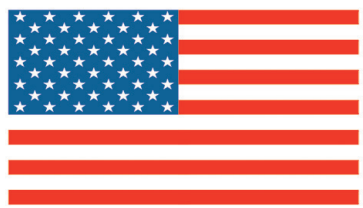
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## Blasts of light on Runnels Street "When Downtown Big Spring Rocked"

*Editor's Note: This week's history moment is written by James Johnston. James Johnston is on the Executive Board of the Heritage Museum and is the local historian.*

By **JAMES JOHNSTON**

Special to the Herald

On May 26, 1950, checks had been cashed, and people were starting their shopping at the Safeway on Runnels Street. The average income per year in Big Spring, Texas, was \$3,216 but fit the times as shoppers trolled the aisles of Safeway for 82 cents a gallon of milk, 14 cents a loaf of bread, and 43 cents five-pound bags of sugar. Outside, the metered parking spaces along the streets were changing out vehicles, as businesses were closing, people leaving for home and others parking to run into Safeway or some other store nearby store before they closed.

Runnels Street was a busy place in the 200 and 300 blocks up to Fourth Street. Stanley Hardware, Barrows-Douglas Furniture, Safeway, Rasco's Boot and Shoe Shop, The Little Shop, J & K Shoe Store, State Farm, First Fi-



Courtesy photo

**Pictured is a scene from the fire downtown Big Spring at Barrow Furniture which took place in 1950.**

nance, and Sanders' Barber Shop lined the 200 block up to Third Street where the Douglass and Settles hotels reached toward the sky. The new Union Bus Station, Texas Electric, and Bell Telephone dominated the 300 block of Runnels which also had a beauty shop, drug store, package store, photo studio, and

other small stores sharing the block. Waiting bus passengers and other pedestrians walked the sidewalks as the Texas Club entertained non-stop domino games and breakaways from work.

The State Theater's towering

See **FIRE**, Page 3

## A community exhibit is about to launch at Heritage Museum, get those photographs submitted

By **ROGER CLINE**

Herald Staff Writer

Like to take photographs? The Heritage Museum would like to show off some of your work.

This summer, the Heritage Museum of Big Spring will host an exhibit titled "Through the Lens: A Community Photography Exhibit" displaying photographs from local residents.

"This is an opportunity for the community to participate in an all-area photograph exhibit," said Museum Director Tammy Schrecengost. "We don't require that it be framed and matted, like most of the exhibits that we have. Instead, we're asking that they submit the 11" x 14" or 16" x 20" color copy, and a good quality. They will be displayed like that. You're limited to six pieces per person. We'll be accepting

100 pieces total, so when we reach that limit, that will be all we'll do due to lack of space."

Work should be submitted on photo paper in one of the two listed size profiles. Photos will be displayed without frames or matting, and hung on wire for display, Schrecengost added.

Schrecengost said the event is not a contest; instead, those displaying photographs will have the opportunity to offer their artwork for sale during the exhibit.

"If they do sell, the museum gets 20 percent and the artist gets 80 percent of what they want to sell their picture for," Schrecengost said.

The photos will be on display from June 5 through August

See **PHOTO**, Page 3

## Look both ways before you cross - Railroad Safety and the importance of ENS signage

By **AMANDA DUFORAT**

Managing Editor

Memorial Day weekend typically means increased traffic on the roadway. Statistics show an increase in hurried and distracted driving which can result in a failure to adhere to warning signs, and end up with vehicle collisions.

"Railroad safety is one of those things we need to be aware of and attentive too every day, not just on holidays or during Rail Safety Month," Melanie Gambrell, Big Spring Rail Engineer, Conductor, said. "We want our community to be aware of the dangers associated with crossing rail lines. The more awareness we have the better chances we have of avoiding an accident."

Big Spring Rail System has been operating for almost 10 years in Big Spring and there are still some who do not realize an active rail line crosses Highway 80, near the Law Enforce-



Courtesy photos

**Big Spring Rail has been operating in Big Spring for 10 years. Should one encounter an issue at a railroad crossing, look for the blue ENS signs for emergency numbers and information.**

ment Center. With growth taking place near that particular piece or rail line, Gambrell said it's a good time to bring awareness to train and rail safety.

"At the end of the day we (rail line workers) want to go home to our families, and we want all those crossing the rail line to go home to their families

as well," Gambrell said. "Train versus car is never something we want to see. Trains don't stop on a dime and that makes it all the more important to avoid a situation that could result in a collision."

See **SAFE**, Page 3

### Upcoming Events

**Large Item Pick Up**  
 District 6  
 June 16  
 Schedule pick up by  
 June 14

**Veterans of Comedy**  
**Fundraiser Show for**  
**DAV of Big Spring**  
 June 11 at 7 p.m. at  
 the VFW Hall,  
 500 Driver Rd.  
 Donations accepted at  
 the door

**Summer meal**  
**program through**  
**BSISD begins June 1**

**Memorial Day**  
 May 31 at 11 a.m.  
 Flag Raising  
 Ceremony at Vietnam  
 Memorial  
 Take a moment to  
 honor those who  
 sacrificed

Share your news and  
 sports photos with  
 us. E-mail editor@  
 bigspringherald.com

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## Take Note

• First Annual Hospital Corps Birthday Party will be held in Big Spring at Moss Creek Ranch, 1601 S. Moss Lake Road on June 17, 2021. The evening will include smoked brisket, ribs, cole slaw, green salad, beans, potato salad, iced tea and water. All spouses and Marine Corps personnel are invited. For more information or to purchase a ticket, contact Jerry Groves at 432-816-9682 or Doc Roger Rodman at 325-232-0665. Reservations must be made by June 10, 2021.

• The Young and the Married meets every Thursday, for an eight-week study on Familylife art of parenting – with a meal at 5:30 and a small group at 6 p.m. The group will meet in NazFamily Fellowship Hall.

• Dora Roberts Rehabilitation Center will celebrate 60 years on 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday.

• Big Spring ISD summer lunch services will begin June 1 and run through July 30. Breakfast will be served from 7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m. with lunch served from 11:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. Serving will take place at Goliad from June 7 through July 1; High School from June 1 through June 24; Junior High from June 7 – June 24.

• The Great Courses history video lecture series is taking place each Tuesday, beginning May 18 at Noon. The lectures will take place in the Theater Room in the First Presbyterian Church, located at 701 Runnels Street. No charge for the lectures.

• Howard County Community Health Center is offering the Moderna – a two dose and Janseen – a single dose, Covid-19 vaccine to those over the age of 18. Businesses, churches, groups or organizations of 10 members or more who would like the vaccine can schedule a time to have a mobile vaccine clinic. The staff will to the business, church, or organization to administer the vaccine. For ore information, call 806-894-7842 ext 178 or 124 or e-mail Covid19@sprhs.org

• College Baptist Church Vacation Bible School 2021 will take place June 6-10 from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. College Baptist Church is located at 1105 Birdwell Lane. To register call the church office at 432-267-7429. Preregistration must be completed.

• Interim HealthCare is looking for volunteers. Those who would like to find out more about becoming a volunteer can cal 432-263-5999.

• The Howard County Democrats meet on the second and fourth Mondays of each month at 5:30 pm. in the Cactus Room located in the Student Union Building of Howard College.

• Howard College has several Workforce Training courses coming up. Welding Maintenance begins May 24, Shielded Metal Arc Welding begins June 7, and Intro to Welding Using Multiple Processes begins June 21. All welding classes are Monday and Thursday nights from 6 to 10 p.m. Howard College also has upcoming courses in Customer Service and License to Carry. Call 432-264-5151 or visit hc4.life/training for more information.

• Russ McEwen Family Aquatic Center is set to open June 1 and close Aug. 7. The Aquatic Center will be open Tuesday through Saturdays from Noon until 8 p.m. and Sundays 1 p.m. until 8 p.m. and closed Mondays.

• Forsan Food Pantry will be open twice a month from 4:15 p.m. to 5:15 p.m. Families in need can pull up to the front of the Junior High/High School and receive a free box of pre-packed meals. If you have any questions or need to pick up a box at a different time, contact Kaci Wash at 432-457-2223 ext 821 or Jenny Sayles at jennysales@yahoo.com.

• Cub Scouts meet Monday from 6:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. at Naz Family Church, located at 1400 S. Lancaster.

• Howard County Republican Club meets the second Monday of each month in the Cactus Room at Howard College. The next meeting will be held in the newly renovated Cactus Room. Everyone is welcome. The meeting takes place at Noon. For more information call 432-213-7628.

• A new group named Taking Care of Business has started in Howard County. It is made up of people of all ages and genders who want to be better than they are. The focus of the fledgling organization is to engage in meaningful discussions that promote personal growth. Additionally, the organization will plan and execute worthwhile activities within the community.

There is no membership fee and attendance is not taken. The only requirements are that you be positive or want to be more positive than you are, consider yourself to be a good person but want to be better than you are, and that you have a desire to help others be better too. Childcare is available during the discussion time if you let us know. Topics to be avoided include Religion and Politics, though we can dance around them.

Taking Care of Business meets in the Masonic Lodge on the court square. It is not necessary that you have any masonic affiliation to participate in this Growth Group. All Covid-19 safety protocols will be followed as defined by local, state, and federal authorities. At this time refreshments will not be served but you are welcome to bring your own and not share. The meetings take place at 219 South Main Big Spring, Texas. For more information write to Colonel.Allen.M.Morris@Gmail.com or just come to the meeting.

• The Howard County Library meeting rooms are now open at limited capacity. Only five people are allowed in the small room and 15 in the large room.

The meeting rooms can only be used by appointment, and only by community organizations. No parties or social gatherings will be allowed at this time. For more information, call the Howard County Library.

• The Senior Supper Club has come out of hibernation to resume its normal Tuesday evening dinners. The Come-One-Come-All group will be meeting on Tuesdays at 5 p.m. and orders will be placed around 5:30 p.m. after much socializing from a distance.

The Senior Supper Club is an informal group of folks from Howard County who meet at least weekly and sometimes more for Dutch-Treat food at different area restaurants. Sometimes the group also meets for cards, dominoes, or desserts and fellowship. For more information, contact Colonel.Allen.M.Morris@Gmail.com.

• Food distribution at St. Vincent de Paul takes place the second Thursday of each month from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Distributions are at 1009 Hearn at SVDP Building.

• Permian Basin Multiple Sclerosis Support Group for information, encouragement and support. The group meets monthly on the Second Saturday of each month from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Holiday Inn Express at 5321 John Ben Sheppard Parkway, Odessa. If you or someone you know has been touched by MS, or if you are just interested in more information please feel to contact Gary Tidwell at garylteagle1987@gmail.com.

• VFW Post 2013 meets the first Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. New members are being sought. The Post is located at 500 Driver Rd. Qualified veterans, those who have served in a foreign war, who are interested in joining the VFW are encouraged to attend a meeting to find out more information.

• O'Neal-Kunkle, Chapter #47 of the Disabled American Vets (D.A.V.), meets the third Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. at 2204 Runnels Street. For more information, please contact Norman Witcher at 432-413-6663.

• Home Hospice is looking for volunteers (18+) and junior volunteers (9-16 years old). Applications can be picked up at the Home Hospice office, located at 111 E. Seventh Street, Suite A between 8 a.m and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Adult volunteers will need to complete a training and must be able to pass a background check. Volunteer duties will include home visits; junior volunteers will be helping with office work, community events and holiday activities. More information can be obtained by calling 264-7599 or 432-967-0901.

• Keep Big Spring Beautiful meets at noon the first Monday of every month. We meet at Howard College in the Cactus Room. Our vision is that every Big Spring citizen will take individual responsibility for making Big Spring the most beautiful city in Texas. Visitors are always welcome. For more information call Tammy at 432-935-0057. Toasty Tuesday is also a weekly clean up effort that takes place around town at 6:30 p.m. every Tuesday. The locations is normally announced on the Keep Big Spring Beautiful Page along with in the Monday edition of the Big Spring Herald.

• The Big Spring Art Association meets the third Saturday of the month, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m., in the basement of the Howard County Library. Come join us, we would love to have you.

• Big Spring and surrounding counties are in need of foster families. Foster parents are the caretakers for the children in the community who have been abused or neglected. For more information on becoming foster parents or adoptive families, call the Children's Protective Services office at 432-263-9669.

• Victim Services is a non-profit independent community-based program serving victims of

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

• The mission of CASA of West Texas is to promote and support quality volunteers who speak for the best interest of abused and neglected children in court in an effort to find each child a safe, nurturing and permanent home. We need your help. If you're interested in volunteering, contact Sara Basaldua at 1-877-316-8346 or visit www.BecomeaCASA.org or www.casawtx.org.

• Scenic Mountain Medical Center Auxiliary is looking for new members. If you have a heart for serving people, have at least four hours a week to spare, SMMC Auxiliary might be the fit for you.

Duties include working in the gift shop, delivering newspapers to inpatients, hospitality services, popcorn and more. To find out more about the SMMC Auxiliary, contact Amy Miramontes at 268-4809 or April Arms at 268-4907.

• The Crossroads Young Marines is taking applications for another boot camp. For more information, call 432-517-4791. Young Marines welcomes boys and girls ages 8 to 18 who are still attending school.

• The Homeownership Preservation Foundation (HPF) is an independent national nonprofit dedicated to helping distressed homeowners navigate financial challenges and avoid mortgage foreclosure. If you want to stop mortgage foreclosure and are need of help, the time to call 888-995-HOPE is now. HPF can provide counseling free of charge, in English and 170 other languages, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. For free foreclosure help, call the hotline.

• The Howard County Democrats meet the second and fourth Monday of each month at 5:30 p.m. at the Howard County Democratic Headquarters, 1408 Scurry, behind Prosperity Bank.

• 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.

**BIG SPRING HERALD**  
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2021**


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# Support Groups

## MONDAY

- Alcoholics Anonymous, As Bill Sees It, 615 Settles, 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.

## TUESDAY

- 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 at 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.
- Caregivers Support Group, sponsored by the Area Agency on Aging, meets the second Tuesday of every month at 10:30 a.m. The meetings are held at the Senior Citizens Center located at 100 Whipkey Drive. These meetings are open for any caregiver, whether medical professional or family member. For more information, please call Becky Letz at 267-1628.
- Al-anon family group meets at 8 p.m. at 615 Settles.
- DivorceCare is a biblical support group for those facing divorce or separation. Each DVD session features nationally respected experts, such as Christian Counselors and Pastors. Small group discussions and workbook exercises help participants apply the information to their own situations. We cover pertinent issues like: • Will I survive? • How to get out of debt. • How do you know when you are ready for a new relationship? • How to lessen the impact of divorce on your children. • Is reconciliation possible? There is no charge for attendance. 13-week seminars are held two times per year on Tuesday evenings from 6 to 8 p.m. at Trinity Baptist Church in Big Spring. Visit the

DivorceCare Ministry of TBC Facebook page for information. You can also call Donna Burcham at 267-6344 for information on seminar dates and how you can register to attend.

## WEDNESDAY

- Celebrate Recovery meets at First United Methodist Church Youth Hall, 400 Scurry, from 6-8 p.m. Hurts, habits and hang-ups. Leave message for Joyce Webb at 325-212-860

Submit your Support Group information to be included or updated. Email information to editor@Bigspringherald.com or call 432-263-7331.

## THURSDAY

- Alcoholics Anonymous, 615 Settles, open discussion noon to 1 p.m.; women's meeting 6:30 until 7:30 p.m. Newcomers' meeting 8 p.m. until 9 p.m.
- Weight Watchers meets at 6 p.m. at St. Paul Lutheran Church. Weigh-in is at 5:30 p.m. Weigh-in is confidential and you don't have to talk if you don't want to. Flexible payment options.
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder support group meeting is at 6:30 p.m. at the VA Medical Center Veteran's Healing Center.
- Bring Everyone Into The Zone, or BEITZ Support Group, is a veteran-based peer group. The purpose of the group is to provide peer-to-peer support to service members, veterans and families, especially those suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI), military sexual trauma (MST) and other traumatic events in their lives. BEITZ meets every Thursday at 6 p.m. at 501 Birdwell Lane. For more information, email francisco.garza@wtcmhmr.org, or call 432-268-3003.

- GriefShare is a biblical support group that focuses on helping people who are dealing with a loved one's death. Each DVD session features nationally respected grief experts and real-life stories, followed by small group discussion about the topics presented (with workbook support); there is no charge for attendance. 13-week seminars are held three times per year on Thursday evenings, 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., at Trinity Baptist Church in Big Spring. Visit the GriefShare Ministry of TBC Facebook page. You can also call Vivian Gordon at 432-466-3583 for information on seminar dates and how you can register to attend.

## FRIDAY

- Reformers Unanimous International is a faith-based addictions program helping people find freedom from addiction. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. Fridays at Trinity Baptist Church in Big Spring. Enter at the main entrance of the church.
- AA open discussion meeting from noon until 1 p.m. at 605 Settles. Open Big Book study meeting, 8 p.m. until 9 p.m.

## SATURDAY

- Alcoholics Anonymous open discussion meeting, 615 Settles, noon to 1 p.m. Open podium/speakers meeting 8 p.m. until 9 p.m. Open birthday night, no smoking meeting the last Saturday of each month at 8 p.m. Covered dish supper at 7 p.m.

## SUNDAY

- Alcoholics Anonymous closed meeting from 11 a.m. to noon at 615 Settles. Open meeting 7 p.m. to 8 p.m.

# FIRE

Continued from Page 1

marquee, the area's biggest placard, blinked from bold to a smaller font while the neon buzzed and looked forward to the darkness when the sunlight did not dim its brilliance. It was the job of the State's marquee to entice patrons at all times, even when it was closed--with its appointment full of many light bulbs, yards of neon tubing, and painted and tiled surfaces to dazzle and glitter. The movie's house's bright light along Runnels would be no match for a super nova-type flash of light that Friday evening of May. Or would it?

It was shortly after 5:30 PM when Joe Smith was closing Barrows-Douglas Furniture Store when he was suddenly blown across the room by a terrific fireball and explosion that shook downtown Big Spring as if a bomb had been dropped. Badly shaken, but alive, Joe managed to regain his senses and crawl and stagger toward the front of the building across the debris of the fixtures and merchandise. Bleeding from multiple cuts, he dragged his painful fractured foot across the piles of charred rubble. After reaching the front of the building he started shouting for help, where he was pulled out by others that had rushed to the scene. Right before the blast, Lorena Lynch had just stepped outside the store and was soon walloped by the flying glass shrapnel, luckily only suffering multiple cuts. Other people on both sides of the street and sidewalks

were hit by the glass and cut also.

The surrounding area's buildings had shaken and rattled from the tremendous explosion as if a plane had crashed or an earthquake had happened. Runnels Street was soon filled with smoke as people exited on to the downtown sidewalks not knowing what to expect. The atomic blast-like burst would start Big Spring's largest fire scene since 1938. Firemen and ambulances arrived at the scene as thick black smoke bellowed out of the furniture store and soon rose to be seen from miles away. Flames threatened the Safeway next door and other surrounding stores as bystanders flocked to see the excitement. One man nearby said he was literally rocked out his chair and rushed to leave the building.

Firemen furiously fought the fire as the ceiling and roof were engulfed in leaping, roaring flames and smoke. The object of the firemen was to keep the fire from spreading to other buildings, and they did, fighting the fire surgically, but it still took hours to extinguish a lot of fuel from the furniture and wooden roof structure. Saving grace was the winds were not blowing that Friday. The day before, Big Spring had experienced howling winds and one of its signatory sand blasting bombardments. A day earlier, and the town might have been in ruins.

The \$100,000 fire (\$1,099,074.69 in today's dollars) destroyed and wiped out the Barrows-Douglas Furniture Store. Everything went up in smoke, with no such thing as a fire sale on this one. The scene

was tragic and spectacular as cameras recorded the smoke-filled Runnels Street. And the cause was one familiar in those days--natural gas. Investigators of the Barrows-Douglas explosion deemed the home furnishings store to be such a victim of a natural gas leak. Apparently, no one ever detected the accumulation of the leaked natural gas in the ceiling.

Like from a gangster movie, the last thing Joe Smith remembered was reaching to pull the string on a light fixture at the rear of the building--and then a deafening blast and a blinding light. With Providence beneficence, Joe Smith survived that moment of the brightest light and momentary high impact on Runnels Street.

The brilliant and dazzling collection of of marquee lights up the street at the State Theater stayed radiant and glowing for many more years, with a lot less brightness in comparison to the Barrows-Douglas Furniture lightening-like flash and noise. But the State's shimmering sparkling, twinkling, fluorescing, shining marquee was no one hit wonder. A storied and longer source of light that old theater marquee was! Schooling us that the greatest luminosity is to be marquee-like with all kinds of lights making for the grandest of light, and not just being a flash in a pan.

# SAFE

Continued from Page 1

Big Spring Rail runs mostly in the daytime hours, but will occasionally make runs at night and on weekends. Anytime a vehicle or pedestrian approaches a rail crossing caution should be exhibited. "Since the beginning of Big Spring Rail we have been lucky in that only a minor accident has occurred," Gambrell said. "We do not have safety arms that go down when trains are crossing and that means drivers and those crossing need to do so with a little more caution."

She continued, "Big Spring Rail does have flashing lights and bells at the crossing on Highway 80, but nothing beats the old safety adage of looking both ways before crossing."

According to Gambrell, cameras are placed on each of the crossings for an add-

ed safety measure should an incident ever occur.

"Even if you've never seen a train crossing on that particular track, always assume a train is going to be crossing and use caution. Don't try and beat a train because in the end, trains don't stop instantly and the train comes with a lot more force than a vehicle, even traveling at the low speed of 10 mph that Big Spring Rail operates at."

Gambrell continued, "One of the important safety features that often goes unnoticed or at least is underutilized when it comes to rail safety is the Emergency Notification Systems (ENS) which are located at every crossing."

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Railroad Administration, the purpose of the ENS sign is to provide the public with critical emergency contact information at every highway-rail grade crossing.

"On the sign there is a number that is associated with that particular rail crossing. When you call the 8-00 number and provide that specific number the operator on the other end of the line will be able to know exactly what crossing you are at and in turn send support services, close down the right part of the line if needed and take any other action necessary," Gambrell said.

A few additional safety tips when approaching a rail line crossing include:

- Always expect a train to be crossing – look both ways and then proceed with caution
- Trains have the right of way – do not try and beat the train
- Just because you don't hear a train doesn't mean one is not approaching; look and adhere to flashing lights, bells and safety arms
- Only cross at designated crossing areas
- Do not park on or stand on tracks

# PHOTO

Continued from Page 1

21. There is no fee for submission, and submissions can be hand delivered or mailed to the museum, 510 Scurry St. in Big Spring. "Either way. Just let us know if you're mailing it that it's on its way so that we'll be aware. Otherwise bring it by 510 Scurry. Put your information with it," Schrecengost said.

The museum reserves the right to refuse inappropriate photographs, Schrecengost added.

"There's really no limits except for if it's deemed inappropriate, we won't accept it," she said. "Other than that, there's really no limit as to what you can submit: Animals, people, landscapes, whatever you choose."

For additional information, contact the Heritage Museum at 432-267-8255.

## MYERS & SMITH FUNERAL HOME & CHAPEL

24th & Johnson 267-8288

Lois Biddison, 87, died Friday. Graveside service will be at 2:00 PM Saturday at Mount Olive Chapel.

Misty "Minnie" Babcock, 36, died Friday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home. A fund has been established at Myers & Smith Funeral Home to assist with expenses.

Sally Dawn Schumpert, 62, died Sunday. Services are pending at Myers & Smith Funeral Home.

Angline Torres, 47, died Monday. Services will be Saturday at 9:00 AM in the Myers & Smith Chapel. Burial at Mount Olive Memorial Park.



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# States tap federal aid to shore up empty unemployment funds

By DAVID A. LIEB

The Associated Press

Businesses could be spared billions of dollars of higher taxes in coming years — potentially freeing up money to spend on employees or invest in their operations — as a result of federal coronavirus aid flowing to the states.

Governors and lawmakers in more than half the states are planning to use at least part of their federal pandemic relief money to bail out unemployment insurance trust funds that were drained by a surge in jobless claims caused by business closures and restrictions, according to an Associated Press review.

By tapping into the federal aid, states could avoid automatic tax hikes that otherwise would be imposed on businesses to repay federal loans that have kept state unemployment systems afloat during the COVID-19 pandemic. That means state jobless funds could recover much faster than they did after the Great Recession, when it took some states five to 10 years to replenish their funds.

"For the first time in decades, states will be able to come out of an economic contraction with well-funded unemployment compensation trust funds and be able to save for the next downturn, rather than focusing on paying off the debt from the last one," said Jared Walczak, vice president of state projects at the Tax Foundation, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit.

Some worker advocates would prefer that states spend their pandemic funds on direct aid to those who have suffered economically during the coronavirus outbreak.

"Using the money to just replenish an account is not serving workers," said Jenna Gerry, a senior staff attorney at the National Employment Law Project, a New York-based group that advocates for low-wage workers and the unemployed.

But business groups contend that employees ultimately will benefit if their bosses don't have to bear the tax burden of restocking state jobless funds.

"It impacts all aspects of that employer's ability to employ people, to grow, to pay wages and benefits," said Dan Mehan, president and CEO of the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The federal government has provided several rounds of aid to states since the coronavirus pandemic began last year, culminating with \$195 billion of flexible funds included in the American Rescue Plan signed by President Joe Biden. U.S. Treasury Department guidance allows the money to be used to replenish unemployment trust funds to their pre-pandemic levels.

At least 29 states already have transferred or proposed to use a total of more than \$12 billion of federal coronavirus aid for their unemployment trust funds, ac-

ording to an AP analysis. That ranges from a \$25 million transfer in Wyoming to commitments of as much as \$1.5 billion in Georgia in Ohio.

Maryland's Republican Gov. Larry Hogan and California's Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom each announced budget plans this spring that would use \$1.1 billion in federal COVID-19 funds to bolster their depleted unemployment compensation accounts.

Hogan said the move would allow the state to "continue helping those who need it most" while also providing "tax relief for struggling businesses."

State unemployment benefits are funded by special federal and state taxes on employers. Each state sets its own tax rate and benefit payment amounts. When trust funds run low, states can get federal loans to keep paying unemployment benefits. Loans taken out in 2020 and still on the books next January must be repaid by November 2022, or else the federal government will raise taxes on businesses to recoup the money.

A decade ago, the Great Recession led to the insolvency of unemployment trust funds in 35 states that collectively racked up more than \$40 billion of debt to pay unemployed workers. It took years for states to repay that.

A U.S. Labor Department report warned shortly before the onset of the pandemic that 21 states still didn't have sufficient reserves in their unemployment funds to weather a potential recession. Most of those states had to borrow from the federal government as pandemic-related layoffs provided a major hit to state unemployment funds.

In the year since March 2020, the total money in states' trust funds plummeted by two-thirds while the median state fund balance declined even more — from \$1.1 billion to \$250 million, according to an AP analysis.

But due partly to federal relief, fewer states have borrowed to pay unemployment benefits than during the last recession. As of Tuesday, 18 states owed the federal government \$52 billion for unemployment loans. California topped the list, with almost \$21 billion of unemployment debt, followed by more than \$9 billion for New York and nearly \$7 billion for Texas.

Missouri took five years to repay over \$1 billion of federal unemployment loans after the recession that ended in 2009. But its unemployment fund has avoided insolvency during the pandemic because Republican Gov. Mike Parson shored it up with \$300 million of aid provided under a law signed by former President Donald Trump.

Parson's office was lobbied to do so by the Missouri Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Had we not done something like that, those employers out there -- small, medium and large that are trying to come back, and come back strong -- would have had to pay the price in increased charges to their unemployment insurance," said Mehan, the chamber CEO.

Pennsylvania just made its final payment in January 2020 on \$2.8 billion of bonds issued to repay the federal government for unemployment compensation loans stemming from the Great Recession. A few months later, it had to start borrowing again because of the pandemic. The state now owes the federal government nearly \$1.6 billion for unemployment loans.

Business representatives are encouraging Democratic Gov. Tom Wolf's administration and the Republican-led Legislature to use federal coronavirus relief money to restore the state's unemployment fund. House Speaker Bryan Cutler said he supports putting the relief money toward existing expenses before funding new programs.



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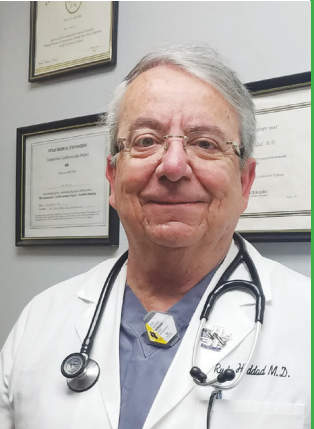
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# Tokyo Olympics looking more and more like fan-free event amid COVID-19 concerns

By **STEPHEN WADE**

AP Sports Writer

TOKYO — The president of the Tokyo Olympic organizing committee hinted Friday that even local fans may be barred from venues when the games open in just under two months.

Fans from abroad were ruled out months ago as being too risky during a pandemic.

The prospect of empty venues at the postponed Olympics became more likely when the Japanese government decided Friday to extend a state of emergency until June 20 as COVID-19 cases continue to put the medical system under strain.

The state of emergency was to have been lifted on Monday. The extension in Tokyo, Osaka and other prefectures raises even more questions if the Olympics can be held at all.

Organizers and the IOC are insistent they will go ahead despite polls in Japan showing 60-80% want them called off.

"We would like to make a decision as soon as possible (on fans), but after the state of emergency is lifted we will assess," organizing committee president Seiko Hashimoto said at her weekly briefing.

Hashimoto promised to decide on local fans by April, then put it off un-

til early June. Now the deadline is within a month of the July 23 opening date.

"There are many people who are saying that for the Olympic Games we have to run without spectators, although other sports are accepting spectators," Hashimoto said. "So we need to keep that in mind. We need to avoid that the local medical services are affected. We need to take those things into consideration before agreeing on the spectator count."

Cancellation pressure grows daily on Tokyo and the IOC as more questions arise about the risks of bringing 15,000 Olympic and Paralympic athletes from more than 200 countries and territories into Japan, a country that has been largely closed off during the pandemic.

The IOC says more than 80% of athletes and staff staying in the Olympic Village on Tokyo Bay will be vaccinated. They are expected to remain largely in a bubble at the village and at venues.

In addition to athletes, tens of thousands of judges, officials, VIPs, media and broadcasters will also have to enter Japan.

Earlier this week, the New England Journal of Medicine said in a commentary: "We believe the IOC's deter-

mination to proceed with the Olympic Games is not informed by the best scientific evidence."

It questioned the IOC's so-called Playbooks, which spell out rules at the games for athletes, staff, media and others. The final edition will be published next month. Also this week, the Asahi Shimbun — the country's second-largest newspaper — said the Olympics should be canceled.

The British Medical Journal last month in an editorial also asked organizers to "reconsider" holding the Olympics in the middle of a pandemic.

On Thursday, the head of a small doctors' union in Japan warned that holding the Olympics could lead to the spread of variants of the coronavirus. He mentioned strains in India, Britain, South Africa and Brazil.

Japan has attributed about 12,500 deaths to COVID-19, a relatively small number that has gone up steadily in the last few months. The vaccination rollout began slowly in Japan, but has moved more quickly in the last few days. Vaccinated people are estimated at about 5% of the population.

The IOC, which often cites the World Health Organization as the source of much of its coronavirus information, has been steadfast in say-

ing the games will happen. It receives about 75% of its income from selling broadcast rights, which is estimated to be \$2 billion-\$3 billion from Tokyo. That cash flow has been slowed by the postponement.

Japan itself has officially spent \$15.4 billion or organize the Olympics, and government audits suggest the figure is even higher.

Senior IOC member Richard Pound told a British newspaper this week that "barring Armageddon" the games will take place. Last week, IOC vice president John Coates was asked if the Olympics would open, even if there were a state of emergency.

"Absolutely, yes," he replied.

IOC President Thomas Bach has also said "everyone in the Olympic community" needs to make sacrifices to hold the Olympics.

The message got pushback from Japanese social and local media, some of which noted that the IOC and the so-called Olympic Family are booked into many of Tokyo's top five-star hotels during the games.

Hashimoto defended the IOC's leadership.

"The IOC has a strong determination to hold the games," she said. "So such a strong will is translated into strong words. That's how I feel."

# Jets' Mosley aims to make impact again after '2-year hiatus'

By **DENNIS WASZAK Jr.**

AP Pro Football Writer

FLORHAM PARK, N.J. — C.J. Mosley has been waiting a long time to feel this way again.

After what he called a "two-year hiatus" — one because of an injury, the other after opting out because of the coronavirus pandemic — the New York Jets middle linebacker is on the football field again and ready to show he can still be a game-wrecking playmaker.

"When you're out for a while, you always get in your head like, 'When I get back, how's it going to feel? Am I going to be able to move like I used to?'" Mosley said Thursday. "After finishing this week, I feel great."

Three practices into organized team activities, Mosley's long-awaited comeback is officially on.

Since signing a five-year, \$85 million deal — the richest for an inside linebacker — with the Jets in March 2019, Mosley has played in just two games. And neither was for a full four quarters. A four-time Pro Bowl selection in five years with Baltimore, Mosley recognizes there are many who doubt he'll be able to make the type of impact New York expected when it doled out that big money.

"There's a little added chip because you've always got your fans that are going to heckle," Mosley said. "When I get back on the field, I definitely want to make sure they're respecting the name again. You want your players to play and, unfortunately, I haven't been able to. They have the right to do that, so I've got to just make sure I do my job."

Mosley's debut with the Jets came in the season opener in 2019, when he had six tackles, returned an interception for a touchdown and recovered a fumble against Buffalo. Then, he injured his groin

while breaking up a pass in the end zone at the end of the third quarter. New York's defense fell apart after he left, and the Jets lost 17-16.

The linebacker missed the next four games before returning for a Monday night game against AFC East rival New England. Mosley re-injured the groin and missed the rest of the season, eventually having core muscle surgery followed by intense rehabilitation.

"It was a grind," he said. "A lot longer than I expected."

Mosley was feeling healthy again last offseason and appeared on track to reclaim his spot as New York's middle linebacker and quarterback of the defense.

But then the pandemic hit.

"With the injury from 2019, just that mental and emotional grind of trying to get back on the field," he said, "and then I get hurt again and then COVID happens, it was like, damn, what's going on?"

He made the difficult decision just before training camp to be one of the nearly 70 NFL players to opt out for the season. Mosley said he consulted with various people, including family members, coaches and even the team psychologist.

"It was just more of a family decision," Mosley said without going into specific details. "At the end of the day, it was my decision as well. So I just thought it was the best thing for me to do."

His absence was felt on the defense, which struggled along with the rest of the team as the Jets limped to a 2-14 record that ultimately got coach Adam Gase and his staff fired. Meanwhile, Mosley watched from his home in Alabama, unable to help his teammates.

"That was my first time not playing football since

I was 5 years old," Mosley said. "That was the biggest difference. When your team's losing and you can't play — whether you opt out or you're injured — it's just frustrating because you want to be on the field to help. Whether I would have been there and we won one game or not, or won more games, you just want to be with the team. I think that was the toughest part."

Mosley, who turns 29 next month, came up in trade rumors early in the offseason, but his contract made him difficult to deal — even if the Jets wanted to do so. New York's signing of former Detroit inside linebacker Jarrad Davis also appeared to cloud Mosley's future with the team.

Instead, he's expected to man the middle of new coach Robert Saleh's 4-3 base defense. And Saleh has liked what he has seen from Mosley so far.

"He looks good," Saleh said. "He's a very powerful mover. Obviously, we can't see tackling, but you can see a lot of power in his movement. He eats up a lot of ground. He's fluid, he's smart, he's savvy, he's a tremendous gentleman. And I'm just really excited to get a chance to work with him."

Mosley is confident he can return to being the player he was two years ago. He has nearly 600 career tackles, 10 interceptions, 8 1/2 sacks, six forced fumbles and six fumble recoveries on a resume he expects to add plenty to over the next several seasons.

"Yeah, I don't have any doubts in myself," he said, mentioning how Rob Gronkowski stepped away from the game before returning and winning a Super Bowl with Tampa Bay in February.

"I'm here," he added, "so we'll let the play do the talking."

# Scioscia says US Olympic roster fluid, changes with call-ups

By **RONALD BLUM**

AP Baseball Writer

Mike Scioscia was planning on having Alek Manoah for the U.S. rotation for Olympic qualifying next week. Instead, the Toronto Blue Jays called up 23-year-old right-hander, who pitched six scoreless innings against the New York Yankees this week in his major league debut.

"It's been fluid. From the roster we have anticipated early, you're probably talking about a 60, 70% turnover," the U.S. manager said Friday, three days before the Americans start their second chance to qualify for the Olympics.

Generally, the better the prospect the less chance he will be available.

Only players not on 26-man major league rosters and injured lists are eligible for selection, and major league general managers often make sure any prospect they think could conceivably help their big league team finds a reason not to be available for qualifying.

The U.S. was three outs from qualifying for the Olympics at the Premier12 tournament in Tokyo in November 2019 before wasting a ninth-inning lead in a 3-2, 10-inning loss to Mexico. Matt Clark hit a tying home run off Brandon Dickson leading off the bottom of the ninth inning, and Efren Navarro had a broken-bat single against Caleb Thielbar to drive in the winning run.

While that 28-man roster had a total career 2.1 Wins Above Replacement, according to Baseball Reference, Scioscia has a more illustrious group totaling about 124 WAR -- but many players whose big league careers are behind them. Some may be viewing the training camp and games next week as a showcase audition for a return to The Show.

Todd Frazier was 3 for 35 at the plate this year before Pittsburgh released him May 13.

"Your priority has to be contained to the process to getting to the gold," Scioscia said. "I think that there is an opportunity for players to get back on the drawing board as far as where their careers might be, but that's not the primary reason they're here."

Dickson, the only holdover from the 2019 roster, threw his last big league pitch in 2012, Anthony Gose in 2016, Marc Rzepczynski in 2018, and Edwin Jackson and Jamie Sherfy in 2019.

See TEAM, Page 10



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Clue: Physical suffering

B. 14 11 4 10 10 23 8 14 14

Clue: Difficulty moving

C. 18 1 4 23 11 14

Clue: Where bones join

D. 25 1 2 11 1 9

Clue: Medical professional

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Annie's Mailbox

Toxic Mother-Daughter Relationship

Dear Annie: I have a daughter who is sometimes very kind and sweet to me but other times feels like a cancer who destroys every cell in my heart.

I avoid her after she does a number on me for a while. But when she senses I have calmed down, she starts to be really sweet again to draw me back.

siderate ways.

I raised both her children from birth while she ran off with her friends all the time and pursued her career goals.

When I raised her, my life was very difficult. I was divorced and poor and didn't have any help from my family or the father, but I spent my entire life trying to make her and my son have a hap-

py life. I put aside my needs completely and gave my children every last bit of love and penny I had.

Even though she was a very happy and confident kid and teenager with lots of friends, she tells me that I was a terrible parent. Mind you, she also says I am the best grandmother ever to her children.

growing up.

She still calls me regularly and wants a relationship with me, but inside I don't trust her and I know the same hurt is coming again. I don't know how to deal with this.

thing through communication, she always excuses her behavior.

This year, she has taken my 15-year-old grandson to live with her, and I don't want to alienate him from my life, so I have to keep dealing with her.

Dear Trouble With Adult Daughter: Your daughter might have borderline personality disorder or bipolar depressive disorder.

entire situation altogether. But walking away from your daughter and your grandkids is not the answer.

Send your questions for Annie Lane to dearannie@creators.com.

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Contract Bridge Famous Hand By Steve Becker. South dealer. East-West vulnerable. NORTH: A63, 1053, AJ, AKQJ5. WEST: KQJ1082, K62, 5, 1042. EAST: 94, J974, 10984, 986. SOUTH: 75, AQ8, KQ7632, 73. The bidding: South West North East. Opening lead — king of spades. One real test of a partnership is its ability to reach slams that should be bid, and to avoid slams that should not be bid.

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Tomorrow's Horoscope

Zipper Moon

ARIES (March 21-April 19). In the same way you can't make up a nickname for yourself, your reputation is up to other people to decide.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). You'll experience a friendship luxury. You'll bring your half-formed ideas and your knottiest dilemmas to the one you trust implicitly and have an exciting, intelligent conversation about it.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). What happens in your personal life can also be seen through the wider lens of society. In fact, you'll notice how your actions play into the politics of these times.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). There's a reason you keep coming back. You wouldn't return unless it was doing something for you.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). When you're already playing at a higher level, some consider the quest for more to be greedy.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Many people learn best by doing, and for good reason. In action, you can feel the

excitement of each move, the thrill of getting it right and the pain of doing it wrong. You're brave, and you want to learn quick. Throw yourself in.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). Harmony depends on not only hitting certain tones but also doing so in the right timing with others. You nail it. You pace yourself so timetables can match up -- between friends, colleagues, professional allies and more.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). Surface qualities may attract a relationship, but they won't carry it. You want to connect with, help and learn from others, and it requires you to bring much more consideration and effort to the table.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). The future knows how it wants to look and will defy any image of it you've created in your mind's eye. Don't let this stop you from dreaming, though.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). Inside every stage of life is many seasons. To gain, lose, molt, flower, fruit and

BY HOLIDAY MATHIS



more will happen again and again. All the gains and losses of today will be for the short term.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). It is too much to ask yourself to muscle down and do a thing without support. At the very least, support yourself by creating an environment that is conducive to accomplishing the aim.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Understanding is a kind of pleasure akin to fitting the right puzzle piece into a hole. It's even more satisfying when you are seeking to understand and it finally happens, which is what occurs today.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (May 31). You break into new territory and make the rules. As the founder of the culture, you'll ask excellent questions like, "What would this scene be if we all do it this way?"

MEMORIAL DAY TRINE: Mars and Neptune in water signs align to form a trine of good fortune on this day of remembering. Mars is in Cancer, the sign of home -- and the sign of patriotism, which is pride of home on a larger scale.

The philanthropic Aquarius moon highlights a theme here, too. Casting a soft shadow on our ceremonies, beyond the cemetery, behind the waving flags, is the glowing backdrop that is the uncertainty of this life.

To contemplate death is a ubiquitous spiritual practice that spans philosophies, religions and time periods, and is among the most effective ways to focus oneself on how a day should be spent.

Write Holiday Mathis at HolidayMathis.com.

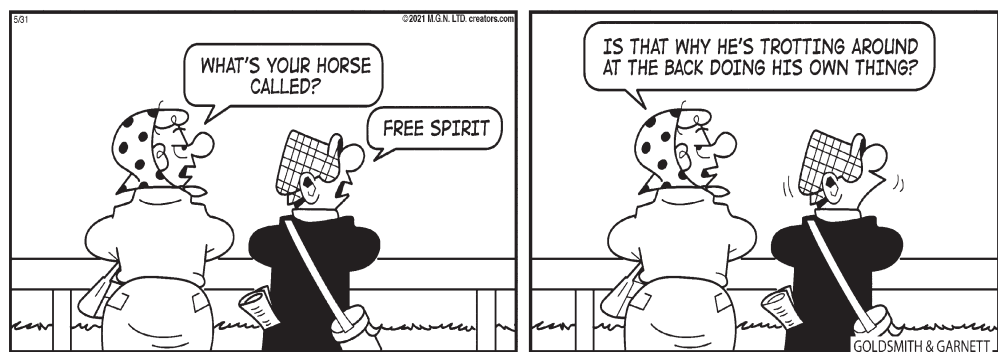
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SUDOKU Fun By The Numbers. Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test! Level: Beginner. Here's How It Works: Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

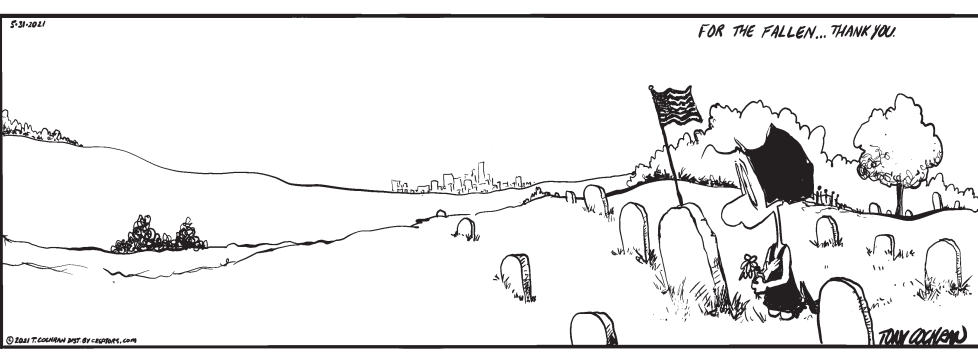


Table with 18 columns representing different TV channels (KMYD, UNI, KPEJ, etc.) and rows listing various programs like 'Big 2 Midland', 'Noticiero', 'Fam-Feud', etc.

ANDY CAPP



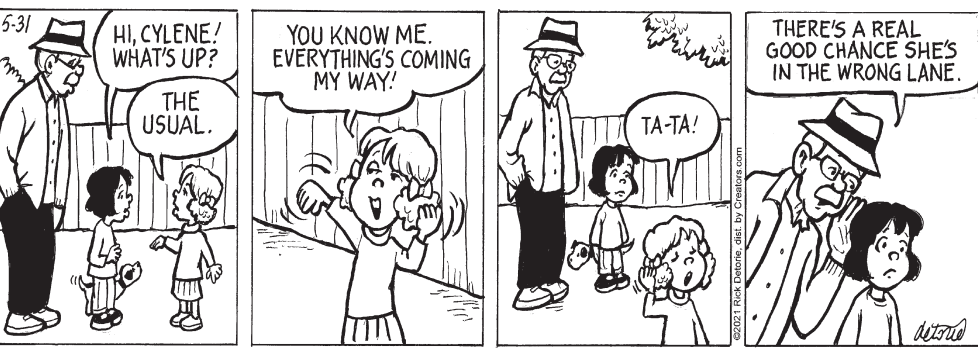
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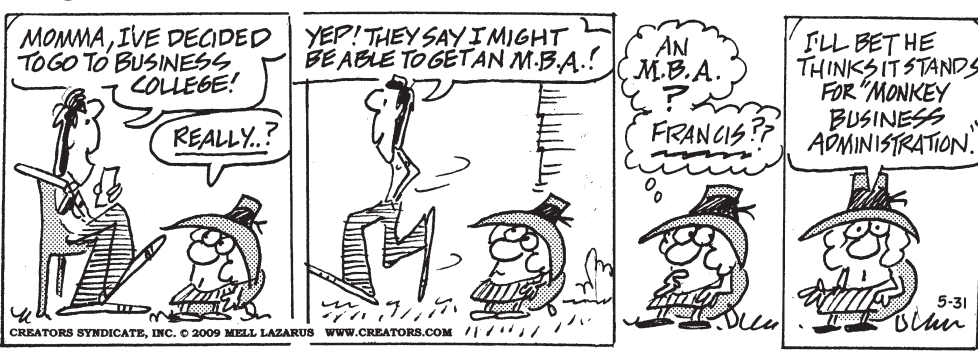
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This Date In History

Today is Monday, May 31, the 151st day of 2021. There are 214 days left in the year. This is Memorial Day. Today's Highlight in History: On May 31, 1921, a race riot erupted in Tulsa, Oklahoma...

In 2009, Dr. George Tiller, a rare provider of late-term abortions, was shot and killed in a Wichita, Kansas, church.

In 2014, Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl, the only American soldier held prisoner in Afghanistan, was freed by the Taliban in exchange for five Afghan detainees from the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In 1958, the Christian catacombs of ancient Rome were accidentally discovered by workers digging in a vineyard along the Via Salara.

In 1970, President George Washington signed into law the first U.S. copyright act.

In 1859, the Big Ben clock tower in London went into operation, chiming for the first time.

In 1889, some 2,200 people in Johnstown, Pennsylvania, perished when the South Fork Dam collapsed, sending 20 million tons of water rushing through the town.

In 1935, movie studio 20th Century Fox was created through a merger of the Fox Film Corp. and Twentieth Century Pictures.

One year ago: Tens of thousands of protesters again took to the streets across America, with peaceful demonstrations against police killings overshadowed by unrest; officials deployed thousands of National Guard soldiers and enacted strict curfews in major cities.

Increasing tensions with police, who fired tear gas and stun grenades. In tweets, President Donald Trump blamed anarchists and the media for fueling violence.

not backed up those uses of the drug. The privately-owned space-craft SpaceX delivered two NASA astronauts to the International Space Station.

director Clint Eastwood is 91. Singer Peter Yarrow is 83. Humanitarian and author Terry Waite is 82. Singer-musician Augie Meyers is 81. Actor Sharon Gless is 78.

Today's Birthdays: Actor- 91. Singer Peter Yarrow is 83. Humanitarian and author Terry Waite is 82. Singer-musician Augie Meyers is 81. Actor Sharon Gless is 78. Broadcast journalist/commentator Bernard Goldberg is 76.

Newsday Crossword

- ACROSS 1 Entryways, 6 Make a sound of fright, 10 In no danger, 14 Taj Mahal's country, 15 Sch. near Beverly Hills, 16 Ship's docking place, 17 Full of rocks, as a beach, 18 Sailor's greeting, 19 Brainstorm, 20 Wine bottle openers, 22 Scarlet and crimson, 23 Head's gesture of agreement, 24 Tax deduction expert: Abbr., 26 Movie director's "Start!", 30 "Should all of us do this?", 34 Raisin \_\_\_ cereal, 35 Large antlered animal, 36 60-min. periods, 38 Hand-held martini mixers, 42 \_\_\_-fi (outer-space stories), 43 Apportion, as budget money, 44 Remove clothes wrinkles, 45 Sculptures of people in parks, 47 Seniors to "respect", 49 River barrier, 50 "Without further \_\_\_...", 51 Corporate symbol, 54 Containers for keeping Champagne cool.

AT THE BAR by Brad Wilber Edited by Stanley Newman www.stanxwords.com

- 8 Reduce one's speed, 9 Hands over dollars and cents, 10 Winding staircase shape, 11 Assistant, 12 Serve a meal to, 13 Historical periods, 21 Negative side of a debate, 25 Urgent request for help, 26 First lessons in reading, 27 Gators' cousins, 28 Unspoken yet understood, 29 Liquid in a pen, 30 Songs sung alone, 31 Person running a party, 32 "In what place?", 33 Mistake, 35 Marathon measure, 37 Nine-digit government IDs: Abbr., 39 "Bye-bye!", 40 Kitchen foil metal, 41 Baby goat, 46 Takes in, as a rescue dog, 47 College Web address ender, 48 People who live nearby, 50 Bottomless pit, 51 Be durable, 52 Capital of Norway, 53 "No pain, no \_\_\_", 55 Violin container, 56 Days before holidays, 57 Be acquainted with, 58 Slight advantage, 59 Vacation excursion, 60 Religious offshoot.

Grid for the crossword puzzle with numbered squares and some pre-filled letters.

Answer to previous puzzle: ISLES, SKINCARE, ATOMS, PANLOAVES, MACON, EVILGRINS, STAT, FRETTS, NADA, ELISISON, EENSYS, BRACKETOLOGY, LEROY, WING, RBG, OPENMIC, DOIDARE, TSA, ARAB, EATER, BLEW OFFSTEAM, ETAIL, TEDTALK, NEST, CATER, MIRA, ANITAHILL, SIMON, CODENAMES, ONION, TRENDIER, LETME.



# IndyCar courts Black fans, drivers in its push to diversify

By DAN GELSTON

AP Sports Writer

INDIANAPOLIS— Rod Reid ran a program full of young, Black kart racers locked out of a venue because of the pandemic and needing a track to race.

Indianapolis Motor Speedway had spent millions on upgrades on the historic property at the same time last year when the coronavirus had a steely grip on the nation. There was no guarantee -- even if gates were open -- that there would be room for NXG Youth Motorsports' usual spot teaching kids STEM classes in a makeshift classroom in the paddock or for their drivers to race around the cone-lined course in a parking lot.

The suggestion was made to Reid: Why not dial up the new boss at IMS? His plea for help last June to Roger Penske -- Reid noted the 2,300 kids from 11 to 15 years old who have passed through the school over 15 years looking for a path into motorsports -- turned instead into a startling revelation for the Captain.

Yes, the NXG kids needed a place to learn and hone their craft. But the blossoming drivers also represented a rare chance for a minority group severely underrepresented in racing to feel at home inside the sprawling, 111-year-old speedway.

"We told him what we were about and he was really surprised," Reid said. "He did not know we existed. The reason we started, especially the idea of exposing the Black community to Indianapolis Motor Speedway, surprised him because he said he couldn't believe people don't feel welcome here. I told him, you're talking years and years and years back to when a person of color couldn't even go to the speedway."

The 84-year-old Penske offered NXG space at IMS to resume the program and, essentially, a new start. He helped NXG start a working relationship with Chevrolet, and the program secured loans to purchase a truck for its trailer. The talks with Penske happened to come not long after the death of George Floyd, a catalyst that in part led to IndyCar's "Race for Equality and Change" initiative supporting diversity and inclusivity across the industry.

"I think the idea that a group of people would not feel welcome in a place he purchased, and a sport he loves, like I do, totally didn't make sense to him," Reid said.

Much like NASCAR dealt with its own racial reckoning last year, IndyCar moved to create a more diverse workforce throughout all levels of a series that has had just two Black drivers race in the Indy 500, its showcase annual event that dates to 1911. Willy T. Ribbs became the first Black

driver to start the race in 1991 (and again in 1993) and George Mack in 2002 are it.

"Isn't it sad, all these years and not another Black driver?" Reid said.

The 66-year-old Ribbs, who drives this summer for the Superstar Racing Experience series, said he never cared much for his role as Indy 500 trailblazer.

"It did not matter. I didn't care about it," he said. "Still don't. It meant nothing. I was focused on going fast and trying to win. If you focused on anything other than that when you were there, you were going to get hurt or get killed."

Programs launched over the last several months are designed to reach far beyond the cockpit, but an anchor of IndyCar's plan was the creation of Force Indy, an all-Black race team led by Reid that competes in the IndyCar ladder USF2000 Series. Force Indy hired and developed Black mechanics, engineers and drivers throughout its entire team. Myles Rowe, who turns 21 in June, drives for the team and has been pegged as a potential Indy 500 driver.

"The goal is, in 2023, can we have an African-American, male or female, try to qualify for the 500," Penske said.

Jimmie McMillian, chief diversity officer for Penske Entertainment, is the architect intent on designing a new era in the open wheel series. He said members of the Black community who live near IMS treat never having attended an Indianapolis 500 as some sort of badge of honor. They have an up-close look at one of the most famous venues in sports and don't really see anyone who looks like them, certainly not on the starting grid.

"We want to make sure our paddock represents the fan base that we hope to have," McMillian said. "My No. 1 goal, I feel every day, is to get rid of the concept that this is a white sport and that people are not welcome here."

Years before Penske assumed stewardship of the series, IndyCar had a diversity committee that worked on recruitment and retainment for both the series and IMS. While McMillian viewed the number of women involved on the corporate side as a positive for the series -- roughly 35% to 40% of the workforce are women -- the minority makeup "was where we probably struggled."

"We tried to figure out why we were so monolithic in our employee base," McMillian said.

IndyCar's solution was an attempt to become more aggressive and creative in its outreach efforts -- how does it find the best and brightest in urban communities and persuade them to seek a career inside the paddock. Yes,

there was a greater presence on social media and ticket drives, and some of the usual promotional pushes like working with key stakeholders in the community such as the Indianapolis Urban League.

"Someone has to take that first step," Penske said. "I think in the position we're in, we can be leaders in that area. We're going to continue to do it. We're looking at the people we do business with. The people that we hire. We have a much deeper focus. We have that within our company. But I think from a racing perspective, I think we have that responsibility."

For McMillian, it was the 1-to-1 connection, the personal stories that could be shared with kids and adults that Indianapolis Motor Speedway was as welcoming to them as any other fan enjoying a pork tenderloin sandwich as cars zip past at 200 mph on race day.

"How successful could you be as a person of color if you don't see people who are successful?" McMillian asked. "So it's telling that story and going out to different communities to say, not only do we want you here, but there's different paths of success for you and your race doesn't matter. This is a great place to work."

McMillian changed tires and performed oil changes working at a Bloomington, Indiana, tire dealer in the late 1990s when his co-workers invited him to a NASCAR race at the Brickyard. He was instantly in awe at the scene of packed crowds and fast cars but Confederate flags and "South Will Rise Again" T-shirts made him uncomfortable and sowed doubts about pursuing a career in motorsports.

He's now leading a charge for change.

IndyCar didn't necessarily have a moment like NASCAR faced last year when Black driver Bubba Wallace led the demand for the stock car series to finally ban the Confederate flag from its races and venues.

IndyCar kept an eye on how NASCAR added minority owners like Michael Jordan and Pitbull, and McMillian said there was even more to study from NHRA: The drag racing series has long been a leader in diversity and essentially made gender, race -- and even socioeconomic -- nonfactors in pursuing a career in motorsports.

That hasn't always been the case in IndyCar.

"I knew that I was not dealing on a level playing field," Ribbs said. "I was not getting the same opportunities based on one thing, and not because I couldn't win. I was not getting support because I was African-American. Support meaning from corporate America."

With few exceptions for drivers born into legacy families, pursuing a career in racing is as much about sponsorship, cash and connections as talent, and the hustle is part of the job. IndyCar took a deeper look at identifying businesses willing to support developmental teams or help in securing equipment for up-and-coming programs. That also means developing a career path in racing for women and minorities in a variety of jobs outside the cockpit ranging from race engineers to public relations and sponsorship selling and beyond; Reid is a former member of the whistle-blowing, yellow-shirted security team.

"Some people say having a driver in a car is going to make all the difference in the world but if you listen to Lewis Hamilton, he's very adamant about the fact that when he gets out of the car and goes to the Mercedes paddock, all the faces don't look like him," McMillian said, referring to the seven-time Formula One champion, who is Black. "His success has not changed that. I have the same concern, quite frankly, that if we were successful enough to have the Lewis Hamilton of IndyCar, that alone would not be the thing we need to really bring the change into the sport that we need."

IndyCar created incentives for teams and track promoters that pushed diversity efforts. NXG students will race karts in Detroit as part of a pilot program that could lead to a full-season schedule in 2022 and expansion of the program is planned across the country.

NXG, funded in part through Lucas Oil sponsorship, has yet to send a student to IndyCar, though there may be no better time for kids to feel like they can succeed in some capacity at IMS.

Penske is engaged at every level and, yes, diversity can be good for the bottom line, but he has taken a hands-on approach with ideas that could spark fundamental change in the sport.

"He says, what can we do, let's get it done," McMillian said.

Look around IMS and tangible culture change is happening now. USF2000, the first rung on the road to IndyCar, raced at IMS during the IndyCar Grand Prix weekend, and more Black fans seemed to visit the track and watch the race than McMillian could remember.

"They said, 'I didn't know so many Black people came to races,'" he said. "The narrative now is, there are a lot of Black people here. We have to make sure all the folks in our community, for one reason or another can say, 'I've been to the track.'"

## TEAM

Continued from Page 5

Pitchers in their upper 30s include Jackson (37 years old), David Robertson (36), Homer Bailey and Rzepczynski (35). The pitching prospects, none viewed on the verge of the majors, include 24-year-old Joe Ryan, 20-year-old Simeon Woods Richardson, 21-year-old Matthew Liberatore and 23-year-old Drew Parrish.

Left-hander Clayton Andrews, a member of the November 2019 team, is being dropped because of a bad elbow.

Position players include catcher Matt Wieters (35), and outfielders Jon Jay and Matt Kemp (both 36).

"Everybody in this room knows that we have some guys that are used to playing every day in the major leagues and understand that they might be in more of a role position," Scioscia said. "We've got some pitchers that have pitched in back end of bullpens

and might not be pitching in the back end of bullpens."

The U.S. opens the Americas qualifying tournament against Nicaragua on Monday at Port St. Lucie, Florida, plays the Dominican Republic the next day at West Palm Beach and closes first-round play in Group A against Puerto Rico on June 2 at Port St. Lucie.

Canada, Colombia, Cuba and Venezuela are in Group B.

The top two teams in each group advance to the super round on June 4 and June 5, and first-round results carry over. The top team from the super round joins Japan, Israel, Mexico and South Korea at the Olympic baseball tournament, to be played in Japan from July 28 to Aug. 7 in Fukushima and Yokohama.

Second- and third-place teams advance to a final qualifier in June in Mex-

ico, which will include Australia, Netherlands and Taiwan.

Baseball is returning to the Olympics after being dropped for 2012 and 2016. Cuba won the gold medal in 1992, 1996 and 2004, the U.S. in 2000 and South Korea in 2008.

Baseball is likely to be dropped for the 2024 Olympics in Paris and then restored again for 2028 in LA



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