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Metro confirms L.A. bus hijacking ends in Santa Monica

MADELEINE PAUKER
Daily Press Staff Writer

Officials have confirmed that a man hijacked a Rapid Line 720 bus in Los Angeles the evening of Dec. 30 and forced the driver to take him to Santa Monica.

The man boarded the bus at Barrington Avenue and Wilshire Boulevard near the Sawtelle neighborhood at about 6:15 p.m, a Los Angeles County Metro Transportation Authority (Metro) spokesperson said. The man threatened the female bus operator with a knife and she hit the duress button inside the bus to alert law enforcement.

Los Angeles Police Department officers followed the bus and intercepted it at the intersection of 5th Street and Wilshire Boulevard in Santa Monica soon after.

The Metro spokesperson said the suspect was arrested and booked by the Santa Monica Police Department.

Dan McGee and Catherine Lerer, who run the West Los Angeles law firm McGee, Lerer & Associates, saw the bus pull over on Wilshire Boulevard just before it reached 5th Street.

McGee said he saw that the bus had no passengers and heard a woman screaming "Get off of me" inside. As a crowd of people gathered, one man went to the door of the bus and asked if she needed help.

Bystanders saw through the door a man who appeared to be homeless leaning over the driver, who was struggling to get away, McGee said. Someone pulled the man off the driver and he ran west down Wilshire Boulevard in the middle of the street.

McGee said he saw two SMPD officers run down the street after the man.

The incident was widely reported on Nextdoor and Facebook, where posters said the man entered the bus in Downtown Los Angeles on Dec. 31.

SMPD was not able to provide more details about the arrest by press time.

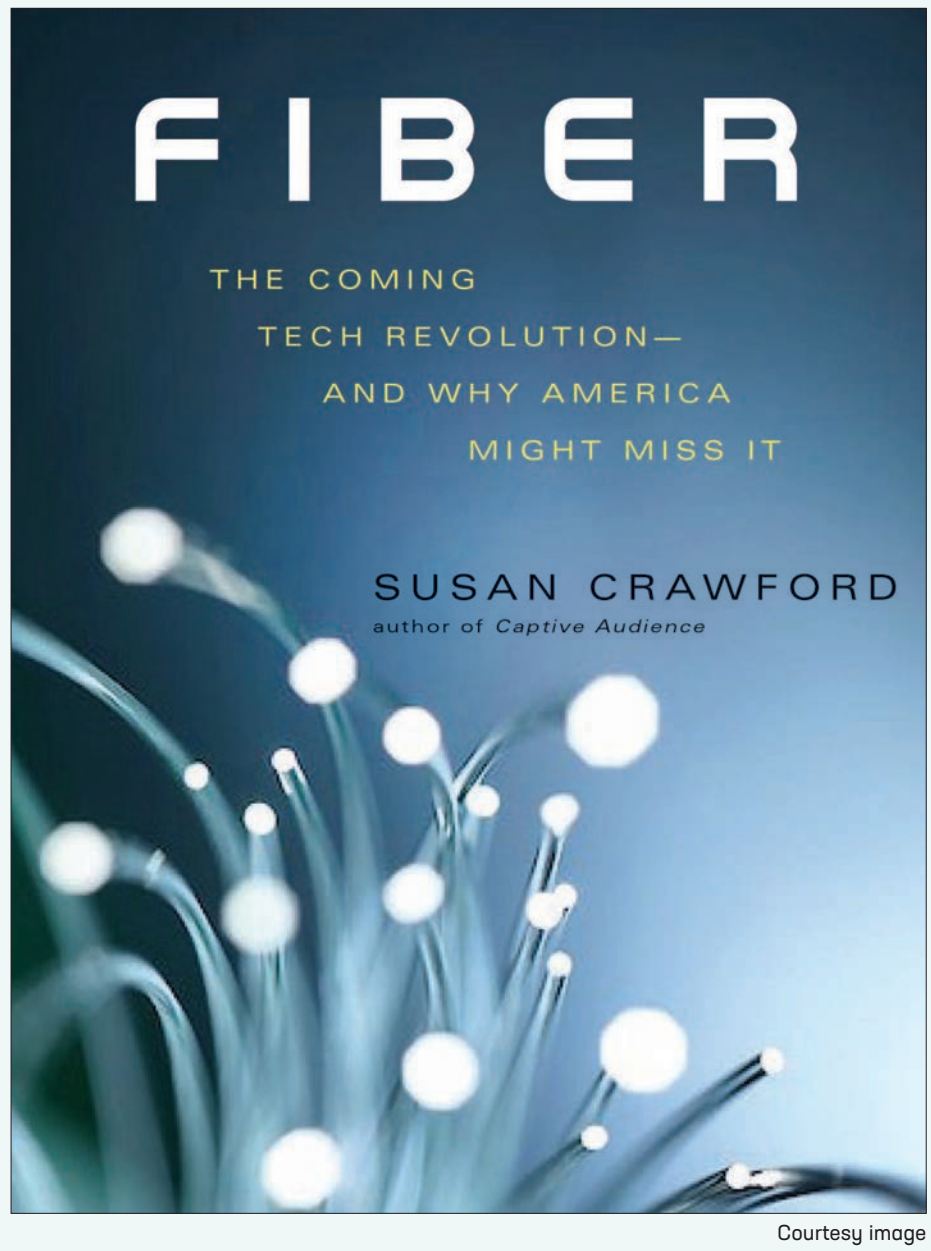
madeleine@smdp.com

Internet infrastructure praised in new book



SUSAN CRAWFORD:

MADELEINE PAUKER
Daily Press Staff Writer



Courtesy image

FIBER: A local author uses Santa Monica as an example of a city thinking ahead.

Santa Monica's status as a technology hub is no accident.

It's a result of careful planning by the city over the past 20 years to install an inexpensive fiber network that allows businesses to transfer massive amounts of data in mere seconds.

Susan Crawford, a Harvard Law School professor and Santa Monica High School alumna who also served as President Barack Obama's technology advisor, writes in her book Fiber: The Coming Tech Revolution—and Why America Might Miss It (Yale University Press) that other cities have a lot to learn from Santa Monica's investment in its fiber infrastructure. The book is on sale Jan. 8.

Fiber transmits data using light rather than electricity, which makes it hundreds of times faster than cable internet. The technology is becoming spreading to cities around the world, including Seoul, Tokyo and Hong Kong, allowing people to access cheap, extremely fast internet.

Santa Monica was ahead of its time. While fiber connects cities in the United States, only a quarter of American households can directly access a fiber network. And because of the monopoly the five main cable companies have on the telecommunications industry, Crawford writes, it could stay that way.

20 states have made it difficult or impossible for cities to intervene in fiber access, but California is not one of them. That allowed Jory Wolf, the City of Santa Monica's chief information officer, to create a telecommunications master plan in 1998 that "put him in the room whenever a public works official was considering tearing up a street" to make

SEE **FIBER** PAGE 7

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NOTICE OF A PUBLIC HEARING BEFORE THE SANTA MONICA LANDMARKS COMMISSION

City of Santa Monica

SUBJECT: Public Hearings will be held by the Landmarks Commission on the following:

1129 Ashland Avenue, 18ENT-0288, Zoning: R1 (Single-Unit Residential) District. The City Landmarks Commission will be conducting a public hearing to consider Landmark Designation application 18ENT-0288 for the property located at 1129 Ashland Avenue to determine whether the Craftsman residence in whole or in part, should be designated as a City Landmark and, if so designated, whether an associated Landmark Parcel should be defined and described in order to preserve, maintain, protect, or safeguard the Landmark. The Landmarks Commission will consider the application based on whether the application, research and public testimony presented demonstrates that the building meets one or more of the required criteria for Landmark designation pursuant to SMMC Section 9.56.100(A). The Commission reviewed the proposed Landmark designation at the December 10, 2018 Landmarks Commission meeting and continued the item to allow for additional research based on Commission comments. Applicant & Owner: Grace Akazawa & Michael Necci

610 California Avenue, 18ENT-0316, Zoning: R2 (Low Density Multi-Unit Residential) District. The City Landmarks Commission will be conducting a public hearing to consider Structure of Merit Designation Application 18ENT-0316 for 610 California Avenue to determine whether the existing single-story residence should be designated as a Structure of Merit. The Landmarks Commission will make a decision regarding designation based on whether the application, research, and public testimony presented demonstrates that the structure meets one or more of the required criteria for Structure of Merit designation pursuant to SMMC Section 9.56.080. Applicant: Santa Monica Conservancy. Owner: Gershon Gabel

WHEN: **Monday, January 14, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.**

WHERE: Council Chambers, City Hall
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica, California

Questions/Comments

The City of Santa Monica encourages public comment on this and other projects. You or your representative, or any other persons may comment on the application at the Public Hearing, or by writing a letter addressed to Steve Mizokami, Senior Planner, City Planning Division, 1685 Main Street, Room 212, Santa Monica, California, 90401-3295. Or, you may contact Mr. Mizokami by phone at (310) 458-8341 or by email at steve.mizokami@smgov.net.

More Information

The meeting facility is wheelchair accessible. If you have any disability-related accommodation requests, please contact (310) 458-8431 or TTY (310) 458-8696 at least three days prior to the event. All written materials are available in alternate format upon request. Santa Monica Big Blue Bus Lines 1, 2, 3, Rapid 3, 7, 8, 9, 10 and 18 serve City Hall and the Civic Center area. The Expo Line terminus is located at Colorado Avenue and Fourth Street, a short walk to City Hall. Public parking is available in front of City Hall, on Olympic Drive and in the Civic Center Parking Structure (validation free).

Pursuant to California Government Code Section 65009(b), if this matter is subsequently challenged in Court, the challenge may be limited to only those issues raised at the Public Hearing described in this notice, or in written correspondence delivered to the City of Santa Monica at, or prior to, the Public Hearing.

ESPAÑOL

Esto es una noticia de una audiencia pública para revisar applicaciónes proponiendo desarrollo en Santa Monica. Si deseas más información, favor de llamar a Carmen Gutierrez en la División de Planificación al número (310) 458-8341.

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What's Up Westside

OUT AND ABOUT IN SANTA MONICA

Friday, Jan. 4

Gallery open

Gallery hours 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. Annenberg Community Beach House

Saturday, Jan. 5

Meet Me At Reed

Come by to play, meet neighbors, and connect. Supervised games and activities led by Santa Monica Community Recreation, kid-friendly entertainment by special guests and community partners, and a selection of food trucks will rotate weekly. Rain may affect programming. Call (310) 458 - 8300 to find out about rain delays or cancellations. 2 - 4 p.m. Reed Park, 1133 7th St.

Training for Tech Teen Volunteer and Leadership Program

Become eligible to volunteer at library tech events by attending this mandatory two-part training. High school students only. Must commit to both sessions. January 5, 1 - 5 p.m. - Introduction to library technologies including 3D printing and coding toys. January 6, 1 - 5 p.m. - Strategies for working with the public and facilitating creative projects. Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd.

Saturday Story Time

Kick start the weekend with some fun stories and songs! Ages 2-5 and families. Main Library, 601 Santa Monica Blvd. 11 - 11:30 a.m.

Ocean Park Book Group

A Monthly Meeting of the Ocean Park Book Group. Meets the 1st Saturday of the Month. Open to All. No Registration Required. 'Manhattan Beach' by Jennifer Egan. Ocean Park Branch Library, 2601 Main St, 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Sunday, Jan. 6

Poetry & the Imagination 2.0

In this workshop, you will read a wide variety of poems by outstanding modern and contemporary poets, generate new work in response to prompts, and workshop edited poems. A continuation of the work created in the previous series with a fresh supply of fun and inspiring prompts. The workshop will culminate with a public reading on Saturday March 16. Sundays, 1/6, - 3/17. 2 - 4 p.m. Cost: $90. 1450 Ocean. https://apm.activecommunities.com/santamonicarecreation/Activity_Search/69930

Monday, Jan. 7

Virginia Avenue Park Advisory Meeting

Virginia Avenue Park Advisory Board meeting occurs the first Monday of every month. Virginia Avenue Park, 2200 Virginia Ave, 7 p.m.

Architectural Review Board Meeting

The Santa Monica Architectural Review Board normally meets on the first and third Monday of every month in the City Council Chamber. City Hall, 1685 Main St. 7 p.m.

The Disabilities Commission Regular Meeting

The mission of the Disabilities Commission is to help improve the quality of life for people with disabilities in Santa Monica by prioritizing issues of concern and advising the City Council and staff on those issues. The Commission recommends ways to maximize participation of people with disabilities in all facets of City life and increase awareness of the abilities, rights and issues of people with disabilities throughout the community. Ken Edwards Center, 1527 4th St. 6:30 p.m.

Just for Seniors: 'Appy Hour' Workshop

Bring your smartphone or tablet and receive small group help to get you started with using your device. Pico Branch Library, 2201 Pico Blvd. 4 - 5 p.m.

Mosaic Art

Make a unique mosaic masterpiece using found materials. Presented by the reDiscover Center. Ocean Park Branch Library, 2601 Main St, 3:30 - 4:30 p.m.

For help submitting an event, contact us at **310-458-7737** or submit to events@smdp.com

COMMUNITY BRIEFS

SACRAMENTO

Brown swears in fourth justice to California Supreme Court

California Gov. Jerry Brown has sworn in former top adviser Joshua Groban to the state Supreme Court in what aides say is likely to be his final public appearance before leaving office next week.

Brown has now placed four justices on the seven-member court. The Democratic governor said Thursday that it cannot be considered a "Brown court" because each justice acts independently, sometimes unpredictably.

The 45-year-old Groban, of Los Angeles, oversaw Brown's appointment of about 600 judges since 2011.

He gives the court a majority of Democratic appointees for the first time since 1986. The Harvard Law School graduate fills the vacancy created by the retirement last year of Justice Kathryn Mickle Werdegar.

Groban received the approval of all three members of the Commission on Judicial Appointments last month.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK

Study finds 'radical underrepresentation' for women in film

Despite widespread attention and protest over gender inequality in film, a new study finds that the number of female directors in the top 250 domestic grossing films last year dipped to 8 percent.

That was down 3 percentage points from 2017, according to the 21st annual Celluloid Ceiling report released Thursday by the Center for the Women in Television and Film at San Diego State University. It was even below the 9 percent level achieved 20 years earlier in 1998.

Researchers found slight gains for women in other roles. In 2018, women comprised 20 percent of all directors, writers, producers, executive directors, editors and cinematographers in the top 250 films. That's up 2 percentage points from 2017.

The study's author, Martha Lauzen, the executive director of San Diego State's center, said such modest gains behind the camera, particularly in the director's chair, reveal an industry resistant to changing long-term gender inequity.

"The study provides no evidence that the mainstream film industry has experienced the profound positive shift predicted by so many industry observers over the last year," Lauzen said.

"This radical underrepresentation is unlikely to be remedied by the voluntary efforts of a few individuals or a single studio. Without a large-scale effort mounted by the major players – the studios, talent agencies, guilds and associations – we are unlikely to see meaningful change. The distance from 8 percent to some semblance of parity is simply too vast."

The largest gains, according to researchers, were among writers (16 percent, up 5 percentage points from 2017) and producers (21 percent, also up 5 percentage points from 2017).

The study also found that in 2018, just 1 percent of films employed 10 or more women in key off-camera roles, while 74 percent of films employed 10 or more men in such jobs.

Researchers also isolated the top 100 and the top 500 films in 2018, though results were similar. Women accounted for 16 percent of directors, writers, executive producers, producers, editors and cinematographers working on the top 100 films (no change from 2017), and 23 percent of the same roles on the top 500 films (an increase of 2 percentage points from 2017).

JAKE COYLE, AP FILM WRITER

LOS ANGELES

California man gets life in prison for murdering in-laws

A Southern California man has been sentenced to life in prison for murdering his in-laws who were visiting from China.

The Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office says 46-year-old Caminero Wang was sentenced Wednesday to life without possibility of parole plus 50 years to life.

A jury found Wang guilty of two counts of first-degree murder on Oct. 1. The jury also found true a special circumstance allegation of multiple murders and special allegations of using a handgun which caused great bodily injury and death.

According to evidence presented in court, victims Shu Zhang and Aiping Diao were slain in Wang's home. Both victims were 60 years old.

Deputy District Attorney Kelsey McKeever-Unger said Wang had previously threatened his wife's life and the lives of her parents.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pelosi elected speaker, will lead Dems confronting Trump

LISA MASCARO
AP Congressional Correspondent

Nancy Pelosi knew this moment would come, even if others had their doubts — or worked to stop her.

Pelosi was elected Thursday as House speaker, the only woman who has held the office and now one of few elected officials who have returned to it. The last time a speaker regained the gavel was more than a half-century ago.

The California Democrat has spent her political career being underestimated, only to prove the naysayers wrong. In this case, it was by winning back the Democratic majority and amassing the votes for the speaker's job.

"None of us is indispensable," Pelosi told The Associated Press while campaigning last fall, "but I do know that I'm very good at what I do."

In accepting the gavel, Pelosi gave nod to the new era of divided government with a pledge to "reach across the aisle in this chamber and across the divisions across our nation."

She said, "The floor of this House must be America's Town Hall: where the people will see our debates and where their voices will be heard and affect our decisions."

In outlining Democratic priorities, she talked about lowering health care costs, investing in green infrastructure and restoring "integrity to government."

"We must be champions of the middle class and all those who aspire to it — because the middle class is the backbone of our democracy," she said.

Pelosi remains a highly polarizing figure, vilified by Republicans as a San Francisco liberal and a caricature of big government. But she is also a mother of five and a grandmother of nine who has shattered glass ceilings to become one of the most powerful politicians of the 21st century.

With President Donald Trump in the White House and Republicans still controlling the Senate, Pelosi's return to the speaker's office to lead a Democratic majority with its biggest freshmen class since Watergate shakes up the dynamic in Washington even beyond the new era of divided government.

Pelosi has faced pressure from some incoming Democrats who have been willing to talk about the possibility of impeachment proceedings against Trump. Pelosi has called impeachment a "divisive activity," and Democrats were cautious about mentioning the "I'' word during the 2018 midterms for fear it would backfire politically.

She took a measured approach to it in an interview airing Thursday on NBC's "Today" show.

"We shouldn't be impeaching for a political reason, and we shouldn't avoid impeachment for a political reason," she said, adding that she would wait for the findings of special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russia meddling in the 2016 election.

Only the House can begin impeachment proceedings. And while Justice Department guidelines suggest a sitting president can't be indicted, Pelosi called that "an open discussion."

"Everything indicates that a president can be indicted after he is no longer president," she said.

Trump himself has denied any wrongdoing.

Pelosi is one of the few congressional leaders who seem to understand Trump, both being children from famous families now primed for deal-making. Trump appreciates strong characters, and, in perhaps a sign of respect, she is one of the few congressional leaders in Washington he has not given a nickname — though he has made her a frequent target.

A core group of rank-and-file Democrats has hungered for new leadership, saying it's time for a new generation to take the helm. They tired of the Republican attack ads featuring Pelosi that are constantly run against them back home, and they worried she would be a drag on efforts to keep the majority in the next election. They enlisted some of the newcomers from the freshmen class to their ranks to try to stop her from regaining the gavel.

But one by one, Pelosi peeled away the skeptics, flipping "no" votes to the "yes" column, sometimes in a matter of days. Some were given lead positions on their legislative priorities, even a gavel of their own to chair special panels.

And Pelosi gave a little, too, promising, at 78, to serve no more than four years in leadership, making way for the next generation.

Pelosi won the speakership by a vote of 220 to Republican Kevin McCarthy's 192 votes.





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The Art of the Schlemiel

In Yiddish "schlemiel" refers to an awkward, unintelligent and unlucky person for whom things never turn our right. An example might be Donald Trump walking up the stairs to Force 1 and having toilet paper stuck to his shoe.

Normally, the moment a POTUS left the bathroom the Secret Service, or his entourage would point out the telltale tissue. Unless those observing took great delight that Trump looked like a schlemiel.

Schlemiels aren't necessarily intellectuals. Coincidentally, Trump never goes to plays, or operas or art exhibits. What he loves most in life, other than Twitter, are buckets of KFC, Fox TV and shouting at his rallies. He also loves golf a sport in which he cheats constantly; he loves having beautiful wives on whom he constantly cheats. (Often with the next Mrs. Trump or Stormy Daniels.)

Meanwhile, the U.S. government is coming to the end of the second week of a shutdown over Trump's "big, beautiful, tall concrete border wall" that Trump swore a hundred times Mexico would pay for. As a result, 800,000 Americans aren't being paid or are furloughed. Congress, however, still get their full salaries and the taxpayers just paid for security and tents, etc, for Trump's "for profit" New Year's eve party at Mar-a-Lago. (Tickets were $1000, up from last year's $750.)

On Wednesday, Trump purportedly tried to find a shutdown compromise. (Though it's so obvious he loves it.) First, he held a televised cabinet meeting during which Trump acknowledged that he was unpopular in Europe but said he could run and win any office there but he didn't want to. Numerous bewildered cabinet members seemed to be looking around for an eject button.

Inexplicably, on the table was a huge movie poster of Trump with the words "Sanctions are Coming" a take off of "Game of Thrones. With the new Democratic House investigations of Trump imminent, I've done my version now on the SMDP website. It features Trump's photo and the words "Tantrums are Coming." (In 2006, Trump photo-shopped his face on the cover of Time Magazine, had it framed, and hung in his office as if it were real. (Can you say "cuckoo?")

In two other cringe worthy cabinet meeting moments, Trump also praised the Soviet Union's ill-fated 1979 invasion of Afghanistan and went on to say, "I think I would have made a great general but who knows." (Damn those pesky bone spurs that prevented your rise to general in the military.)

Later, Trump met with Nancy Pelosi and Chuck Schumer again. On December 11th, the whole world heard Trump clearly say, "I'm proud to shut down the government," telling Schumer "And I won't blame the Democrats."" Surprise, surprise, Trump blames the Democrats. How does he lie so blatantly? Does he not remember or not care? (Then again, the same could be asked about the toilet paper.)

Schumer suggested they agree to the 6 budgets both the House and Senate have voted for and the Homeland Security budget, which would have any border wall funding, would be passed temporarily to re-open the government. With a straight orange face, Trump reportedly said "If I do that, I would look foolish." (As if he hasn't for 2 painfully long years.)

Foolish, or maybe pathetic, Trump recently had a TV commercial airing suggesting Americans phone the White House to thank Trump for what he's done for America. If I were to call I would focus more on what he's done TO America.

All that aside, I may have a border wall solution. Remember when Trump actually thought that the stealth F-35 fighter planes were so high tech they were actually invisible to the human eye? So, what I'm suggesting is a "stealth border wall."

Trump has long ago abandoned his concrete wall. Now he's talking about "steel slats." He even suggested the wall be "see-through" so Border Agents can view what's on the other side. So we fake funding to re-open the government, and tell Trump the new wall is F-35 invisible. He could brag to his base that he won the border battle "bigly" and if and when he ever visited the wall, he could marvel at technology that makes it invisible. (Assuming no toilet paper is stuck to shoe.)

In 1987, journalist Tony Schwartz wrote Trump's best-selling memoir, The Art of the Deal. He now regrets it made Trump a household name. "But Trump didn't write a word, "Schwartz says. "I'm not sure he even read it." (Since 2016, Schwartz has donated $200,000 in royalties from the book to progressive causes.)

In The Art of the Deal, Trump brags that he's the world's best negotiator. Really? In January, 2018, the Democrats offered $20 billion for Trump's wall in return for DACA support. Some negotiator, going from $20 billion to begging for $5 billion. What a schlemiel!

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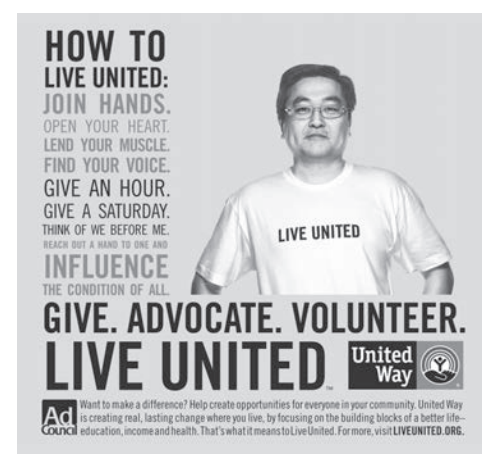
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An awards show crossroads 1 year after the Time's Up Globes

LINDSEY BAHR
AP Film Writer

To misquote "A Star Is Born," awards shows were far from shallow in 2018. Many confronted sexual misconduct in the entertainment industry head on, but as a new year kicks off with the Golden Globe Awards on Sunday one question lingers: Will it continue for another year?

For an event that's more known for its boozy moments than promoting social causes, the Golden Globe Awards went all in as the first major show of the #MeToo era last year. It embraced the newly formed Time's Up Legal Defense Fund , the red carpet was overtaken by a symbolic sea of black dresses, major stars walked proudly alongside activist leaders, Oprah Winfrey gave a barn-burner of a speech about empowerment and Natalie Portman even got in a jab about the all-male directing nominees while presenting the best director award.

Every televised and non-televised event to come had to take the stage in the shadow of the Globes, and all did so in their own way, sometimes with jokes and sometimes with statements: The Screen Actors Guild had all-female presenters, guests wore white roses at the Grammys and the Oscars gave a spotlight to Time's Up leaders and Harvey Weinstein accusers Ashley Judd, Salma Hayek, and Annabella Sciorra.

But this year will be different. With just days to show time, there are no major statements or demonstrations planned for the Golden Globes show or the red carpet, and it could very well set the tone for what's to come with the other awards shows.

"This year, there's no sense of urgency the way there was last year," said Steve Pond, awards editor for The Wrap. "By the same token, there is a sense of 'we can't go back.'"

Subjects like equality and inclusiveness are now permanent fixtures of awards show discourse, Pond said, and their absence from topics discussed on stage would be "conspicuous."

"But the business of everybody wearing black, I think that was kind of a one-time thing until something else that cataclysmic happens and needs to be addressed," Pond said.

Hosts Andy Samberg and Sandra Oh have said that they don't necessarily intend to get political on Sunday night, but will leave the door open for anyone who wants to use their platform to do so. In an interview with The Hollywood Reporter, Samberg said he thinks "people could use a little smile."

"Not to ignore anything, but we spend so much time every day wallowing in a lot of things that are happening in our world that are really depressing, and with good reason — that stuff needs to be paid attention to — but there's also power to being positive and celebratory in the tougher times as well," Samberg said.

Oh added: "I don't think it's shallow to 1) have fun and 2) be honestly celebratory.... What I'm interested in is pointing to actual real change."

The "change" Oh referenced includes the cultural phenomena of films like "Black Panther," nominated for three awards (best drama, best original score and best original song) and "Crazy Rich Asians," nominated for best musical or comedy and best actress (Constance Wu).

In other words, this year it'll be up to the individual to make a statement. Wendy Shanker, an awards show writer who has also written speeches for individual Oscar winners, marveled at the way the actresses in Time's Up took control of the "awards season narrative" at the Globes last year.

"I don't know that they necessarily need to do the same thing this year. But I do believe that you will see many of the women and men on stage referencing #MeToo, referencing the shift in our culture," Shanker said.

That also goes for presenters and guests.

"I think they will book people who have strong vocal public personas," said Shanker. "Producers know that's what keeps a show interesting and I think audiences are engaged by the players of social media who have something to say beyond the performances."

Jessica Chastain is one of those who was just announced as a presenter for the show. The Oscar-nominated actress has established herself as a leading activist voice for equal pay and representation in Hollywood and has not been shy about making statements.

"I think people will still have a lot of fun .... people will be looking for fun and glamour," Shanker said. "(But) the Globes were always 'the party' and now this is 'the party with a message.' It's a protest party."

And Pond said it makes for a more interesting and powerful show.

"In a way the Globes are kind of uniquely suited to doing that because nobody really cares who wins," Pond said. "You can put the focus on something else and it's fine."

Also, for groups like Women in Film, a nonprofit organization that advocates for and advances the careers of women in entertainment, having someone like Winfrey speak about #MeToo and Time's Up on a national platform is undeniably important and has a ripple effect on the culture.

"We wouldn't have seen the changes we have this year, for example Les Moonves getting fired, if it weren't for the consistent media attention on the issue," said Kirsten Schaffer, Executive Director of Women In Film, LA. "Next up (is) bringing this same attention to gender parity, because when more women are in power there is less sexual harassment and abuse."



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- Onsite: Podium courtyard; rooftop pool deck

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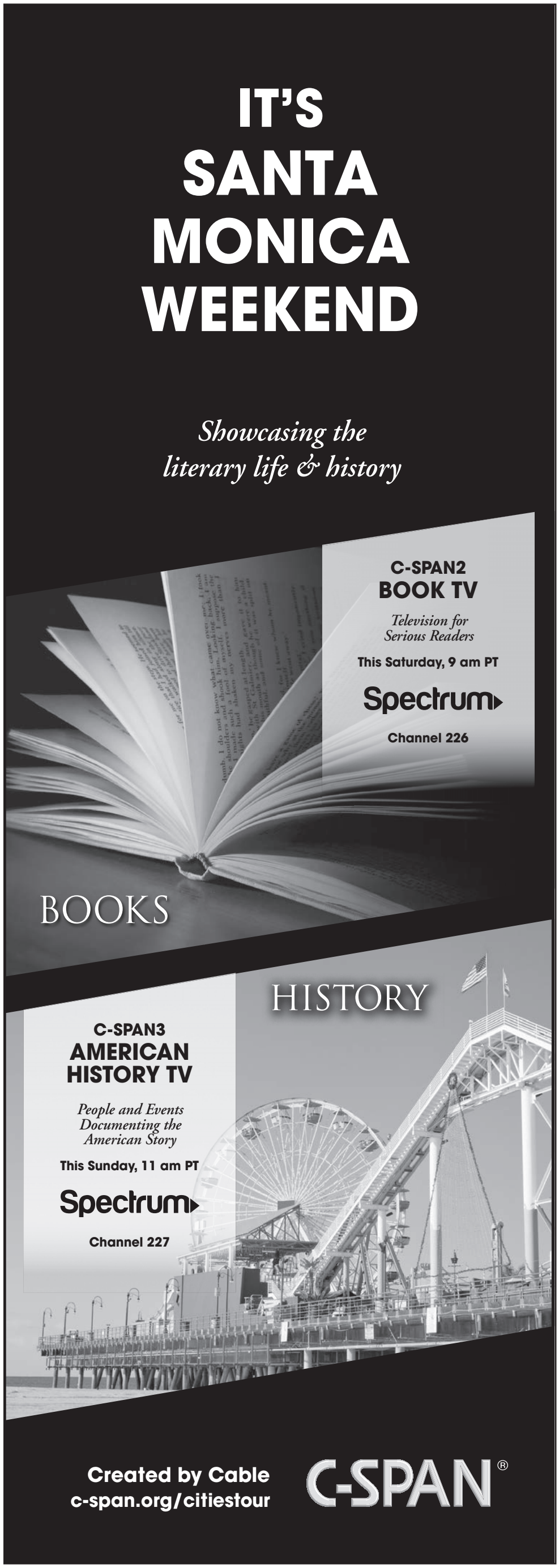
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- Ability to work in fast-paced environment

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Detecting depression: Phone apps could monitor teen angst

LINDSEY TANNER
AP Medical Writer

Rising suicide rates and depression in U.S. teens and young adults have prompted researchers to ask a provocative question: Could the same devices that some people blame for contributing to tech-age angst also be used to detect it?

The idea has sparked a race to develop apps that warn of impending mental health crises. Call it smartphone psychiatry or child psychology 2.0.

Studies have linked heavy smartphone use with worsening teen mental health. But as teens scroll through Instagram and Snapchat, tap out texts or watch YouTube videos, they also leave digital footprints that might offer clues to their psychological well-being.

Changes in typing speed, voice tone, word choice and how often kids stay home could signal trouble, according to preliminary studies.

There might be as many as 1,000 smartphone "biomarkers" for depression, said Dr. Thomas Insel, former head of the National Institute of Mental Health and now a leader in the smartphone psychiatry movement.

Researchers are testing experimental apps that use artificial intelligence to try to predict depression episodes or potential self-harm.

"We are tracking the equivalent of a heartbeat for the human brain," said Dr. Alex Leow, an app developer and associate professor of psychiatry and bioengineering at the University of Illinois' Chicago campus.

At least, that's the goal. There are technical and ethical kinks to work out — including privacy issues and making sure kids grant permission to be monitored so closely. Developers say proven, commercially available mood-detecting apps are likely years — but not decades — away.

"People often feel that these things are creepy," because of the tech industry's surreptitious tracking of online habits for commercial purposes, said University of Oregon psychologist Nick Allen.

Using smartphones as mental illness detectors would require informed consent from users to install an app, "and they could withdraw permission at any time," said Allen, one of the creators of an app that is being tested on young people who have attempted suicide.

"The biggest hurdle at the moment," Allen said, "is to learn about what's the signal and what's the noise — what is in this enormous amount of data that people accumulate on their phones that is indicative of a mental health crisis."

Depression affects about 3 million U.S. teens, and rates have climbed in the past decade. Thirteen percent of 12- to 17-year-olds had depression in 2017, up from 8 percent in 2010, U.S. government data show. One in 10 college-aged Americans is affected.

Suicide has risen to the second leading cause of death for ages 10 to 34. Rates among teen girls doubled from 2007 to 2015, climbing to 5 per 100,000. And among boys, rates jumped 30 percent, to 14 in 100,000.

A recent study suggested a parallel rise in smartphone use likely contributed.

People with mental illness typically get treatment "when they're in crisis and very late in the course of an illness. We want to have a method to identify the earliest signs," in an objective way, Insel said.

If smartphones prove to be accurate mood predictors, developers say the ultimate goal would be to use them to offer real-time help, perhaps with automated text messages and links to help lines, or digital alerts to parents, doctors or first responders.

Facebook is already doing just that with what it calls "proactive detection." After a livestreamed suicide, Facebook trained its AI systems to flag certain words or phrases in online posts that could indicate imminent self-harm. Friends' comments expressing concern about the user's well-being are part of the equation.

"In the last year, we've helped first responders quickly reach around 3,500 people globally who needed help," Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg announced in November. Facebook has not disclosed outcomes of those cases.

THE ONGOING RESEARCH INCLUDES:

— A Stanford University study involving about 200 teens, including kids at risk for depression because of bullying, family circumstances or other life stresses. As part of the research, teens who have been tracked since grade school get an experimental phone app that surveys them three times daily for two weeks with questions about their mood.

Researchers are combining those answers with passive smartphone data, including how active or sedentary kids are, to identify any changes that might be linked with future depression.

Study participant Laurel Foster, 15, acknowledges feeling stress over academics and "the usual" teen friendship pressures and says depression is rampant at her San Francisco high school. She said using the smartphone app felt a bit like being spied on, but with so many online sites already tracking users' habits "one more isn't really a big difference."

"I feel like it's good to actually find out what is stressing you," Laurel said, endorsing the idea of using smartphones to try to answer that question.

— At UCLA, as part of a broader effort to battle campus depression launched in 2017, researchers are offering online counseling and an experimental phone app to students who show signs of at least mild depression on a screening test. About 250 freshmen agreed to use the app in the first year. Personal sensing data collected from the app is being analyzed to see how it correlates with any worsening or improvement in depression symptoms seen in internet therapy.

Sophomore Alyssa Lizarraga, who had the app on her phone for about six months, said it was "a little like the Big Brother thing. Half of me felt that way. The other half felt like I hope it will be useful."

Lizarraga, 19, has had depression since high school in Whittier, California. She has worried that she's "addicted" to her phone and spends a lot of time on social media sites. "People need to see the best side of me" there, she said, and comparing herself with others online sometimes gets her down.

But using smartphones in a positive way for mental health might help nudge people to seek early treatment, if they could see how their phone use showed signs of depression, she said.

— At the University of Illinois' Chicago campus, researchers studying depression and mania in bipolar disorder are using crowdsourcing to test their experimental phone app. Anyone can download the free app, and nearly 2,000 have so far, agreeing to let the researchers continuously track things such as typing speed, number of keystrokes and use of spellcheck. Participants include healthy people, and their data will help researchers zero in on changes in phone use that may signal onset of mood problems, said Leow, the psychiatry and bioengineering expert who helped develop it.

SEE **PHONES** PAGE 7

FIBER

FROM PAGE 1

sure the City installed fiber, Crawford writes in Fiber.

"It took his individual patience with this issue and ability to persuade successive mayors and City Councils that it was important," Crawford said in an interview with the Daily Press. "As a result, Santa Monica remains very relevant as a place for entertainment and tech. Anyone dealing with very large files needs a fiber connection to their business."

Other American cities could follow Santa Monica's example and reap benefits far beyond creating a better business environment.

Crawford said more low-income people could access the internet because municipal fiber would be significantly cheaper than purchasing internet from cable companies. Fiber would also make downloads almost instantaneous and allow people on video conferences to be able to make eye contact in real time, making virtual doctors visits and classroom participation viable.

The problem is, she said, is that cable companies have been politically proactive in fighting cities that have tried to build fiber networks. Comcast sued the city of Chattanooga, Tennessee in 2008 when the city tried to build its own fiber network. (It won the lawsuit and has since built a successful network.)

Crawford likens this era to the period around the turn of the century when electricity provided by private companies only reached wealthy areas. Despite attacks from electricity companies, most states were able to create state-level commissions to oversee utilities by 1914.

A similar transition is needed today, Crawford argues. Internet now is as essential to life as electricity: inadequate connectivity prevents people from accessing economic opportunities, healthcare and education, and hinders business development, she writes in Fiber.

While installing fiber is expensive, Crawford said labor (i.e. paying construction workers to tear up streets) comprises 80 percent of the cost of building a network. Like Santa Monica, cities could simply install fiber whenever a street is already undergoing construction.

"All it would take to roll out fiber to homes and businesses is political will," she said.

Today, Santa Monica's CityNet provides free public Wi-Fi in tourist destinations and real-time data for apps that help people finding parking, Crawford writes.

The City has also connected ten of its affordable housing buildings to fiber since 2015 with $175,000 in initial funding. An additional federal grant of $1.85 million will bring fiber to 29 more buildings in the next few years, providing more than 900 low-income families with either free Gigabit broadband in their community room or service in their units for $48 per month.

Both local and federal policymakers have the obligation to take on the cable companies and pave the way for other cities to follow Santa Monica's lead, Crawford said.

"I don't like to see people being bossed around, and the whole country is being bossed around by five companies with no competition or oversight, so they can charge whatever they want for subpar service," she said. "I was pleased my hometown had taken this issue on so deliberately for so many years and is doing it so well."

madeleine@smdp.com

PHONES

FROM PAGE 6

The study is for ages 18 and up, but if proven to work, the technology could be used in kids too, Leow said.

— Mindstrong, a Palo Alto, California, tech health company co-founded by Insel, the former NIH official, is testing a "digital phenotyping" app in several studies. Insel thinks the technology has promise to transform psychiatry, but that the most important question is whether it can be used to improve patient health.

— Verily, a tech health arm of Google parent company Alphabet, is developing a similar app but declined to elaborate beyond a statement from its mental health leader, Menachem Fromer. He cited two key goals: making predictions about someone's mental health and their symptoms and "discovering new subtypes of disease that may inform treatment decisions."

City of Santa Monica

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING SANTA MONICA ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD MEETING

DATE/TIME: January 7, 2019, 7:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Council Chambers, (wheelchair accessible)
Santa Monica City Hall, 1685 Main Street

PROPERTIES:

- 18ARB-0356: 1235 5th Street: Mixed-Use
- 18ARB-0420: 1501 Broadway: Mixed-Use
- 18ARB-0500: 401 Wilshire Boulevard: Office
- 18ARB-0519: 1030 Centinela Avenue: Single-Unit Dwelling
- 18ARB-0531: 120 Hart Avenue: Single-Unit Dwelling

PRELIMINARY REVIEW(S):

- 1437 7th Street

More information is available on-line at https://www.smgov.net/Departments/PCD/Boards-Commissions/Architectural-Review-Board/ or at (310) 458-8341 (en espanol tambien). Plans may be reviewed at City Hall during business hours. Comments are invited at the hearing or in writing (FAX 310-458-3380, e-mail james.combs@smgov.net, or mail Santa Monica City Planning Division, 1685 Main St., Rm. 212, Santa Monica, CA 90401). The meeting facility is wheelchair accessible. For disability-related accommodations, please contact 310-458-8701 or TTY 310-450-8696 a minimum of 72 hours in advance. All written materials are available in alternate format upon request. Santa Monica "Big Blue" Bus Lines #1, #2, #3, Rapid 3, #7, #8, #9, Rapid #10, and #18 service City Hall and the Civic Center area. The Expo Line terminus is at Colorado Avenue and Fourth Street, a short walk to City Hall. Public parking is available in front of City Hall, on Olympic Drive and in the Civic Center Parking Structure (validation free).



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SURF FORECASTS

FRIDAY - **FAIR** - SURF: 2-3 ft waist to stomach high
Fun new WNW swell picks up further through the day.

SATURDAY - **FAIR** - SURF: 3-4 ft waist to chest high
Stronger WNW swell on the rise and peaking late/overnight - pending storm development.
Winds and conditions become an issue with onshore flow - morning could have a window.

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DAILY POLICE LOG

The Santa Monica Police Department Responded To Calls For Service.
HERE IS A SAMPLING OF THOSE CALLS CHOSEN BY THE SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS STAFF.

Theft recyclables 0 block Seaview 1:39 a.m.
Domestic violence 2200 block 4th 2:05 a.m.
Petty theft 1800 block Lincoln 3:10 a.m.
Hit and run misdemeanor Cloverfield / Ocean Park 6:40 a.m.
Encampment 1600 block the beach 6:59 a.m.
Stakeout 10th / Washington 7:30 a.m.
Traffic collision - no injuries 1400 block Pacific Coast Hwy 9:35 a.m.
Traffic hazard Main / Hill 9:39 a.m.
Defrauding innkeeper 2600 block Lincoln 10:19 a.m.
Auto burglary 1600 block Appian 11:16 a.m.
Stakeout 1100 block 9th 11:48 a.m.
Threats /s 900 block 11th 12:40 p.m.
Grand theft auto 1800 block Main 12:49 p.m.
Hit and run misdemeanor 2000 block Wilshire 1:31 p.m.
Hit and run misdemeanor 6th / Santa Monica 1:34 p.m.
Critical missing person 1200 block Sunset 1:34 p.m.
Petty theft 1300 block 3rd Street Prom 2:17 p.m.
Bike theft 500 block Pacific 2:22 p.m.
Hit and run misdemeanor 1300 block 15th 2:25 p.m.
Auto burglary 400 block Montana 2:31 p.m.
Elder abuse 1200 block 16th 2:46 p.m.
Elder abuse 2100 block Ocean 2:46 p.m.
Panhandling 34th / Pico 2:53 p.m.
Arson 1500 block 12th 3:12 p.m.
Encampment 1100 block Lincoln 3:21 p.m.
Fraud 2300 block 20th 3:51 p.m.
Hit and run misdemeanor 600 block Montana 4:09 p.m.
Exhibition speed Cloverfield / Olympic 4:12 p.m.
Hit and run misdemeanor 2500 block Pico 4:46 p.m.
Fraud 800 block Pacific Coast Hwy 4:46 p.m.
Traffic collision - no injuries city prop involved 4th / Pier 16:47:56
Arson 1300 block 17th 5:05 p.m.
Traffic collision - unknown injuries 20th / Santa Monica 5:06 p.m.
Found person 300 block Santa Monica Pier 5:08 p.m.
Person down 1000 block Lincoln 5:42 p.m.
Encampment 1100 block 3rd 5:44 p.m.
Arson 2900 block Main 6:33 p.m.

DAILY FIRE LOG

The Santa Monica Fire Department Responded To Calls For Service.
HERE IS A SAMPLING OF THOSE CALLS CHOSEN BY THE SANTA MONICA DAILY PRESS STAFF.

EMS 1100blk Arizona Ave 2:15 a.m.
EMS 2100blk Lincoln Blvd 4:10 a.m.
EMS 1000blk Lincoln Blvd 7:47 a.m.
EMS 2300blk Santa Monica Blvd 8:32 a.m.
Elevator rescue 1200blk 7th St 8:42 a.m.
EMS Ocean Ave / Montana Ave 9:23 a.m.
Automatic alarm 2100blk Wilshire Blvd 10:20 a.m.
EMS 1200blk 15th St 11:24 a.m.
EMS 2000blk Santa Monica Blvd 11:36 a.m.
EMS 400blk Ocean Ave 12:27 p.m.
EMS 2400blk Wilshire Blvd 1:00 p.m.
EMS 2500blk Kansas Ave 1:16 p.m.
EMS 400blk Expo line 3:52 p.m.
EMS 1100blk 9th St 4:38 p.m.
Miscellaneous outside fire 2600blk Santa Monica Blvd 4:59 p.m.
EMS 1000blk Lincoln Blvd 5:42 p.m.
EMS 1900blk 18th St 6:00 p.m.
EMS 1100blk Arizona Ave 7:54 p.m.
EMS 1000blk Pico Blvd 8:27 p.m.
EMS 2600blk Ocean Front Walk 8:47 p.m.
EMS 2600blk Barnard Way 8:51 p.m.
EMS 1600blk Bryn Mawr Ave 11:27 p.m.

California water below normal in season's first snow survey

Associated Press

Winter storms have blanketed California's Sierra Nevada in snow, but the drought-prone state is still off to another drier-than-normal start to the crucial wet season, state officials said Thursday.

California water managers said Thursday the Sierra snowpack is only 67 percent of normal in this winter's first manual measurement. The amount of snow is measured monthly through the winter at more than 260 locations to help water managers plan for how much they can deliver to customers later in the year.

As snow in the Sierra melts in the spring and summer, it flows into reservoirs for storage and provides drinking and agricultural water for much of California. The snowpack supplies about 30 percent of the state's water needs, according to the Water Resources department.

Precipitation has bounced up and down as the state continues to recover from a devastating drought that led to tight water restrictions for residents and farmers. Persistent drought has also dried out trees and brush, contributing to severe wildfires.

Gov. Jerry Brown declared a formal end to a three-year drought emergency in 2017, but said water conservation efforts must continue.

"The last few years have shown how variable California's climate truly is and what a profound impact climate change has on our water resources," Karla Nemeth, director of the California Department of Water Resources, said in a statement.

More than 92 percent of California is considered abnormally dry, or in moderate, severe or extreme drought, according to the U.S. Drought Monitor, a project of several federal agencies and University of Nebraska-Lincoln. That's up from 56 percent a year ago.

California typically gets about two-thirds of its annual rainfall between December and March.

A storm is expected to drop snow and rain on much of Northern California, including the Sierra, this weekend and into next week, the National Weather Service said Thursday.

At Phillips Station, a water measurement site near Lake Tahoe, officials on Thursday measured 25.5 inches (65 centimeters) of snow and a snow water equivalent of 9 inches (23 centimeters) — about 80 percent of average for the early January survey.

"We still have three wet season months ahead of us, so there's time for the snowpack to build and improve before it begins to melt, which usually starts happening around April 1," Michael Anderson, climatologist for the water department, said in a statement.

DAILY LOTTERY

POWERBALL
Draw Date: 1/2
8 12 42 46 56
Power#: 12
Jackpot: 69M

MEGA MILLIONS
Draw Date: 1/1
34 44 57 62 70
Mega#: 14
Jackpot: 40M

SUPER LOTTO PLUS
Draw Date: 1/2
21 29 39 42 47
Mega#: 19
Jackpot: 7M

Fantasy 5
Draw Date: 1/2
5 7 17 24 30

DAILY 3
Draw Date: 1/2
MIDDAY: 6 1 0
Draw Date: 1/2
EVENING: 4 9 2

DAILY DERBY
Draw Date: 1/2
1st: 10 Solid Gold
2nd: 07 Eureka
3rd: 09 Winning Spirit
RACE TIME: 1:44.16

Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of the winning number information, mistakes can occur. In the event of any discrepancies, California State laws and California Lottery regulations will prevail. Complete game information and prize claiming instructions are available at California Lottery retailers. Visit the California State Lottery web site at **http://www.calottery.com**

WORD UP!

elevenses

1. British. (usually used with a plural verb) a midmorning break for refreshments.
2. British. the refreshments taken.

WELL NEWS BY SCOTT LAFEE

Vaccine Rates Get Shot in the Arm

■ Since 2015, when California legislators banned nonmedical vaccine exemptions, more and more kindergartners are getting all of their required vaccinations before beginning school. In 2017-2018, for example, 95 percent of students had all of their required shots.

■ But where there's action, there's reaction. Researchers report that the rate of medical exemptions has increased, jumping to 0.7 percent in 2017-2018. Exemptions, which require signed, written statement from a licensed physician, must explain the physical condition or medical circumstances that prohibit vaccination – and whether the exemption is limited to certain vaccines or is temporary.

MYSTERY PHOTO

SPONSORED BY ice THE PLAZA AT SANTA MONICA



The first person who can correctly identify where this image was captured wins a prize. Send answers to editor@smdp.com.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S CROSSWORD

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

Sudoku

Fill in the blank cells using numbers 1 to 9. Each number can appear only once in each row, column, and 3x3 block. Use logic and process of elimination to solve the puzzle.

SOLUTIONS TO YESTERDAY'S SUDOKU

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

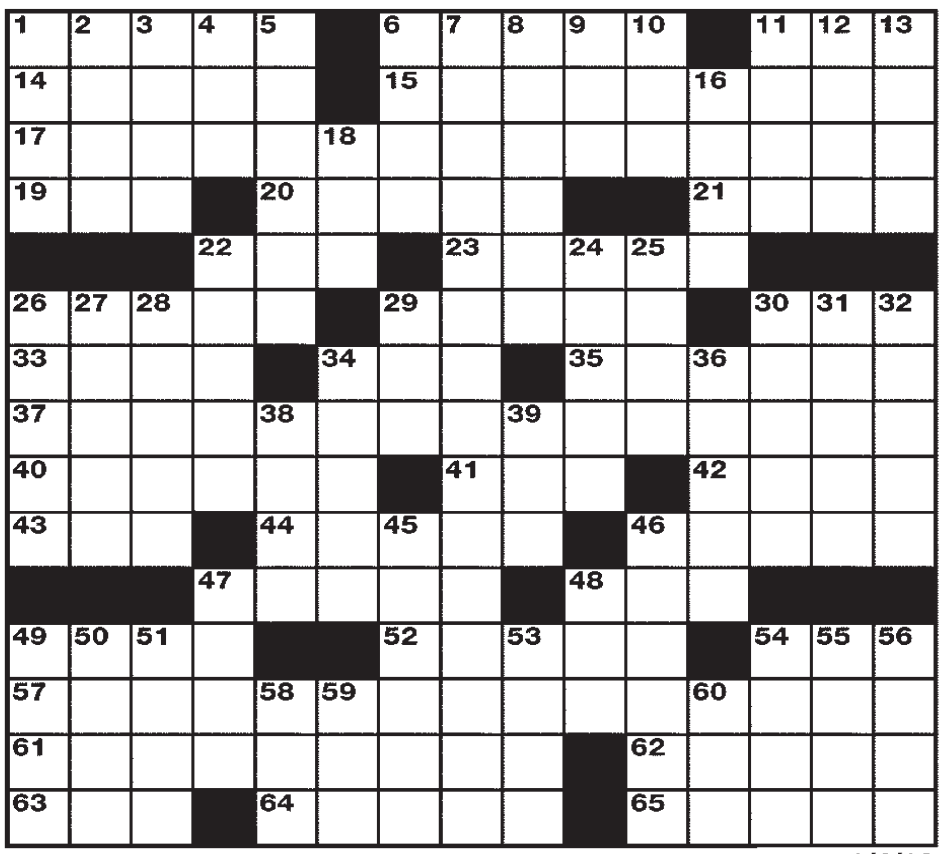
9	7	4		5	6	2		8
	8				9			
	2		4			7		
	3			6				
4				2				6
				9			1	
		2			5		8	
			6				5	
5		8	9	4		1	7	3

Newsday Crossword

CAPITAL B by Mark McClain
Edited by Stanley Newman
www.stanxwords.com

ACROSS
1 Smoke detector's low-battery sound
6 Garfield's middle name
11 Vague degree
14 Post denial
15 Praiseful
17 Two capital B's
19 Letters on some collectible coat buttons
20 Toadstools, e.g.
21 Lemony Snicket series girlfriend
22 Clown accessory
23 2010s secretary of state
26 Monastery VIP
29 Move casually
30 A Rocky Mtn. state
33 Powdered grain
34 Flawless, in spaceflight
35 E-book hardware
37 Two capital B's
40 Change-machine directive
41 Article read by Merkel
42 Crunchy snack
43 Beverage served in spots
44 Plastic wrap, for short
46 Sci-fi guy __ Scott Card
47 Seem indifferent
48 Hour after *mezzanotte*
49 With proficiency
52 Defeat utterly
54 Pasture sound
57 Two capital B's
61 It may have up to 354 legs
62 Swamp thing
63 Regrettable
64 Not normally visible
65 African scavenger

DOWN
1 *Power Lunch* airer
2 Low-tech farm tools
3 Any of *Las Canarias*
4 Net holder in basketball
5 "Net" figure
6 Milne's first name
7 Two capital B's
8 Red rocks
9 Mouthwash endorsing org.
10 Many a monthly, for short
11 Nonvocal assents
12 Yosemite tour vehicle
13 Literary bad side
16 Unnamed others
18 Dog or boxer
22 *The Right Stuff* writer
24 Subsequent showing
25 Diner supplies
26 Sphere of operation
27 Cassini contemporary
28 Toy plane material
29 Witty bit
30 Food for thought
31 GM's former battery brand
32 Incendiarism
34 Daisy's cousin
36 Prefix for physics
38 Foot support
39 Last Summer Olympics city
45 Watchmaker Piccard
46 Way up there
47 Part of GPS
48 Put in the game
49 Things learned first
50 La __ Tar Pits
51 Finish a flight
53 Superlative prefix
54 Pungency
55 Poetic future time
56 City seen in *Slumdog Millionaire*
58 Rightmost sundial letters
59 Clinic designation
60 Mr. Gatsby



CREATORS SYNDICATE © 2018 STANLEY NEWMAN STANXWORDS@AOL.COM 1/4/19

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY (Jan. 4)

The Mercury change on your birthday is a harbinger of empowerment as well as clarity of deed and expression. Never doubt the power of a carefully worded intention. Your work to build a relationship will bring a release of past baggage and a new breath of sweetness to daily life. There's a move in May. Aquarius and Virgo adore you. Your lucky numbers are: 16, 42, 9, 30 and 1.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)
Is your opinion causing controversy? You could be utterly wrong – or utterly right. Either way, the winning move is to take a breath and hear the others out. All benefit from the civil airing of ideas.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)
You find inspiration everywhere you go – in the grasses underfoot, the clouds overhead, the hand of the person next to you. Scenery feeds your imagination, love even more so.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21)
The dance of love is a push, pull affair. The tango is on. The trickiest part is keeping the distance between you at the optimum ratio to create strong tension and still maintain freedom of motion.

CANCER (June 22-July 22)
Your approval rating is going up. Try not to pay too much attention to that though, just as you didn't give it too much attention when it was going down. It's not their job to like you. That job falls squarely to you.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)
You're not searching for yourself anymore. You know who exactly who you are, and furthermore you reserve the right to change your mind or even your personality, at any time because who you are goes much deeper than those things.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)
When your brain is firing on all cylinders, you feel brightly alive. And when your brain is a din of unhelpful chatter, you feel far less so. Rigorous exercise will work wonders to reset your mental energy.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23)
Try not to make up reasons why something won't work before you've even tried it. This is just fear talking because your mind doesn't like uncertainty. That's OK. Let it talk, but walk forward anyway.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21)
When you feel secure in your relationship, you're more likely to take risks in other areas, especially in regard to professional advancement. To know you're loved is a beautiful thing to fall back on.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)
While necessity may be the mother of invention, too much need and hardship can keep a person's mind from working at peak performance. Seek a gentle pace. Take care of yourself.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)
Maybe life can be easy and still satisfy your need for a challenge. The mountain to climb has more to do with creativity than hardship. It's about finding the stimulus to push your imagination.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)
There's a saying that one pound of learning requires 10 pounds of common sense to use it. Truly, theoretical knowledge will pale next to even the most minimal practical experience, so wherever possible, go in person.

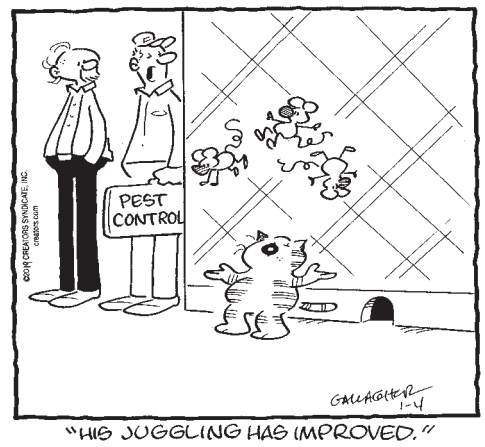
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)
Your self-control will be in strong supply, and that's why you may find yourself mentally bickering with someone instead of actually bickering, which would be a regrettable move since, ultimately, those details are petty.

Mercury Crossing

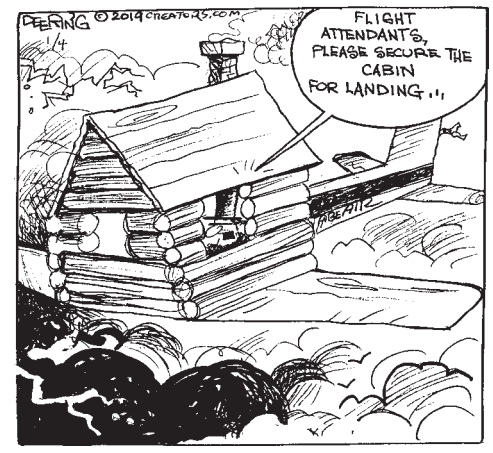
If being listened to and understood is one of your needs, you might be a human. Alas, quality attention is in short supply, which is one reason why therapists get paid. The good news is that there are still people who are willing to trade. You listen to them, they listen to you, and everyone will be on the same page during this critical Mercury crossing.

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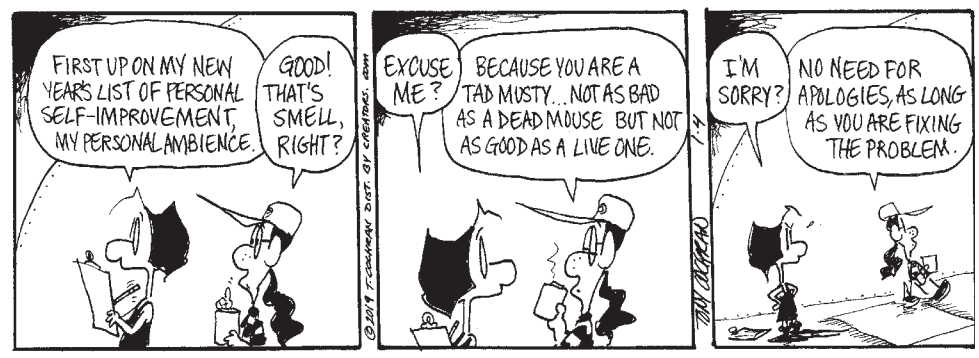
Heathcliff
By PETER GALLAGHER



Strange Brew
By JOHN DEERING



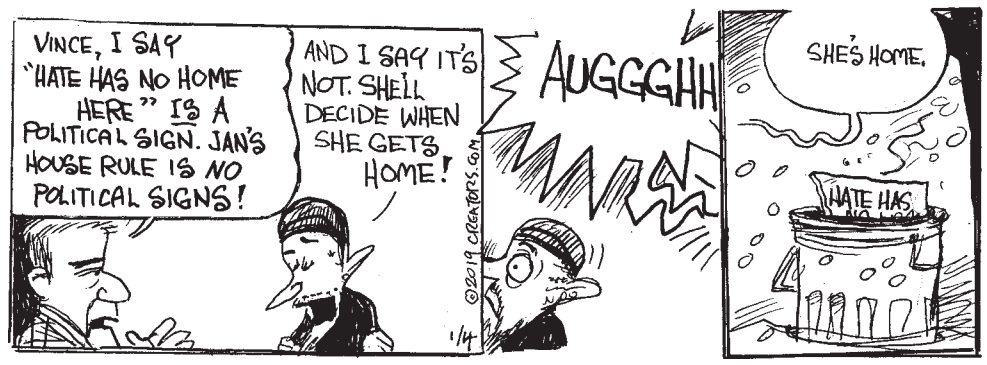
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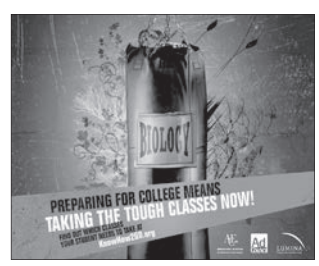
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As health law case goes to appeals court, sign-ups steady

RICARDO ALONSO-ZALDIVAR
Associated Press

Democratic attorneys general on Thursday appealed a federal court ruling that the Affordable Care Act is unconstitutional, as new enrollment numbers underscored the staying power of the Obama-era law.

The government reported that about 8.4 million Americans have signed up this year under the law, reflecting steady demand for its subsidized health insurance. President Donald Trump still disdains "Obamacare," but he failed to repeal it after promising a better plan in its place.

The Democratic attorneys general said they've launched their appeal of a recent ruling by a conservative federal judge in Texas who declared the Affordable Care Act unconstitutional. In Washington, Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., announced a vote next week on a resolution that would authorize lawyers for the House to join the appeal.

The health law remains in place while the lawsuit continues before the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans.

Thursday's enrollment update covers the 39 states served by the federal HealthCare.gov website. For those states, sign-up season officially ended Dec. 15. The final count will be higher, after major states like California and New York that run their own campaigns are added in.

The Trump administration called the sign-up numbers "remarkably steady" at a time when unemployment has been low and more workers have access to job-based coverage. Sign-ups in the 39 HealthCare.gov states were about 5 percent lower than last year, despite the administration's deep cuts to the advertising budget and Trump's ongoing disdain for the program.

A former Obama administration official said it's validation for former President Barack Obama's signature law.

"A larger percentage of people kept their coverage than ever before," Joshua Peck, who previously ran marketing for HealthCare.gov, said after analyzing Thursday's numbers. "Once again, demand for comprehensive health coverage wins the day and underscores the resiliency of the Affordable Care Act."

With the House under Democratic control, repeal is out of the question for Republican foes of "Obamacare."

The greatest threat to the ACA now seems to come from a lawsuit filed by group of Republican-led states. U.S. District Judge Reed O'Connor in Fort Worth, Texas, recently ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, declaring the entire law unconstitutional after Congress repealed its fines for uninsured people.

Democratic state attorneys general defending the health law announced Thursday that they have formally launched their appeal of O'Connor's ruling. The Democratic state officials stepped in after the Trump administration said it would no longer defend key parts of the ACA, such as its protections for people with pre-existing medical conditions.

"We think the decision was wrong-headed and that it was an over-reach," said California Attorney General Xavier Becerra.

If the case were to reach the Supreme Court, the five justices who upheld the health law in its first major challenge continue to serve. They are the court's four liberals and Chief Justice John Roberts. Becerra said the appeals court case may take a year to decide.



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