

'BASKERVILLE: SHERLOCK HOLMES MYSTERY' APRIL 5-20

AFTER FIVE

THE NORTH STATE MAGAZINE

APRIL 2024 / 37th Year / No. 6

THE NEWS, ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT MONTHLY

ON THE COVER

JOSS HOUSE 150th

Weaverville Joss House will be celebrating its 150th anniversary on April 13. The event will include firecrackers, tours, crafts for kids and more, including an appearance of a dragon costume (right) by Sacramento's Eastern Ways Martial Arts to mark the Year of the Dragon. See page 2

WILD OPEN HOUSE

Shasta Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation will host its annual Baby Shower and Open House



on April 6 at its Wildlife Center in Anderson River Park. Rescued animals like this screech owl, Whistler (on the hand of its SWRR handler, Patti Blasquez, from

2023's open house), who had an obvious eye injury and wouldn't be able to hunt, can be seen at the event. See page 7

CULTURAL CRUISE

The annual Redding Cultural Cruise, which in the past has happened in January, returns April 12-13 to celebrate Arts, Culture and Creativity Month. Ten venues are scheduled for the cruise tour. See page 10



Weaverville Joss House 150th anniversary celebration April 13

The event to include firecrackers, costumed Chinese Lion and Dragon dancers, tours, crafts for kids and more

By Ken Smith

A celebration in honor of the 150th anniversary of the Weaverville Joss House will kick off, quite literally, with a bang. Or, more correctly, a lot of bangs, as the planned five-hour event will commence at 10 a.m. on April 13 with the lighting of 30,000 firecrackers.

And if that's not enough, the event's grand finale will be the ignition of 50,000 more.

"It's going to get a little noisy," Jack Frost, State Parks historical guide at the Weaverville Joss House State Historic Park, said with a laugh.

The day's activities at the Weaverville Joss House, located on Main Street (Hwy 299) at Oregon Street in the middle of the town, will also include free admission to the temple, crafts for kids, tea and fortune cookies and traditional Chinese Lion and Dragon dances. Dignitaries from the local area and California State Parks are also scheduled to be in attendance, as will the granddaughter of Moon Lim Lee, who was the temple's long-time caretaker and a prominent member of Weaverville's once populous Chinese community.

Annual Chinese New Year celebrations held at the Joss House and this year's special sesquicentennial anniversary are "part of our job here of preserving, interpreting and protecting this Taoist temple that was originally built in the 1850s, '60s and '70s," Frost said. The current building was built in 1874 to replace two earlier structures built in 1853 and 1861. Both were damaged or lost to fire in 1861 and 1873, respectively, Frost said.

Officially known as the "Temple of the Forest Beneath the Clouds," the Weaverville Joss House is the oldest continuously used Chinese temple in California, and has been a state park since 1956 ("Joss" is believed to be a name the Portuguese gave Chinese Taoist temples). Historical artifacts on display there include mining tools, artwork, photos and weapons used during an 1854 Tong War.

"The most unique part is the whole



PHOTO / © 2024 California State Parks

State Parks historical guide Jack Frost inside the Weaverville Joss House. Frost said a lot of people in the north state don't even know it exists. "Then when they do come visit, they're amazed," he said.

interior of the temple, every bit of which was imported from mainland China," Frost said. "And that was a time when transportation wasn't like it is now with FedEx or UPS. It all came by boat from China to San Francisco, then by riverboat up the Sacramento River, if the water was high enough. Then it was hauled up here from Red Bluff by mule teams and wagons, or sometimes on poles draped across the shoulders of some of the Chinese people who lived here then."

In addition to 2024 marking a momentous milestone for the temple, it is also an important year according to the Chinese zodiac: the Year of the Dragon. This system, based around February's Lunar New Year, is a 12-year cycle with each year represented by a different animal (recent examples include the ox, tiger and rabbit). The dragon is the only mythical creature



PHOTO / © California State Parks

Weaverville Joss House circa late 1800s to early 1900s.

included among them, and dragon years are traditionally associated with prosperity, power and good fortune.

In honor of this, the event will include the appearance of a traditional Chinese dragon, as well as elaborately costumed lion dancers. Frost said this is the first time in recent memory that a dragon has visited the temple, and it was arranged especially for this "auspicious" year.

After the lions dance at the state park, they will march through the streets of Weaverville visiting stores, a tradition meant to bring good luck to merchants. The dragon ceremony and lion dances will be performed by representatives from Sacramento's Eastern Ways Martial Arts.

The event in Weaverville is being jointly organized by the California State Parks and the non-profit Weaverville Joss House Association. Frost said the overseeing agencies consult with several organizations to ensure the cultural integrity of the park and celebrations like this, the San Francisco-based Ching Chung Taoist Association of America and Marysville's Bok Kai Temple.

"We do reach out to make sure that whatever we do is approved by

the Chinese community, that we aren't making any mistakes or representing something incorrectly," Frost said.

Weaverville's Chinese population boomed during the town's Gold Rush years, officially peaking at about 2,500, though Frost said there may have been many more immigrants not noted in historical records.

The population began declining later in the 1850s, and continued trickling away through the 1930s. Today, no known descendants of the original population remain in the area. Frost said many returned to China, but some lineages have been traced to the East Bay Area and across the western United States. One family, he said, is now located in East Longmeadow, Mass.

One man who did remain, and is central to the Joss House's continuing legacy, is the aforementioned Moon Lee. According to the California State Parks website, he was born in 1903, owned several businesses in the area and became the temple's caretaker in 1938, a position he held until his death in 1985. He gifted the temple and grounds to the state in 1956, and he and his wife Dorothy helped found the Weaverville Joss House Association in 1982.

Frost said that Moon Lee was motivated to make sure the Joss House stayed protected for posterity, and that his daughter assumed the role as the temple's "cultural caretaker" until her recent passing. Now her daughter, who is scheduled to appear at the ceremony, is carrying on the tradition.

"This is a really unique opportunity for folks here in Northern California to see something like this and marvel at it," Frost said. "A lot of people, even from as close as Shasta County, don't even know about it. Then when they do come visit, they're amazed."

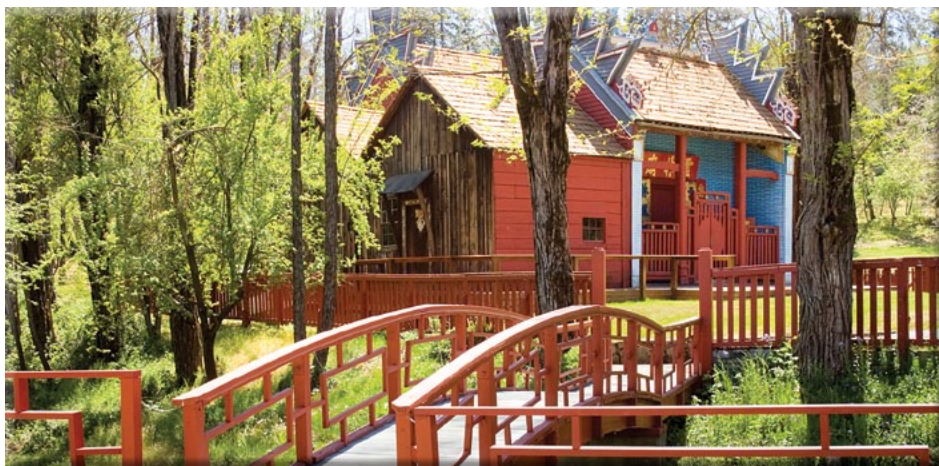


PHOTO ABOVE / Zack Frank COVER PHOTO / HunterKitty

The Weaverville Joss House is one of many joss houses. According to the State Park, the term "joss" is believed to be a corruption of the Portuguese word "Deus," meaning God. Thus, a temple where Chinese gods were kept and worshipped was called a joss house. The name was reportedly first used in the late 1700s.

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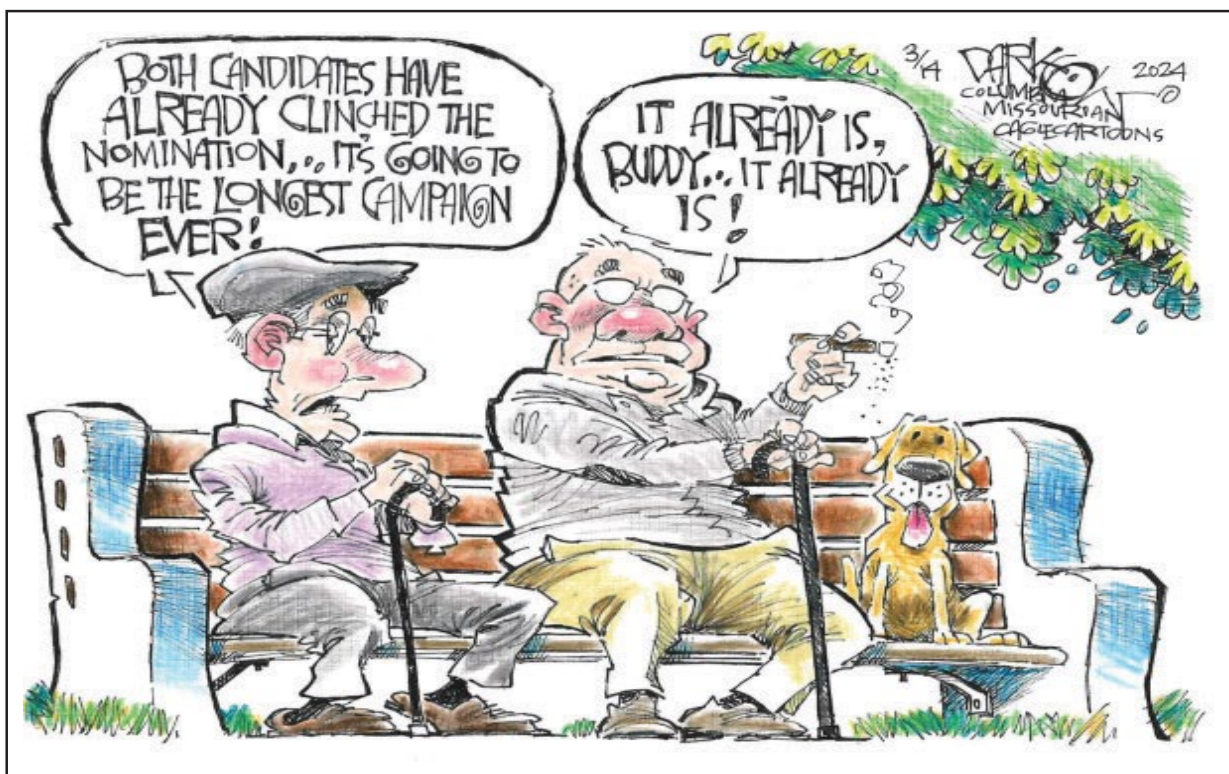
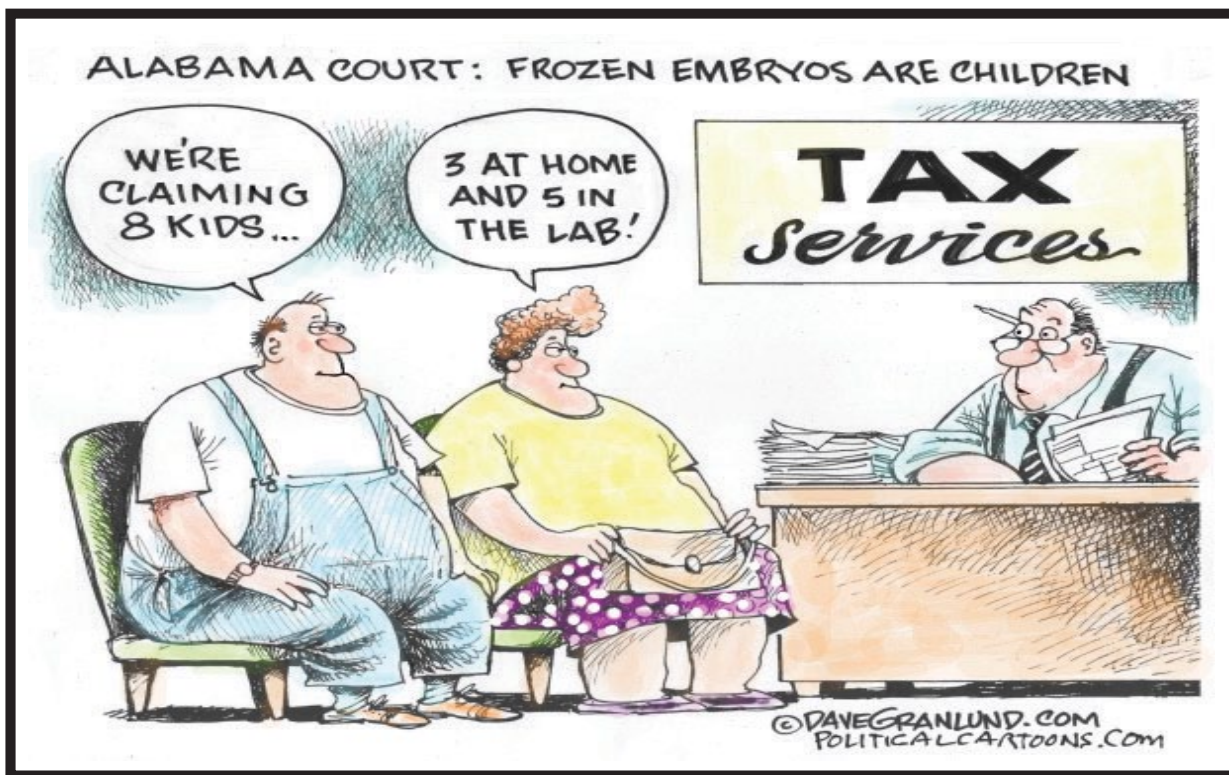
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No telephone call submissions; email or regular mail only.
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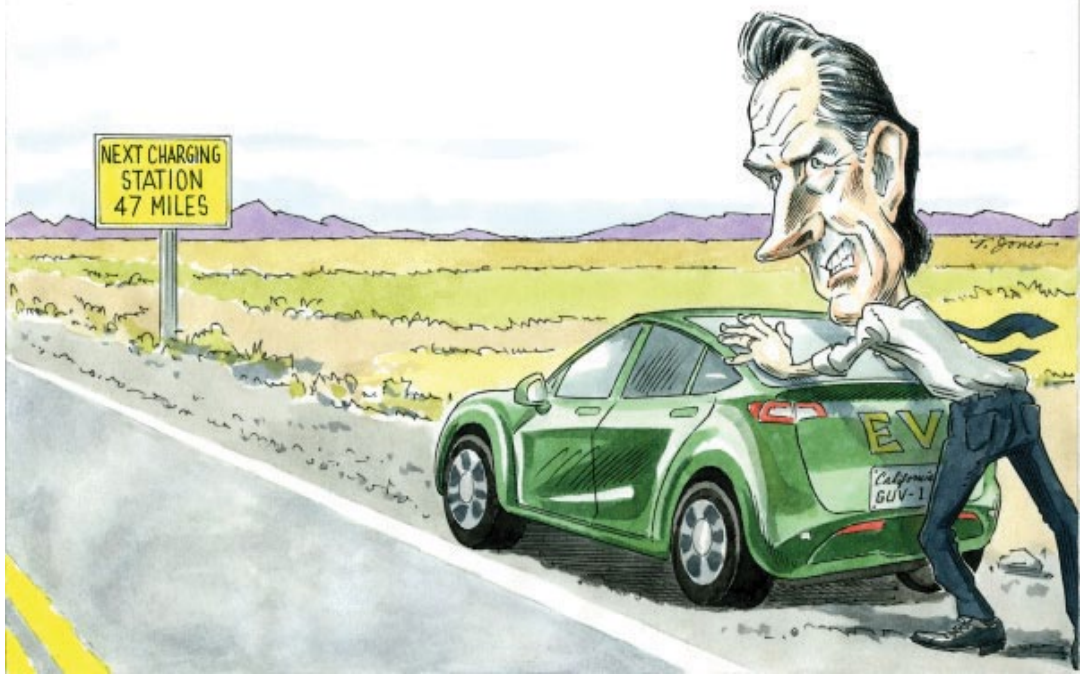
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No brainer

By Tom Purcell



Get this: Men and women's brains are different.

Using a powerful, first-of-its-kind artificial intelligence model, Stanford Medicine was able to determine with a 90% success rate whether or not an MRI scan of human brain activity was coming from a male brain or a female brain.

"The findings, the investigators suggest, help to resolve a longstanding controversy about whether reliable sex differences exist in the human brain," reports Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology News.

Controversy?

I grew up an only boy with five sisters. My father and I figured out more than half a century ago that men and women have innately different brains.

However, prior to about 20 years ago, according to Stanford Medicine Magazine, the neuroscience community thought the difference in male and female brains was due to cultural influences.

You know, the old argument that boys like toy trucks because toy trucks are pushed on them as children and little girls like dolls because dolls are pushed on them.

But in the early 2000s those claims were disabused by a variety of studies, according to Psychology Today that, put simply, showed the circuitry in male and female brains is wired differently and these innate differences result in different behavior.

It's not to say a male brain is better than a female brain, or vice versa.

But Stanford Medicine Magazine says that women generally have greater reading and writing abilities than men.

They're also better at retrieving information from their long-term memory — especially everything we've done wrong since the moment we met them.

A 2014 University of Pennsylvania study found that females routinely use both sides of their brains in a highly coordinated manner, whereas men often use only one.

Women would be shocked if they knew how many things we use only half a brain to do.

For example, one study found that the male brain doesn't pick up as many sensory cues as a woman's.

When a man walks into his home, for example, he isn't likely to notice dust — which, I'm told, consists of fine, dry particles that settle on furniture.

That's one reason men do one-third as much housework as women, according to Fast Company — and also why, according to the great humorist P.J. O'Rourke, we clean our place about once every girlfriend.

The male brain also has superior visual-spatial awareness. We're better at navigation, creating and using tools or understanding abstract concepts, such as geometry.

Our noggins are wired for larger spaces, such as the garage, the backyard, the golf course, or, some ancient time ago, hunting woolly mammoths out in the wild with our buddies.

Sure, some men are neat freaks and homebodies and some women are sloppy and couldn't care less about the inside of their homes.

But on average, where biology is concerned, it's clear male and female brains are different.

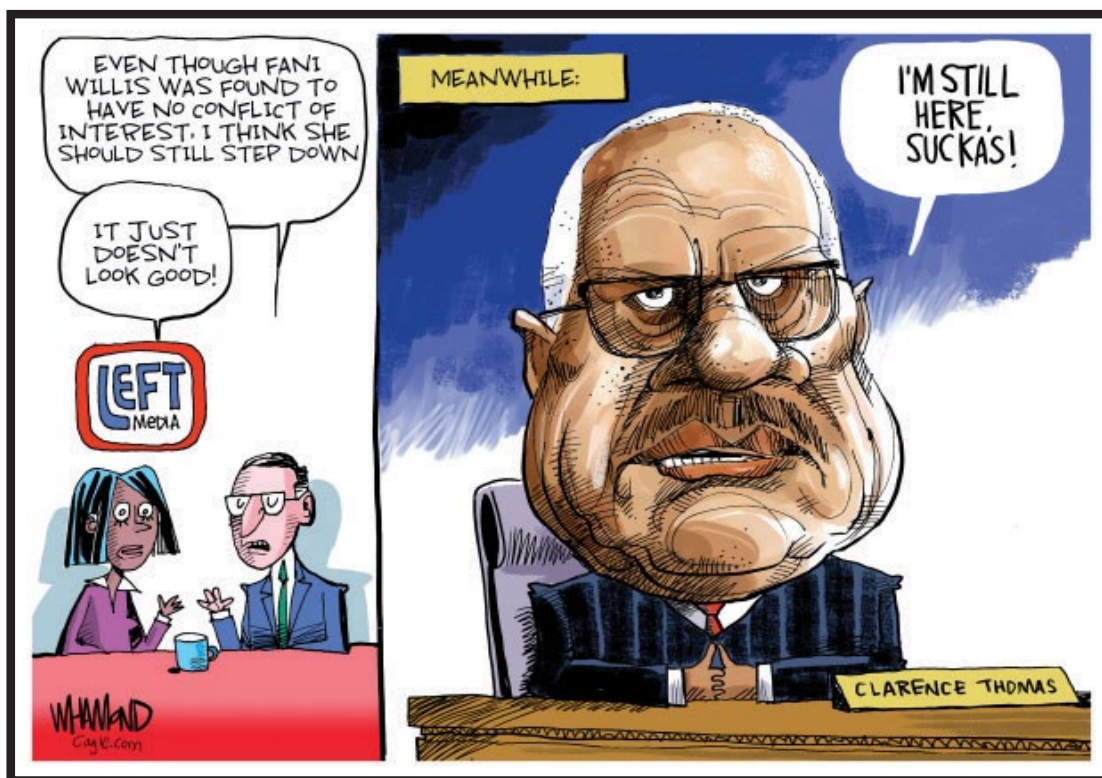
For instance, notes Stanford Medicine, why are women more prone to suffering depression, while men are twice as likely to have issues with drugs and alcohol and 10 times more likely to suffer dyslexia?

Personally, I think a man is at his best when he finds a lifelong companion whose female brain is strong in multiple ways in which his is weak.

Look, surely we can all agree we don't need an MRI to know that men and women have different ways of thinking.

To borrow from legendary humorist Dave Barry, we all know which parent is more likely to drive off from the supermarket with the baby still in the baby seat he had set on the roof of the car.

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AFTER FIVE PHOTO

A Virginia possum, Polly, and Shasta Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation handler Natasha Braziel at the 2023 SWRR Baby Shower and Open House. Polly came from another rehab center and couldn't be released because she was too friendly.

SWRR Baby Shower and Open House slated April 6 at Anderson River Park

Shasta Wildlife Rescue and Rehabilitation (SWRR) will host its annual Baby Shower and Open House from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, April 6 at its Wildlife Center in Anderson River Park, 3752 Rupert Road, Anderson.

The event includes special tours of the facility only conducted at this time of year prior to the big influx of baby animals rescued during the coming spring and summer season.

Guests can get up close and personal with SWRR's educational animals and can visit an educational display table. Children's activities include making a gift for the wild birds in your yard, an animal face painter station and a publisher of

children's nature books. The first 75 children to visit will receive baby shower favors.

Admission to the Baby Shower and Open House is free.

Volunteer

Volunteer opportunities abound as well. Want to get hands on and help save these lives? See their center manager at this event.

Want to help the animals? Bring a baby shower gift of paper towels, toilet paper or unscented laundry soap to help SWRR care for the needs of animals and defray the cost of running the center. Go to shastawildlife.org or call 530-917-0930 for a list of needed items.

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NEWS of the WEIRD

Ann Arbor, Michigan, police chased a stolen 17-ton forklift through city streets for an hour, NBC News reported, in what they called “a very dangerous situation” – especially so, since the driver was a 12-year-old boy.

The boy allegedly found the construction vehicle outside Forsythe Middle School with the keys inside.

While no one was injured, the forklift struck 10 cars as it crawled through neighborhoods with law enforcement in pursuit; at one point, officers warned other cars that he was “lowering the hooks – don’t go in front” of it.

The boy was taken into custody and moved to a juvenile detention center.

“I’m having it my way!” appeared to be the message from a large inflatable Burger King Whopper that came loose outside a restaurant in Newberg, Oregon, and took off through the windy streets.

KOIN-TV reported that the sandwich began its journey around 7 a.m. on Nov. 11 and crashed into a smoke shop before hitting an American flag and another business.

Amy Kepler of the Newberg Police Department said that strangely, they didn’t receive any 911 calls about the burger, and no injuries or damage were reported to police. “It happened very quickly and did not affect traffic,” she said.

Sandra Jimenez, 44, is cooling her heels at the Turner Guilford Knight Correctional Center in Miami, Florida, after she attacked her boyfriend of eight years at their home, Fox35-TV reported.

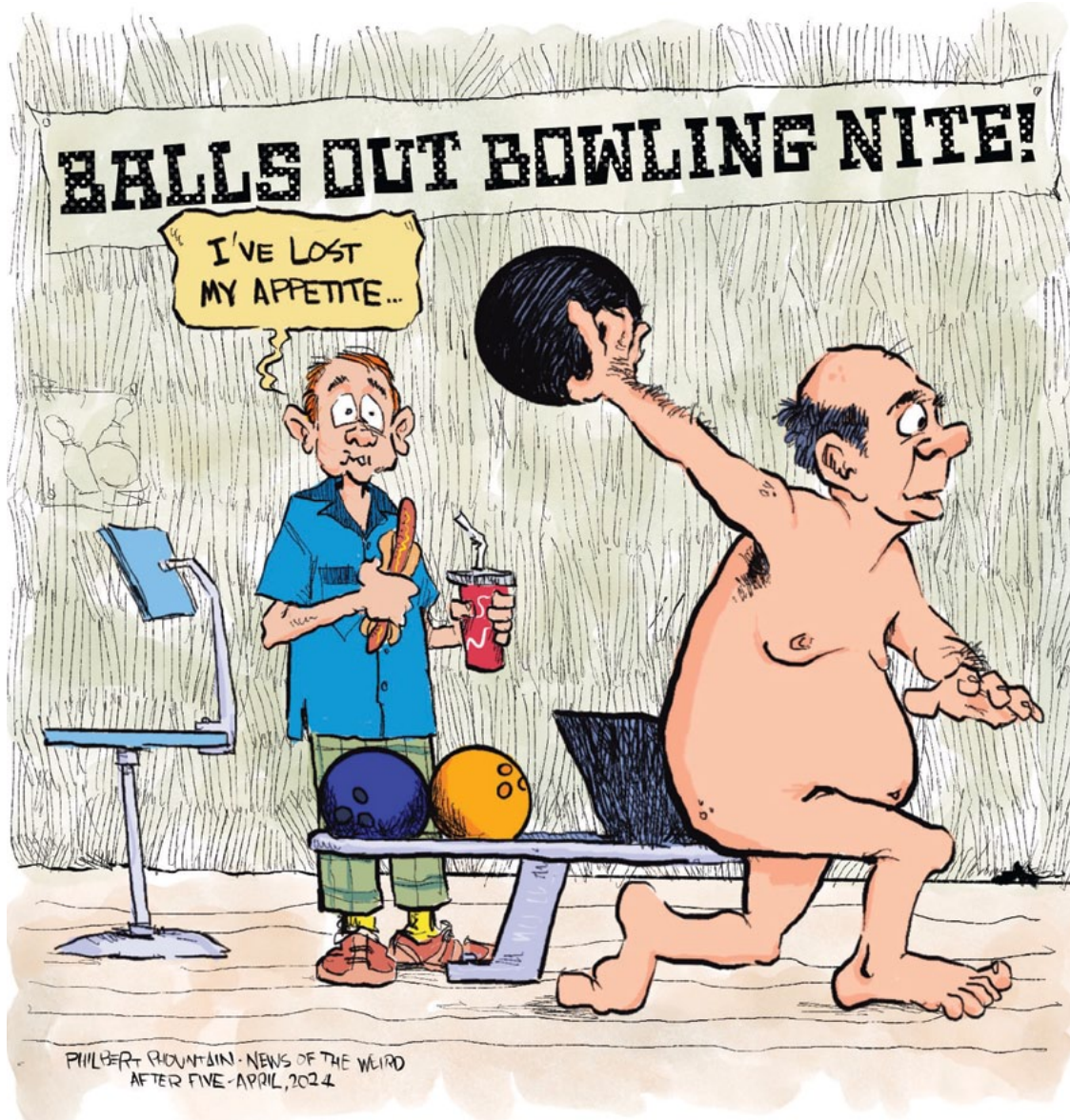
According to the victim, as the couple argued about him “looking at other women,” Jimenez allegedly jumped on him as he lay on the couch and stabbed him in the right eye with one of her dog’s rabies shot needles.

She then left the house, and he called police, who took him to the hospital.

Officers later found her asleep in a vehicle outside the home and arrested her for aggravated battery. Jimenez told them her boyfriend’s injuries were “self-inflicted.”

Iris Logan, 70, converted her front yard in St. Paul, Minnesota, into an expression of her individuality more than 30 years ago, the Associated Press reported.

But the city inspector is fed up with her stones, statues and decorative art and ordered her



Looking for something light and airy to do at the end of April? Set your GPS for Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the Crafton Ingram Lanes, where Balls Out Bowling will return on April 28, according to WTRF-TV. The Pittsburgh Area Naturalists are hosting the event, which requires nudity (except women are allowed to wear bottoms). Participants must be 18 or older, and sexual activity is not permitted; harassment will result in being ejected from the bowling alley. And leave your cellphone at home; no photos or videos allowed. You won’t have anywhere to carry it anyway!

to clear it out. “I’m a rock lover,” Logan said. “If I see a rock I like, I try and roll it in my car on a 2-by-4.”

A petition supporting Logan gained 150 signatures. “It’s not just about aesthetics,” said Justin Lewandowski, a community organizer. “It’s about our identity and how we, as residents, engage with each other and with city policy.”

Kansans, emboldened by their vote to keep abortion legal in 2022, have spoken again: Gov. Laura Kelly announced that the state will halt production on the described “ugly as sin” new license plates that were supposed to roll out in 2024.

Fox News reported that some drivers balked at the

design because it too closely resembled the University of Missouri’s colors; others thought the gold-and-black plate was Kelly’s nod to New York, her home state. Others called it “slapdash and dull.” The governor promised a future public vote on possible new designs.

A woman flying from Orlando to Philadelphia on Frontier Airlines apparently couldn’t hold it another second, WKRC-TV reported.

“Sorry, everybody,” she said in a video captured by traveler Julie Hartman, before pulling her pants down and squatting in the aisle to urinate.

According to the woman, she had been told by a flight

attendant that she couldn’t use the restroom; one woman on the video can be heard saying, “That poor little boy” about a child sitting next to the spot where the woman squatted.

A 35-year-old man from Vietnam went to the hospital in Dong Hoi with severe headaches, fluid discharge and loss of vision, Metro News reported.

When doctors did a CT scan, they discovered two broken chopsticks that were penetrating into his skull from his nose.

Apparently, the man had been in a fight several months before and didn’t remember much about it – but said he thought something might have

been stabbed into his face. Surgeons removed the chopsticks, and the patient is recovering.

As a man in Xiamen, China, used the “smart” toilet in his home, he first smelled smoke – right before the toilet burst into flames.

He didn’t have time to pull his shorts back up, but he did manage to capture pictures of the toilet with flames emerging from the bowl.

Oddy Central reported that the owner believed a short circuit was to blame; other incidents of toilets bursting into flame in China have been reported over the last two years.

A 62-year-old woman from Haslett, Michigan, picked a poor time to dash through the self-checkout at Walmart with \$700 worth of merchandise in her cart, WJRT-TV reported.

As the store participated in a Shop With a Cop event in Genoa Township, a clerk notified one of about 75 police officers on hand about the shoplifter.

“I do have to say it surprised me,” said Michigan State Police Lt. Rene Gonzalez. “When you see 75 cops in the store, I mean, I don’t know if maybe they thought we were too busy.” The alleged thief was detained in the parking lot and taken to jail.

Joshua James Pinquet, 21, of Orlando, Florida, made an apparent sudden decision to quit his job, Iredell Free News reported.

As he was driving a van with four prison inmates locked in the cargo area, Pinquet contacted his boss at the inmate transport company and said he was done.

He was supposed to deliver the inmates to Hickory, North Carolina, but instead he kept going; when Iredell County sheriff’s officers caught up with him, he was arrested and charged with second-degree kidnapping and larceny.

As the last remaining Hooters restaurant in West Virginia prepared for demolition, residents of Kanawha City gathered for a candlelight vigil, WCHS-TV reported.

The event, which started as a joke, got international attention, and hundreds of people showed up. “It’s a lot of memories going down with that building,” said Noah Collins of Rand, West Virginia. Tearful former Hooters employees

–Please See Page 12

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Cloud Forest Temple

Weaverville Joss House State Historic Park

Main (Hwy 299) and Oregon Streets, Weaverville

Weaverville Joss House State Historic Park and Weaverville Joss House Association invite you to join them for a historic event on Saturday, April 13, from 10am-3pm. Standing since 1874, we celebrate the temple's testimony to time.

Temple Art * Lion Dance * Dragon Dance
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REDDING CULTURAL CRUISE → 2024

Annual Redding Cultural Cruise returns in April to coincide with Arts, Culture & Creativity Month

The annual Redding Cultural Cruise, which in the past has happened in January, returns April 12-13 to celebrate Arts, Culture and Creativity Month, which the State of California declared in 2019.

Visitors will be able to view examples of art, see historical artifacts, hear music by local performers and get a sampling of the north state's culture and arts.

The event begins at 4 p.m. on Friday, April 12, with the cultural bus and car tour starting at Redding City Hall. It continues on Saturday, April 13, with the walking/biking tour.

Participating venues are Redding City Hall, Turtle Bay Exploration Park and The Mosaic Restaurant Gallery, Shasta Historical Society, Shasta Arts Council (Old City Hall), The Art Hunger, Viva Downtown, Behrens-Eaton House Museum, Riverfront Playhouse, Shasta Living Streets, and North Valley Art League.

Drive, bike or walk to all the Cruise stops. Cultural Cruise printed guides will be available at each location. You can also download and print them at Shasta County Arts Council's website, shastaartscouncil.org.

Turtle Bay Exploration Park will celebrate the "Yosh Sugiyama Retrospective" exhibition on Friday only with a lecture by guest curators Alice Porembski and Sue Lang at 5:30 p.m. Refreshments will be available during the lecture with more available to purchase. Other offerings include "Amazing Pollinators" and "Glowing Wild."

Entry fees for cruisers will be waived on Friday only, from 5-8 p.m. Saturday will have normal business hours and fees.

Shasta Historical Society, 1449 Market St., invites you to explore historical artifacts and the many stories that make up the rich tapestry of experiences that shaped Shasta County. They will be featuring the "We Are Not Strangers Here" exhibit. Free entry, snacks and drinks will be provided. Hours of operation are Friday 4-7 p.m. and Saturday 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

The **Behrens-Eaton House Museum**, 1520 West St., invites all to take a trip back in time. Visitors will discover the restored Victorian home of the 1890s containing original family furniture. Costumed docents will greet you and take you on a tour of local

history. Hours of operation are Friday 4-6:30 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Shasta Arts Council – Old City Hall, 1313 Market St., will be presenting a group exhibition of north state artists entitled the "Celebrations of Arts" in the gallery on Friday night. Saturday will feature a ZineFest in the ballroom by Red City ZineFest. Stop in between 11 a.m. and 9 p.m. on Saturday to see local artists, vendors, and musicians celebrating their crafts in this collective living magazine.

The Art Hunger at 1504 Market St., will feature their April gallery. Hours of operation are Friday 2-8pm and Saturday noon to 6 p.m.

Viva Downtown will feature several musical artists upstairs at the IOOF Hall, 1504 Market St., for both cruising days, as part of their First Friday Concert series. Pop in for a stamp and some music.

Redding City Hall, 777 Cypress Ave. features an extensive exhibition of works curated by the North Valley Art League on Friday only. The exhibit is changed three times per year. The public is welcome to view three floors of art at their leisure during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., excluding holidays. Stop by Friday at 4 p.m. to help kick off Cultural Cruise 2024. They will be closed on that Saturday.

The **Carter House Gallery** at Caldwell Park, 48 Quartz Hill Road, home of **North Valley Art League**, will be celebrating the opening of their April exhibit on Friday from 4-7 p.m. Saturday will have normal hours from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Stop into **Shasta Living Streets** and the new **Shasta Bike Depot**, 1322 California St., to see photos and history of Redding and Shasta outdoor living and cycling culture from the 1880s to today. Experience art and design in the Bell Plaza, an adaptive reuse of older downtown buildings. Hours will be Friday 4-8 p.m. and Saturday 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Stop by **Riverfront Playhouse**, 1950 California St., on Saturday only, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., to learn about upcoming shows and more at this Redding theatre.

For more information, go online to Shasta Arts Council's website at shastaartscouncil.org.

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NEWS of the WEIRD

-From Page 8

reunited for one last time. "I started out coming in to get a job and it became so much more because I met so many lifelong friends and my co-workers," said Danielle Hughart.

"This building right here was a legitimate iconic figure to the Kanawha Valley," declared co-organizer Leo Browning. The corporate office sent a box of calendars to distribute to those who attended the vigil.



At an event billed as "Willy's Chocolate Experience" in Glasgow, Scotland, children and parents were so underwhelmed that police were called, The New York Times reported.

The event, which promised Willy Wonka-themed chocolate fountains, performances by Oompa Loompas and "optical marvels," turned out to offer just a few jelly beans and a nearly empty warehouse.

Stuart Sinclair, who paid about \$44 per ticket to bring his kids to the show, said it amounted to "maybe 20 chairs, a couple of tables and a half-inflated bouncy castle."

Jenny Fogarty, who was hired to play an Oompa Loompa, said she was given a 15-page script the night before and that "the wigs were very cheap."

The organizer later canceled the event; it was unclear who had called police. The event organizer, House of Illuminati, said ticket purchases would be refunded.



Neighbors in an apartment building in Wejherowo, Poland, became alarmed as a 19-year-old man tried to lead a full-grown horse up the stairs to his third-floor home, Radio Gdansk reported.

Police were called to the building and determined that the mare, worth about \$3,800, had been stolen. She was returned to the owner, and the horse thief was charged with theft; he faces five years in prison.



Details have recently emerged about an incident in Willow Springs, Missouri, the Springfield News-Leader reported. The Howell County Sheriff's Office had

investigated after a man in his 60s, who was a paraplegic, lost his feet while brush-hogging.

"It was a poorly executed plan," said Lt. Torey Thompson. He said it was clear almost immediately that the accident had been staged: The cuts were very clean, the feet were nowhere to be found, and tourniquets had been applied to both legs.

Allegedly, the victim had help from a man from Florida, who cut off the feet with a hatchet to help him commit insurance fraud.

However, since the unnamed man never filed the claim and he was so severely injured, the sheriff's office declined to charge him.

And the missing feet?

"A couple of days later, we got a call that a relative found them in a bucket obscured by tires, so we went and got them," Thompson said.



As a Delta flight soared from Amsterdam to Detroit, maggots began falling from an overhead compartment onto passengers below, The Guardian reported.

Philip Schotte, who was on the flight, said attendants traced the source to a bag stowed above and found a rotten fish wrapped in newspaper. They removed the offending item, and the pilot announced that the plane would be returning to Amsterdam.

Apologizing, Delta said the passengers were placed on another flight and the plane was removed from service for cleaning. Passengers were also given 8,000 air miles, hotel room compensation and a \$30 meal ticket.



Sri Lankan Airlines was forced to ground one of its Airbus A330 planes for three days after a rat was spotted on the aircraft, United Press International reported.

The rodent was seen during a flight from Lahore, Pakistan, to Colombo, Sri Lanka. Workers sprayed the plane with poison, and technicians checked wiring for damage done by chewing.



You might have missed the first-ever

Florida Man Games in St. Augustine, but it's never too early to plan for next year.

United Press International reported that hundreds of people paid \$55 each for a ticket to watch Floridians compete in a mullet contest and a "Florida sumo" event where competitors tried to spill each other's beers.

Other events included a pork butt eating contest, a race that simulated stealing a bike, and an "evading arrest obstacle course."

One winning team walked away with the \$5,000 prize. "We understand that Florida is weird," said Pete Melfi, organizer of the event. "We embrace it."



Brandie Gotch, 30, of Peoria, Arizona, told police that her children were being bullied by other kids, and she had reported it to the school and law enforcement, but nothing happened.

So, she took matters into her own hands, CBS5-TV reported.

With her four children in her Silverado, Gotch drove to a local park, where she allegedly approached a group of kids and started yelling at them. Police said Gotch grabbed a 14-year-old boy by the hair and yanked his head back and forth as she yelled at him, then grabbed a stick from her truck and chased him, yelling, "I am going to kill you and run you over!"

She then jumped back into her truck and drove it toward the group of kids, running over a girl's ankle in the process, although she told police she didn't think she hit the girl.

"I hope I didn't," she said. Her own children told police they were bouncing all over the truck during her jaunt through the park.

Gotch was charged with six counts of endangerment, four counts of aggravated assault, two counts of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon and one count of attempted first-degree murder.



Legend says that if the seven ravens who protect the Tower of London (six, plus one spare, as decreed by King Charles II) ever leave the landmark, the tower will crumble and the Kingdom of England will fall.

So it's no surprise that the tower has a ravenmaster, and 56-year-old

Michael "Barney" Chandler has just been installed in the job, the Associated Press reported.

Chandler is a former Royal Marine who said, "We don't know if (the prophecy is) true or not, because we've never let the number drop below six -- and it's not going to happen while I'm here."

As the sixth holder of the post, Chandler will be in charge of four other Beefeaters who look after the ravens.

"You never know what they're going to do," he said. "They're all totally different, personality-wise." His favorite is Poppy, who hops up to him to accept a treat of a dead mouse now and again. Spoiler alert: The birds' feathers are trimmed so they can't fly away.



In Rye, New Hampshire on Feb. 29, Lillian Edin celebrated her 25th birthday -- although she is 100 years old. "I feel 25, until I start trying to walk," Edin said, according to WMUR-TV. "I can't believe I've lived this age. I really can't." She was feted with lunch and cupcakes.



A brother and sister who were both born on Leap Day four years apart are getting to celebrate the unusual birthday for the first time. Omri Demchak, 8, and his sister, Scout, 4, celebrated with more than 50 people at the coffee shop their parents own in Brooklyn, New York.

Most years, the family celebrate Omri's birthday on Feb. 28 and Scout's on March 1. Mom Lindsay Demchak said neither of the leap kids was due on the special day. "It was truly serendipitous," she told the New York Post.



Issue 12 of France's La Bougie du Sapeur (The Sapper's Candle) has hit the newsstands, the BBC reported -- which is kind of a big deal because it is printed only on Feb. 29, every four years.

The first edition was in 1980. Editor Jean d'Indy said the 20-page tabloid is "put out by a few pals. We meet in a bar and toss around ideas over drinks. We have a lot of fun, and if the reader does, too, that's the icing on the cake." It has a print run of 200,000, costs about 5 euros, and is not available online.



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PHOTO / Kim Mobley

Axiom cast, left to right: Danny Lindberg, Mike Spence as Dr. Watson, Tyler Lockamy as Sherlock Holmes, Nick Brown and Josselyn Carter.

Axiom presents Ken Ludwig's 'Baskerville: Sherlock Holmes Mystery'

Ken Ludwig's *Baskerville: Sherlock Holmes Mystery* is playing at Axiom Repertory Theatre from April 5-20.

The comedy, directed by Emma Richardson, stars Tyler Lockamy as Sherlock Holmes and Mike Spence as his trusty sidekick Dr. Watson. Also in the cast are Nick Brown, Danny Lindberg, and Josselyn Carter in various supporting roles. Stage manager is Beka Bee.

"I'm having a blast working with Tyler, Mike, Nick, Danny, Emma and Beka," Carter said in an email. "It's easy to have fun with such a talented group where we can try ridiculous things and still challenge each other to be better. We all could use some levity in life and this show provides the laughter so greatly needed."

Ken Ludwig (*Lend Me a Tenor*, *Moon Over Buffalo*) transforms Arthur

Conan Doyle's classic *The Hound of the Baskervilles* into a murderously funny adventure.

Sherlock Holmes is on the case. The male heirs of the Baskerville line are being dispatched one by one. To find their ingenious killer, Holmes and Watson must brave the desolate moors before a family curse dooms its newest heir.

Watch as the intrepid investigators

try to escape a dizzying web of clues, silly accents, disguises, and deceit as five actors deftly portray more than 40 characters.

Does a wild hellhound prowl the moors of Devonshire? Can our heroes discover the truth in time?

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For tickets and more information go online to axreptheatre.com

What's with all the big stuff?

By Peter Funt



After years of trying to develop what he called a “premium” hamburger, McDonald’s CFO Ian Borden surprised no one the other day by announcing that the company’s new focus is not making burgers better, just a lot bigger.

The move won’t please nutritionists, but it fits perfectly with a growing desire among Americans for super-sized stuff.

Consider ads for the 2024 Chevrolet Suburban boasting that, at 18 feet in length, the vehicle is “impossible to ignore.” Chevy refers to its massive SUV as “a room with a view.”

And what about the 100-year-old Stanley company that found new life when its giant drinking cups became a sensation. Now Stanley is selling a humongous 96-ounce version for \$90, “thoughtfully designed to be your personal hydration companion.” When this big baby is filled with water it weighs 8.8 pounds.

In the world of fashion — or at least fashion fads — a recent headline in the New York Times noted “Fashion’s Big Idea: Oversize Everything.” Seems skinny jeans are out and clown pants are in. This month Julianne Hough wore what might have been the biggest pants in Oscar history when she hosted ABC’s red carpet show. “Hough wore a white Alexandre Vauthier couture jumpsuit with a gold and silver metallic bodice,” People Magazine dutifully reported. “The pants were so voluminous, though, that they acted as an optical illusion, making her jumpsuit look like a gown.”

The fascination with over-sized items comes at a time when many folks are troubled by a shift toward deceptively smaller products in categories such as snack foods, the result of what’s known as shrinkflation. “Some companies are trying to pull a fast one by shrinking the products little by little and hoping you won’t notice,” said President Biden last month.

But there’s no such problem when it comes to, say, TV screens. They’ve grown steadily in recent years—from roughly 55 inches, measured diagonally, to 98 inches. Samsung offers a version it calls The Wall, which measures 292 inches, making it the largest TV on the retail market.

Being a golfer I was intrigued by a club I saw on Amazon named the Sooolong, with the “biggest, baddest driver head on the planet.” It’s listed at 750cc’s, which, for the record, is about 60% larger than USGA rules permit.

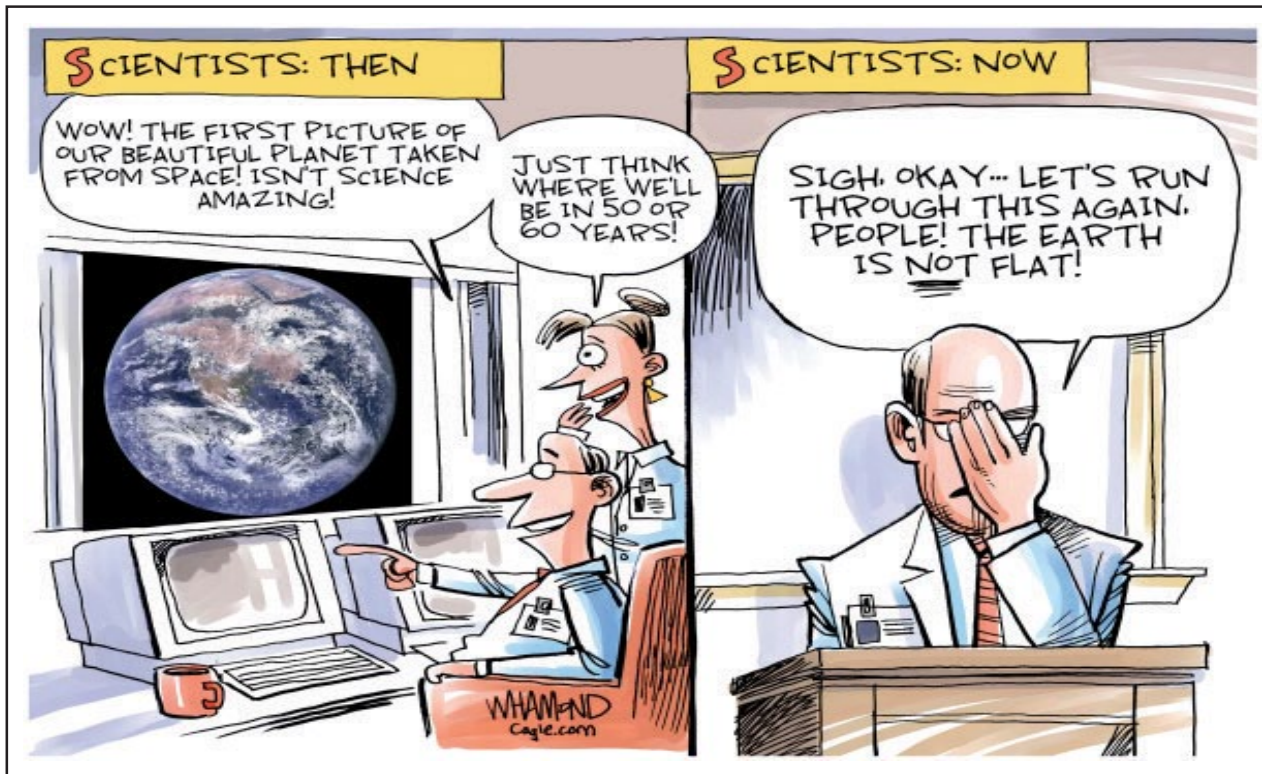
The rest of the world has long scoffed at the way we Americans favor bigness — from our 10-gallon hats to our Big Gulp sodas.

That brings us back to McDonald’s which recently offered a Double Big Mac sandwich, consisting of one-and-a-half buns surrounding four beef patties. “The opportunity is significant” said Mr. Borden, for a “large, more satiating type burger.”

Satiate is an interesting choice of words to describe the trend. The dictionary defines it as “gorge, overfeed, sicken and nauseate,” which are really big matters, to say the least.

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Peter Funt’s latest book is “Playing POTUS: The Power of America’s Acting Presidents,” about comedians who impersonated presidents.



Recommended vaccines for Medicare recipients

Dear Savvy Senior,
My husband and I recently turned 65 and would like to find out which vaccines are recommended and covered by Medicare?
- New Beneficiaries



By Jim Miller

Dear New,
All recommended vaccines for adults, age 65 and older, should be covered by either Medicare Part B or Part D, but there are some coverage challenges you should be aware of. Here's a rundown of which vaccines are recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and how Medicare covers them.

Covid-19

Even though Covid-19 is no longer a public health emergency, it can still cause severe illness, particularly in older adults. Because the Covid virus continues to mutate, new vaccines are being developed to keep pace, so the CDC recommends that all seniors stay up to date with the latest Covid vaccines, including booster shots.

All Covid-19 shots are covered 100 percent by Medicare Part B.

Flu

Considered an annual vaccination, most people of all ages receive flu shots in the fall when flu season begins. The CDC recommends seniors, 65 and older get a high-dose flu shot for extra protection beyond what a standard flu

shot offers. The Fluzone High Dose Quadrivalent, FLUAD Quadrivalent and FluBlok Quadrivalent are your three options.

Annual flu shots are covered under Medicare Part B.

Pneumonia

These vaccines help protect against pneumococcal disease, which can cause pneumonia, meningitis and other infections. The CDC recommends everyone 65 and older get a pneumococcal vaccine. There are several different vaccine options available, so talk to your doctor or pharmacists to find out which is best for you or visit the CDC's Pneumococcal Vaccination webpage at CDC.gov/vaccines/vpd/pneumo/public/index.html.

Medicare Part B covers both single dose and two-dose pneumococcal shots once in your lifetime.

Shingles

Caused by the same virus that causes chicken pox, shingles is a

painful, blistering skin rash that affects more than 1 million Americans every year. All people over age 50 are recommended to get the two-dose Shingrix vaccine, which is given two to six months apart, even if you previously received Zostavax. In 2020, Shingrix replaced Zostavax, which is no longer available in the U.S.

All Medicare Part D prescription drug plans cover shingles vaccinations, but coverage amounts, and reimbursement rules vary depending on where the shot is given. Check your plan.

Tdap

Tetanus, diphtheria, and pertussis (whooping cough) are diseases caused by bacteria that can lead to serious illness and death. Therefore, a one-time dose of the Tdap vaccine is recommended to all adults. If you've already had a Tdap shot, you should get a tetanus-diphtheria (Td) booster shot every 10 years.

All Medicare Part D plans cover these vaccinations.

RSV

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) can lead to pneumonia or bronchiolitis and can worsen other chronic conditions common among older adults, such as asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). The CDC recommends all adults, age 60 and older, talk to their doctor about getting one of the RSV vaccines (either Arexvy or Abrysvo), usually in the fall and winter months when the virus is most prevalent.

Most Medicare Part D plans cover the RSV vaccine, but not all. If your plan doesn't cover it, you can ask for a coverage exception. You can also pay for the shot out of pocket and then follow-up with your plan to get reimbursed. If you pay for the shot upfront, your plan must pay you back.

Other Vaccinations

There are other vaccines you may need depending on your health, lifestyle or travel plans. To help you get a handle on which ones are appropriate for you, take the CDC's What Vaccines Do You Need? quiz at www2.cdc.gov/nip/adultimmsched. Also, talk to your doctor during your next visit about what vaccinations you should get.

Send your senior questions to: Savvy Senior, P.O. Box 5443, Norman, OK 73070, or visit SavvySenior.org. Jim Miller is a contributor to the NBC Today show and author of "The Savvy Senior" book.

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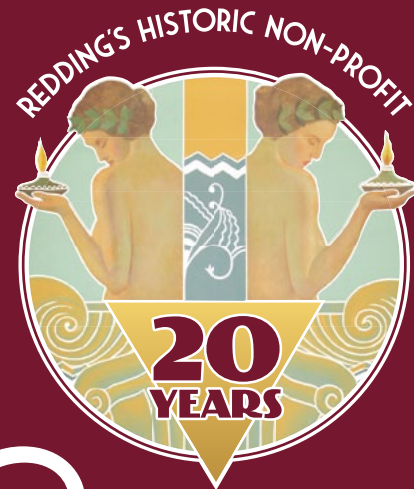
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