

Daly City Library & Recreation Services
Active Adult/Senior Services
presents



Current Events with Frank Damon

Doelger Senior Center has been fortunate to have Frank Damon leading both our Current Events and History discussion groups for the last 6 years. During this time of physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Frank is sharing his current events discussion topics online. Starting on Monday, January 4, 2021 at 1:30 pm Frank will offer Current Events discussion groups each Monday on ZOOM.

Daly City Active Adult/Senior Services invites you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: Current Events with Frank Damon

Time: 1:30 pm – 2:30 pm every Monday

Join Zoom meeting with following link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87222786510?pwd=d0VucFhGYzhMMXVhSUNJTmdFWDNwdz09>

Meeting ID: 872 2278 6510

Passcode: 724368

Frank received his BA degree from the University of San Francisco with a dual major in Political Science and American History. He also earned his MA in Political Science and teaching credentials at USF. Over the course of his career, Frank taught in the San Mateo Union High School District and at Marin Catholic High School, Terra Nova High School, Golden Gate University, College of San Mateo, Skyline College and Canada College.

If you are interested in joining *Current Events with Frank Damon*, please go to www.dalycityseniors.org/current-events or contact Frank directly at frankdamon@my.smccd.edu.

Man in the News

He is a former lawyer, investor, lobbyist, banker, and government official. He is currently an artist and an author. His main claim to fame, however, is that his father is the current president of the United States. Born 51 years ago in Delaware, he entered the business world after graduating from Yale Law School. During the presidential election, he was widely criticized for serving on the board of Burisma Holdings, an energy company based in Ukraine, while his father was vice president. Many said this was a conflict of interest and an ethical, if not a criminal, violation.

Earlier this year, he published a memoir called “Beautiful Things” which details his fight against drug addiction. Since becoming a full-time painter, he has managed to sell several of his artworks. Some have sold for up to half a million dollars! These high prices have raised ethical concerns for the White House, as some worry that people are only paying these prices to get access to his father.



Who am I? (*Hunter Biden*)

Haiti in Chaos

On July 7th, two dozen armed men pulled up outside the house of Haitian President Jovenel Moïse — joh-veh-nel moy-EES. The men posed as DEA agents from the U.S. in order to get into the residence. Once inside, the men shot Moïse and his wife Martine. Moïse died of his wounds, while his wife was rushed to a hospital in critical condition. So far, investigators have identified most of these men as mercenaries from Colombia.

As of last week, more than 20 people had been arrested; one of them, a Haitian-American doctor, has been accused of masterminding the killing, but he says he is innocent. Anger had been simmering in Haiti against Jovenel Moïse for some time. He had been linked to the theft of billions of dollars in international disaster relief. A massive hike in oil and gas prices two years ago set off nationwide protests like the one shown here. Moïse also angered voters by refusing to leave office at the end of his presidential term earlier this year. He said he had been cheated out of his first year by a long fraud investigation. Even though most legal experts in the country had rejected this argument, Moïse held onto the presidency, and even tried to change the constitution to gain more time in office. This shocking assassination has left Haiti with no clear leader. Two different politicians have claimed to be the “rightful” prime minister, and Haiti’s parliament has been dissolved for many months. Haitian leaders have asked the U.S. to help keep the peace, though the U.S. has not agreed to send soldiers there. Some politicians, such as Representative Frederica Wilson of Florida, say that the U.S. has ignored problems in Haiti long enough, and that we should help our close neighbor in its time of need.

Haiti in chaos

Credit: U.S. Embassy in Haiti, public domain

President Jovenel Moïse was assassinated in his home on July 7th; his wife Claudine was badly wounded in the attack.

Protesters often burn tires in the streets of Haiti.

“We can no longer pretend that Haiti does not exist and that Haiti is not in crisis.”
—U.S. Rep. Frederica Wilson

For many years, other countries used Haiti to make themselves richer. Spanish settlers came in the 15th century and forced the native people into slavery. Most native Haitians died from disease and cruel treatment, so the Spanish brought tens of thousands of people from Africa and made them slaves. France took control in 1697 and turned Haiti into a colony called Saint-Domingue, in which 87 percent of the people were enslaved Africans. Former slave Toussaint Louverture and others started a revolution. Louverture was captured and died in a French jail, but in 1804, his army defeated the French. This made Haiti the first nation to be liberated by former slaves.

In 1825, France threatened war unless Haiti paid it 150 million francs, or about \$21 billion in today's money. At the same time, other western nations refused to recognize the new Black nation. U.S. President Thomas Jefferson cut off aid to Haiti and urged other nations to stop trading with Haiti. Why do you think he did this? (He was afraid enslaved people in the U.S. would be inspired by Haiti's example.)

After the assassination of Haiti's president in 1915, U.S. forces invaded Haiti to protect American business interests. The U.S. occupied Haiti until 1934, giving much of the country's land to American companies. In 1957, the U.S. backed the dictator François Duvalier, known as "Papa Doc." When he died in 1971, his son Jean-Claude Duvalier, or "Baby Doc," took over until he was forced out in 1986. These leaders stole millions of dollars and ruled through violence.

In 1991, Jean-Bertrand Aristide became the first democratically elected president in Haitian history. Aristide was a Catholic priest who promised to raise the poorest Haitians out of poverty. But he was overthrown by the country's military twice in 13 years.

Haiti was the world's first Black republic

Toussaint Louverture was a leader of the Haitian revolution (1791-1804)



“We need to be told the whole story of these wonderful, resilient, courageous, and industrious people.”
—Randall Robinson, author



François "Papa Doc" Duvalier ruled Haiti from 1957 to 1971; his son, Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier ruled from 1971 to 1986



Jean-Bertrand Aristide became Haiti's first democratically elected president in 1991

Political interference by other countries is one of the main reasons that Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere today. Poverty is worse in rural areas, where many farms have been ruined by poor environmental policies such as deforestation. Poor people do this for heating and cooking fuel. But this has allowed the soil to wash away, leaving much of the land unusable for farming. Poor land management and international interference has also led to Haiti losing much of its traditional agricultural base.

During his campaign, Jovenel Moïse had promised to draw on his experience as a banana exporter to change land usage in Haiti, and to start more solar and wind-powered farms. But when these promises went unfulfilled, some Haitians came to regard the president as uncaring. President Moïse also failed to deliver on his promise of universal education in Haiti. This is important in a country where only 60 percent of people can read, and less than half its children attend school. But the educational changes Moïse promised never really happened. And a number of Haiti's problems have been related to environmental issues. The country is still recovering from an earthquake that killed 160,000 people in 2010. Several hurricanes have also hit the country in recent years. These storms now cause more damage than in the past, and scientists say global warming is the main reason for this. Five years ago, Hurricane Matthew caused \$2.6 billion in damage, and also unleashed a deadly epidemic of cholera. What is cholera? (A disease caused by bacteria in drinking water.) Haiti has also been hit hard by COVID-19, and the situation may get much worse due to a lack of vaccines in the country.

Haitians face many other problems as well.

- Poor land management, loss of agriculture
- 60 percent live in poverty
- 40 percent are illiterate
- Devastating earthquakes, hurricanes, epidemics

Poverty-stricken neighborhood in Cap-Haitien



School children in Haiti

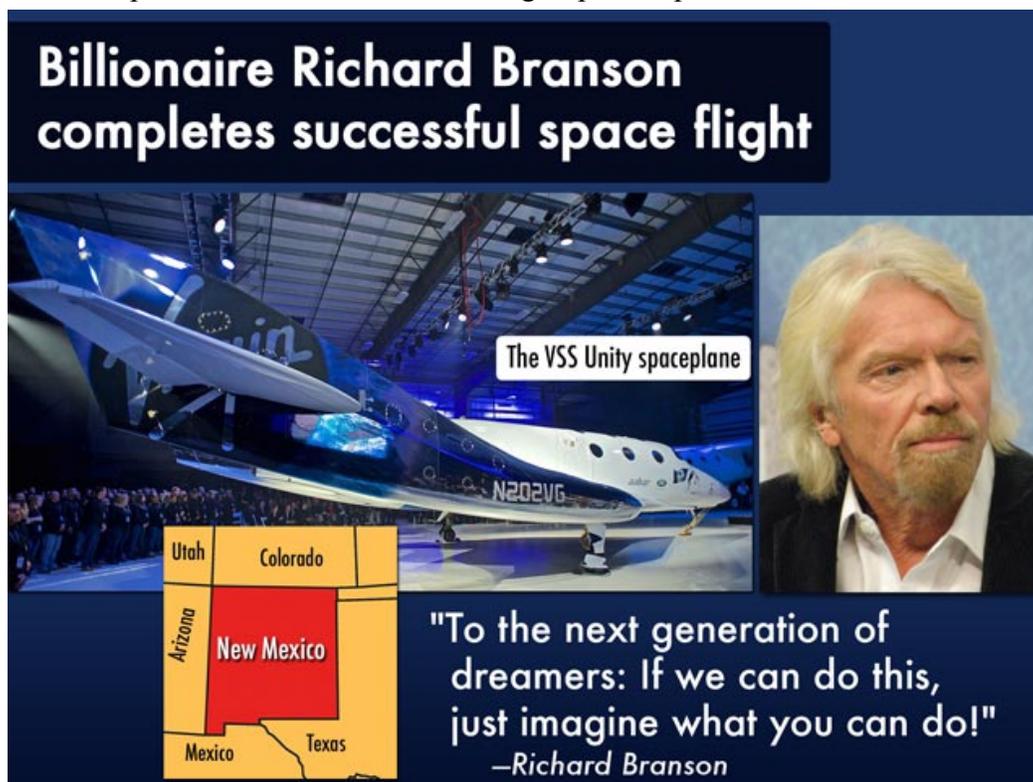
Billionaire Richard Branson Completes Successful Space Flight

Seventy-year-old billionaire Richard Branson made history recently. Branson is the founder of the Virgin Group, which consists of more than 400 companies, including a spaceflight company called Virgin Galactic. On July 11th, Branson became the first person to travel to space on a spacecraft he helped fund. Branson, along with two pilots, and three employees of Virgin Galactic, took off from a launch site in Truth or Consequences, New Mexico. The group traveled in the SpaceShipTwo vehicle named the “VSS Unity,” shown here. Virgin Galactic has spent the last two decades designing a spacecraft capable of safely traveling to and returning from space. Why do you think billionaires like Branson are so eager to travel to space?

Branson and his crew completed a successful suborbital flight, reaching a height of 53 miles above the Earth’s surface. A suborbital flight requires significantly less speed than a flight attempting to achieve orbit above Earth. The U.S. military considers the boundary to space to be 50 miles above the Earth’s surface, so Branson’s flight just barely broke the boundary. Although they did travel high enough to experience nearly four minutes of weightlessness.

Branson isn’t the only billionaire with plans to travel into space. Amazon founder Jeff Bezos plans to take part in a spaceflight on July 20th using a rocket developed by his space company called Blue Origin. Experts say these flights could usher in a new era of “space tourism,” in which the ultra-wealthy can buy tickets to travel off the planet. Would you want to travel to space if tickets were affordable?

Virgin Galactic plans to offer tickets for upcoming space flights at \$250,000 per seat. Branson also said that having this experience made him realize how incredible our planet is. He said he wants to spend the rest of his life working to protect planet Earth.



Billionaire Richard Branson completes successful space flight

The VSS Unity spaceplane

Utah Colorado
Arizona New Mexico
Mexico Texas

"To the next generation of dreamers: If we can do this, just imagine what you can do!"
—Richard Branson

Billionaires in space: What are they achieving?

“The space race used to be between superpowers,” said Chandra Steele in *NBCNews.com*. “Now it’s between the super-rich.” British billionaire Richard Branson fired the starting gun this week, joining five Virgin Galactic employees on a rocket that ascended 53.5 miles above New Mexico to the edge of space, giving passengers several minutes of

weightlessness. “Honestly, nothing could prepare you for the view of Earth from space,” said Branson, 70. He leapfrogged ahead of Amazon chairman Jeff Bezos, who will achieve his “boyhood dream” next week by traveling to suborbital space for 11 minutes aboard his Blue Origin shuttle. Elon Musk’s SpaceX company, meanwhile, will charge a lucky few \$55 million apiece for a ride on its *Dragon* capsule and an eight-day stay on the International Space Station. Space travel once fostered scientific curiosity and national pride, but billionaires using their astronomical wealth “to leave the planet” isn’t exactly inspirational.

It’s easy to scoff at these “boys and their toys,” said Eric Berger in *ArsTechnica.com*. But Bezos, Branson, and Musk have committed two decades of work and billions of their personal fortunes to open “space tourism” to private citizens. Branson “put his billion-dollar ass on the line



Branson floats in zero gravity.

to demonstrate the safety of Virgin Galactic’s vehicle. That is no small thing.” Soon, people willing to spend \$250,000 will be able to repeat Branson’s experience, said Michael Greshko in *NationalGeographic.com*. And ticket prices will drop over time, bringing us closer to the dream of “democratizing space.”

It’s an empty dream, said Jacob Silverman in *NewRepublic.com*. The superwealthy may enjoy a chance to take the world’s most expensive Instagram photos, but we’ve already discovered that radiation and low gravity damage the body and make sustained human presence in space unlikely for generations, “if ever.” And while mega-billionaires squander fortunes on their childhood fantasies, Earthlings are struggling to meet the urgent issues of climate change, health care, housing, and a growing, grotesque wealth gap. The new space race is “scientifically useless”—a mere repeat of what NASA achieved 60 years ago, said Michael Hiltzik in the *Los Angeles Times*. The real future of space is robotic exploration, like NASA’s missions to Mars, which is vastly cheaper and more practical. Establishing colonies on other worlds is “the dream of schoolchildren, and it’s time that the billionaires grew up.”

Conservationist Works to Protect China's Rare "Magic Rabbit"

Meet the Ili pika — ILL-ee PYEkah —, a very cute but very rare mammal. It is only about 8 inches in size, and it is very difficult to find in the wild. In fact, only a few people alive today have ever seen one in person. That includes the Chinese conservationist who first discovered them in 1983. His name is Li Weidong. For the past several years, Li has devoted his life to finding and protecting the Ili pika. No one had seen one since the early 1990s, until July of 2014. Li and his team were looking in the Tianshan mountains when they saw the animal shown here, poking its head above the rocks. He took photos of it, including this one. Photos of the cute animal quickly went viral on social media and the Ili pika became an international celebrity.

After rediscovering the animal, Li helped start two sanctuaries in the area to protect the Ili pika and its natural habitat. But Li is actually worried, because estimates show that there are fewer than 1,000 Ili pikas left. Li says the Ili pika's population has decreased 70 percent since the early 1980s. Pikas generally prefer to live in cold, mountainous areas, where they eat grasses and other mountain plants. Little is known about the Ili pika, but American pikas can die in temperatures over 78 degrees. Rising global temperatures and human development have driven the Ili pikas higher up into the mountains. These problems, along with pollution, are threatening the species' survival. Li is concerned that almost nothing is being done to protect these animals.

Conservationist works to protect China's rare "magic rabbit"



"Suddenly two bunny ears emerged from the crack of one of the rocks. The little thing was staring at me, blinking at me. I thought it was the most beautiful and bizarre creature I'd ever seen. I couldn't believe my eyes."

—Li Weidong



Conservationist Li Weidong

Pikas are members of a group called lagomorphs, which includes rabbits and hares. What similarities and differences do you notice between the pikas shown here and rabbits and hares?

Pikas are small, furry animals that live in mountain ranges in North America and Asia. Despite their cute appearance, pikas are surprisingly tough animals. Some pikas can live on mountains at altitudes of nearly 20,000 feet. They prefer to live on rocky mountain sides where they can find shelter in the cracks and crevices between rocks. Because pikas need cooler temperatures to survive, they spend much of their time avoiding direct sunlight by hiding beneath mountain rocks.

Pikas are herbivores, meaning they only eat plants. Their diet consists mostly of shrubs, grasses, moss, and lichen. And though they live in cold environments, Pikas don't hibernate during the winter. Rock-dwelling pikas create a "haypile" of dried vegetation that they use as food during the winter. Pikas are very vocal animals. Because of the high-pitched sounds they make, pikas have earned the nickname "whistling hares." They use a series of complex calls to communicate with each other. Many of the calls relate to protecting their haypiles. But pikas also use these calls to recognize one another, to warn other pikas of nearby predators, and to attract mates. While pikas aren't currently listed under the Endangered Species Act, experts say we should be concerned about the threats these animals face. Because they need cool temperatures to survive, climate change is already having a major impact on pika populations around the globe. Recent studies have found that rising temperatures have caused some pika populations to disappear completely.



- Pikas are related to hares and rabbits.
- Some pikas live at altitudes of 20,000 ft.
- Pikas are sometimes called "whistling hares" because of the high pitch call they make when alarmed.
- Pikas make a series of complex calls to communicate.

Newly Discovered Bone Carving shows Neanderthals made Art

About 30,000 years ago, a species called *Homo neanderthalensis* or “Neanderthals,” became extinct. Neanderthals were another species of human, and close relatives of today’s humans. Which scientists call *Homo sapiens*, Latin for “thinking man.” But a recent discovery suggests that Neanderthals also did a lot of thinking. In 2019, researchers discovered a special bone carving, shown here, at the Unicorn Cave archaeological site in Germany. This bone belonged to a species of giant deer that went extinct more than 7,700 years ago. Scientists used carbon dating, a method for determining the age of organic objects, on the giant deer bone and found that it was roughly 51,000 years old. As you can see in the image, the bone has lines and symbols carved into it, which researchers believe may have been an early form of visual art.

The researchers say that these lines form a pattern and were made intentionally, not as a result of butchering the animal. The researchers believe this bone carving shows that Neanderthals were capable of abstract or symbolic thought, although what these symbols might represent is still unclear. Previous research had shown that only *Homo sapiens* were capable of this kind of thought. For almost two centuries, we have used the term Neanderthals as an insult when applied to a person’s intelligence. But discoveries like the bone carving show that Neanderthals were smarter than we previously thought. Some experts believe these advances may have been made because some Neanderthals cross-bred with *Homo sapiens*.

Newly discovered bone carving shows Neanderthals made art



Photo: V. MINKUS



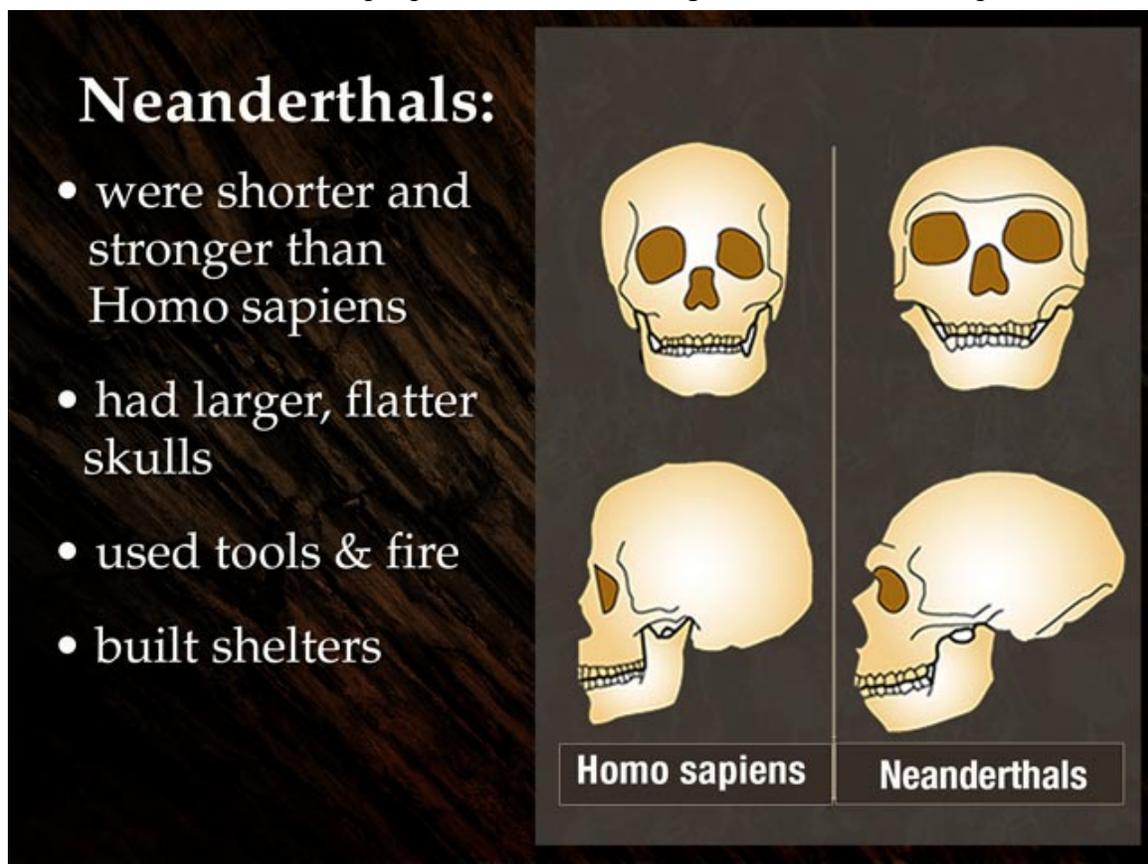
Neanderthal carving on a giant deer bone

“It’s the start of culture, the start of abstract thinking, the birth of art.”

—Thomas Terberger, archaeologist at the University of Göttingen.

Scientists say that Neanderthals existed on Earth for more than 300,000 years before they became extinct. During that time, they overlapped with Homo sapiens for a few thousand years. Before the 1800s, scientists didn't know about Neanderthals. Two skulls were found in the early part of the 1800s, but no one knew what they were. In 1856, miners in Germany's Neander Valley found a fossilized skeleton. A scientist recognized the fossil as a relative of humans. Since then, scientists have found bones and other fossils of more than 100 different Neanderthals. The illustrations here show two sets of skulls. The drawings on the right show the average skull of a Neanderthal, and the ones on the left show the skull of a modern human. What differences do you see?

Neanderthals were also stronger than Homo sapiens; we know this because their bones were much thicker than ours, and they are thought to have had larger noses than we do. Neanderthals were stockier than Homo sapiens, with barrel-shaped rib cages and shorter limbs. Some experts believe Neanderthals evolved this way to retain body heat in cold climates. Neanderthals could build and use tools and use fire for warmth and cooking. They sometimes lived in caves, but they could also build shelters outside. Neanderthals lived in small social groups that included family units. Most Neanderthals only lived to about 30 years old, about the same as ancient Homo sapiens. Another interesting fact is that because Homo sapiens and Neanderthals interbred thousands of years ago, almost all modern humans carry a small amount of Neanderthal DNA. Scientists have discovered that most Europeans and Asians have at least 2 percent Neanderthal DNA, and people with African backgrounds have about .5 percent.



Zaila Avant-garde is 2021 Spelling Bee Champion

Every year, many people look forward to watching the Scripps National Spelling Bee. This contest is shown on ESPN. The 2020 contest was cancelled, due to COVID-19 precautions. But the Bee was back in 2021, although it was moved to Orlando, Florida. It is usually held in Washington, D.C. This year's winner is Zaila Avant-garde — zah-EE-lah ah-vahnt-gahrd —, a 14-year-old from Harvey, Louisiana. The last time she competed in the National Spelling Bee, as a 12-year-old, Zaila tied for 370th place. Since then, however, she has been studying extremely hard. She usually puts in about seven hours of spelling practice every day, covering 13,000 words during that time.

Her path to the championship involved spelling some very hard words. When Zaila spelled her final word, “ m u r r a y a ” — murr-EYEah — she became the first African American winner in the history of the Scripps National Spelling Bee. For her win, she received the first-place prize of \$50,000. This is not the first time Zaila Avant-garde has gotten national attention. She already holds three Guinness World Records for her basketball-handling skills! One of these records involved dribbling SIX balls, all at the same time, for 30 seconds. After her Spelling Bee victory, several colleges offered Zaila full scholarships. She is flattered by this attention, but she plans to attend Harvard College when she graduates from high school. Zaila is also eyeing a future in the WNBA and a job with NASA.

Zaila Avant-garde is 2021 Spelling Bee champion



“To actually win the whole thing was like a dream come true.”



To win, she had to spell words such as:

- **ancistroid** *hook-shaped*
- **dysphotic** *having very little light*
- **depreter** *technique for finishing a wall*
- **murraya** *Asian citrus tree*

Country of the Week: South Sudan

_____ South Sudan is a country in East Africa. It is the youngest country in the world, having been formed as an independent nation in 2011. It used to be part of another country. Around 12 million people live in South Sudan. Tropical forests cover much of South Sudan. The White Nile, a tributary of the Nile River, runs straight through the country, creating large swampy areas and marshes in its wake.

These forests and wetlands support many kinds of animal life. One of the largest wildlife migrations in the world takes place annually in South Sudan, when more than 1 million antelope come through the country. There are also many species of birds in South Sudan, including the African fish eagle. The African fish eagle is the national animal of South Sudan. It is similar in appearance to a famous North American bird, the bald eagle.

Juba is the capital and the largest city in South Sudan. It has a population of just over 500,000 people, and it is the political and cultural center of the country. The largest airport in South Sudan is located in Juba, and this airport is the major point of entry for much of the international aid that comes into the country. South Sudan's economy is heavily dependent on oil exports. Exports of agricultural products like cotton, teak, and mangoes, as well as mineral resources like copper and iron ore, are also important to the country's economy. However, South Sudan also borrowed a lot of money from European countries and NGOs to build up its infrastructure, and now the country is saddled with debt that has hampered its economic growth. Salva Kiir Mayardit has been the president of South Sudan since 2011.

Country of the Week:
South Sudan

Juba
Credit: D Chol, CC BY-SA 4.0

Salva Kiir Mayardit
Credit: Jenny Rockett, CC BY-SA 3.0

African fish eagle
Credit: Charles J. Sharp, CC BY-SA 4.0

The collage features several elements: the title 'Country of the Week: South Sudan' in large black font; the South Sudan flag (black, red, green, and white horizontal stripes with a yellow triangle and star); an aerial photograph of the city of Juba; a portrait of President Salva Kiir Mayardit wearing a black hat and speaking at a microphone; a map of East Africa with South Sudan highlighted in red and labeled 'South Sudan' and 'Juba'; and a photograph of an African fish eagle perched on a branch.

South Sudan is one of the oldest inhabited regions on Earth, and it has been home to many civilizations for thousands of years. Beginning in 1899, Sudan and South Sudan were put together as one colony under Egyptian and British control. In 1956, Egypt and the UK granted independence to the whole area, and it became one country just called Sudan. But there were many conflicts within the country even after independence.

Sudan endured two long civil wars between government forces based in the north and rebel groups in the south. Then, in 2011, the government decided to allow those in the south to hold a referendum to decide if they wanted to secede from Sudan and form their own country. In the 2011 Independence Referendum, more than 98 percent of South Sudanese voted in favor of independence, and South Sudan officially became independent that same year. Even after South Sudanese independence, however, there have been many issues within the country, and between 2014 and 2020 there was a destructive civil war that claimed hundreds of thousands of lives. Today, the political situation in South Sudan has improved, but it is still an unstable nation. On the country's 10th anniversary, President Kiir promised the people no more war. However, about 60 percent of the population suffers from severe food shortages. Christianity is the dominant religion in South Sudan. Many South Sudanese people also practice traditional African religions, and even the Christianity practiced in the country is influenced by traditional African spirituality. South Sudan has produced several internationally famous athletes, including many NBA players. Luol Deng, who was born in South Sudan, was in the NBA from 2004 until 2019.



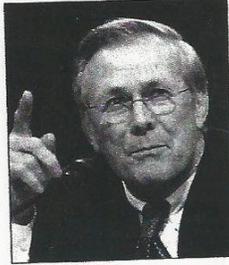
The hawk who oversaw the U.S. invasion of Iraq

Donald Rumsfeld
1932–2021

On the morning of Sept. 11, 2001, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was seated at his desk in the Pentagon watching news footage from New York City, where two planes had just smashed into the World Trade Center. Suddenly, his office began to shake—a hijacked Boeing 757 had slammed into the Pentagon's southwest wing. Rumsfeld ran to the crash site to help in the rescue work, then moved to the military command center. He quickly emerged as the hawkish face of the Bush administration's War on Terror, achieving fleeting popularity as U.S. forces ousted Afghanistan's Taliban rulers, who had harbored al-Qaida and Osama bin Laden. But Rumsfeld and fellow neoconservatives were soon pushing President George W. Bush to strike Iraq, claiming—with no hard evidence—that dictator Saddam Hussein also had ties to al-Qaida, and weapons of mass destruction. “The best and in some cases the only defense,” Rumsfeld said, “is a good offense.” No WMDs were found following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, and the country rapidly descended into bloody sectarian conflict. Rumsfeld offered no mea culpas in his 2011 memoir, insisting that the Iraq War, which cost the U.S. \$700 billion and resulted in the deaths of 4,400 American service members and hundreds of thousands of Iraqis, “created a more stable and secure world.”

Rumsfeld was born in Evanston, Ill., to parents who were successful real estate agents, said *The New York Times*. He earned a scholarship to Princeton University, where he was captain of the wrestling and football teams. After a stint as a Navy fighter pilot, Rumsfeld won a long-shot bid in 1962 for a House of Representatives seat in an affluent Chicago suburb. “A strikingly handsome Midwesterner radiating confidence,” the Republican formed a group of aggressive young lawmakers dubbed “Rumsfeld's Raiders” and easily won three more terms. Richard Nixon admirably called Rumsfeld a “ruthless little bastard” and hired him after winning the presidency.

As head of the Office of Economic Opportunity, Rumsfeld pared the anti-poverty agency down sharply, said *The Times* (U.K.).



Then, having rankled Nixon's top aides, he was dispatched to Brussels as ambassador to NATO in 1973, leaving him “untainted when the full fury of the Watergate scandal broke.” President Gerald Ford named Rumsfeld his chief of staff, then defense secretary, where he clashed with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, foiling a major arms-control deal with the Soviet Union. The Pentagon's youngest-ever chief—he took the post at age 43—Rumsfeld was an intense manager who sent out flurries of memos that came to be known as “snowflakes.” After Ford's 1976 election defeat, Rumsfeld went into business as a pharmaceutical and tech executive, making millions of dollars from his role in the development of NutraSweet and high-definition TV.

In his second Pentagon stint, Rumsfeld had ambitious plans to “streamline and modernize the military,” said *The Wall Street Journal*. He dismissed a request from top generals for a 480,000-strong Iraq invasion force, calling it “old thinking,” and capped the maximum deployment at 125,000 troops. Baghdad fell in three weeks, but the occupying force was too small to restore order. “Stuff happens,” Rumsfeld remarked when Iraqis went on a looting spree. Pentagon officials said the chaos was fueled by the defense secretary's decision to disband Iraq's army, which left some 300,000 men jobless; many went on to join ISIS. Rumsfeld often “came across as insensitive to strains on the U.S. military,” said *The Washington Post*. In 2004, he told Army reservists worried about the lack of armor on their vehicles that “you go to war with the Army you have.” Asked about the failure to find WMDs, Rumsfeld insisted that “the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.”

“As the war dragged on with little sign of progress,” President Bush resisted calls to fire Rumsfeld, said *The Guardian* (U.K.). But after Republicans suffered a drubbing in the 2006 midterm elections, “Rumsfeld was immediately sacked, and largely disappeared from public life.” In a 2015 interview, he said the U.S.'s fatal mistake in Iraq was trying to build a democracy. “You can be helpful, you can provide assistance,” Rumsfeld said, but eventually, “you're going to have to take your hand off the bicycle seat.”

The director who brought Superman to the big screen

Richard Donner
1930–2021

Richard Donner was at home nursing a hangover when the call came in that would change his life. A veteran TV director, he'd just made his movie breakthrough with 1976's *The Omen*, about parents who adopt a young boy who is secretly the Antichrist. Now he was being offered \$1 million by a producer to bring the comic-book hero Superman to the big screen. After insisting on a rewrite of a script he found too cartoonish and casting an unknown Christopher Reeve in the title role, Donner struck gold with the global smash *Superman* in 1978. Other hits followed, including the kids' adventure film *The Goonies* (1985) and *Lethal Weapon* (1987), the buddy-cop blockbuster starring Danny Glover and Mel Gibson that spawned three sequels. The genre-hopping director said his aim was to tell human tales, and credited *Superman's* success to his insistence on playing it straight. “Anything I've been involved with or have been surrounded by,” Donner said, “it's about story.”

Richard Schwartzberg was born in the Bronx, where his father, a Russian-Jewish immigrant, worked for the family furniture business, said *The New York Times*. On visits to his maternal grand-



father's Brooklyn movie theater, Richard “became fascinated by film,” but with “no specific career ambitions” he joined the Navy in his teens. He then studied business at New York University, but dropped out to try his hand at acting, adopting the stage name Donner. He landed some small roles, but quit when a director, Martin Ritt, told him, “I'd never make it as an actor because I couldn't take direction, but he thought I could give it.” After “several years of directing commercials,” Donner moved to Los Angeles in 1959 and “made his way in television drama,” said

The Times (U.K.). He directed episodes of *The Twilight Zone*, *Perry Mason*, and *Gilligan's Island* and made three unsuccessful films before finding big-screen success with *The Omen*.

While Donner directed few post-1980s hits, he “continued working steadily,” said *The Guardian* (U.K.). The production company he founded with his wife, Lauren Shuler Donner, was behind box office smashes including *Free Willy* (1993), *X-Men* (2000), and *Deadpool* (2016). A convivial man with an outsize personality, Donner lacked any pretense about his cinematic contributions. His sole boast: “I'm pretty good at meeting a schedule and a budget.”

Remembering When...

Most libraries have changed a great deal since we were young. They now feature movies on DVD, rows of compact discs and audio books, computers for looking up information, and many other things we never dreamed of when we were growing up. Many libraries also offer e-books, or electronic books that can only be read on a digital device. Some libraries are even getting rid of their actual physical books.

This week, we remember libraries the way they used to be: quiet places full of books, where we could learn about most everything in the world. Do you remember what your local library looked like? Was it housed in a beautiful old building, or something simpler? Did it have a certain smell and feel? What were its most striking details? For many of us, our first memory of the library was getting a library card. Unlike today's slick plastic bar-coded cards, they were typed and hand-written. Signing your name to a library card was a major event. It meant you were growing up and entering the world of knowledge. It also meant accepting responsibility; you had to promise to pay fines on overdue books, and to replace any materials you lost.

Many of us visited the library once a week, when we'd stock up on books for the week. And a bookmobile, like the one shown here, was the perfect solution for those of us who lived in rural areas.

Remember When . . .
Your local
library



#758	398
Steel, Flora Annie	St
AUTHOR	
English fairy tales	
TITLE	
DATE DUE	BORROWER'S NAME
NOV 18	Clara Crowley 70
NOV 15	Ruth Barrow
DEC 20	Ruth Barrow
OCT 6	Billy Bell 2A
OCT 13	Charles Simpson 7B
NOV 10	William 7B
APR 4	Pat Barrow 7A
APR 5	William 7A
APR 10	William 7A
APR 10	William 7A
MAY 3	Minnie 7A
PRINTED IN U.S.A.	



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Bookmobile in
North Carolina, 1950

Sometimes the library would hold special events, which may have included a librarian reading to groups of young people, as shown in the photo here. There was no such thing as a computer database then either — if you wanted to find something specific, you had to look it up in the card catalog. You could also look at books in the other sections: the adult stacks, the reference collection, and the periodicals area. If your library was big enough, you could also sit at a table and read, or do research for a school theme or paper. Bringing your books up to the counter was a great feeling. For each book, you often had to sign your name on a small card that went into the library's filing system. One of these cards is shown here, for a school library book called "English Fairy Tales." Look carefully at the top signature. Can you read it? (It is signed "Elvis Presley," and it's his first known autograph.)

One thing hasn't changed from those times to now — the feeling of going home with new library books to read. These books taught us about faraway places, or about our community and state and country. They introduced us to poetry, to drama, to fiction and nonfiction books. But what we mostly learned about was ourselves.

What we know about Jan. 6

A House select committee will soon investigate the Capitol insurrection. What have we learned so far about that day?

Who broke into the Capitol building?

At least 800 people smashed their way into the building from eight locations. Most had marched in a crowd of thousands that swarmed the Capitol after then-President Trump held a “Stop the Steal” rally in Washington, D.C. During that rally, Trump repeat his false claim that the 2020 election was stolen and urged the crowd to march on the Capitol and “fight like hell” to save the country. Some marchers, court filings reveal, had brought knives, baseball bats, a crowbar, sharpened sticks, bear spray, and tasers. Most of the more than 535 participants now facing a variety of charges appear to have acted spontaneously, but at least 80 have connections with organized extremist groups. The most prominent are the Proud Boys and the Oath Keepers, a militia that recruits followers from the military and law enforcement. At least 55 current or former members of the military and more than a dozen current or former police officers from around the country have been charged with participating in the Capitol riot.



‘Fight like hell’: Trumpists storm the Capitol.

Was the attack planned?

Videos captured by participants show a core group of dozens of people outside the Capitol wearing riot gear, moving in single-file military-style formations, and shouting directions to the rest of the crowd. For weeks beforehand, there were at least 1 million social media mentions of storming the Capitol to prevent Congress from certifying Joe Biden’s electoral victory. Local and national law-enforcement agencies were aware of these threats, and the intelligence arm of the Capitol Police received a tip about “detailed plans to storm federal buildings.” But neither the FBI nor the Department of Homeland Security deemed those threats credible, and the officers stationed on the Capitol grounds were not warned of a possible attempt to invade the building.

What else went wrong?

Few of the badly outnumbered frontline police officers at the barricades had crowd-control tools or riot gear. At least four were dragged into the crowd, including Metropolitan Police Officer Michael Fanone, who was beaten, kicked, and tasered while pleading for his life. “Some guys started getting a hold of my gun,” he said. “They were screaming out, ‘Kill him with his own gun.’” Capitol Police Sgt. Aquilino Gonell was battered with a flagpole and had his hand sliced open. “We’re going to kill you,” he recalled rioters shouting. “You’re a disgrace. You’re a traitor.” It took three hours for National Guard troops to arrive, and by the end of the day, more than 150 police officers were injured—some suffering broken bones, burns, concussions, and a heart attack. Officer Brian Sicknick, 42, suffered two

strokes and died the next day; two officers who defended the Capitol died by suicide days later.

Were GOP officials involved?

At least 57 state and local Republican officials have been identified among the rioters. Among members of Congress, the picture is less clear. Some Republicans have ties to extremist groups: Arizona Rep. Paul Gosar met with members of a local chapter of the Oath Keepers in 2017. Colorado Rep. Lauren Boebert has met with members of the Three Percenters militia and tweeted the morning of Jan. 6

that “today is 1776”—a phrase many of the insurrectionists also used. Some congressional Democrats claim they saw Republicans giving Trump supporters tours of the Capitol before the attack, in violation of pandemic restrictions—a claim Republicans deny. Unnamed White House aides told reporters that Trump was gleeful as he watched the riot unfold on television, and for two hours ignored pleas to call the crowd off. He never summoned the National Guard, which the Pentagon finally sent in.

What has happened since?

More than a dozen people have pleaded guilty to, among other charges, picketing in a Capitol building, obstruction of Congress, and conspiracy. Attorney General Merrick Garland has reportedly decided against prosecuting rioters for sedition, the rarely used charge of trying to overthrow the government, believing it will be far easier to get convictions on more concrete violations of law. The most potentially serious charges—assaulting police officers and obstructing an official proceeding—carry prison sentences of up to 20 years, although first-time offenders are unlikely to get maximum terms.

How the rioters portray their motives

During court hearings and in interviews, participants in the Capitol riot have offered various justifications for their actions. Some have tried to paint themselves as victims: The lawyer for Jacob Anthony Chansley, the so-called QAnon Shaman, claims he was “brainwashed” by QAnon websites and Trump propaganda, while the lawyer representing Anthony Antonio, seen in videos shouting at officers, says he contracted “Foxitis” from Fox News. The lawyer for retired NYPD officer Thomas Webster, seen in a video attempting to gouge a Washington police officer’s eyes out, says that Webster acted in self-defense; he also conveyed Webster’s dismay that he was being jailed alongside “inner-city” criminals. Several defendants have argued that Trump “invited” them into the Capitol, and that they were just following their president’s orders. Many accused rioters, however, resent right-wing conspiracy theories that the Capitol attack was a false-flag operation. “Don’t you dare try to tell me that people are blaming this on antifa and BLM,” Jonathan Mellis posted on Facebook. “We proudly take responsibility for storming the Castle.” He’s been accused of trying to stab police officers with a sharp stick.

What remains unknown?

The House committee aims to find out why it took hours for the National Guard to arrive, what role militias played, why police were so unprepared, what Trump did during the riot, and whether any Republicans were in contact with the rioters. Far-right activist Ali Alexander said he and Reps. Gosar, Andy Biggs (R-Ariz.), and Mo Brooks (R-Ala.) “schemed up” a plan to put “maximum pressure on Congress” not to certify Biden’s victory, but this claim remains unconfirmed. House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy and most other Republicans have opposed any investigation into Jan. 6, which frustrates those directly affected. “Some things supersede politics,” said Officer Fanone. “This is about right and wrong.”

Supreme Court: What did we learn about the new majority?

“There were two very different Supreme Courts in the term that just ended,” said Adam Liptak in *The New York Times*. The nation’s highest judicial body has spent the past nine months defying predictions that the three Trump-appointed justices and their three conservative colleagues would “regularly steamroll” the court’s remaining three liberals. For most of the term, the 6-3 court was “fluid and unpredictable,” with liberals and conservatives joining to defend Obamacare, a Catholic charity’s right not to violate its beliefs on gay marriage, and college athletes fighting exploitation by the NCAA. But in this term’s last two cases, the court’s “conservative supermajority” reasserted itself in 6-3 rulings along ideological lines, upholding new voting restrictions in Arizona and striking down a California law requiring nonprofit political groups to disclose their donors. Nonetheless, we clearly “do not have a 6-3 conservative court,” said Josh Blackman in *Reason.com*. Because justices Amy Coney Barrett and Brett Kavanaugh are not the fiery partisans Trump expected, and often join with Chief Justice John Roberts, we now have a 3-3-3 court containing “a conservative wing, a moderate wing, and a principle-fluid progressive wing.”

The term may not have been “a clean sweep for conservatives,” said Ian Millhiser in *Vox.com*, but they got “about 80 to 90 percent of what they realistically could have expected.” The attempt to overturn the entire Affordable Care Act was so legally spurious that even Clarence Thomas, a longtime critic of the law, admitted it in a begrudging concurrence to the 7-2 ruling. But make no mistake: With Barrett and Kavanaugh aboard, “the court’s middle is really far to the right.” They clearly favor an expansion of religious exemptions from law, state restrictions on voting, and



A surprise to both fans and critics

limitations on unions. But note how even the conservative rulings were made with “judicial restraint and discipline,” said Jay Michaelson in *NYMag.com*. In *Fulton v. Philadelphia*, the court unanimously ruled that the city of Philadelphia could not refuse to give a contract to Catholic Social Services because that agency will not consider same-sex couples as foster parents—but the narrow ruling “passed on an opportunity to redraw church-state law from scratch.” The cautious Roberts, Kavanaugh, and Barrett prefer to

move the ball down the field toward conservative goals incrementally, rather than ignite political firestorms.

There was nothing restrained about how the court “turned back the clock on voting rights,” said Richard L. Hasen in *Slate.com*. In the Arizona case, Justice Samuel Alito decided that even if new restrictions might affect minorities more than others, they did not violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. Alito created a “new and impossible test” for those challenging state voting laws: They must prove that a restriction is *intentionally* designed to suppress votes.

In other cases, the court proved itself a Bill of Rights champion, said David French in *TheDispatch.com*. It defended a cheerleader’s right to free speech on social media, and limited police officers’ ability to enter the homes of misdemeanor suspects. So far, the court has chosen judicial restraint and to “consistently confound fans and critics alike.” Yet “deep fissures” lie beneath the surface, said Adam Winkler in *The Washington Post*. In the term that begins in October, the court will wade into cases that put gun control laws and *Roe v. Wade* on the line. “Don’t be surprised next June if talk of surprising compromises has vanished.”

Learning that your family owned slaves

Stacie Marshall found out that her family once enslaved seven people, said Kim Severson in The New York Times. Now the Georgia farmer is trying to find a way to make things right.

JUST BEFORE PEOPLE started to take the pandemic seriously, Stacie Marshall slipped into the back of a conference room in Athens, Ga., and joined two dozen Black farmers in a marketing seminar called “Collards Aren’t the New Kale.”

She stood out, and not just because she was one of only two white people in the room. Marshall, 41, still had the long blond hair and good looks that won her the Miss Chattooga County title in 1998. The win came with scholarship money that got her to a tiny Baptist college and a life away from Dirt Town Valley, Ga., the small Appalachian valley where her family has farmed for more than 200 years.

Leading the seminar was Matthew Raiford, 53, a tall, magnetic Gullah Geechee chef and organic farmer who works the coastal Georgia land his forebears secured a decade after they were emancipated from slavery.

He asked if there were questions. Marshall raised her hand, ignored the knot in her stomach, and told her story: She was in line to inherit 300 acres, which would make her the first woman in her family to own a farm. She had big plans for the fading commercial cattle operation and its overgrown fields. She would call it Mountain Mama Farms, and sell enough grass-fed beef and handmade products like goat’s milk soap to help support her husband and their three daughters.

But she had discovered a terrible thing. “My family owned seven people,” Marshall said. She wanted to know how to make it right. Raiford was as surprised as anyone in the room. “Those older guys have probably never heard that from a white lady in their entire lives,” he recalled.

For almost three years now, with the fervor of the newly converted, Marshall has been on a quest that from the outside may seem quixotic and even naïve. She is diving into her family’s past and trying to chip away at racism in the Deep South, where every white family with roots here benefited from slavery and almost every Black family had enslaved ancestors.

“I don’t have a lot of money, but I have property,” she said during a walk on her farm last winter. “How am I going to use that for the greater good, and not in like a



Marshall: ‘I will get some hell.’

paying-penance sort of way but in an it’s-just-the-right-thing-to-do kind of way?”

It’s not easy finding anyone in this farming community of 26,000 she can talk to about white privilege, critical race theory, or renewed calls for federal reparations. She can’t even get her cousins to stop flying the Confederate flag. It’s about heritage, not hate, they tell her. Hers is the national soul-searching writ small: Should the descendants of people who kept others enslaved be held responsible for that wrong? What can they do to make things right? And what will it cost?

After the seminar, the farmers offered some ideas: She could set up an internship for young Black farmers, letting them work her land and keep the profit. Maybe her Black neighbors wanted preservation work done on their church cemetery. Or maybe—and this is where the discussion gets complicated—she should give some land or money from the sale of it to descendants of the Black people who had helped her family build wealth, either as enslaved people in the 1800s or, later, as sharecroppers who

lived in two small shacks on her land. “She is deep in Confederate country trying to do this work,” Raiford said when he went to visit her farm this spring.

As the only young woman running a farm in the valley, Marshall already feels like a curiosity. You can’t really hide from your neighbors here, which is the best and the worst thing about tight communities. Not long ago, she ended up in a CrossFit class with Marjorie Taylor Greene, the far-right Republican this region elected to Congress in 2020.

Marshall hasn’t told most of her extended family what she is doing. “I will get some hell,” she said. “There are people in this community that are totally going to turn when I start telling these things.” At the same time, she is protective of her corner of the South. “I don’t want my family to be painted out as a bunch of white, racist rednecks,” she said. “God, I am proud of every square inch of this place—except for this.”

OVER THE YEARS, Marshall’s father and grandfather drove trucks or took shifts at the cotton mill to keep the farm running. At 68, her father, Steve Scoggins, still works 3 p.m. to midnight as a hospital maintenance man.

Her father, who lives down the road, is as proud of his farm daughter as a man could be. He unabashedly supports her work against racism, but at the Dirt Town Deli, he sometimes stays quiet when an offensive comment passes among his friends.

Marshall’s childhood was steeped in conservative rural politics and the power of the evangelical church. She left home to attend Truett McConnell University, a Baptist school near the Tennessee border, on a scholarship for students with ambitions to become a minister or marry one. There she met Jeremy Marshall, a product of the Atlanta suburbs who was studying for the ministry. They married when both were 21, and went on to earn master’s degrees.

The couple lived and worked for a decade at Berry College, a liberal arts school in northwest Georgia where they helped care for 400 evangelical students in a program paid for by the conservative WinShape Foundation. But last year, as the coronavirus hit, they decided it was time to move to the family farmhouse she had inherited.

Choosing Covid

As anti-vaxxers shun shots, Delta variant drives a new surge in infections



Delta variant drives surge among the unvaccinated

What happened

Covid cases surged across the U.S. this week, rising 50 percent in 31 states as the pace of vaccination stalled and the highly contagious Delta variant spread among the unprotected. U.S. cases doubled to more than 23,000 a day over the past week and hospitalizations rose 21 percent, driven by the now dominant variant from India, which spreads more than 200 percent faster than the original coronavirus. While new infections rose in all but two states, the hardest hit were those with the lowest vaccination rates, including Missouri, Arkansas, Nevada, and Louisiana. Nearly all hospitalizations and 99.5 percent of deaths were among the unvaccinated. "If they're sick enough to be admitted to the hospital, they are unvaccinated," said Howard Jarvis, an emergency room doctor in Springfield, Mo. "That is the absolute common denominator." Hospitals reported an influx of young adults and even some children—in Mississippi, where the 34 percent vaccination rate is well below the national average of 48 percent, seven children were in intensive care. "We have a vast pool of unimmunized people who are a perfect breeding ground for the Delta variant," said State Health Officer Thomas Dobbs. "It's going to kill folks—and it's already killing folks."

Pfizer representatives met with federal officials to seek authorization of a booster shot for its Covid vaccine. The company says Israeli data show that its vaccine has reduced effectiveness against the Delta variant, while Pfizer's own research indicates that a third shot produces a five- to 10-fold boost in antibody levels. But U.S. health officials said they needed more real-world data on how vaccines are performing against Delta, and stated that vaccinated Americans "do not need a booster shot at this time."

What the editorials said

"Covid-19 is not done with us yet," said the *Los Angeles Times*. With mask and distancing restrictions lifted and life returning to normal, "it's easy to forget that a pandemic is still raging." But after "steep declines" in infections, we now face "exponential growth" as the Delta variant preys on the tens of millions who've rejected safe and highly effective vaccines and "decided to take their



Vaccinating a teen in Missouri, a Covid hot spot

chances." These holdouts need to wake up and "recognize their growing risk."

The Delta variant is "no cause for panic," said the *New York Post*. Yes, it's more contagious, but numbers from Britain and Israel, which have both suffered Delta spikes, suggest that "vaccines remain highly effective" against serious illness and death. Nonetheless, "overcautious health bureaucrats" are urging even the vaccinated to mask up indoors and questioning school reopening plans. But "the only rational response is to work harder to get the holdouts jabbed."

What the columnists said

The Trumpist right wing "is becoming a death cult," said Eugene Robinson in *The Washington Post*. How else to explain the "twisted" scene at the Conservative Political Action Conference, where a right-wing author drew cheers when he "crowed" that the U.S. had fallen short of its vaccination goal of 70 percent? Or the relentless peddling of loony anti-vax propaganda by Fox News' Laura Ingraham and Tucker Carlson? For this cult, "owning" scientists, mask-wearing libs, and Joe Biden is worth anything—but "they're owning no one except themselves" and their "loved ones."

It's hard to overstate the "sheer insanity" of what's happening in red states, said Charlie Sykes in *TheBulwark.com*. You'd think the same crew outraged by masks and distancing might "see the vaccines as a ticket back to normal life." Instead, they've chosen this perilous moment "to go full anti-vax." The conservative lawmakers and pundits likening college vaccination requirements to apartheid and health workers sent door-to-door to Nazi brownshirts are engaging in "performative demagoguery" that will result in lost lives. Call it what it is: "depraved indifference to human life."

As America hardens into two camps, those vaccinated and those not, the Delta variant "only exacerbates the divide," said Sarah Zhang in *TheAtlantic.com*. For the vaccinated it poses little threat of serious illness—but for stubborn holdouts, "getting infected is probably a matter of time." A year ago, vaccines were "a distant hope." Now here we sit, "with too many doses and too few willing arms, at a time when the advantages of vaccination are clearer than ever."