Bailing out

The Trump administration in chaos as staff departures mount

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Editor’s letter

History, it turns out, is not over. Liberal democracies have not won the war of ideas. In his influential 1992 book, *The End of History*, political philosopher Francis Fukuyama surveyed a world in which the Soviet Union had collapsed, the Cold War was over, and the West had won—seemingly for good. Free-market democracies, Fukuyama said, had proven they were the “final form of human government.” But that victory’s permanence was an illusion. In the 21st century, liberal democracy is in retreat all over the world, as autoritarians and populist extremists seize the levers of power. In China, President Xi Jinping has made himself an emperor. (See Talking Points.) In Russia, the modern czar Vladimir Putin leverages the West’s social media and free speech to deepen our divisions and interfere in our elections. Poland, Hungary, and Turkey are all devolving into autocracies; far-right populist parties are on the rise throughout Europe. (See Best European Columns.) “Twenty-five years ago, I didn’t have a sense or a theory about how democracies can go backward,” Fukuyama recently told *The Washington Post*. “And I think they clearly can.”

In a new book, *The People vs. Democracy*, political scientist Yascha Mounk explains what Fukuyama failed to foresee. Center-left and center-right mainstream parties, Mounk says, have failed to address the powerful economic and cultural anxieties created by globalization, immigration, and multiethnic societies. Faith in democracy is waning; the belief that the system is “rigged” is growing. That’s opened the door to nationalist strongmen who claim to speak for “the people,” with simplistic solutions to their complaints. If democracies and mainstream parties do not adapt, Mounk warns, the center will not hold; authoritarians on both the Left and Right may carve up the world. Here and abroad, the threat to free speech, individual rights, and the rule of law is very real. History is still being written, and it’s a real page-turner.

William Falk
Editor-in-chief
The main stories...

Trump stands firm on metal tariffs

What happened
President Trump this week insisted on pushing ahead with his plan to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports, despite fierce pushback from congressional Republicans, Wall Street, and the business community, and the resignation of his chief economic adviser, Gary Cohn. Taking even senior White House officials by surprise, the president last week announced across-the-board tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum. He said the U.S. had been “mistrusted” by other countries for decades, raised against America’s $375 billion trade deficit with China, and batted away concerns about retaliatory tariffs, tweeting: “Trade wars are good, and easy to win.” Wall Street registered its concern as stock prices dropped. Trump later signaled that major U.S. trade partners Canada and Mexico could be exempted if they accepted “fair” new terms for the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which is currently being renegotiated.

GOP lawmakers reacted with a chorus of condemnation. House Speaker Paul Ryan warned that the tariffs would have damaging “unintended consequences,” while Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell said they risked provoking “a larger trade war.” Cohn, a former Goldman Sachs banker whose resignation was the latest in a string of White House departures (see Talking Points), had fiercely opposed new tariffs. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker threatened to impose retaliatory tariffs on U.S. products, including Harley-Davidson motorcycles, Kentucky bourbon, and Levi’s blue jeans. “We can also do stupid,” he said.

What the editorsials said
Trump is making “the biggest policy blunder of his presidency,” said The Wall Street Journal. The tariffs will temporarily benefit a “handful” of steel and aluminum companies, and their 170,000 or so employees, by raising prices. But those price increases will heavily impact the companies that rely on the metals—which employ some 6.5 million Americans. Car manufacturers and other steel-intensive industries will shift their production lines abroad; prices for everyday goods such as beer and canned foods will rise; and other countries will inevitably respond with retaliatory tariffs on our biggest exports. As for the Trump administration’s “preposterous” claim that these tariffs are necessary because of “national security,” that’s an argument other countries will now “surely emulate.”

Other of the supposed “adults in the room” is gone, said The New York Times. Cohn’s chief accomplishment was helping engineer a tax cut that “will benefit wealthy people like himself,” but at least he fought against the president’s worst protectionist instincts. His exit proves that the “cranks and nationalists” in the White House—led by trade adviser Peter Navarro and Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross—have won the battle for Trump’s ear.

What the columnists said
Employment at U.S. iron and steel mills has plummeted from 188,000 workers three decades ago to about $6,000 today, said Catherine Rampell in The Washington Post. But because of automation, we produce as much steel today as we did 30 years ago. Tariffs won’t bring many steel jobs back—so the president should stop offering false hope to the Rust Belt.

Despite all the hysteria, the proposed tariffs “will not end the world,” said Josh Bivens in The New York Times. Global steel and aluminum prices are artificially low because government-subsidized producers in China and other countries are creating “excess capacity.” Trump wants to “protect American metal producers” until this problem is addressed. The tariffs may also serve as big leverage in renegotiating NAFTA, said Liz Peek in TheHill.com. By dangling an exemption for Canada and Mexico, Trump could well “extract the kind of concessions that his predecessors failed to demand.”

Trade is the one issue on which Trump has always been consistent, said Paul Waldman in WashingtonPost.com. He sees it as a “zero-sum contest in which the only goal is exporting goods”—if the U.S. imports something from another country, that nation has “won,” and we’ve “lost.” This explains why Trump won’t be swayed by arguments about job losses and rising consumer prices: For him, that’s a small “price to pay” for restoring America’s “pride and dignity.” The president wants to show “that we’re big and strong, that nobody’s going to laugh at us”—whatever the cost.

It wasn’t all bad
■ Quebec musher Anny Malo was 25 miles into the 150-mile Copper-Dog sled race when disaster struck. One of her dogs, Max, had collapsed after a piece of ice became lodged in its throat. Malo was trying to help the dog when fellow musher Frank Moe passed by. A trained EMT, Moe suspended his own race and performed doggie CPR, blowing air into Max’s snout and reviving the animal. Moe finished 11th in the race—but his generosity earned him a sportsmanship award. As for Max, Malo says he’s well and still “the happiest dog in my truck.”

■ Mary Lou Smith is known as the Queen of the Conch. The 70-year-old has been joyously blasting the large pink shell at weddings and parties on Key West, Fla., for nearly two decades and has won the island’s annual conch-blowing contest several times. But Smith’s shell talent inspired a particularly special moment this week when, shortly after she won this year’s women’s division contest, her beau, Rick Race, 73, jumped onstage, got down on one knee, and proposed. It took Smith a moment to gather her thoughts. “I didn’t know what to say, so I blew the conch,” she says. “Then, I said yes.”

■ Philando Castile’s legacy lives on in the public schools of St. Paul, Minn. The JJ Hill Montessori nutrition supervisor was killed in an officer-involved shooting in 2016. Inspired by Castile’s history of buying lunch for the school’s poorer kids when they couldn’t afford it, a local university professor and her students created a charity to pay off JJ Hill’s entire student lunch debt. Since September, Philando Feeds the Children has raised more than $130,000: enough to wipe out not only the debt at JJ Hill, but all student lunch debt across St. Paul’s 56 public schools. “We are merely trying to continue Mr. Phil’s kind spirit,” says Prof. Pam Fergus.
North Korea dangles offer of nuclear disarmament

What happened
North Korea is willing to hold “candid talks” with the U.S. about dismantling its nuclear program and has promised to halt weapons tests during any negotiations, South Korea announced this week following a historic meeting in Pyongyang. North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un apparently made the offer during a four-hour dinner with envoys from Seoul—Kim’s first meeting with South Korean officials since he took power in 2011. “[North Korea] made it clear that it would have no reason to keep nuclear weapons if the military threat to the North was eliminated and its security guaranteed,” South Korean officials said. What exactly Pyongyang would want in return for denuclearization wasn’t clear: It has previously demanded a full U.S. military withdrawal from the South and an end to the U.S. nuclear umbrella. North Korea didn’t publicly confirm South Korea’s statement, but acknowledged “a satisfactory agreement.” Kim also said he’d be willing to meet South Korean President Moon Jae-in in April.

President Trump responded to Kim’s offer with cautious optimism. “May be false hope, but the U.S. is ready to go hard in either direction!” he tweeted. He added that he was open to direct talks, but an administration official said North Korea would first have to make “credible moves” toward denuclearization. Meanwhile, the U.S. imposed new sanctions on North Korea for using a chemical weapon—the deadly VX nerve agent—to assassinate Kim’s half-brother in Malaysia last year.

What the columnists said
Trump has taken a lot of flak for his “madman” approach on North Korea, said Krishnadev Calamur in The Atlantic.com. The president struck back at Kim’s nuclear provocations with not only biting economic sanctions but also threats to “destroy” North Korea with “fire and fury.” Many worried Trump would taunt Pyongyang’s volatile dictator into war. But Kim is now talking about renouncing nuclear weapons, something he has “never put on the table before.” Can it be? Has “Trump’s blustery rhetoric… worked?”

Mueller’s investigation gets closer to Trump

What happened
Special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation appeared to be zeroing in on President Trump himself this week, with multiple news organizations reporting that prosecutors were questioning witnesses about the activities of Trump’s personal attorney Michael Cohen and casting a wide net for documents and emails concerning the president and his advisers. Former Trump campaign adviser Sam Nunberg revealed that Mueller’s office had served him with a subpoena demanding all documents involving Trump and nine of his closest advisers going back to Nov. 1, 2015. In a series of rambling TV interviews, Nunberg asserted that he would defy the special counsel’s orders, before later backing down, and suggested that he believed Mueller’s team “may have something” on the president.

The special counsel’s office also appears to be scrutinizing the influence of foreign money on Trump’s campaign and political positions. George Nader, a Lebanese-American businessman who advises the crown prince of the United Arab Emirates and has made frequent trips to the White House since the election, is now cooperating with Mueller’s probe, according to The New York Times. Nader attended a January 2017 meeting in the Seychelles with informal Trump adviser Erik Prince, founder of private security firm Blackwater, and a Russian businessman with close ties to Vladimir Putin. The purpose of that meeting has been a puzzle to U.S. officials since intelligence agencies picked up on it in the final days of the Obama administration.

What the columnists said
“Mueller’s investigation is clearly now going into the deepest, darkest corners of Everywhere,” said Charles Pierce in Esquire.com. Virtually everyone in Trump’s orbit appears to be in the special counsel’s crosshairs, and Mueller keeps uncovering the stench of corruption. “It’s the money. It’s the Russians. The whole damn dirty deal is one great writhing ball of poisonous snakes, and Mueller seems to be perilously close to untangling it.”

Don’t get too excited, said Ed Rogers in The Washington Post. Nunberg was a marginal figure in the Trump campaign who was unceremoniously shoved out in August 2015. “It is difficult to imagine” what he could possibly have to offer Mueller. Nunberg was undeniably a “bit player,” said Zack Beauchamp in Vox.com. But we know that Russian intelligence saw Trump’s chaotic and disorganized campaign as an “irresistible target” and “repeatedly attempted to penetrate it.” As a result, “the Mueller team has a huge number of leads to investigate.”

“Trump stands behind a final redoubt: Nobody has shown he conspired with Russia in 2016,” said John Harwood in CNBC.com. But what we do know is worrisome enough, including his shady pre-election business dealings in Moscow, his staffers’ meeting with Russians promising “dirt” on Hillary Clinton, and his apathy toward Russian election meddling. No matter what the special counsel eventually concludes about Trump’s relationships with Russia, the public evidence “already paints a jarring picture.”
Controversy of the week

Kushner: Why he’s in big trouble

How bad was last week for Jared Kushner, President Trump’s son-in-law and senior adviser? “So bad,” said Jed Shugerman in Slate.com, that it was actually “hard to keep track of how many bad stories there were.” It started with the news that Kushner had lost his top-secret security clearance, followed swiftly by a possible explanation of the demotion: a Washington Post report that U.S. intelligence intercepted at least four foreign governments—including China and Israel—discussing ways they might use Kushner’s complex business interests to manipulate him. Every foreign country knew that Kushner “was desperate for cash,” said Rick Wilson in TheDailyBeast.com. In 2007, as the 26-year-old acting head of his family’s business, Kushner made the most expensive real estate purchase in U.S. history: 666 Fifth Ave. in Manhattan, for which he paid $1.8 billion at the peak of the housing bubble. The skyscraper is now a failing “white elephant”; the $1.2 billion mortgage is due for full repayment early next year; and Kushner’s family doesn’t have the money. In other words, it isn’t just his lack of experience or his “child-voiced affect” that may have made foreign governments think they could manipulate “the Naif Prince of Trumplandia.” It’s also that “he needs a billion dollars fast.”

The manipulation may have been mutual, said Clayton Swisher in TheIntercept.com. Last April, Charles Kushner, Jared’s father, approached the government of Qatar—a longtime U.S. ally that hosts an American air base—seeking investment in 666 Fifth Ave. The Qatari’s declined, and a month later the younger Kushner lobbied his father-in-law to side with Qatar’s neighbors, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, in a conflict that led to a blockade of Qatar and almost to war. Think about that, said Rick Wilson of Qatar and almost to war. Think about that, said Eugene Robinson in The Washington Post. Trump reportedly now sees Kushner as a liability and has quietly asked Chief of Staff John Kelly to orchestrate the departure of “Javanka,” as Kushner and Ivanka are collectively known. But “blatant corruption” exists at every level of this administration, starting at the very top. “To say we are being governed like a banana republic is an insult to banana republics.”

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But wait, there’s more, said Aaron Blake in Washington Post.com. The New York Times also reported last week that the Kushners did eventually borrow more than $500 million last year, from two companies, Citigroup and Apollo Global Management, whose officials had met with Jared Kushner at the White House. The family denies impropriety, but it certainly looks as if Jared was “using the White House as his own personal boardroom.” All of this—along with the additional revelation that Kushner met with foreign officials without informing the National Security Council—will be of great interest to special counsel Robert Mueller, said Charles Pierce in Esquire.com. “It’s pretty plain that a spit is being prepared for him at Mueller’s House of BBQ, right next to the one on which Paul Manafort is currently revolving.”

Kushner is a walking illustration of “why nepotism is so dangerous,” said Michael Cohen in The Boston Globe. For more than a year, a debt-ridden real estate heir with no experience in government has been shaping policy and poring over sensitive secrets for no other reason than that he’s “married to the president’s daughter.” Kushner’s days may be numbered, said Eugene Robinson in The Washington Post. Trump reportedly now sees Kushner as a liability and has quietly asked Chief of Staff John Kelly to orchestrate the departure of “Javanka,” as Kushner and Ivanka are collectively known. But “blatant corruption” exists at every level of this administration, starting at the very top. “To say we are being governed like a banana republic is an insult to banana republics.”

Only in America

· A candidate for the Texas state legislature has received the bulk of her campaign donations in the form of deer semen. The semen of prized deer is an alternative currency in rural Texas, and Democratic Judge Ana Garza should net around $51,000 when the vials of semen are sold at auction. “Semen is a very common way for us to donate,” said Fred Gonzalez of the Texas Deer Association.

· Conservative groups have blocked a bill banning child marriage in Kentucky. Under current state law, girls of any age can marry if they are marrying a man who impregnated them. A bill setting a minimum marriage age of 17 was withdrawn this week, when Republicans said the Family Foundation of Kentucky objected, placing parents with government, and the precedent that sets.”

Good week for:

Full disclosure, after porn star Stormy Daniels sued President Trump to nullify a $130,000 “hush agreement” about their past sexual relationship, saying he failed to sign it. The suit makes ominous mention of “certain still images” Trump allegedly sent her.

Disconnecting, with the publication of a study that found that people who check their smartphones during meals are less happy than people who don’t. Phone checking, the researchers found, contributes to “greater boredom and worse overall mood.”

Inner fortitude, after British police dropped all charges against the epically constipated Lamar Chambers, 24, and released him from jail to receive medical attention. Chambers, who allegedly swallowed packets of drugs upon his arrest, refused to have a bowel movement for 47 days, smashing the world record by two weeks.

Bad week for:

Grand Theft Oscar, after an ebullient Frances McDormand put down her Best Actress Oscar statue at an Academy Awards after-party and a man ran off with it. Terry Bryant, 47, was arrested after he cavedorted with the Oscar on Facebook Live, boasting he’d won it.

Branding, after an Indiana company confirmed it was making replicas of the presidential seal to be used as tee markers at a Trump International golf course. Federal law says that use of the presidential seal for commercial purposes is a crime.

Speedy trials, after all trials were canceled in Forsyth County, N.C., when judges and lawyers showed up in court and found no jurors. The county had failed to mail 1,700 jury-duty notices, and sent deputies to a local mall in a failed attempt to find volunteers.

Boring but important

Carson cancels pricey dining set

Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson became the latest Trump official to face scrutiny over his spending habits last week after he was forced to cancel a $31,000 furniture order for his HUD office, amid an investigation by the House Oversight Committee. The purchase of the custom-made, hardwood dining set came to light after HUD official Helen Foster claimed she was demoted for “resisting” attempts by Carson’s wife, Candy, to “get around” a $5,000 federal limit on office renovations. Carson, a former neurosurgeon, said the existing furniture was old and potentially “unsafe.” He said he expressed his preference for cheaper options, but “left this matter alone to concentrate on much bigger issues.”
Jackson, Miss.

Senate retirement: Citing ill health, Republican Sen. Thad Cochran announced this week that he will resign from the U.S. Senate in April, putting both of Mississippi’s Senate seats on the ballot in this year’s midterm elections. The 80-year-old Republican, who chairs the powerful Senate Appropriations Committee, has been dogged in recent months by Beltway whispers that his physical and mental health was fading, and a cluster of aides have closely supervised his activities on Capitol Hill. Cochran’s retirement will trigger a special election that could roil Mississippi politics. Republican Sen. Roger Wicker is already facing a primary challenge from state Sen. Chris McDaniel, a controversial hard-right candidate that GOP leaders hope to keep out of the Senate. McDaniel nearly unseated Cochran in 2014 and could choose to run for the departing senator’s open seat again instead of facing the incumbent Wicker. Republican Gov. Phil Bryant will now appoint an interim senator to hold the seat until November.

Texas

Democratic surge: Democrats in Texas voted in droves this week in the first primary elections of 2018, boosting confidence on the Left that high turnout and anti-Trump sentiment could propel Democrats to midterm victories in the ordinarily red state. More than 1 million votes were cast in the statewide Democratic Senate primary, more than double the number in 2014. Rep. Beto O’Rourke will now face GOP Sen. Ted Cruz in November; Cruz is favored for re-election, but O’Rourke has been drawing crowds and enthusiasm from small donors. At least 14 women won Democratic nominations for House seats, with more expected after runoff elections in May. Unsurprisingly for Texas, Republicans cast more ballots overall, with just over 1.5 million votes. Democrats have not won a statewide race since 1994, but the party believes it could flip three House districts, near Houston, Dallas, and San Antonio, that Hillary Clinton won in 2016.

Charleston, W. Va.

Teacher raises: West Virginia lawmakers voted unanimously this week to give teachers and state employees a 5 percent raise, ending a nine-day teacher strike that shut down classes for 277,000 public school students. Teachers had initially walked out on Feb. 22 after Gov. Jim Justice offered them a 2 percent salary increase, and they resisted union leaders’ calls to return to class when Justice bumped the offer to 5 percent, deciding to continue the strike until the raise was enacted by the legislature. GOP lawmakers warned that the pay raises would have to be paid for with spending cuts, including to Medicaid. In Oklahoma, which is ranked 49th in the nation for average teacher pay, just behind West Virginia, teachers are now planning their own statewide walkout. “West Virginia teachers walked out—and they make more than us!” said high school teacher Bon Bennett at a rally in Bartlesville, Okla.

Washington, D.C.

Russian meddling: The State Department has yet to spend a single dollar of the $120 million it was granted over a year ago to prevent foreign countries from meddling in U.S. elections, The New York Times reported this week—heightening concerns that President Trump isn’t doing enough to counter Russia’s cyberthreat before the November midterms. The State Department’s Global Engagement Center, which heads the effort to counter the Kremlin’s disinformation campaign, does not have an analyst who speaks Russian, and a department-wide hiring freeze has hindered the recruitment of computer experts able to combat hacking and social media manipulation. Last week, Adm. Michael Rogers, head of the U.S. Cyber Command, told lawmakers he has not been granted the authority from President Trump to confront Russian cyberoperators, and that U.S. inaction has likely emboldened Moscow to attempt further meddling. “They have not paid a price that is sufficient to change their behavior,” warned Rogers.

Crystal River, Fla.

Racist podcast: A Florida school district last week removed a middle school teacher from her classroom after HuffingtonPost.com reported that she was the secret host of a white nationalist podcast. Dayanna Volitich, 25, who teaches social studies at Crystal River Middle School, is accused of producing the podcast, “Unapologetic,” under the pseudonym Tiana Dalichov. During her shows, Volitich allegedly praised neo-Nazis, including former KKK grand wizard David Duke; said Muslims should be eradicated from the earth; and asserted that science proves certain races are smarter than others. She is also believed to have boasted about “infiltrating” her school and attempting to spread her white nationalist beliefs among the students. “I’m pretty hyperaware that [colleagues] will be watching,” said Volitich, during a conversation with one podcast guest. “I’m getting a little more under-handed.” Volitich could not be reached for comment; the school said an investigation was ongoing.
Salisbury, U.K.
**Russian hit?** Police said that a former Russian spy and his daughter who were found unconscious on a park bench in southern England this week had been exposed to a nerve agent. Sergei Skripal, 66, and his daughter Yulia, 33, had visited a pub shortly before passing out. A former colonel in Russia’s military intelligence agency, Skripal was convicted in 2006 of revealing Russian agents to British intelligence, but was released in a 2010 spy swap. The father and daughter are critically ill; a police officer who responded to the scene is seriously ill in hospital. The case resembles that of Russian ex-spy Alexander Litvinenko, who died in London in 2006 after drinking tea laced with radioactive polonium; Scotland Yard said that hit was likely ordered by President Vladimir Putin. U.K. Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said Russia has proved itself a “malign and disruptive force in the world.”

Prague
**Denouncing Communists:** A former Communist-era police officer in the Czech Republic has resigned as chairman of national legislature’s police oversight group after thousands of protesters rallied against his appointment in cities across the country. Zdenek Ondracek, a Communist Party lawmaker, served in a police unit that beat up pro-democracy demonstrators before the 1989 Velvet Revolution. Outraged by his appointment, protesters chanted, “Communists are murderers!” They accused Prime Minister Andrej Babis of making a deal with the Communists: Ondracek’s appointment in exchange for their support for a coalition government led by his ANO party. Ondracek said he has no regrets about his past.

**Guarding the crime scene**

Paris
**Child sex law:** The French government said this week it will set the age of sexual consent at 15, following a public outcry last year over two cases involving sex with minors. In November, a court acquitted a 30-year-old man of raping an 11-year-old girl after concluding the child had not experienced “constraint, threat, violence, or surprise” during the sex act. In a similar case, a 28-year-old man was charged with having sex with a minor, not rape, because it was concluded that his 11-year-old victim had not been forced into the act. The new law, said Equality Minister Marlène Schiappa, will mean that “there can be no debate, ever, on the sexual consent of a child.” France previously had no statutory rape law, although adults could be prosecuted for sexually abusing children.

**Tegucigalpa, Honduras**
**Arrest in activist’s murder:** Honduran police have arrested the head of a hydroelectric company in connection with the 2016 murder of Berta Cáceres, an activist who led the fight against a dam project on a river sacred to indigenous communities. Police say Roberto David Castillo Mejía, president of Desarrollos Energéticos, the firm behind the project, was detained as he tried to flee the country. Cáceres, 43, was shot dead in her home. A former military intelligence officer, Castillo has been charged as the “intellectual author” of the murder; he denies any wrongdoing. He is the ninth person arrested in connection to the shooting, and the fourth with ties to the military.

Panama City
**Trump Org boot ed from hotel:** Panamanian police scuffled with and finally evicted Trump Organization employees from a Trump-branded luxury hotel in Panama this week, a victory for the majority owner after a two-week standoff. Miami-based investor Orestes Fintiklis, who bought a majority stake in the tower last year, said the Trump brand had lost its cachet because of Donald Trump’s presidency and that he could not fill the rooms. But employees with the Trump Organization, which managed the buildings, refused to leave their offices. Workers for Fintiklis pried the Trump name off the building with a crowbar this week, but the organization, which is run by the president’s sons, says the dispute is not over.

Altamira, Brazil
**Millions lose homes:** At least 7.6 million Brazilians, or one every minute, have been forced out of their homes since 2000 by droughts, floods, and the building of dams and other infrastructure projects. An analysis released this week by Brazil’s Forced Migration Observatory found that 6.4 million lost homes because of natural disasters, and another 1.2 million were relocated for massive construction projects. Dam companies often resettle the newly homeless in shoddily built housing. Some 30,000 indigenous rain forest dwellers displaced by the Belo Monte dam in 2014, for example, have ended up in slums in the nearby city of Altamira, where the murder rate has skyrocketed more than 1,000 percent since 2000. “They tossed us into a field of violence,” fisherman Raimundo Braga Gomes told TheGuardian.com.

**Building the Belo Monte dam**

**Dwelling loss: 7.6 million Brazilians, or one every minute, have been forced out of their homes since 2000 by droughts, floods, and the building of dams and other infrastructure projects.**
Moscow
No #MeToo: The backlash against sexual harassment hasn’t reached Russia, where lawmakers are making light of groping allegations against a senior politician. BBC journalist Farida Rustamova this week accused Leonid Slutsky, who heads the State Duma’s foreign affairs committee, of sexually harassing her during an interview in his office last year. Slutsky asked Rustamova if she’d like to quit her job to work for him, she said, and then began “running his hand, the flat of his palm, up against my nether region.” She is the third journalist in two weeks to accuse Slutsky of sexual harassment. Slutsky shrugged off the allegations. “I don’t feel people up. Well, OK, just a little,” he said. Duma Speaker Vyacheslav Volodin said female reporters shouldn’t complain. “You think working in the Duma is dangerous?” he said. “Change your job.”

Beijing
Censoring Pooh: China has gone into censorship overdrive after a wave of online criticism greeted the Communist Party’s decision to abolish presidential term limits, which will let President Xi Jinping stay in office indefinitely. Authorities have scrubbed Weibo, China’s popular social media platform, of words and phrases such as “incompetent ruler,” “shameless,” and “emperor,” and even temporarily nixed the letter “N,” possibly because the mathematical equation $n > 2$ could be used to refer to Xi’s number of terms as president. Mentions of George Orwell’s novels *Animal Farm* and *1984*—which skewer communism and authoritarianism—are banned, as is any reference to Winnie the Pooh, because Xi’s critics have mocked his resemblance to the beloved bear.

Eastern Ghouta, Syria
Aid convoy flees: The first aid convoy in months reached the besieged Syrian rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta this week, but pro-regime forces stripped it of most of its medical supplies and then resumed shelling, forcing the convoy to leave before it had unloaded all its food and water. Some 400,000 civilians are trapped in the area with no supplies, surrounded by the forces of President Bashar al-Assad, and at least 800 noncombatants have been killed in Eastern Ghouta in recent weeks. The United Nations’ human rights chief, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, blamed Assad for “indiscriminate, brutal attacks.” Meanwhile, in Afrin in northwestern Syria, tens of thousands of civilians have fled a Turkish offensive against U.S.-allied Kurdish militants.

Kandy, Sri Lanka
Anti-Muslim riots: Sri Lanka has declared a state of emergency and blocked social media to try to stem a wave of anti-Muslim riots. Incited by extremist Buddhist monks, mobs of majority Sinhalese Buddhists burned Muslim-owned businesses and homes in and around Kandy, the country’s second-largest city. The attacks were sparked by reports that a group of Muslims had killed a Sinhalese man in an altercation. At least two people have died in the riots, and eight others have been injured. Religious tensions have increased over the past year, as hard-line Buddhists have opposed the resettling in Sri Lanka of a few hundred Rohingya Muslims fleeing persecution in Myanmar. Muslims make up 9 percent of Sri Lanka’s population.

Hwange National Park, Zimbabwe
Elephant parts to U.S.: The Trump administration has quietly scrapped the ban on importing body parts of African elephants and other animals hunted for sport. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service said last fall it would lift an Obama-era ban on the import of lion and elephant trophies. But after an outcry, President Trump intervened for the elephants, tweeting that he was unlikely to be convinced that “this horror show in any way helps conservation.” On March 1, however, U.S. Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke—an avid hunter who had the arcade game *Big Buck Hunter Pro* installed in the Interior Department’s cafeteria—ordered that importation be allowed. Trump’s sons Eric and Donald Trump Jr. are big-game hunters; photos from a 2011 safari to Zimbabwe show Eric with a dead leopard and Donald Jr. holding up the severed tail of a dead elephant.

Durban, South Africa
Grimy attack on athlete: A top South African triathlete was attacked while training this week by three men who tried to cut off his legs with a chainsaw. Mhlengi Gwala, 27, was bicycling when the men hauled him into some bushes and began sawing into his right calf. “He was screaming and crying, but there was no help from no one because it was the early hours of the morning,” said his training partner, Sandile Shange. The attackers stopped when they hit bone, and Gwala managed to crawl to a road and flag down a car. His right leg was severely damaged, with the muscle and nerves cut through; doctors think they will be able to save the leg, but it’s unclear whether Gwala will ever race again. He was due to compete in the South African national championships this month.

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People

Glover’s unshakable self-belief

Donald Glover is a true renaissance man, said Tad Friend in The New Yorker. The 34-year-old is perhaps best known as the creator, writer, director, and star of FX’s Atlanta. But when he’s not working on his TV show or taking big roles in blockbusters like the next Star Wars film, Glover also performs as a sketch comic and stand-up comedian, a DJ named mcDJ, and a Grammy-winning musician called Childish Gambino. Glover thinks of life as a computer program and says he has “figured out the algorithm.” At age 10, he says, “I realized, if I want to be good at PE, I have to be good at basketball. So I went home and shot baskets in our driveway for six hours, until my mother called me in. The next day, I was good enough that you wouldn’t notice I was bad. And I realized my superpower.” Glover channeled that determination to earn a place at New York University, where he was hired to write for the sitcom 30 Rock while still living in a college dorm. Those early successes have left him believing that there’s nothing he can’t do. “[People] think, ‘Oh, he thinks he’s the golden flower of the black community, thinks he’s so different.’ But I am, though! I feel like Jesus. I do feel chosen. I don’t see anyone out there who’s better.”

Japanese anti-suicide crusader

Yukio Shige has walked hundreds of people back from the edge. In Japan’s Tojinbo cliffs, the 80-foot-high suicide cliffs—“searching for people who might be planning to jump. Over the past 15 years, Shige, 73, has managed to talk 609 people down. “The way I save people, it’s like I’m seeing a friend,” he says. “It’s not exciting or anything. I’m like, ‘Hey, how are you doing?’ These people are asking for help. They’re just waiting for someone to speak with them.” Shige says the Tojinbo jumpers cover a cross section of the nation’s most vulnerable people: the homeless, the elderly, anxious schoolchildren. They take a train to Fukui prefecture, and then the bus, carrying very little cash, “because if you’re going to heaven, you don’t need money.” One elderly couple was saddled with debt from a failing business; another potential jumper, a 17-year-old girl, felt overwhelmed by the academic pressure her parents were putting on her. She was the 23rd of 28 people Shige saved in 2017. He called her parents, who came to pick her up. “We asked, ‘Which is more important, her life or graduation?’ And we handed her over.”

Streisand’s trail blazing

Barbra Streisand has been doing things her own way for years, said Ramin Setoodeh in Variety. The showbiz legend lives on a 3-acre estate in Malibu, Calif., meticulously designed by Streisand herself. She shares the home with her husband, James Brolin, and their three dogs—two of them clones of her beloved coton de Tulear, Samantha, who died in 2017 at age 14. “They have different personalities,” she says of Miss Violet and Miss Scarlett, who were created using cells from Samantha’s mouth and stomach. “I’m waiting for them to get older so I can see if they have her brown eyes and seriousness.” Streisand, 75, is very comfortable breaking with convention. In 1983, she became the first woman to direct, produce, co-write, and star in a single studio movie, Yentl. “I didn’t know it was a glass ceiling. I just thought, They don’t believe in a woman’s capacity to handle finances or to be the businessman. I was told, ‘A woman wants control? That’s crazy!’” As a director, she has had numerous fights with her male stars and cameramen, who have repeatedly questioned her decisions. But Streisand has total faith in women’s abilities. “We’re giving [men] the benefit of the doubt that we’re equal. I think women are more powerful than men.”

Gossip

President Trump temporarily dropped his ongoing feud with the “fake news” media for a night of fun at this year’s Gridiron Club and Foundation’s spring dinner, firing off a series of jokes in front of a room full of journalists. Trump started by apologizing for being late; “Jared could not get through security,” he explained, referring to his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, whose White House security clearance was just downgraded. He said that his “apprentice,” Vice President Mike Pence, constantly asks, “Has he been impeached yet?” In perhaps the darkest joke of the evening, Trump alluded to the White House staff turnover and rumors that first lady Melania Trump is furious about his alleged infidelity. “Who is going to be the next to leave?” the president asked. “Steve Miller or Melania?” When the audience gasped, Trump turned to Melania and said, “You love me, right?”

O.J. Simpson claims that if he did murder ex-wife Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman, then he had an accomplice, according to a 2006 interview airing on March 11. The former NFL star made the comments in a conversation about his bizarre book If I Did It—during which Simpson muses hypothetically about how he would have carried out the 1994 murders. Fox canceled the earlier showing of the interview after a widespread outcry. Now, in what’s been promoting as his “Lost Confession,” says TMZ.com, Simpson claims he’d gone with a friend to Brown’s house to “scare the s— out of her”—carrying a knife for dramatic effect—when Ron Goldman, a waiter she had just met, showed up. Simpson says he began screaming in rage and then blacked out; when he regained consciousness, he was covered in blood.

Keith Richards has apologized to Mick Jagger after publicly suggesting that his geriatric bandmate should get a vasectomy. The Rolling Stones rocker made the comments a year after Jagger, 74, welcomed his eighth child, this one with 31-year-old Melanie Hamrick. “Mick’s a randy old bastard,” Richards, 74, told The Wall Street Journal. “It’s time for the snip—you can’t be a father at that age. Those poor kids!” Richards later tweeted that he “deeply” regretted the comments.
How bad is the problem?
About 554,000 people in the U.S. were homeless on any given night in 2017—including nearly 58,000 families with children—meaning they didn’t have a safe, permanent place to sleep. That figure represents a 1 percent rise since 2016—the first time the nation’s homeless population has increased in seven years. But the country’s biggest cities, especially those on the West Coast, have seen a far bigger rise in homelessness. New York City, which has the nation’s largest homeless population, reported a 4 percent increase since 2016 to about 76,500 people, San Diego a 5 percent increase to 9,160, and Los Angeles a 26 percent increase to nearly 55,200. Many of those homeless people crowd into places like L.A.’s “Skid Row,” where hundreds of tents and tarpaulin shanties crowd the sidewalks just blocks from City Hall. “Skid Row is—and long has been—a national disgrace,” the Los Angeles Times wrote in a recent editorial. “In the world’s richest nation, homelessness on this scale should be shameful and shocking.”

Do all homeless people live on the street?
No, in fact about two-thirds of homeless people in the U.S. live in some kind of shelter or temporary housing, staying with friends or family or in a motel. But the number of street sleepers varies from city to city. In New York, which is required by law to provide shelter for all residents, about 3,000 people sleep on the streets. In Los Angeles, three-quarters of the homeless—some 40,000 people—don’t have shelter, and sleep outside or in their vehicles. Many communities make it a crime to live outside. More than 80 cities have passed laws making it illegal to sleep in vehicles, and more than 60 have banned camping in public. Cities such as Denver and San Francisco have handed out free one-way bus tickets to the homeless, hoping to off-load the problem onto another community. “Society’s message to the homeless is abundantly clear: You don’t matter, because you don’t have money,” says Veronica Harnish, who blogs about her experiences with intermittent homelessness.

Why is homelessness rising?
While some people become homeless because of mental illness and drug addiction, more than 75 percent simply can’t afford a place to live. There are now only 12 counties in the U.S. where a worker earning the state minimum wage or federal minimum wage of $7.25 an hour would be able to afford a one-bedroom rental home on their own, according to the National Low Income Housing Coalition. And while wage growth has remained flat for the past 20 years, the median rent for a vacant home or apartment has doubled over the same period, to about $910 in 2017. A shortage of housing is pushing up rents, and so is gentrification of neighborhoods where poor people used to live. In most cities, the demand for housing far outstrips the supply. New York City, for example, added 62,345 new housing units from 2011 to 2015, enough to house about 125,000 people, but its population grew by more than 300,000 over the same period.

What’s being done to help?
With no signs of the problem disappearing, some communities are turning away from punitive approaches. Instead of razing its homeless encampments, Oakland has started providing trash pickup and portable bathrooms for residents. After a Hepatitis A outbreak began ravaging Southern California’s homeless community, private donors, charities, and city authorities worked together to erect three “bridge shelters” in San Diego. The tent-like structures are the size of a city block and filled with rows of bunk beds. They have heating and cooling, laundry facilities, and communal dining areas, plus 24/7 security and access to social services. Seattle has authorized permanent encampments for the past decade, with 11 sanctioned camps in the Puget Sound area that receive city funding. But such projects remain controversial, among both Seattleites who don’t want to live near such camps and homelessness advocates who say they’re a stopgap solution.

How can cities get people off the street?
Many experts believe the best solution is to simply put the homeless into low-cost or free apartments, without preconditions. Utah, which has a “Housing First” strategy, has one of the nation’s lowest rates of chronic homelessness. Just 6 percent of the state’s homeless are considered chronic—people who have been living on the streets for more than a year—compared with 24 percent nationwide. Evidence suggests that programs like Utah’s are far more cost-effective than putting homeless people in transitional housing. One Colorado study found that the average homeless person costs taxpayers $43,000 a year in shelters, emergency-room visits, and other expenses, while providing permanent housing for the same person would cost $17,000 a year.

Would that work elsewhere?
Finding vacant homes is a challenge in crowded, booming states like California, which would need to build 180,000 new housing units each year—100,000 more than are currently being built—simply to keep up with population growth. “It’s obvious what the answer is: affordable housing,” said Bob Erlenbusch, who began working with the homeless in Los Angeles in 1984. “I never in a million years thought that it would drag on for three decades with no end in sight.”

Working while homeless
While many people associate the homeless with begging, about 25 percent of the homeless population has a job, according to the Washington, D.C.-based Urban Institute. In the heart of California’s Silicon Valley, where rents are $3,000 or more, low-income workers in industries like food service, retail, and hospitality juggle their day jobs with finding a place to sleep at night. Tes Saldana, 51, works as a cook for two hotels in Palo Alto. She lives in an RV with her three adult sons, two of whom also work; their monthly vehicle payments come to $700. Until recently, she parked on a tree-lined street in nearby Mountain View along with a group of fellow homeless RV campers. Late last year, the city banned vehicles more than 6 feet high from parking there. It’s tough, she says, living in the shadow of enormous wealth. “How about for us people who are serving these tech people?” Saldana said. “We don’t get the same paycheck that they do.”
Political vs. cultural power

Peter Beinart
TheAtlantic.com

“Conservatives are losing the culture war over guns”—and they know it, said Peter Beinart. Although Congress and most red states aren’t budging on gun-control laws after the Parkland shooting, more than 20 corporations have cut ties with the NRA, and Dick’s Sporting Goods has announced it will no longer carry AR-15s. “The Marjory Stoneman Douglas gun-control activists have become national heroes,” and the NRA and its allies sound increasingly hysterical in attacking them, the media, and “socialist” elites. “This dynamic isn’t unique to guns,” Conservatives hold most of the political power in the country, yet when they look at cultural trends, they “feel like they’re losing.” They see kneeling football players protesting police killings, Confederate statues coming down, black and brown people and feminists challenging white “male dominance,” gay marriage becoming widely accepted. Donald Trump’s election was largely “a rebellion against these cultural shifts”—and he remains popular on the Right because his constant attacks on the media, black athletes, and liberals scratch “a conservative itch.” But conservatives are realizing that even when they win elections, the tectonic shifts in America’s culture are nearly impossible to reverse.

Planned Parenthood’s absolutism

Michael Graham
TheFederalist.com

“Planned Parenthood is the NRA of the Democratic Party,” said Michael Graham. “Only worse.” As the largest abortion provider in the country, the women’s health organization spearheads the pro-choice lobby. Its political action committee spent $45 million on the 2016 election, all to support Democrats, and $175 million last year on things like “movement building” and “engaging communities.” These sums make the organization a powerful and unyielding force, and the Democratic Party more absolutist on abortion than Republicans are on guns. When moderate Democrats suggested last year that being pro-choice shouldn’t be a “litmus test” for party candidates, Planned Parenthood denounced the proposal as “shocking” and “totally wrong.” In Congress, there are now only three openly pro-life Democrats, down from more than 60 in 2008; the few Democratic candidates who dare admit to being pro-life “personally” generally feel a need to say that they’d still vote with their party on the issue over their conscience. The parallels to the NRA are clear. Planned Parenthood refuses to let Democrats from more conservative regions of the country support any limitations on the procedure whatsoever—proof that “you don’t need a gun to be a bully.”

A new nuclear arms race

Fred Kaplan
Slate.com

Vladimir Putin’s boasting about his new nuclear weapons warrants a simple response, said Fred Kaplan: “Go ahead, waste your money.” The Russian president last week claimed his country had developed new, low-flying cruise missiles that could avoid missile defense systems. Computer-generated video showed one such nuke targeting Florida. But Russia and the U.S. have long had the capacity to launch hundreds of nuclear missiles at once, rendering “anti-missile missiles” useless in an all-out nuclear war; missile-defense systems are designed to prevent limited assaults from “small nuclear powers such as North Korea.” Putin probably made his threatening announcement in response to a recent Pentagon document calling for upgrades and additions to America’s nuclear arsenal. In the past, the tensions between Moscow and Washington over this nuclear buildup could be addressed in face-to-face diplomacy. But Putin is driven by a “pathetic yearning for renewed empire,” while President Trump scorns actual diplomacy and can’t negotiate with Moscow anyway because it would inflame suspicions Putin owns him. As a result, we appear to be heading for a “revival of the Cold War,” an expensive new arms race, and a new era of instability and mutual hostility.

Viewpoint

“It has been inspiring and thrilling to watch the furious, clear-eyed teenagers [of Parkland] shame and vilify gutless politicians and soul-dead lobbyists for their complicity in the murders of their friends. This uprising of the young against the ossified, monolithic power of the National Rifle Association has reminded me that the flaws of youth—its ignorance, naïveté, and passionate, Manichaean idealism—are also its strengths. Young people have only just learned that the world is an unfair hierarchy of cruelty and greed, and it still shocks and outrages them. Revolutions have always been driven by the young.”

Tim Kreider in NYTimes.com

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Best columns: Europe

AUSTRIA

Waiter, there’s smoke in my food

Thomas Golser
Kleine Zeitung

Austrians want to be able to eat out without choking on cigarette smoke, said Thomas Golser, but their own government won’t allow it. Smoking was supposed to be banned in restaurants and bars as of May 1, thanks to a law passed in 2015, when the center-left Social Democratic Party was in power. But after the elections last year, the far-right Freedom Party said it wouldn’t join a coalition with the center-right People’s Party unless the ban was dropped. Chancellor Sebastian Kurz needed Freedom’s support to govern, so he sacrificed his people’s health to secure power. Oh, sure, larger establishments will still be required to have a separate room for smokers. But those rooms generally have “either no door, a swinging door, or a door that servers simply leave propped open.” That means “everything from obvious fog banks to dangerous nanoparticles” wafts across to the nonsmoking area. In the past few weeks, more than 420,000 Austrians—nearly 5 percent of the population—have signed a petition calling for the ban to be upheld. It’s true that Austria has a high rate of smoking, and the habit is generally accepted here. Thirty percent of adults smoke. But that means 70 percent do not. Shouldn’t the majority rule? Especially when it’s our health at stake?

FRANCE

The bloom is off Macron

Alain Auffray
Libération

French President Emmanuel Macron is doing exactly what he said he’d do—and the French despise him for it, said Alain Auffray. Macron, who exploded French politics last year by winning the presidency without the backing of either of the two major parties, campaigned on a platform of radical economic reform. He promised to ease labor restrictions to make the job market more flexible, and to increase workers’ purchasing power with a cut to payroll taxes. Fast-forward eight months, and nobody notices the few extra coins in their pocket, while everyone is outraged “when the price of a baguette goes up.” Macron has especially irritated pensioners, who didn’t benefit from the payroll tax cut, by hiking a tax they do pay, used to fund public health care and family aid. A centrist who pleases nobody, he has lost support equally from those on the Left and the Right, and his approval rating now stands at 41 percent, down five points since December. The good news for Macron is that his rivals fare no better. The Socialists have collapsed; the right-wing Republicans have a historically unpopular new leader in Laurent Wauquiez; and the far-right National Front has slumped since party leader Marine Le Pen lost the presidential runoff to Macron. For now, the French have no choice but to stay the course and see how Macron’s policies play out.

Italy: A political revolution but no government

Italy’s election was “an earthquake,” said Kay Wallace in La Repubblica (Italy), and we don’t yet know what government will rise from the rubble. Fed up with a sclerotic economy and European Union-imposed austerity, and alarmed at the never-ending influx of illegal immigrants, voters this week toppled the establishment and elevated fringe parties in their place. The populist, anti-corruption Five Star Movement was the single biggest winner, with nearly 33 percent of the vote. But a right-wing coalition led by the anti-immigrant, far-right League party took 36 percent, so President Sergio Mattarella could give it the first try to form a government. Neither Five Star nor the League has led before. The losers are clear: The center-left Democratic Party, which headed the last government, collapsed to just under 19 percent, while former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s center-right Forza Italia—a League ally—won only 14 percent. That means the next prime minister will likely be either an untested populist, 31-year-old Luigi di Maio of Five Star, or an unabashed xenophobe, the League’s 44-year-old Matteo Salvini.

Italy has split in two, north versus south, but the common theme is revolution, said Stefan Ulrich in the Süddeutsche Zeitung (Germany). In the north, the League rules supreme, “populist and contemptuous of the European Union.” In the south, Five Star took nearly every district, apparently as a protest vote, since nobody really knows what the party stands for beyond opposition to the corrupt political establishment. Italians plainly resent the EU for leaving them to deal alone with the 650,000 migrants who’ve landed on their shores in the past four years. “Criminality, corruption, and a surging black market are consuming the land,” while unemployment has soared in the south: In many southern regions, nearly 60 percent of young people are jobless. Of course, what Italy needs to combat these ills is “a persistent reform policy through a stable government over many years”—precisely what it just rejected by booting out former Prime Minister Matteo Renzi’s Democrats.

It’s unlikely that the League and Five Star will join forces, said Alberto Magnani in Il Sole 24 Ore (Italy). While both are critical of the EU, Five Star merely seeks to limit immigration, not kick out all migrants, as the League wants. And the League, representing the wealthier industrialized north, wants a 15 percent flat tax, while Five Star promotes progressive taxation and a generous welfare state. “Hostility to the old parties” and resentment of Brussels are not enough common ground to forge an agreement “between two movements that draw on different electoral bases.” More likely is that Five Star, which once said it would never ally with another party, will try to govern in partnership with what’s left of the Democrats. That is the best outcome we can hope for, said Massimo Rocca in Il Fatto Quotidiano (Italy). Italy’s establishment has been “trying to ghettoize” Five Star supporters for too long. But the political elite has been vanquished, and now it’s the people’s turn to rule.
How they see us: Preparing for a misguided trade war

The U.S. president doesn’t understand basic economics, said Peru’s AltiaVoz.pe in an editorial. Two centuries after Scottish economist Adam Smith demonstrated in The Wealth of Nations that mercantilism hurts economies, while free trade lifts everyone, Donald Trump has gone full protectionist. He promised a tariff of 25 percent on imported steel and 10 percent on aluminum last week, and when economists warned such measures would trigger a trade war, Trump tweeted, “Trade wars are good, and easy to win.” The president apparently believes that having a trade deficit with a country like China is a bad thing for the U.S.—even though the U.S. has imported more than it has exported for four decades, during which its economy has tripled in size. At a time “when even the Communist parties of Asia have accepted the advantages of global trade,” it’s baffling to see a Western leader so clueless.

Trump’s pledged tariff hikes are an “American assault on the rules-based global trading system,” said Lawrence Herman in The Globe and Mail (Canada). The president is trying to skirt World Trade Organization rules by claiming that lower-cost steel and aluminum imports are a threat to national security, because they undermine the American factories that might produce metals for tanks and ships in a time of war. But the WTO’s national security exemption is supposed to be invoked only in wartime or during national emergencies, and by abusing the system Trump is inviting other countries to play dirty. Global trade rules were crafted over decades “to prevent a repeat of the beggar-thy-neighbor tariff policies of the 1930s.” shredding them would do “in- calculable damage” to global commerce.

The European Union is already threatening to strike back, said Hendrik Kafsack in the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (Germany). European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said the bloc could slap tariffs on goods produced in the home states of key Republicans, such as Harley-Davidson motorcycles, made in House Speaker Paul Ryan’s state of Wisconsin, and bourbon, from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell’s state of Kentucky. But such a response would concede that we are playing Trump’s destructive game. The EU should keep its focus on upholding the WTO by bringing a formal trade complaint against the U.S. Only “a prudent response” can fend off a ruinous cycle of escalation.

If the U.S. thinks it will hurt China with a steel tariff, it is mistaken, said the Global Times (China). While it’s true that we’re the world’s largest steel producer, most U.S. steel imports come from American allies like Canada and South Korea; only 2 percent come from China. Those allies will suffer, and so will Americans, who will foot the bill for higher-cost steel. The last time the U.S. tried a steel tariff, in 2002, it saved some 20,000 American steel jobs while killing 200,000 jobs in other sectors. That’s why China is not concerned. Trump’s plan “will meet with huge opposition in the U.S., and the world will not allow it.”

President Vladimir Putin’s announcement of powerful new nuclear weapons should make Russians feel cheated, said Karina Orlova. In his annual address to the Federal Assembly last week, Putin displayed “cartoons with poor-quality graphics” purporting to show that Russia has developed a nearly infinite-range cruise missile, a nuclear-powered underwater drone, and hypersonic missiles that can evade U.S. defense systems. “Escalation of an arms race is a serious matter,” especially because the collapse of the USSR was partly caused by Soviet attempts to spend their way to military parity with the U.S. Little money was left to fund technological innovation or business infrastructure, so the USSR dropped behind the U.S. in those areas, and Russia still lags to this day. Yet in the same speech, Putin made the Soviet mistake of setting ridiculous benchmarks for development, saying he wanted to double tech exports and the number of people employed by small businesses. Such goals are not met “merely because Putin—or Brezhnev—orders it.”

In the U.S., the country where companies invent advanced rockets and popular computers, no president has ever set as a national goal the doubling of yields or crops. Instead, America’s civil society and market economy set the conditions to allow innovation. Our authoritarian system can build weapons, sure. But that won’t make this country great.

Remember when the Philippines was a “beacon of democracy to the entire world”? asked Oscar Franklin Tan. In 1986, our “People Power” revolution overthrew decades of dictatorship by Ferdinand Marcos. “Ordinary people stood in the streets and stopped tanks” three years before the massacre in Tiananmen Square and the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the world hailed us as an example of the possible. More than 30 years later, the anniversary of that uprising is no longer a day to celebrate. Instead, it’s “become a pretext for bitter old men to harangue youth on how they do not know history.” Nobody wears yellow, the color of the revolution—instead, communists have hijacked the festivities for their protests. The last time I felt pride in being Filipino was probably around 2009, when boxing legend Manny Pacquiao picked up a pair of world titles. But Pacquiao is now a political party member and a sitting senator. Like our revolution, he has gone from “defining national monument to ordinary politics.” Given that our current president, Rodrigo Duterte, is a foul-mouthed autocrat, have we any heroes left? Must we reach back to the 15th century to revere Sultan Kudarat, repellent of Spanish invasions? It’s time to “reappropriate what in history inspires us.”

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Talking points

White House chaos: Why even Trump’s aides are worried

“For a few months this fall and winter, someone who was squinting just right could see the Trump administration starting to finally get its footing,” said David Graham in TheAtlantic.com. Former Marine Gen. John Kelly had instilled some military discipline as White House chief of staff, and President Trump’s approval ratings rose when Congress passed a major tax cut. But after several convulsive weeks, any illusion of stability is gone. “The president, and the presidency, are as far off the rails as ever.” First came the Rob Porter domestic abuse scandal, which led to the revelation that many senior staffers were working without permanent security clearances. In response, Kelly downgraded the top-secret access of Trump’s son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner. After admitting in testimony to a House panel that she sometimes told “white lies” for the president, communications director Hope Hicks suddenly announced her resignation. Hicks, who was squinting just right could see the Trump guy smiling. “[Trump] had the worst campaign ever. On election night, he was almost superhuman, said Michael Goodwin in The New York Post, but his presidency was always going to be “unique.” Millions of Americans voted for him for that very reason, knowing he was a tireless “warrior” who would disrupt conventional politics and turn Washington on its head. Trump’s confidants say his tolerance for chaos is almost superhuman, said David Jackson in USAToday.com. He has actively welcomed melodrama and disorder throughout his career—including real estate and in politics—and usually finds a way to turn it to his advantage. Remember, says Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), “Trump had the worst campaign ever. On election night, he was the guy smiling.”

Trump does have a “habit of shooting himself in the foot,” said Michael Goodwin in The New York Post, but his presidency was always going to be “unique.” Millions of Americans voted for him for that very reason, knowing he was a tireless “warrior” who would disrupt conventional politics and turn Washington on its head. Trump’s confidants say his tolerance for chaos is almost superhuman, said David Jackson in USAToday.com. He has actively welcomed melodrama and disorder throughout his career—including real estate and in politics—and usually finds a way to turn it to his advantage. Remember, says Rep. Peter King (R-N.Y.), “Trump had the worst campaign ever. On election night, he was the guy smiling.”

How does he plan to replace them, exactly? asked Jeet Heer in NewRepublic.com. Trump “struggled with staffing from the start,” after his shambolic and divisive campaign alienated most respectable job candidates. Recruiting qualified people has only gotten harder as the dysfunction has deepened, leaving Trump with fewer responsible advisers to rein in his worst excesses. Even those who are rooting for the president to succeed have to admit that “Trump is his own worst enemy,” said Noemie Emery in Washington Examiner.com. His irrational outbursts and his attacks on his own Cabinet officials, including Sessions and McMaster, may “usurp in a Congress that wants to impeach him.” Even Republicans are growing weary of the constant turmoil.

There’s every reason to believe things will get worse, not better,” said Chris Cillizza in CNN.com. Ethics scandals are damaging a growing number of Trump’s Cabinet officials; Kushner faces grave questions over his business dealings with foreign governments and banks; and special counsel Robert Mueller’s investigation into potential collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia is creeping ever closer to the Oval Office. “A lonely and cornered Trump rarely reacts well”—as last week’s sudden announcement of a “trade war” demonstrated. More “score-settling” with his enemies and flailing aides is coming, as Trump’s impotent wrath grows. “Think the White House is in chaos now? Just wait.”

Noted

- Just days before the White House announced its intention to impose steep tariffs on steel imports, President Trump’s billionaire friend Carl Icahn dumped $313 million in steel-related stock. Icahn sold off nearly 1 million shares of the Wisconsin-based crane manufacturer Manitowoc Co. Inc., whose stock price plunged 6 percent after Trump’s tariffs announcement. Icahn said he sold because of his concerns about “creeping inflation.” Los Angeles Times

- The rate of suicides carried out with guns is as much as 43 percent higher in states with loose gun laws than in states with strict gun laws, a new study has found. Researchers said their findings indicate that troubled people without guns will not necessarily find another way to kill themselves. In 2016, 61 percent of the 38,511 deaths caused by firearms were suicides. Los Angeles Times

- Melanie Knauss was granted a green card while dating future husband Donald Trump in 2001, under the elite EB-1 program—the so-called Einstein visa designed for scientists, authors, multinational business executives, Olympic athletes, and other professionals who can demonstrate “sustained national and international acclaim.” Knauss, then an obscure model, was one of the 1 percent of immigrants who received green cards that year through the EB-1 program. The Washington Post

- Nearly 1 in 3 Medicare patients undergo surgery in their last year of life, and 18 percent are operated on in their last month, even though studies show the very old and sick are more likely to be harmed by the ordeal of surgery than helped. USA Today
Xi: The rise of the authoritarians

Chinese president Xi Jinping “has joined the planet’s most exclusive club,” said Nic Robertson in CNN.com. China’s Communist Party last week proposed eliminating term limits for Xi, effectively making him emperor for life and enabling him to rule the world’s most populous nation “without recourse to real checks and balances.” Other autocrats who’ve carved out virtually unchallenged power include Russia’s Vladimir Putin, Turkey’s Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Xi’s power grab has shaken European political and business leaders, said Steven Erlanger in The New York Times. With the U.S. abdicating its global leadership role under President Trump, Europe had hoped China would become “a responsible stakeholder” in the global order. But Xi’s vision for his nation is internally authoritarian and externally aggressive, and “few still believe China is moving toward the Western values of democracy and rule of law.”

How did so many get Xi’s autocratic impulses wrong? asked Isaac Stone Fish in The Atlantic.com. The West assumed that China—“like Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan”—would one day become more democratic, more open, and more like America as it embraced capitalism, free trade, and modernity. Indeed, Xi pledged allegiance to “reform and opening up” when he laid a wreath by a statue of reform-minded Deng Xiaoping in 2012. But since then, “his China has grown more politically and economically repressive,” using technology to crack down on dissent and monitor citizens. This should not be a surprise. China, let us remember, is a one-party country that still reveres the dictator Mao Zedong and ruthlessly crushed the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy uprising.

In the 21st century, dictatorships are “making a comeback,” said Brian Bremner and Peter Martin in Bloomberg Businessweek. “The global liberal democratic order” that once seemed destined to spread to other nations is in retreat. Even the current U.S. president seems down on democracy, with Trump last week calling Xi’s ascension to permanent power “great,” and quipping, “Maybe we’ll have to give that a shot some day.” China’s authoritarianism is no joke, said Charlie Campbell in Time.com. Xi has brazenly torn up four decades of post-Mao reform, and he will also have “few qualms” about flouting international norms that Beijing perceives as constraining its interests. China’s “lurch toward one-man rule should worry us all.”

Gun control: What happens next?

It’s been nearly a year since the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School nixed the national debate on guns, said German Lopez in Vox.com, and “we still have essentially no idea” where President Trump stands. At first, Trump focused on arming teachers, but last week, Trump blindsided gun-rights advocates by calling for expanded background checks and saying the government should be able to seize weapons from anyone who seems mentally unstable. “Take the guns first,” Trump said, “go through due process second.” The very next day, the NRA tweeted that Trump had assured them that he’s still firmly against gun control. On this divisive issue, it will be impossible to push through any federal legislation if the president’s “policy positions are constantly in flux.”

It doesn’t really matter what Trump wants, said Alexander Bolton in TheHill.com. Republican congressional leaders know from experience it’s only a matter of time before Trump loses interest in the issue. “The bottom line is, there is little impetus among Republicans on Capitol Hill to vote on gun-control legislation anytime soon.” Still, Trump’s embrace of gun-control measures was significant, even if it didn’t last, said Margaret Talbot in The New Yorker. “The primitive sensors by which Donald Trump divides the world into winners and losers were telling him that for now, at least, the proponents of unfettered gun rights smell like losers.” Recent polling shows that 88 percent of Americans now support universal background checks, while 68 percent support a ban on assault-style weapons. The politics of guns is shifting.

I wouldn’t be so sure, said David French in NationalReview.com. Liberals are hoping to reverse decades of defeats in the gun-control debate by making gun ownership “culturally toxic.” But it won’t work. The right to self-defense is sacred, and enshrined in our Constitution. “It’s hard to persuade any man or woman to surrender an unalienable right—especially when exercising that right helps preserve the most vital right of all, the right to live.” Check your recent history, said Jack Shafer in Politico.com. Gay marriage also once seemed unthinkable, but the opposition virtually collapsed in a matter of years, unable to resist the cultural tide. Something similar is happening right now with marijuana. Trump’s voice of the wind is just one more sign that guns could be next. “Is the implausible on its way to becoming inevitable?”

Wit & Wisdom

“The universe is under no obligation to make sense to you.”
Astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, quoted in Forward.com

“Most successes are unhappy. That’s why they are successes—they have to reassure themselves by achieving something that the world will notice.”
Agatha Christie, quoted in The Wall Street Journal

“If at first you don’t succeed, try Botox.”
Jay McInerney, quoted in The New Yorker

“I am not afraid of an army of lions led by a sheep; I am afraid of an army of sheep led by a lion.”
Alexander the Great, quoted in the LaGrange, Ga., Daily News

“In war, there are no unwounded soldiers.”
Argentine writer José Norosky, quoted in The New York Times

“If they’ve never learned to be alone, people develop only weak and fragile defenses against the ways life decides to hurt them.”
Author Astrid Lindgren, quoted in TheParisReview.org

“The beginning of wisdom is found in doubting.”
Theologian Peter Abelard, quoted in The Wall Street Journal

Poll watch

- 50% of American voters oppose President Trump’s proposed tariffs on steel and aluminum, while 30% approve. 64% disagree with Trump’s claim that a trade war would be “easily won.” 28% agree with his statement.
- 57% of Americans—including 80% of blacks, 75% of Hispanics, and nearly 50% of whites—are hoping to “get Trump as a racing. 85% of Democrats believe he is a racist, compared with just 21% of Republicans.

Quinnipiac University

Associated Press/NORC Univ. of Chicago

THE WEEK March 16, 2018
**Artificial intelligence: Google’s smart camera**

“Something strange, scary, and sublime is happening to cameras,” said Farhad Manjoo in The New York Times. They’re getting brains. Last week, Google released Clips, a tiny camera aimed primarily at parents and pet lovers. “It’s one of the most unusual devices I’ve ever encountered.” Using artificial intelligence, it determines whether events happening in front of it are worth documenting, and if they are, it records them in audio-free, seven-second clips. “It doesn’t take long to imagine the useful and very creepy possibilities.”

The device, which is “about the size of a tin of mints and has no screen,” has been trained to recognize smiles, lighting, and “other hallmarks of nice photos,” and is able to learn which faces are most familiar to you. In that sense, it makes “taking pictures unconscious and all but invisible.” I used Clips on a recent family vacation, and it recorded several hundred brief clips of events that were typically too spontaneous for a regular camera—my kids goofing off, dancing adorably, playing catch. Among them, there were surprisingly poignant moments. It made me realize that soon most cameras won’t just watch—they’ll understand, too.

“Calling the pocket-size Clips just a camera feels incomplete,” said Michael Calore in Wired.com. Removing “the tedium, the timing, and the guesswork” from capturing shareable images, it works best when placed on something stationary. To activate it, you simply twist the lens, and a flashing light indicates when it is recording. The only way to inspect the results is through an in-phone app, where you can also edit your clips into viral-ready GIFs. It’s easy to see why the mere idea of Clips “causes people to freak out,” said Geoffrey Fowler in The Washington Post. But Google has thoughtfully addressed privacy concerns “in a number of notably Un-Googly ways.” For instance, Clips is never connected to the web, and its images are stored on the hardware, not the cloud. You can transfer your images to your phone or put them online, but this process is manual and never involuntary. “Clips plays it extra careful with how it handles data.”

Google is clearly onto something with Clips, said Dan Seifert in TheVerge.com, but its chief problem is the camera “just doesn’t work that well.” Most of my clips “didn’t look better or feel more authentic than what I’m already able to do with my phone.” The decidedly average images are often flat, blurry, or grainy. The price, at $249, is steep, and the three-hour battery length is fleeting. So while the idea is “admirable,” to truly be worthwhile, Clips needs to “reassure me that by trusting it and putting my phone away, I won’t miss anything important.” That’s a lot to ask of any camera. This one “doesn’t quite get there.”

**Bytes: What’s new in tech**

**Palantir’s predictive policing**

For the past six years, “one of the world’s most secretive and powerful tech firms” has quietly used New Orleans as a testing ground for its predictive-policing technology, said Ali Winston in TheVerge.com. Palantir, the data-mining firm co-founded by Peter Thiel, began a partnership with the New Orleans police in 2012 to attempt to forecast “which people are likely drivers or victims of violence” or are gang members. Palantir software, which relied in part on data provided by police, “traced people’s ties to gang members, outlined criminal histories, analyzed social media, and predicted the likelihood that individuals would commit violence.” The program’s existence is not well known; some members of the City Council were unaware of the partnership when contacted by TheVerge.com.

**Amazon’s smart-doorbell maker**

Amazon has agreed to purchase the connected-doorbell startup Ring for about $1 billion, said Alex Barinka in Bloomberg.com. The move follows last year’s introduction of Amazon Key, which allows verified delivery drivers to deposit packages directly into a shopper’s home with the help of a smart lock. Both moves aim to guard against an online-shopping scourge: theft from doorsteps. Ring manufactures and markets video doorbells and security cameras that connect to users’ phones or computers, “letting them see and speak to anyone on their property from afar.” The acquisition places Amazon in “direct competition” with security-camera makers such as Nest Labs, Honeywell, and Canary Connect.

**Facebook takes aim at LinkedIn**

Facebook is making a more significant push into online job listings, said Kaya Yurieff in CNN.com. The social media company announced last week that users will be able “to apply for local jobs directly” on its Facebook Jobs platform. “Users in the U.S. and Canada have been able to see job postings on Facebook since last year,” and this expansion includes making the jobs platform available in more than 40 international markets, including the U.K., Spain, and Brazil. The company is clearly escalating its battle with the Microsoft-owned LinkedIn, which has more than 546 million users in some 200 countries and pitches itself as the premiere business-oriented social media platform. Facebook’s effort will involve a range of new tools, including “the ability to schedule interviews and create job posts on mobile.”

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**Innovation of the week**

“Heated jackets aren’t new,” said Erin Winick in TechnologyReview.com. But those currently available depend on the wearer to activate and adjust them. Boston-based clothing company Ministry of Supply is hoping to take some of that work out of the equation with a heated jacket that “customizes its temperature using machine learning.” The jacket, dubbed the Mercury, uses an accelerometer along with temperature sensors to alter the heat it pumps out “according to the ambient temperature and your activity levels.” That means the jacket can quickly adjust going from frigid outdoor temperatures to sweaty interiors like crowded subway cars. Intriguingly, the company will be able to measure how often customers wear the jacket, the length of their commutes, and even their temperature preferences. Currently in its prototype-testing phase, the Mercury should be widely available in November.

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A record winter warm spell in the Arctic

Scientists are growing increasingly alarmed by the unseasonably warm temperatures in the Arctic. It’s currently winter at the North Pole: The Arctic region hasn’t seen daylight since October and is usually a frigid minus 22 degrees Fahrenheit at this time of year. But a weather station at the northern tip of Greenland has seen a record 61 hours of above-freezing temperatures since Jan. 1, with the mercury rising to a balmy 43 degrees at one point. While the Arctic has become increasingly warmer in recent decades, this heat wave is particularly unusual, with average February temperatures exceeding norms by 27 degrees— with some days 60 degrees above normal. “This is an anomaly among anomalies,” Michael Mann, a climatologist at Penn State University, tells TheGuardian.com. “It is a suggestion that there are further surprises in store as we continue to poke the angry beast that is our climate.” The warmer temperatures in the Arctic have had a knock-on effect in Europe, causing an unprecedented cold snap that left large swathes of the region blanketed with snow last week. Warmer air and melting Arctic ice weaken the polar jet stream, the strong band of winds that forms at the point where balmy air from lower latitudes meets the frosty air of the Arctic. Weaker winds cause the jet stream to lose strength and become wobbly, allowing the cold air normally trapped in the Arctic to descend farther south.

Tackling teen depression

Suicide has become the third leading cause of death for young people in the U.S., prompting experts to issue updated guidelines on depression, reports NPR.org. The American Academy of Pediatrics now recommends that doctors screen all young adults ages 12 to 21 every year for the mental health disorder. Twenty percent of Americans suffer from depression at some point in their teens, but only about half are diagnosed, and just one-third receive treatment. Signs of trouble—such as irritability, moodiness, listlessness, and complaints of stress—are often dismissed as typical adolescent behavior. “A lot of parents go to their pediatrician for the scraped knees and sore throats but don’t think of them when it comes to seeking help for emotional and behavioral issues,” says researcher Rachel Zuckerbrot. “The earlier we identify teenagers who show signs of depression, the better the outcome.”

Peanut allergy breakthrough

A promising new treatment could help ease the lifelong burden of peanut allergy. In people who suffer from this sometimes life-threatening affliction, peanut protein triggers an allergic reaction. The new treatment, developed by Aimmune Therapeutics, is a peanut protein powder that helps children build up a tolerance to the allergen. The California-based firm carried out a clinical trial involving 496 kids, ages 4 to 17, with severe peanut allergies. Under strict supervision, 372 of the children mixed increasing doses of the powder into their food over a period of six months; they then had the maximum dose for an additional six months. The other participants had a placebo. By the end of the study, 67 percent of the kids given the treatment could tolerate the equivalent of two peanuts, compared with only 4 percent of the placebo group. While the powder doesn’t cure peanut allergy, it could help prevent life-threatening reactions. “It’s not going to be for everybody,” allergist Jonathan Tam, from Children’s Hospital Los Angeles, tells CBSNews.com. “But for certain families that are very anxious about having accidental exposures, this is a great therapy.” Aimmune plans to seek approval for the treatment from the Food and Drug Administration by the end of the year.

Health scare of the week

Alcohol-related dementia

Heavy drinking takes an irreversible, long-term toll on the brain, increasing the risk for all forms of dementia, a new study suggests. Researchers analyzed the medical records of more than 1 million adults diagnosed with dementia from 2008 to 2013. They found that the strongest predictor for the condition was hospitalization for an alcohol-related health issue, particularly among those younger than 65, and that nearly 60 percent of early-onset dementia cases were associated with alcohol-related brain damage. Alcohol is toxic to brain cells and contributes to chronic conditions that reduce blood flow to the brain. The World Health Organization defines heavy drinking as four or more drinks a day for men, three or more for women. “Some people look at their drinking habits and say, ‘Oh, it’s not so bad,’ or, ‘A lot of people drink this much,’” lead author Jürgen Rehm, from the University of Toronto, tells Time.com. “And yes, a lot of people do—but that’s why a lot of people are dying prematurely, and maybe why a lot of people are developing dementia.”

Chile’s Mars-like Atacama Desert

New hope for life on Mars

The discovery of actively reproducing microbes in one of Earth’s most hostile environments has renewed hope that alien life could be lurking on Mars. Scientists found the bacteria in the Atacama Desert in Chile, an area so dry that parts of it receive an average of only a quarter-inch of rainfall a year. Whitewashed with salt and constantly bombarded by intense ultraviolet radiation, the Atacama has the most Mars-like landscape on the planet. When the researchers unearthed bacteria in the desert’s driest areas, they were unsure whether the microbes were dead, or alive but dormant. After analyzing samples over several years, they discovered it was the latter. The microbes survive the Atacama’s arid conditions by essentially going into hibernation, for years, decades, even millennia; when enough rain falls, they wake up and reproduce. Mars once had vast oceans and still has snow, ice, and fog, so it’s possible there are Martian microbes that adapted to an increasingly inhospitable environment in a similar fashion, reports Forbes.com. “If life can persist in Earth’s driest environment,” says study leader Dirk Schulze-Makuch, from Washington State University, “there is a good chance it could be hanging in there on Mars.”
Pick of the week’s cartoons

I’VE CALLED YOU ALL HERE TO DISCUSS SOME RECENT STAFF DEPARTURES...

McCABE  PORTER  HICKS

TRADE WAR

WHAT FOREIGN INFLUENCE?

I LIKED OUR OLD SCHOOL BUS BETTER

For more political cartoons, visit: www.theweek.com/cartoons.
Review of reviews: Books

**Book of the week**

**Conspiracy: Peter Thiel, Hulk Hogan, Gawker, and the Anatomy of Intrigue**

by Ryan Holiday

*(Portfolio, $28)*

“Even now, it still feels too surreal to be true,” said Rowland Manthorpe in Wired.co.uk. Nearly two years ago, former pro wrestler Hulk Hogan—backed by billionaire venture capitalist Peter Thiel—succeeded in bankrupting Gawker.com with a lawsuit that began when the popular online news organization posted a short video of Hogan (real name Terry Bollea) having sex with his best friend’s wife. Author Ryan Holiday’s lively new account of Gawker’s takedown sheds new light on the zealouness with which Thiel pursued vengeance against the site, while offering a surprising argument that such brilliant secret plotting should be applauded. “Agree or disagree, it’s all part of the pleasure.”

“Holiday has written one helluva page-turner,” said William Cohan in The New York Times. Thiel, as he has publicly admitted, had nursed a grudge against Gawker since 2007, when its offshoot that covered Silicon Valley outed Thiel as gay. Holiday reports that Thiel began actively working to undermine Gawker four years later when a young Australian, identified in the book only as Mr. A, persuaded him that he could destroy Gawker by spending $10 million on researchers and lawyers hired to identify a vulnerability and then sue. Thiel has since admitted that he and A also considered illegal methods of achieving their goal before dismissing that route. Then Hogan’s video popped up, and Thiel’s lawyers jumped on the opportunity, devising an unorthodox claim of privacy invasion and funneling enough money to Hogan that he could turn down a lucrative settlement offer and go for the kill.

Though his book acknowledges that Thiel wanted more from the suit than he achieved, “Holiday doesn’t reach the intellectually honest conclusion that Thiel’s conspiracy was a failure,” said Alyssa Rosenberg in The Washington Post. Yes, Gawker as it was known is dead. But Thiel also brought himself more notoriety, instead of regaining the privacy he valued, and he’s not made the internet at all more civil. He has marginally helped his image by opening up about why he targeted Gawker, explaining, for example, that he believes the mavericks who drive progress need freedom to operate without having to worry that their personal secrets will be exposed by a self-appointed watchdog. But he’ll forever be the billionaire who used his wealth to silence a news outlet he didn’t like. That makes him the story’s villain.

**Novel of the week**

**White Houses**

by Amy Bloom *(Random House, $27)*

Amy Bloom’s new novel “brings the reader inside a love affair for the ages,” said Jenny Shank in The Dallas Morning News. Eleanor Roosevelt and journalist Lorena Hickok apparently carried on an extended affair during the first lady’s years in the White House, and though we can’t know what went on behind closed doors, Bloom has used fiction to illuminate her two subjects, not exploit them. The former National Book Award finalist “has always worked best up close, near her characters’ heads and hearts,” and the formula works again here. Hickok tells the story, and she proves to be “a terrific narrator: brash, funny, and opinionated as all get-out,” said Heller McAlpin in the San Francisco Chronicle. A South Dakota native who’d risen from a hard youth to become a prominent Associated Press reporter before Roosevelt brought her into the White House as the designated “first friend,” she loves both Roosevelts but never loses sight of their blind spots. Despite a few “overly long” digressions, the novel “reminds us what true greatness looks like.” The Roosevelts were imperfect, but they were leaders.

**What Are We Doing Here?: Essays**

by Marilynne Robinson *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux, $27)*

Marilynne Robinson “has come through again,” said Christine Brunckhorst in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. In a fractured nation too often preoccupied with petty concerns, the Pulitzer-winning, thoughtfully spiritual 74-year-old novelist insists on looking at the bigger picture and finding hope. Her new book gathers 15 essays on “such unhip topics as God, faith, and conscience,” yet they prove “so wide-ranging and fine, they will remind you that we humans are so much grander than our politics.”

“At the core of the book is Robinson’s passionate argument that we must reassert the history of the United States,” said Scott Esposito in the San Francisco Chronicle. By her measure, the Puritans deserve far more credit for their progressive politics and their role in establishing the American republic, and her heroes of the 18th century built the universities and a body of literature that express a shared faith in human potential. “Probably the most challenging idea” in What Are We Doing Here? is “her unflinching belief that humanity occupies a special place in the cosmos”—because she simply makes the assertion instead of arguing for it. But more perplexing than any of her laments about our era’s spiritual impoverishment is her proposed solutions, said Micah Meadowcroft in FreeBeacon.com. Pour more money into public universities? Robinson is apparently so accustomed to speaking to friendly liberal audiences that she doesn’t see how her allies have pushed religion aside. “She speaks from a position akin to that of a privileged pet.”

Anyone who’s read Robinson closely won’t find much that’s new here, said Parul Sehgal in The New York Times. This book’s final essay, however, “delivers like no other,” offering a wry, mournful account of how her mother wasted her final years bingeing on the angry rhetoric of Fox News. Robinson has no patience for liberals’ easy cynicism either, arguing instead for the need to arrive at one’s own conclusions about the world. That makes her latest a sort of intellectual autobiography—“a starchy, ardent account of what it means to be the custodian of one’s conscience in a world saturated with orthodoxies.”
Best books...chosen by Jesse Ball

Jesse Ball, one of America’s most celebrated young novelists, is the author of A Cure for Suicide, Samedi the Deafness, and six other highly original works. His latest, Census, is a fable about the travels of a father and an adult son with Down syndrome.

Riddley Walker by Russell Hoban (Indiana Univ., $18). If copies of this book were given to us at birth, there would be many more children preserving their imaginations into the shallow waters of adulthood. It is a post-apocalyptic novel told in an invented dialect. Simply read the words aloud to yourself and you’ll understand them. Reading this burning tale, one feels company in one’s heart.

Sweet Days of Discipline by Fleur Jaeggy (New Directions, $13). The clarity and power of Jaeggy’s style is staggering and important. The story here concerns two girls in a boarding school, and there is something deeply stylish to the telling, like an incandescently red bird painted on wet brown foliage.

The Story of a Brief Marriage by Anuk Arudpragasam (Flatiron, $16). Arudpragasam’s elegant debut novel takes place in a refugee camp being rained with bombs. The book’s great power, though, lies in the author’s awareness of the meaning embedded in simple things. There is no need to search for what is marvelous in the sensational; the marvelous is already present.

Torture of Women by Nancy Spero (Siglio, $48). This book, a bundle of death and pain, reproduces a 123-foot collage by Spero in which she incorporated the text of Amnesty International documents that detail incidents of horrific torture visited on women. But Spero is not a fatalist. She is insisting that we take seriously our responsibility as witnesses.

Animal Liberation by Peter Singer (Harper Perennial, $15). Since the Industrial Revolution, people have been unnecessarily subjecting animals to drastic horrors. And yet the activity continues, because people do not care enough about crimes they don’t see. But Singer reminds us that we are complicit if we don’t act. Read this 1976 classic and see whether you can refute it.

Walks With Walser by Carl Seelig (New Directions, $16). In recent years, the number of Robert Walser obsessives seems to have swelled, and this portrait of the Swiss writer feeds our Walsermania. An editor and friend, Seelig knew Walser during several difficult decades, and appears to have been a marvel himself. His portrait of Walser left me in tears.

Also of interest...in wide open spaces

The Great Alone by Kristin Hannah (St. Martin’s, $29)

A 13-year-old must navigate unfamiliar territory in Kristin Hannah’s bestseller, a “compelling saga of domestic violence, determination, and destiny,” said Kim Ode in the Minneapolis Star Tribune. In 1974, Leni Allbright’s family leaves Seattle for Alaska because her father, a Vietnam War vet with PTSD, wants to live off the grid. But remote Alaska, which has an “almost human presence” in the book, exacerbates the family’s dysfunction, and Leni can do only so much to overcome those challenges.

The Kings of Big Spring by Bryan Mealer (Flatiron, $28)

To call this book a sprawling family saga is “something of an understatement,” said Don Graham in The Dallas Morning News. Journalist Bryan Mealer descends from a line of strivers who’ve tried to eke out a living in the vast Texas plains since the 1890s. Buffeted by boll weevils, dust storms, and often their own vices, the Mealers persevered, though their brief brush with oil wealth wouldn’t last. Stuffed with colorful characters, “the whole book is a roller coaster of hope and disaster.”

A Wilder Time by William E. Glasslsey (Bellevue Literary Press, $18)

William Glasslsey’s “brief but ambitious” memoir tries to marry art and analysis, said Ted Nield in Nature. Officially, the geologist ventured to western Greenland to study some of the oldest rocks in existence. But he also found time to soak in the island’s icy gran- deur. Though his accounts of those two pursuits don’t always mesh, Glasslsey “eloquently evokes a place where land feathers into Arctic sea, ice floes glide by on mirror-smooth tongues of clear frigid water, and silence reigns.”

The Book List

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The ‘inclusion rider’ Oscars: A ho-hum night with one intriguing kicker

By the end of Sunday’s hours-long Oscars broadcast, “you could not, nor would you want to, escape Frances McDormand,” said Mark Harris in NYMag.com. On a night when Hollywood looked uncertain whether to celebrate or to continue fighting injustices that had been the talk of the town for months, the 60-year-old Best Actress winner delivered the ceremony’s one moment of “genuine unchoreographed excitement.” Capping a season in which the women in the industry started toppling male icons by speaking out against sexual predation, a jittery McDormand called on all the female nominees in the hall to stand in a show of power, then urged the whole gathering to remember two words: “inclusion rider.” Inclusion what?

It was legalese, but it “felt like a break,” said Alison Willmore in BuzzFeed.com. Picking up on an idea floated in a 2016 TED talk, McDormand was suggesting that stars begin insisting on a clause in their contracts to require that every film meet various diversity standards—such as 50 percent women—in the hiring of its crew and secondary cast. Forget generalities; she was pushing people to act. Unfortunately, she is advocating “an unworkable quota system,” said Christine Rosen in The Weekly Standard. Once race and gender become hiring considerations, there can be no end to the claims of underrepresented groups. And unless Hollywood’s unions want to tell their white male dues payers that work is about to dry up, stars can’t win this fight—making the rider talk look like “just another piece of empty Hollywood posturing.”

Half the country was clearly turned off by the posturing of past years, said Marwa Eltagouri in The Washington Post. Sunday’s Oscar broadcast was the lowest-rated in history, down 24 percent from a year ago, and conservative pundits from Fox News to Breitbart.com loved that, blaming the downturn on the show’s predictable slew of anti-Republican jokes and liberal self-congratulation. “Lowest rated Oscars in history,” President Trump tweeted on Tuesday. “Problem is, we don’t have Stars anymore - except your President (just kidding, of course)! It’s truly a shame that the Oscars have come to this,” said Tyler Smith in Politico.com. The show used to be a moment when all of America—while tuning in to see their favorite stars dressed to dazzle—really did celebrate the magic of cinema. Today, partisanship “washes away any hope” that we’re even watching the same screen.

And the winners were...

Best Picture: The Shape of Water
Best Director: Guillermo del Toro, The Shape of Water
Best Actor: Gary Oldman, Darkest Hour
Best Actress: Frances McDormand, Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri
Best Supporting Actor: Sam Rockwell, Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri
Best Supporting Actress: Allison Janney, I, Tonya

The ‘inclusion rider’ Oscars: A ho-hum night with one intriguing kicker

The Breeders
All Nerve
★★★★
A new album from the Breeders “would be special no matter how it sounded,” said Glenn Gamboa in Newsday. The pioneering alternative rock group hasn’t released any new material in nine years, and hasn’t recorded anything with its 1993 lineup since that year’s Last Splash, a huge crossover hit. But singer-guitarist Kim Deal “clearly had something huge planned for this reunion.” All Nerve revives the surrealism humor of the band’s best work, yet it’s “an ambitious, cannonball-size comeback” that “shows how much the Breeders have grown in their time apart.” Kim and her twin, Kelley, are up front again, and, as before, the Breeders’ fractured rock “gets its bizarre spark from the tension between the Deal sisters’ ethereal harmonies and their dissonant dual-guitar squall,” said Terence Cawley in The Boston Globe. The album barely clocks in at 30 minutes, “but it still manages to feel epic,” especially on “Spacewoman” and “Howl at the Summit,” songs that “build to downrightanthemic choruses.”

Superorganism
Superorganism
★★★★
“If the internet had an in-house band, it might sound a little like Superorganism,” said Ben Cardew in Pitchfork.com. The members of the eight-piece collective actually met online and recorded their first hit single using file sharing. Now living together in East London, the band has delivered a debut album that’s a “hugely accomplished reflection of the present”—“a magpie-friendly collage of pop” whose random audio samples, bellowy guitar riffs, and winning choruses are knit together by the “fantastically world-weary vocals” of frontwoman Orono Noguchi. “Not every song is well served by the group’s whimsy,” said Randall Colburn in ConsequenceOfSound.net. One mellow track “abruptly careers into what sounds like an arcade of quacking ducks.” But “what Superorganism does so well is hitch its whimsical aural textures to steady, inviting beats and familiar melodies.” All of it is fascinating listening, and “there’s joy to be found” in such “kleidoscopic songs as “Everyday Wants to Be Famous.”

David Byrne
American Utopia
★★★★
David Byrne has returned with his first solo album in 14 years, “but solo in his case doesn’t mean alone,” said Bob Boilen in NPR.org. A long list of contributors—including Brian Eno—participated in this “brilliantly analytical” project, which uses vignettes of daily life to inspire listeners to rethink how we see the world. “If a brain in a jar could observe the world, make sense of it, and churn it into a batch of songs, it would make American Utopia.” The 10-track album “isn’t as vital a statement as it wants to be,” said Zachary Hoskins in SlantMagazine.com. “This being latter-day Byrne, the dominant mood is one of daffy, pie-eyed optimism,” and Byrne’s “goofily abstracted” lyrics don’t lend themselves to sweeping state-of-the-nation surveys. On “Every Day Is a Miracle,” for example, he pairs “bland affirmations” with “a litany of stoner epiphanies.” Even so, it’s uplifting to hear “one of pop music’s most idiosyncratic voices continuing to follow his wayward muse.”

THE WEEK March 16, 2018
**The Week’s guide to what’s worth watching**

**For the People**
Sure, Shonda Rhimes’ new series is essentially *Grey’s Anatomy* with lawyers instead of doctors. But you can hardly blame the prolific producer for repeating her successful formula: an attractive young cast, sexual tension, clashing ambitions, and witty give-and-take. Set in lower Manhattan in the nation’s most prestigious federal trial court, *For the People* has the look of a hit. **Tuesday, March 13, at 10 p.m., ABC**

**Rise**
The new series from *Friday Night Lights* creator Jason Katims plays like a mix of that series with a healthy helping of early *Glee*. In a Pennsylvania industrial town where high school football rules, an inspiring drama teacher shakes things up when he recruits a gridiron star to play the male lead in a production of the controversial coming-of-age musical *Spring Awakening*. Josh Radnor plays the teens’ mentor. *Moana* vocal star Auli’i Cravalho leads the way when it’s time for the big musical numbers. **Tuesday, March 13, at 10 p.m., NBC**

**The Mountain Lion and Me**
When a mountain lion left tracks in the snow covering Casey Anderson’s Montana yard, the wildlife filmmaker followed the prints to their source. In this documentary shot in ultra-high definition, Anderson chronicles the year he spent recording the graceful predator’s every move, beginning with a heart-pounding night waiting for her to return to the den where she’d hidden her kill. **Wednesday, March 14, at 8 p.m., Smithsonian Channel**

**Wild Wild Country**
A six-part documentary series resurrects a mostly forgotten story about a toxic cult that attempted to create its own version of utopia in 1980s rural Oregon. Indian meditation guru Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh had built his following by preaching free love, but when locals resisted the influx of his orange-clad followers, the woman he’d made his top lieutenant turned vicious, stockpiling guns, issuing threats, plotting bombings, and finally poisoning enemies in and outside the compound. **Available for streaming Friday, March 16, Netflix**

**Instinct**
No one-hour drama series on broadcast TV has ever had an openly gay lead character, but that’s hardly the most interesting thing about Dylan Reinhart. For one, he’s played by Tony winner Alan Cumming. He’s also a charismatic professor, popular author, expert in psychopathology, and former CIA officer who gets pulled back into fighting crime when a New York City detective asks him to help catch a serial killer who’s clearly read a Reinhart best-seller. With Bojana Novakovic, Naveen Andrews, and Whoopi Goldberg. **Sunday, March 18, at 8 p.m., CBS**

### Monday, March 12
**True Grit**
John Wayne earned his first and only Oscar playing Rooster Cogburn, a one-eyed Texas Ranger who agrees to help a teenager find her father’s killer. (1969) **9 p.m., Starz Encore**

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The creepy, kooky family gets a scare from a psychotic nanny. Christopher Lloyd, Joan Cusack, and Christina Ricci co-star. (1993) **8 p.m., Movieplex**

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In Spike Lee’s offbeat love letter to New York City, Edward Norton plays a drug dealer on the eve of a seven-year prison term. (2003) **4:30 p.m., Showtime**

### Friday, March 16
**Hacksaw Ridge**
Andrew Garfield plays a conscientious objector who’s decorated for his valor as a World War II combat medic. (2016) **7:40 p.m., Cinemax**

### Saturday, March 17
**Finian’s Rainbow**
Four years before *The Godfather*, Francis Ford Coppola directed Fred Astaire’s final musical, a story about an Irishman who steals a leprechaun’s gold. (1968) **5:15 p.m., TCM**

### Sunday, March 18
**Gallipoli**
Mel Gibson gave a strong early performance in this war drama about Australian friends who fight together in Turkey during World War I. (1981) **2:30 p.m., Movieplex**

### Monday, March 19
**Collateral**
In a four-part series created by playwright David Hare, Carey Mulligan plays a London detective who uncovers layers of intrigue while investigating the fatal shooting of a Muslim pizza deliveryman. **Currently streaming on Netflix**

### Wednesday, March 21
**Christian Amanpour: Sex and Love Around the World**
The award-winning news host launches a six-part series in which she visits cities around the world to ask women about sex and the forces that govern it. **Saturday, March 17, at 10 p.m., CNN**

### Sunday, March 18
**Genius Junior**
Neil Patrick Harris hosts a new game show that quizzes some of America’s smartest kids. **Sunday, March 18, at 9 p.m., NBC**

### Show of the week
**This Is Us**
The current season of *This Is Us* will forever be remembered for the Super Bowl–week episodes that caused millions of viewers to ponder tossing their slow cookers. But aside from the Crock-Pot tragedy, which resolved a central mystery with a slight off-note, the series has displayed no trace of a sophomore slump as it’s explored the roots of simmering conflicts between the Pearson offspring and revealed how the paterfamilias died without ending his key role in its flashback scenes. Have tissues ready for the season finale—for tears of joy expected when Kate and Toby tie the knot. **Tuesday, March 13, at 9 p.m., NBC**

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**Movies on TV**

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**THE WEEK March 16, 2018**

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**All listings are Eastern Time.**
**LEISURE**

**Food & Drink**

**Critics’ choice: The many flavors of locavorism**

**Lady of the House Detroit**

Kate Williams’ generosity knows no bounds, said Rebecca Flint Marx in *The New York Times*. At her “decidedly welcoming” new Corktown restaurant, the chef who made her name at Republic is now building a better Detroit every day, starting with the tiny cups of black tea that greet guests as they settle in for dinner. Williams has deep roots in the city’s historic Irish neighborhood—her immigrant great-grandparents met at the local Gaelic League—and she’s chosen to give back by sourcing produce from Detroit’s urban farms and cooking cozy Irish-inspired food that’s served on old-fashioned china in a room with a big fireplace and a dark ceiling. She’s a big believer in using all parts of an animal, and “a sense of resourcefulness pervades her cooking”: a roast chicken for four; rich shrimp butter served with baker Shelby Janisch’s “exceptional” rye-sourdough bread; a trio of scallops, “fat as tuffets,” set on a bed of polenta cooked in whey. If you have no room left to finish the meal with the “improbably airy” potato doughnuts, get them boxed to go. They’re “just as good the next day.”

1426 Bagley Ave., (313) 818-0218

**Rider Seattle**

“There is plenty about Rider that tethers it to the Pacific Northwest,” said Providence Cicero in *The Seattle Times*. The house restaurant at the new Hotel Theodore is anchored by a custom-built grill that burns Washington applewood and lends a welcome char to most every bit of fruit, fowl, or whole fish served in the white-tiled dining room. Chef David Nichols has made it a mission to serve meals that are rooted in place—a place where ocean meets forest—and most of the time, that works. Skip the forgettable raw seafood plateaus but not the steelhead fillet, bavette steak, or duck breast that comes straight from that grill, and also seek out the outliers. The “Salish Sea cioppino” is a chile-spiked, crab-flavored tomato-based soup. The crab toast it’s served with features Dungeness crabmeat creamed with coconut milk and pureed fennel. And the roasted-carrot pasta is tossed with whole clams, Calabrian chiles, and “a rousing chorus of cilantro and lime.” If the friendly servers ever truly learn their trade, Rider could do Seattle proud. 619 Pine St., (206) 859-4242

**Cultivar Boston**

For a restaurant set at the very heart of historic Boston, Cultivar “gives off heavy-duty northern-Calib vibes,” said Jolyon Helterman in *Boston* magazine. The bright, beechwood-chic décor “channels every chilled-out bistro dotting the road from San Francisco to Sonoma,” and chef Mary Dumont so delights in rococo celebrations of local seasonal bounty that New England’s long winters will probably be a perpetual challenge. Still, there are “masterpieces to be had” at Cultivar even post-September. Dumont’s yakitori beets, served with house-made ricotta, are “fire-roasted to intense earthy sweetness.” An impeccably balanced apple salad combines heirloom chicories, honeycrisp, guanciale, and *tête de moine* cheese. Then there’s the roast chicken. The white and dark meat is boneless and then wrapped back into the skin before roasting. Served on savory polenta and dressed with herbs, it’s now the best in Boston, and “comfort food at its finest.” 1 Court St., (617) 979-8203

**Recipe of the week**

The raisin-packed white soda bread you come across every St. Patrick’s Day isn’t what the Irish typically eat, said Andrea Geary in *Cook’s Illustrated*. Their preferred daily bread is “dead simple to make” and more versatile, because the “savory, nutty” flavor of wholemeal flour pairs well with cheese or cured fish, tea or hard cider. To create a bread as tender, toothsome, and delicious here, where wholemeal flour is hard to find, you have to add a few more ingredients. After that, though, it’s foolproof, and “so quick and wholesome that you’ll want to make it every day, too.”

**Irish brown soda bread**

2 cups whole-wheat flour • 1 cup all-purpose flour • 1 cup wheat bran • ¼ cup wheat germ • 2 tsp sugar • 1⅛ tsp baking powder • 1⅛ tsp baking soda • 1 tsp salt • 2 cups buttermilk

• Adjust oven rack to middle position and preheat oven to 375. Lightly grease an 8-inch round cake pan. Whisk whole-wheat flour, all-purpose flour, wheat bran, wheat germ, sugar, baking powder, baking soda, and salt together in a medium bowl.
• Add buttermilk and stir with a rubber spatula until all flour is moistened and dough forms a soft, ragged mass. Transfer dough to a counter and gently shape into a 6-inch round. Using a serrated knife, cut a ¼-inch-deep cross about 5 inches long on top. Transfer loaf to prepared pan. Bake 40 to 45 minutes, rotating pan halfway through baking, until loaf is lightly browned (center should register 185 degrees).
• Invert loaf onto a wire rack. Reinvert loaf and let cool at least 1 hour. Slice and serve.

**Beer: Wine included**

Artisanal brewers are turning to wine grapes to make great beer, said Spike Carter in *Bloomberg.com*. Whether the grains and grapes are co-fermented from the start or wedded halfway through, the results are “wildly unique, sometimes odd, and usually a delicious blurring of the lines.”

**Stillwater Oude Bae** ($12 per four-pack). Perfect for a picnic, this winning hybrid is a sour amber ale aged in French oak with pinot noir grapes. It delivers “an appealing funk and richness.”

**Brasserie Cantillon Saint Lamvinus** ($40 for 750 ml). A blend of Belgian lambics is aged in oak with merlot grapes to create Saint Lamvinus, a cult-worthy hybrid with a “brilliant burgundy hue.”

**Upright Brewing Co. Oregon Native** ($20 for 750 ml). This “jazzy pleasure” is also barrel-fermented with pinot noir grapes, and has the red-fruit aroma typical of pinot.
This week’s dream: Road-tripping in southwestern Australia

I had always wanted to take a leisurely road trip along the coastal region south of Perth, said Margo Pfeiff in the Los Angeles Times. Perth itself is a sun-soaked marvel of a city, and the corner of Western Australia that lies below it is “remarkably” diverse, with 600 miles of coastline, several national parks, and six wine-growing regions. A friend and I finally made the tour last March, as Australia’s summer turned to fall, and Perth put us in the right mood. The city has 1.7 million residents, but there are 19 white-sand surfing beaches in the metro region, and in Kings Park and Botanic Garden, a 1,000-acre green space, you don’t feel like you’re in a city when rainbow lorikeets are flitting among the banksia blossoms.

From Perth, we took State Route 2 south to Margaret River, the town at the heart of a region known for its wine, cheese, tender Arkady lamb, and freshwater crayfish. We stocked up at the Margaret River Farmers’ Market, “the epicenter of all things edible,” then started making day trips from our cottage three miles from the sea. A bit of winery hopping took us to Vasse Felix and Cape Mentelle Vineyards, and we regularly hiked the headlands and beaches of Leeuwin-Naturaliste National Park. Over morning coffee at the cottage, we watched peacocks grazing with the sheep on a neighbor’s farm.

Heading inland, we drove into the Southern Forests, where among one stand of 400-year-old trees, we strolled on a walkway strung 120 feet off the ground in the forest canopy. After an overnight in Albany, a former whaling outpost full of old taverns, we were on to Esperance, stopping frequently for closer looks at the many “strange and fantastical” blossoms that make Western Australia the best place in the world to see unique wildflower species. On Woody Island, a ferry ride away from Esperance, we searched for tiny penguins in the bush after some snorkeling. The next afternoon, in Cape Le Grand National Park, we fared even better, finding kangaroos bouncing in the surf and lounging on the “blindingly white” sand of Lucky Bay.

At Perth’s Peppers Kings Square Hotel (peppers.com.au), doubles start at $110.
**The 2018 BMW M5: What the critics say**

**Motor Trend**
“What a car.” The last time BMW’s performance division redesigned its supersedan, in 2011, it left drivers feeling cold. “Well, guess what? The M5 is once again completely bonkers, hair-on-fire great.” Lighter, more powerful, and “scary fast,” the 2018 model is also the first M5 with all-wheel-drive and no manual transmission. Purists will have their doubts—until they’ve driven this “supremely entertaining” supersedan.

**Car and Driver**
We were among those doubters, muttering profanities while reading the spec sheet. “Then we actually drove the 2018 BMW M5, and hallelujahs spilled from our lips.” The eight-speed transmission is “technically flawless,” and with a twin-turbocharged V-8 that now makes 600 hp—40 more than the outgoing model—the M5 “launches with the authority and unrelenting thrust of a Saturn V rocket.” Best of all, the M5 also feels like a well-balanced rear-wheel-drive car, because almost all power is directed to the rear axle, except when the computers sense you need bailing out.

**Jalopnik.com**
Let’s admit it: “Most M5s will probably spend their lives valet-parked”—and that’s a shame, because on a track, “this meaty monster has more capability than any cushy five-passenger people mover has any right to.” It’s easily “one of the most capable four-door performance cars on the planet.”

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**The best of...golf style**

**Garmin Approach X40**
You can get an even slimmer Garmin smart-watch if all you want is yardage data for 41,000 courses worldwide. The X40 adds fitness tracking and automatic shot logging—plus three extra band colors. $290, garmin.com

**Puma P110 Snapback Cap**
Puma has taken a subtler approach to branding with the new caps that PGA trendsetter Ricky Fowler is wearing on tour. Color options include a green cap made from 100 percent recycled materials. $28, cabragolf.com

**Tory Sport Chevron Polo**
Tory Burch makes bold use of her sport line’s signature chevron stripes in this 1970s-inspired jersey. That’s cut-and-sewn detailing in a moisture-wicking cotton-blend fabric. $128, torysport.com

**W.R. Case Golfer’s Tool Pocket Knife**
Why not carry your divot repair tool everywhere? Case slips one into a pocketknife with a bone handle and 3.5-inch blade made from surgical steel. It comes in a gift box with a magnetic ball marker. $67, knifecountryusa.com

**Original Jones Carry Bag**
There’s not much to this Sunday bag made of waxed canvas, but the bare-bones look “says you belong on the back tees.” After all, you will have a caddie with you. $230, jonesgolfbags.com

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**Tip of the week... Choosing the right cooking oil**
- **Olive oil** offers grassy, peppery flavor notes that make it a go-to for salads, but extra virgin has a fairly low smoke point. “Pure” olive oil is filtered, though, elevating the smoke point to 465 degrees.
- **Canola oil** is a great all-purpose option because of its “barely there” flavor and 400-degree smoke point. Use it for everything except salad dressing and deep-frying.
- **Com oil**, another neutral oil, is better than canola for deep-frying because it has a smoke point of 450.
- **Peanut oil** also works well for frying, especially stir-frying. Essential to many Asian dishes, it imparts a nutty flavor.
- **Coconut oil** is viscous and slightly sweet in its unrefined form, making it a good butter substitute in baking. Refined, it has a mild coconut flavor and a smoke point of 400.
- **Grapeseed oil** has a “light, clean” flavor that makes it a popular substitute for olive oil. Source: Better Homes and Gardens

**And for those who have everything...**
“At last, an electric skateboard that’s not just a novelty.” Until today, the StarkBoard was the only battery-powered device able to perform jumps and stunts on a par with skateboards. But now the company has solved the problem of size, with a 30-inch-long model that weighs a mere 19 pounds. It’s foldable, it’s portable, and it’s fast. StarkBoard was the subject of this week’s first-ever cover story. Now it’s on the market, and you can get one for $1,035. Starkmobility.com

**Best apps... For watching free movies online**
- **Crackle**, a streaming website and app owned by Sony, serves up a rotating selection of movies for anyone who establishes a user account. “You will have to put up with a fair amount of advertising, but the choice of movies is good.”
- **Classic Cinema Online** offers great pictures from the ‘30s, ‘40s, and ‘50s. Once again, they’re “surrounded by ads,” but “there are some genuine gems to find here, and you’ll come away from your viewing with a much more rounded film knowledge.”
- **Popcornflix** brims with “trashy, low-budget” films, but you can find decent titles here if you’re willing to hunt.
- **PBS** offers a limited number of documentaries, independent movies, and shorts, but the PBS.org site and PBS Anywhere app let you dive right in and begin streaming shows and movies, no registration required. “God bless PBS.”

Source: Gizmodo.com

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**THE WEEK March 16, 2018**
**Best properties on the market**

**This week: Homes in Mexico**

1 **Zihuatanejo** Villa Encantada is a five-bedroom, 10,000-square-foot home overlooking Zihuatanejo Bay and the Pacific Ocean. The house is designed for a seamless flow between outdoor and indoor living, with wood beams, tile floors, and en-suite bedrooms with private terraces and spa bathrooms. The property is surrounded by palms and tropical gardens, which attract hummingbirds and parrots. $1,174,000. Shari Reynolds, Christie’s International Real Estate, (469) 224-0483

2 **Los Cabos** This four-bedroom villa is part of Chileno Bay Resort & Residences. The home has a kitchen with high-end appliances, marble floors, wood ceilings, floor-to-ceiling windows, a large covered terrace, and views of the bay. Amenities include access to the community’s spa, restaurants, golf course, and concierge services. $3,050,000. Chileno Bay Resort & Residences, (800) 916-1290

3 **San Miguel de Allende**

Mexican architect Juan Carlos Valdez built Casa Dorada, a three-bedroom colonial-style house on a historic street in this popular expat town. Features include boveda brick ceilings, hand-carved stone pillars, nine fireplaces, local tiles, radiant-heated floors, and a rooftop terrace. Outside are a central garden and a pool flanked by two guest casitas. $2,995,000. Peggy Taylor, Luxury Portfolio International, (011-52) 415-101-0058
Best properties on the market

4 ▶ Cuernavaca  Quinta Toscana is a four-bedroom house built around an open-air atrium. The 1955 home features a tiled kitchen, rustic wood beams, two fireplaces, a library, and an upstairs living room with terrace. The lush property includes a private guest suite that faces the gardens and pool; staff quarters; and a four-car garage. $3,529,274. Laura de la Torre de Skipsey, Guadalajara/Sotheby’s International Realty, (011-52) 333-627-6437

5 ▶ Tulum  Casa Siankaana is set in the SianKa’an biosphere reserve, a UNESCO site on the Caribbean Sea. The off-the-grid, eco-friendly home is powered by sun and wind, and includes five bedrooms, a large central living room with a palapa roof, a media room, and two terraces. The palm-covered 2-acre property offers direct access to the beach and lagoon. $3,750,000. Sara Plaga, Riviera Maya/Sotheby’s International Realty, (011-52) 984-803-3036

6 ▶ Riviera Nayarit  This four-bedroom home is located in Mandarina, a private community an hour from Puerto Vallarta. The contemporary-style house has floor-to-ceiling windows, wood ceilings, 2,600 square feet of outdoor living space, and views of the jungle and the Pacific Ocean. Ownership includes access to polo grounds, arenas, and a 1-mile beach. $4,800,000. JP Mahoney, One&Only Private Homes, (011-52) 322-152-3292

7 ▶ Playa Mujeres  Part of a private Caribbean enclave on a peninsula north of Cancún, this one-bedroom condo features a gourmet kitchen, marble floors, custom woodwork, and high-end bathroom design. The residence comes with access to a Greg Norman golf course, private beaches, a marina, sports courts, a gym, and restaurants. $320,000. Julie Quigley, PowerPlay Destination Properties, (214) 914-5480

Steal of the week
A small-business tax break

The recent tax overhaul offers pass-through businesses a big opportunity to save.

What is a pass-through business?

Sole proprietorships, partnerships, limited liability companies (LLCs), and S corporations are all types of pass-through businesses—named after how they are taxed. Instead of being taxed at corporate rates, as with C corporations, profits “pass through” to the business owners, who then pay taxes on them as personal income. Of the 26 million businesses in the U.S. in 2014, 95 percent were pass-throughs. Most are small businesses: Sole proprietorships are operated by a single person, who can be anything from a housekeeper to a doctor, while a partnership can be a law firm or a car dealership, for instance. But some pass-throughs are very large businesses with millions of dollars in profit, such as the Trump Organization or the Dallas Cowboys Football Club. The new tax law enacted in December allows certain pass-through businesses to deduct up to 20 percent of income from their tax bills, which can lower their effective tax rate.

Can I be a pass-through business?

It’s possible, but it may not be in your best interest. “This is one of the most pressing issues for taxpayers and business owners,” says Mark Everson, vice chairman of tax-consulting firm Alliantgroup LP. “They are looking carefully now at how they are legally organized.” Obviously, you’d first have to own a business. Less obvious: You might qualify as a business owner without even realizing it—for example, if you’re a freelancer. But before you jump into making yourself an LLC or other kind of pass-through, know that qualifying for the full pass-through deduction under the new law can be tricky. It depends on many factors, including what your taxable income is and what kind of business you do.

What are the new rules?

If your taxable income is less than $157,500 for single filers, or $315,000 for joint filers, you can deduct 20 percent of either your eligible business income or your taxable income, whichever is less. Above those income limits, what you can deduct depends on your business. For specified service providers—including doctors, lawyers, accountants, consultants, and investment advisers—the deduction is phased out until your taxable income reaches $207,500 for individuals or $415,000 for married couples filing jointly. At that point, the deduction is eliminated for these types of service businesses. But even with the phase-out, many highly paid professionals, such as lawyers, athletes, and stockbrokers, will probably still want to turn themselves into LLCs or other pass-throughs. Tax experts have noted that there are plenty of ways to game the system and get around the restrictions.

How much are the savings?

You’re going to need a calculator—and probably an accountant—to figure out your own potential benefit. But “the deduction... has the potential to reduce your taxable income by tens, if not hundreds, of thousands of dollars,” says Jeffrey Levine, director of financial planning at wealth management firm BluePrint Wealth Alliance in New York. He offers these examples: Jack is single and makes $100,000 a year at his day job. He also works as a consultant on the side and makes $50,000. His taxable income is $133,500. Filing as a sole proprietorship, he can deduct a full 20 percent of his side business’s $50,000 profit, bringing his taxable income down by $10,000, to $123,500. On the other hand, Jill is also single and makes $100,000 a year as a real estate agent. Her taxable income is $73,000. Unlike Jack’s, her taxable income is less than her eligible business income. So she can deduct 20 percent of the $73,000 figure, which gives her a $14,600 deduction.

How do I set it all up?

If you do decide to go the pass-through route, seriously consider working with a certified public accountant or other financial pro to ensure that you maximize the tax benefit available to you. “The most complicated piece of the reform is the deduction for pass-through income and how it is limited for taxpayers with joint income above $315,000,” says tax law expert and professor Bradley Heim. “I would advise anyone in that income range with a pass-through business to work with a tax professional, since correctly applying those tests and figuring the proper deduction will not be easy.”
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The news at a glance

Banks: Senate seeks to weaken Dodd-Frank

Republicans in the Senate, with support from some Democrats, moved ahead this week with an effort to scale back the sweeping financial regulations passed in the aftermath of the financial crisis, said Aimee Picchi in CBSNews.com. Their proposed bill, sponsored by Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho), would weaken rules created under the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial reform law—raising the threshold for “too big to fail” banks from $50 billion to $250 billion and exempting about two dozen financial firms from capital and liquidity rules and the highest level of Federal Reserve oversight. Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-Mass.), the bill’s key opponent, called the proposed changes “a punch in the gut” to U.S. consumers.

Democrats are “sharply split” over rolling back Dodd-Frank, said Jim Puzancghera in the Los Angeles Times. But “after years of complaints from bankers in their states,” more than a dozen Democrats joined their Republican colleagues in voting to advance the bill, citing the need for “sensible revisions” to onerous banking rules. The provisions designed to ease burdens on smaller banks, including reducing mortgage regulations, enjoy nearly unanimous support. But Democrats remain divided over changes that would weaken oversight of midsize banks. If the bill passes the Senate, it moves to the House, where Republicans are “expected to accept it.”

Tech: U.S. deals blow to Broadcom- Qualcomm merger

The U.S. government has dramatically “inserted itself into the technology industry’s biggest potential takeover,” arguing the deal could endanger the country’s technological prowess and, in turn, national security,” said Kate O’Keefe in The Wall Street Journal. The Committee on Foreign Investment in the U.S. this week instructed California-based chipmaker Qualcomm to delay a key shareholder vote that could have helped Singapore-based chip-making rival Broadcom’s $117 billion takeover bid. In response, Broadcom this week pledged it would invest $1.5 billion in 5G technology in the U.S. “to ease regulatory concerns.”

Banking: Goldman Sachs plans aggressive expansion

Goldman Sachs is embarking on a mission “to make a new fortune off the globe’s fast-growing ranks of millionaires,” said John Aidan Byrne in the New York Post. The firm plans to hire at least 200 more financial advisers over the next three years for its private wealth management unit, increasing the division’s ranks by 30 percent. Analysts said the effort could generate as much as $1 billion in annual revenues by 2020 for the firm. Goldman has also launched a slew of new initiatives targeting middle-class consumers, with household-budgeting tools, insurance, mortgages, and car loans.

Tech: Amazon-branded checking accounts

Banking might be the next industry disrupted by Amazon, said Hugh Son in Bloomberg.com. The e-commerce giant is reportedly in talks with banks such as JPMorgan Chase and Capital One about building a checking account—like product it could offer to its customers. The product would be targeted at Millennials and those who don’t already have a bank account, and would help Amazon “lower fees they pay to financial firms and give it a bigger window into customers’ income and spending habits.”

Retail: Kohl’s to start selling groceries

Kohl’s customers will soon be able to “pick up milk and eggs along with their cargo shorts and yoga pants,” said Abha Bhattarai in The Washington Post. To boost foot traffic, the department store chain plans to join forces with German discount grocer Aldi to test grocery sales in 10 of its locations. The effort comes as Kohl’s last week reported sales growth of 6.3 percent in the last quarter, its largest quarterly increase since 2001. The move follows similar in-store partnerships with Amazon and Under Armour.

Corporate loyalty in permanent ink

“A surprising number of workers are expressing a bond with their employers” by getting tattoos of company logos, said Rachel Feintzeig and Kelsey Gey in Wall Street Journal. When consultancy Booz & Co. was rebranded as Strategy&, Mahadeva Matt Mani, a suburban dad who favors “suits with a tie and a pocket handkerchief” impulsively inked a 2.5-inch “&” on his ankle at a company retreat. Minnesota-based Anytime Fitness actually has a tattoo room at corporate headquarters, which is where media director Mark Daly got a tattoo of the running man logo, prompting his wife to call him a “knucklehead.” Red Hat tech worker Thomas Cameron filed an expense form for the $100 he spent inking the software company’s red fedora logo on his arm—and got reimbursed. He’s planning another tattoo soon. “The company recently announced it was changing its logo.”
Making money

Mortgages: Will rising rates spook homebuyers?

Buying a first home is “an agonizing problem for a lot of young people,” said Greta Kaul in MinnPost.com. A disheartening combination of rising home prices, low inventory, and escalating building costs have been conspiring to render the dream of getting on the property ladder increasingly unattainable. Adding to prospective buyers’ woes, the Federal Reserve is expected to raise interest rates several times over the coming months. As borrowing costs escalate, house hunting will become “even tougher,” said Kathryn Vasel in CNN.com. Home prices nationwide have soared by an average 48 percent since 2011, while incomes increased by just 15 percent in the same period, creating a real “affordability challenge.” And now, just as the home-buying spring and summer seasons begin, interest rates are ticking higher: A 30-year fixed-rate mortgage hit an average 4.43 percent last week, the highest level since April 2014.

Let’s have some perspective around those numbers, said Jeff Andrews in Curbed.com. Assuming that rates rise by another 0.85 percent in the next year and home prices climb 2.6 percent in real terms, a typical monthly mortgage payment will go up from $804 to $910. While that 13 percent increase is not insignificant, it still means borrowing rates remain at historic lows. Twelve years ago, the average monthly payment, adjusted for inflation, was $1,263. And in the early 1980s, the 30-year fixed-interest rate was roughly 18 percent. Prospective homebuyers may be worried by the Fed’s increases, but rates are “unlikely to get better than they are now,” so it’s wise to keep house hunting. There may be some deals to be had in the coming months, too, said Kathy Orton in The Washington Post. The “upward march” of interest rates, combined with the loss of tax breaks for some homeowners, could begin to have a “damping effect” on the market. Sales of new homes stalled in January, which could put downward pressure on prices this summer.

“While buying and owning a home can be fun and rewarding, it’s not all HGTV makes it out to be,” said Hillary Hoffower in BusinessInsider.com. For the most part, “it involves a lot more mental and monetary effort than most buyers originally anticipate.” So when you are ready to take the plunge into homeownership, be patient and flexible through the search process. Make a short list of “must-haves” for your home, but be willing to compromise on the rest, said Bill Ness in Forbes.com. You may have to sacrifice those granite countertops to shorten your commute to work. Study your prospective neighborhood and see if you can imagine yourself living there. “Don’t buy beyond your means.” And be meticulous with your paperwork—errors can be costly. Buying a first home is daunting, but go in with a strong plan and “don’t let fear stop you.”

What the experts say

Locating your old 401(k) accounts

“Do you know where your money is?” asked Ken Fisher in USA Today. Keeping track of old 401(k) accounts can be tricky. Americans lost track of more than $7.7 billion worth of retirement savings in 2015 alone. If you “accidentally and unknowingly” abandoned a 401(k), it’s “time to retrieve it and take control.” The good news is, “if your money was invested, it should still be growing.” But you’ll want to consolidate, because having multiple accounts with numerous fee structures and investment plans will be costly in the long term. Check old statements, contact your previous employers, or search the site of the National Registry of Unclaimed Retirement Benefits. “When everything is merged, you can work on your own or with your adviser to make sure the money is invested right for your goals and needs.”

Financial documents to keep

For the millions of Americans itemizing their deductions, tax season is a time of “paper piles, bursting files, and inscrutable tax forms,” said Ron Lieber in The New York Times. With the new tax bill offering fewer reasons to itemize, “there may be less mess in your future.” But you will still want to retain “more than you might think.” The IRS anticipates you’ll keep your returns and “any supporting documentation” three years after filing. Make sure you also keep records of your IRA conversions to prove you’ve already paid tax when you withdraw. It’s also important to retain copies of major insurance policies and any estate-planning documents. To cut down on paperwork, scan and save digital copies of receipts for deductible expenses.

Determining your estimated taxes

“How much should I pay?” asked Jeanne Sahadi in CNN.com. It’s a perennial question for those who pay quarterly estimated taxes. But it’s “especially tricky this year,” because the new tax law changed income tax rates, and eliminated some deductions and exemptions and added others. Tax experts are still awaiting guidance from the IRS on some key provisions, so until that advice arrives, it’s probably “better to figure your estimated payments to match 100 percent (or 110 percent) of what you paid last year.” It’s not advisable to skip the quarterly payment that is due April 17 just because you are unsure of what you owe. “You could be hit with underpayment penalties for the quarter when you file your 2018 return next year.”
Corporate America is growing a conscience, said Derek Thompson in The Atlantic. Under intense social pressure, companies in the Trump era are taking stands on issues ranging from guns to global warming to immigration. In recent weeks, 20 major firms, including Delta, Hertz, Avis, Symantec, and MetLife, have cut ties with the National Rifle Association in response to the Parkland, Fla., school massacre. Dick's Sporting Goods has stopped selling the AR-15 rifle, and both it and Walmart have raised their minimum age for firearm purchases to 21. Last year, Disney’s CEO quit a White House business council after Trump withdrew the U.S. from the Paris climate accord; drug company Merck's CEO left after Charlottesville. It’s “hard to understand” why anyone would care whether a pharmaceutical firm or car rental company has chosen sides in the latest political debate, said Michael Strain in Bloomberg.com. “But apparently many people do”—and CEOs are speaking out in response.

“This isn’t heroism, shareholder activism, or even corporate social responsibility—it’s plain old business,” said Heidi Moore in The Washington Post. Few of these companies are going to take a financial hit for their outspokenness. Dick’s Sporting Goods, for instance, sold AR-15s at just 35 of its 719 stores, and gun sales nationally are on the slide. Walmart stopped selling ARs in 2015 not out of principle but because customers weren’t buying them. “Predictably enough,” companies that make a lot of money from their relationship with the gun industry, such as FedEx, haven’t budged since Parkland. “Morality is easy when it costs nothing.” That’s not to say there isn’t sometimes an upside to activism, said Aaron Chatterji in The New York Times. Patagonia’s sales surged after it protested the decision to slash the size of Bears Ears National Monument in Utah, and Apple won fans after CEO Tim Cook spoke out against a discriminatory Indiana law. But other companies have “had to retreat” after taking positions, as Target did when conservatives criticized its trans-inclusive bathroom policy. In our polarized environment, companies continually have to decide “which kind of consumers they can write off and which ones to curry favor with.”

Long-term, that will be bad for business, said Megan McArdle in The Washington Post. Consumers are increasingly shopping their politics, with “liberals eating at Starbucks and Panera while conservatives dine on Papa John’s and Chick-fil-A, and crafters splitting between Hobby Lobby and Michaels.” That’s all well and good for niche markets, but companies that rely on economies of scale cannot thrive “catering to a small, fanatically partisan fan base.” The reason we’re demanding that companies choose sides in “weighty cultural and political debates” is that we have a “dearth of other options” to anchor us, said Daniel Foster in National Review. The institutions where we once found community—churches, unions, even families—have waned. “Precious few alternatives, apart from the corporation, have arisen in their place.” And so we turn “to the corporation for shelter.”

The benefits of business regulations

David Lazarus
Los Angeles Times

President Trump has made removing private-sector regulations one of his top priorities, said David Lazarus. Getting rid of outdated and burdensome rules, he assures us, will supercharge economic growth and create more jobs. But numbers released by his own administration undercut the idea that “regulations are bad for the country.” Last week, “when no one was looking,” the Office of Management and Budget published a congressionally mandated report that finds that the “benefits of regulations far outweigh the costs.” Government analysts examined 16 major rules that were “fully quantifiable,” meaning their costs and benefits could be measured. That includes, for instance, “the cost of imposing clean-air and clean-water rules on factories versus the benefit to ordinary people of not getting cancer and running up huge hospital bills.” The findings: In 2016, such rules cost $4.9 billion to impose but resulted in $27.3 billion in benefits. That’s “a hell of a good investment” by any measure. Other estimates have put the benefits far higher, at $833 billion for the past decade, “or 12 times what these rules cost industry to impose.” And despite Trump’s deregulatory push, economic growth actually slowed in the past quarter, to 2.5 percent from 3.2 percent. His own numbers spell it out: “Take away rules and regulations, and all you end up doing is shortchanging the American people.”

The job market’s sweet spot

Neil Irwin
The New York Times

Just how low can unemployment go? asked Neil Irwin. Economic theory suggests there is a “magic number” for the jobless rate—a sweet spot where virtually anybody who wants a job can find one, while there’s still a “bare minimum” of unemployment as people move between gigs, as well as low inflation. Yet “economists have no idea” what this number might be, as it is constantly shifting, and their uncertainty “has huge economic consequences.” The problem has to do with the Federal Reserve’s mission to keep inflation in check. If unemployment falls below the ideal level, it can presage damaging inflation, signaling to the Fed that it is time to raise interest rates.

Fed chairman Jerome Powell has said he believes the sweet spot is when the jobless rate is in “the low 4s.” Does January’s 4.1 percent unemployment qualify? Or could joblessness be allowed to “drift lower” without sparking inflation? In 2013, the Fed estimated the sweet spot at 5.5 percent unemployment. Luckily, it didn’t begin raising interest rates when it hit that figure, or “millions of Americans who are now working would have been consigned to unemployment for no good reason.” It’s now up to Powell to decide whether he is willing to “test the lower limits” of his estimate. Millions of Americans’ economic fate depends on his getting it right.
The student athlete who broke the 4-minute mile

On May 6, 1954, Roger Bannister worked a morning shift in London, before catching a train to Oxford and enjoying a ham salad lunch with friends. Later that day, in front of 3,000 spectators at the city’s Iffley Road running track, the 6-foot-2-inch medical student made history, becoming the first person to run a mile in under 4 minutes. In damp and windy conditions, and aided by pacemakers Chris Brasher and Chris Chataway, Bannister finished in 3 minutes 59.4 seconds—a feat many had thought was impossible. “With 5 yards to go the finishing line seemed almost to recede,” he later recalled. “Those last few seconds seemed an eternity.”

Born in the London suburb of Harrow, Bannister took to running at an early age, said The Washington Post. “I just ran anywhere and everywhere,” he recalled. “It was easier for me to run than to walk.” Bannister went to Oxford University to study medicine at age 17 and quickly became its athletic club's star performer. He continued to improve after graduating and went to the 1952 Helsinki Olympics “favored to win the gold” in the 1,500 meters. Instead, he finished fourth, “and his crushing disappointment motivated him to pursue the 4-minute mile.” He trained while keeping up with his studies, which meant he often ran just 25 miles a week. Bannister's triumph in Oxford was hailed in newspapers around the world, but “his record stood for only 46 days,” said The Times (U.K.). On June 21, Australian runner John Landy beat his time by over a second. The two rivals had a “dramatic showdown” at the Commonwealth Games in Vancouver, British Columbia, two months later, in what became known as the “Miracle Mile.” Both men finished in under 4 minutes—but Bannister won by 5 yards.

Later that year, after winning the 1,500 meters at the European championships, Bannister abruptly retired from competitive running “to concentrate on medicine,” said The New York Times. He would live “a distinguished life,” becoming a world-famous neurologist, working for several national and international sports bodies, and serving for eight years as head of Oxford's Pembroke College. “Running was just a small part of my life,” he said. “[My career] is a greater source of satisfaction than happening to move my body at a certain speed for a few moments in 1954.”

The versatile director who helmed Bond and Alfie

Lewis Gilbert was a proud maker of what he called “entertainment films.” Versatile and unburdened by artistic pretensions, the British director helmed hits including 1966's Alfie, about a swaggering Cockney lothario played by Michael Caine, and the acclaimed 1956 World War II film Reach for the Sky. But he was most widely known for his work on the James Bond series, directing Sean Connery in 1967's You Only Live Twice and Roger Moore in 1977's The Spy Who Loved Me and Moonraker (1979). “[People] aren’t interested in any of my films until I say ‘James Bond,’” Gilbert said in 2010. “And the minute I say ‘James Bond,’ they practically genuflect.”

“Born in London into a vaudeville family, Gilbert began touring in an act, the Four Kemptons, with his parents when he was 4,” said The Guardian (U.K.). After acting in several low budget films as a child, Gilbert decided in his late teens to become a director. “He got his start behind the camera with the Royal Air Force during World War II when he made several documentary shorts,” said The New York Times. Gilbert put that experience “to good use” in the 1950s and '60s, directing action spectacles such as Carve Her Name With Pride and Sink the Bismarck! He pitched Alfie to Paramount studio bosses after seeing the original stage version in the West End; they agreed, he said, only because “it was going to be made for $300,000—the sort of money executives spend on cigar bills.” The film received five Oscar nominations, including for Best Picture, and propelled Caine to stardom.

Gilbert initially rejected an offer to direct You Only Live Twice, 007's fifth outing, said The Times (U.K.). “I would be like Elizabeth Taylor’s fifth husband,” he told producers. “I would know what to do, but I wouldn’t know how to make it any different.” He eventually signed up, and created “one of the most stylishly over-the-top” installments of the franchise. After “several disappointments” in the 1970s, Gilbert enjoyed further success with 1983’s Educating Rita, about an alcoholic professor (Michael Caine) who mentors a young housewife (Julie Walters), and 1989’s Shirley Valentine. Having spent much of his life on film sets, Gilbert told Variety in 2002 that his dream was to work forever. “I just hope that upstairs,” he said, glancing at the sky, “there’s a film company that’s looking for a young director.”

The entrepreneur who founded Tower Records

Before the 1960s, record shops were a rarity. Music was sold mostly at department stores, with a small selection of LPs and 45s tucked away in a corner. Russ Solomon changed that. With Tower Records, which during its peak in the 1990s was a billion-dollar business, Solomon pioneered the concept of music megastores—shops the size of football fields, filled with tens of thousands of titles from every genre and artist imaginable. The stores stayed open till midnight, and the music-loving staffers were encouraged to order the inventory themselves. “We wanted people in the store to run the store,” Solomon explained. “You can’t make decisions on what to do in Phoenix if you’re sitting in New York or London.”

Born in San Francisco, Solomon was 16 when he started “selling used jukebox records” at his father’s drugstore in Sacramento, said The Sacramento Bee. The booming business soon “had its own street entrance,” and Solomon opened his first stand-alone store in the city in 1960. He expanded with outlets in San Francisco and Los Angeles, and his passionate customer base would grow to include rock stars such as Bruce Springsteen and Elton John. By the 1990s, Tower had nearly 200 stores in the U.S. and 14 other countries, selling videos and books as well as music.

Solomon’s unquenchable ambition ultimately “contributed to his undoing,” said The Washington Post. Saddled with debt from the company’s global expansion, and unable to compete with discount chains and pirated downloads, Tower filed for bankruptcy in 2004 and went out of business two years later. “The fat lady has sung,” Solomon wrote to employees. “She was off-key. Thank You, Thank You, Thank You.”
Two powerful men, two different paths

Robert Mueller and Donald Trump were born 22 months apart to wealthy families in New York City and raised to lead, said journalists Marc Fisher and Sari Horwitz. The similarities end there.

The Astor, Vanderbilt, and Mellon families educated their boys. At the Episcopal school, Mueller became captain of the soccer, hockey, and lacrosse teams. He played hockey with classmate John Kerry, a future secretary of state and one of three St. Paul’s alumni who would run for president.

Mueller epitomized the tradition of “the muscular Christian” at the top prep schools, the archetype of the strong boy who embodies “values of kindness, respect, and integrity,” said Maxwell King, 73, a classmate at St. Paul’s. “Bob was a very strong figure in our class…. He was thought of as somebody you could count on to be thoughtful about everybody on the team and to have very high standards.”

At Princeton, which his father also had attended, Mueller was accepted into one of the most socially exclusive eating clubs. Mueller had planned to go to medical school, but as a classmate who studied with him recalled, organic chemistry got the better of him.

Just a few weeks after he finished Princeton with a degree in politics in 1966, Mueller enlisted in the Marine Corps, a rare choice for an Ivy League graduate at a time when many young men were casting about for ways to avoid the draft. Mueller has often said he was inspired to join the Marines by lacrosse teammate David Hackett, who had graduated from Princeton a year earlier and gone off to fight in Vietnam.

In April 1967, as he led his platoon in evacuating fallen Marines from a battle-ground, Hackett was shot in the back of the head by a North Vietnamese sniper. Mueller to this day speaks of Hackett’s death as a turning point, as the event that pushed him to a career of public service. By November 1968, he was leading a rifle platoon in the jungles of Vietnam.

Like Mueller, Trump was raised in rare comfort. The Trumps had a family chef and chauffeur, but they never considered themselves part of the country’s ruling class. Theirs was immigrant stock, from Germany and Scotland, hardy entrepreneurs who tackled the new land with a blitzy of new businesses—restaurants, hotels, and finally real estate.

Donald Trump grew up in a 23-room manse in Queens, a faux Southern plantation house with a Cadillac limousine in the driveway. He attended private school from kindergarten on; his focus in school, Trump told The Washington Post in 2016, was “creating mischief.” In second grade, he said, he punched his music teacher in the face. He got into trouble often. Before eighth grade started, his father sent him to military school.

At New York Military Academy, Trump thrived. For the first time, he took pride in his grades. He won medals for neatness and order. He also won notice from fellow cadets for touting his father’s wealth and boasting to friends, “I’m going to be famous one day.”

Trump competed to become a cadet leader and enjoyed wielding authority. As a junior supply sergeant in E Company, he ordered that a cadet be struck on the backside as punishment for breaking formation. Another time, while inspecting dorm rooms, Trump saw cadet Ted Levine’s unmade bed and blew up. Levine threw a combat boot at Trump and hit him with a broomstick. Trump, infuriated, grabbed Levine and tried to push him out a second-story window, Levine said.

Promoted to captain of A Company, Trump won respect from some of the other boys, who said they never wanted to disappoint him. Trump introduced them to a world of
The last word

fun, setting up a tanning salon in his dorm room, bringing beautiful women to campus, and leading the baseball team to victory.

M U��TER’S RIDGE WAS a killing ground, a craggy hellscape in Quang Tri province where the Marines had been fighting for years, setting up and abandoning bases as they tried over and over to assert control of a key route the North Vietnamese used to infiltrate the South.

On Dec. 11, 1968, Mueller led a platoon of Marines into an eight-hour battle around an extensive complex of North Vietnamese army bunkers. The enemy hit Mueller’s men with a “heavy volume of small arms, automatic weapons, and grenade launcher fire,” according to a Marine Corps account.

As his platoon suffered heavy casualties, “2nd Lt. Mueller fearlessly moved from one position to another, directing the accurate counterfire of his men and shouting words of encouragement to them,” the account said. He earned a Bronze Star Medal with “V” distinction for combat valor, and was promoted to first lieutenant.

Four months later, the North Vietnamese attacked a squad of about a dozen Marines from Mueller’s platoon. Responding to the ambush, Mueller led the rest of his men to assist the Marines under assault. They pushed ahead against heavy fire, and Mueller was shot in the thigh.

Although seriously wounded during the firefight, he resolutely maintained his position and, ably directing the fire of his platoon, was instrumental in defeating the North Vietnamese Army force,” said the citation on the medal Mueller received.

His year in Vietnam was a turning point. A lifelong friend said that after Vietnam, Mueller “went from being this affable, good guy, good athlete” to having the “backbone and the steel that he has today.” But Mueller doesn’t talk about those harrowing months in the jungle. “That is not his style. He doesn’t brag about himself.”

Trump got five draft deferments between 1964 and 1969—four for being a college student and one for a medical disqualification. Trump has said he had bone spurs in his foot. During his presidential campaign, Trump said he could not recall which foot had the spurs. Later, his campaign said he had them in both heels.

He worked as a prosecutor in San Francisco and Boston. And in Washington, he headed the Justice Department’s criminal division as an assistant attorney general under President George H.W. Bush, supervising high-profile cases such as the prosecution of Panamanian dictator Manuel Antonio Noriega and the terrorist bombing of Pan Am Flight 103.

But by 1993, he was ensconced in the $400,000-a-year luxury of a white-collar litigation job in the Washington office of a Boston law firm, Hale and Dorr. It was not a happy time. “He hated it,” said longtime friend Thomas Wilner. “He couldn’t stand selling his services to defend people he thought might be guilty.”

So one day, Mueller called D.C.’s local prosecutor, U.S. Attorney Eric Holder Jr., and asked for a job, not handling the office’s big national cases but working the line, prosecuting homicides on the streets of Washington. He wanted no title, no supervisory position. He told Holder that he was shaken by all of the killings in Washington, then the nation’s murder capital, and that he just wanted to try homicide cases.

“I love everything about investigations,” Mueller said years later in an interview. “I love the forensics. I love the fingerprints and the bullet casings and all the rest.”

After Mueller did a stint as U.S. attorney in San Francisco, President George W. Bush nominated him to direct the FBI. He was sworn in on Sept. 4, 2001, one week before the planes hit the twin towers. For the next 12 years, in both Republican and Democratic administrations, Mueller led the FBI through one of the most difficult periods in its history. The bureau shifted from a domestic law enforcement agency largely focused on criminal threats to a global intelligence organization reoriented to fight terrorism.

Mueller worked around the clock and usually avoided the limelight. He frustrated his speechwriters by crossing out every “I” in speeches they wrote for him. It wasn’t about him, he told them: “It’s about the organization.”

M U��LER BURROWED into the bureaucracy and won allies by eschewing publicity. Trump charged into one industry after another, from casino gambling to steaks to for-profit education and finally to politics. The only through line in his career was his own celebrity—the power and allure of his name.

Three months after he graduated from college, Mueller married his girlfriend, Ann Standish, whose ancestors had come to the United States on the Mayflower. The couple, who met at a party when they were 17, have two daughters. One of them has spina bifida, and at one point, Mueller took a job in the U.S. attorney’s office in Boston in part to be near the treatment she needed.

Mueller has asked reporters not to discuss his family; Trump for decades sought coverage of his love life by gossip columnists, and talked about his dates and bedroom activities with radio host Howard Stern.

Trump has five children by three wives. Like his father before him, Trump was distant from his children when they were very young but grew close once they were mature enough to learn the family business and join him on his daily rounds.

Mueller is a lifelong Republican who has worked for administrations of both parties; Trump was raised in a Republican home by a father who spent many weekends visiting the Democratic clubs of Brooklyn, building relationships with the politicians who might help him get his projects built.

For four decades, Trump toyed with the idea of entering politics. He changed his party registration seven times between 1999 and 2012—he was a Democrat twice, a Republican three times, and an independent. In 2000, he briefly ran for president under the Reform Party banner. Once, when asked in a TV interview why he was a Republican, he said, “I have no idea.”
The Puzzle Page

Crossword No. 447: Vanilla Sky by Matt Gaffney

ACROSS
1. European city that got a blanket of snow on Feb. 26, its first since 1922—and before that, since 1985
5. Pan cleaner
11. Place
14. Quartet that beats queens
15. Shape-shifting organism
16. Apply
17. The hottest place on Earth, which last received snow accumulation in 1922
19. Ewe said it?
20. He played Gandalf
21. Sinister
22. Really busting a gut, in the '90s
26. Number of leaves on a clover, sometimes
27. Subtropical region of the U.S. whose only recorded snowfall took place on the morning of Jan. 19, 1977
33. Make misshapen
36. Yours is Chordata
37. Crown (classical model used for police cars)
38. Political humorist Molly
40. Suffix for serpent or elephant
41. John, Paul, or George, but not Ringo
43. Short-term job
44. James who hosted the 2016 Tonys and 2017 Grammys
47. Precursor to riches
48. Hot spot that surprisingly sees snow about once every decade, most recently on Jan. 8 of this year
51. Lacking slack
52. Home to the Tretyakov Gallery
56. Head cover
58. Wood shop holders
61. French ally
62. Time
63. In 2007, this city in the Southern Hemisphere saw its first snow since 1918
66. Part of a certain cage
67. Surround luxuriously
68. Ire
69. Stubborn creature
70. Summer and others
71. Toronto ___ (second-largest newspaper in Canada)

DOWN
1. Center-to-circumference lines
2. Most of the globe
3. Signified
4. It is, in Latin
5. Uses a piggy bank
6. Epps of House, M.D.
7. Songs for one, in the Italian plural
8. Greatest athlete of the 20th century, per the International Olympic Committee
9. Daniel played him to a 2013 Oscar
10. Communal areas
11. The bar exam?
12. Its academy is in Colo.
13. Blue-green
18. Celebrated figure
23. More than "your"
25. 30 for 30 channel
26. Viral menace
28. Bronze medalist's placement
29. Chrissie in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame
30. Gets outta Dodge
31. Timer's sound
32. Pretends to be
33. Cher wears a lot of them
34. Sneaker brand big in the '90s
35. Some punches
36. Canceled, as a space mission
42. Culinary ___
45. Milk
46. Archivists
49. Battery choice
50. Parks from Alabama
53. Jeweler's unit
54. Round letter
55. Older and ___
56. She married Zeus
57. Novelist Murdoch
58. Ernest's pal of TV
59. Part of, as a scam
60. Japanese buckwheat noodles
64. Game with a special dock
65. It can take many forms.
66. ___ milk
67. Culinary ___
68. ___ Cramer
69. ___ milk
70. ___ Cramer
71. ___ Cramer

The Week Contest
This week’s question: Researchers in Britain have warned that young children who grow up relying heavily on smartphones and tablets start school lacking the hand strength needed to hold a pencil and write. Please come up with a medical term to describe the hand-weakening syndrome that is afflicting these young "digital natives."

Last week’s contest: Twenty-three members of an extended family were kicked off a cruise in the South Pacific last week after they allegedly spent days insulting, harassing, and drunkenly brawling with other passengers. If Hollywood were to make a movie about this cruise from hell, what title could it give the film?

THE WINNER: “The Shove Boat”
Mary Jo Astrachan, Oneida, N.Y.

SECOND PLACE: “Little Ship of Horrors”
Ken Liebman, Williston, Vt.

THIRD PLACE: “Ocean’s 911”
Sandy Lawrence, Delanson, N.Y.

For runners-up and complete contest rules, please go to theweek.com/contest.

How to enter: Submissions should be emailed to contest@theweek.com. Please include your name, address, and daytime telephone number for verification; this week, type "Weak grip" in the subject line. Entries are due by noon, Eastern Time, Tuesday, March 13.

Winners will appear on the Puzzle Page next issue and at theweek.com/puzzles on Friday, March 16. In the case of identical or similar entries, the first one received gets credit.

The winner gets a one-year subscription to The Week.

Sudoku
Fill in all the boxes so that each row, column, and outlined square includes all the numbers from 1 through 9.

Difficulty: hard

Find the solutions to all The Week’s puzzles online: www.theweek.com/puzzle.

Sources: A complete list of publications cited in The Week can be found at theweek.com/sources.

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