



– Photo by Alfredo Vasquez

SUPPLY AND DEMAND – Built in 1915, Elephant Butte Dam serves multiple purposes including flood risk reduction, hydroelectric power generation, irrigation, and recreation. With a storage capacity of over 2.5 million acre-feet, Elephant Butte plays a crucial role in water resource management in the region.

Drought continues to impact water supply for farmers

By Alfredo Vasquez
Special to the Courier

EL PASO COUNTY – With another spring planting season starting in El Paso County, farmers’ attention instinctively turns to how much irrigation water they can expect from the Rio Grande. And preliminary indications show that it is going to be another lean year.

El Paso receives nearly half its annual water supply from the Rio Grande. River flows that arrive in El Paso primarily originate from snowmelt runoff in southern Colorado and northern New Mexico. Based on current conditions and climate trends, it is unlikely the Rio Grande will receive more water from the Rocky Mountains this year than the previous one, according to official data.

As of March, the U.S. Drought Monitor reported that the Rio Grande Basin was experiencing a record snow drought, with Colorado’s statewide snowpack at record lows and the basin’s first or second warmest winter on record.

Spring runoff into the Rio Grande is eventually stored in Southern New Mexico’s Elephant Butte Reservoir before releases are made for irrigation and municipal use in the El Paso area. Currently Elephant Butte Dam is holding about 12.8 percent of its water capacity. In 2025, the dam water level was at 14.2 percent. Water release date for this year’s irrigation period has not yet been determined, with



– Photo courtesy Center for Land Use Interpretation

AGE AND VANDALS – This marred plaque offers a bit of information about Elephant Butte Dam. Power produced by the dam is distributed through the power station to the left side of the picture.

See **WATER**, Page 3

Iran's other enemies

It's not just Israel. One of the least convincing arguments of opponents of the Iran war is that it is a conflict initiated by the Jewish state for its own benefit – the U.S. is just along for the ride.

This view not only discounts the U.S. interest in defanging Iran but also neglects that there are other countries in the region besides Israel and Iran and that they, too, have a stake in the outcome of this war.

If there's anything that Iran has succeeded in doing over the first month of battle, it is further demonstrating the intolerable threat that it represents to the region.

The so-called Gulf Cooperation Council states – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and

the United Arab Emirates – have the misfortune of being located just across the Persian Gulf from Iran, putting them on the front line of the war.

A key element of Iran's strategy has been to impose economic pain on these states to force them to press the United States into staying its hand.

While the effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz is indirectly harming the United States by driving up the global price of crude and other materials, it is a direct blow to the Gulf states, since the Saudis, Kuwaitis and Emiratis send the majority of their oil through the waterway.

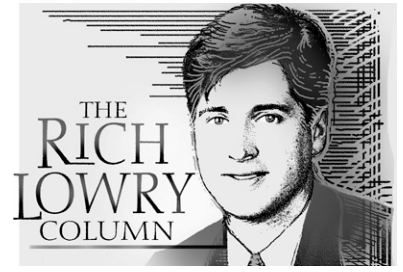
The Iranians have struck the Gulf states with missiles and drones by the thousands. The ongoing blitz is damaging energy infrastructure

and destroying the reputation of the Gulf states as an oasis of calm and economic development in an otherwise turbulent region.

There's no insurance policy against having a fanatic millenarian state as a neighbor, while nothing quite concentrates the mind like an unprovoked drone attack on one of your luxury hotels – or your airports, oil fields and data centers.

Iran likes to pretend that it is only striking at military infrastructure, but that's absurd.

As long as Iran is run on its current basis, it



See LOWRY, Page 7

Food for thought By Rick Shrum

Bankrupting Spectrum?

Check ground wires on outside equipment tied to services in your home

This missive just kept getting put off – but here we go. On September 13, 2025 El Paso had a large storm with some lightening. It knocked out service from Spectrum to my entire block, and probably other parts of El Paso County. A lightening bolt came very low on my block. And instead of the static electricity running to ground outside my home through Spectrum's ground wire, the charge also came into my home and into my equipment through Spectrum's coaxial cable, through Spectrum's modem and then into my hard-wired LAN. This did not happen to my neighbors. Turns out Spectrum did a poor job of grounding their equipment on my home – a point they have never denied – well, there

were the pictures.

The surge took out mostly small equipment and components along with an old HDTV and exercise bike control panel. The LAN equipment and components cost \$236 to buy and I replaced the components myself. I wrote off the bike and TV. It also knocked me offline for two days because when Spectrum came to replace their modem, quite promptly actually, they did not check their other equipment. The connection stayed on about an hour and failed. Apparently there was a problem in Spectrum's equipment on the outside that, once again, killed the connection – and Spectrum verified that the modem was indeed dead over the phone.

An Act of Nature?

Companies are replacing "Act of God" with "Act of Nature" to modernize legal language, remove religious connotations, and better reflect that many "natural" disasters are now foreseeable or exacerbated by human-caused climate change. This shift addresses the need for precise, secular terminology in contracts and insurance, focusing on the event's origin rather than a divine cause.

– AI definition

Spectrum then told me it would take another day to replace the "new" modem.

Enter AT&T. They had no problem getting me back online the next morning. That's when I discovered that equipment and components in my home had been affected along with the modems. So, while I was back online, half of my LAN was down. But I was functional. I also decided not to pursue a claim for the

equipment and components – because that's always fun. I also told Spectrum I wanted their equipment off of my home and they said they usually leave it up in case (they do believe in customer churn) I chose to subscribe with them again.

Fast forward a couple of months and I called Spectrum again to remove the equipment. Same answer – we don't usually take it down. This time I explained to a nice

gentleman named Christian that it really had to come down because it was not properly grounded, had already caused a financial loss and I did not want any further problems. Here's where the story goes bizarre. Christian insisted on filing a claim. I told him it was not necessary and I did not want to waste my time. Then he tells me it is the right thing to do and Spectrum pays

See GROUND, Page 5

Put Texas in your corner.



WHEN DO YOU RENEW?

Vehicle registration fees help Texas build and maintain highways, roads, and bridges. So *Check the date, love your state*® and *Put Texas in your corner*®. When you keep that registration sticker current, you're sticking up for all of us. Learn all about it at www.TxDMV.gov.



Texas Department of Motor Vehicles
HELPING TEXANS GO. HELPING TEXAS GROW.

1973 53 Years 2026 WEST TEXAS COUNTY COURIER

PUBLISHED:
Published each Thursday (minimum 50 issues) by Homesteader News, Inc. Office open Monday through Thursday.

COPYRIGHT:
Entire contents © 2026 Homesteader News, Inc. Individual authors retain all rights. Pictures, drawings and written material appearing in the West Texas County Courier may not be used or reproduced without written permission of Homesteader News, Inc.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:
Letters must not be more than 250 words in length. They should be dated, must be signed and have an address and daytime phone number. Only the name and city will be printed with the letter. The West Texas County Courier reserves the right to edit or reject letters to the editor or other submitted material it considers inappropriate.

AD DEADLINE:
Friday 4 p.m. for the next Thursday.

PERSONAL CLASSIFIED RATES
\$15 for 25 words, \$20 for 40 words. Ad must be in writing and pre-paid. The West Texas County Courier reserves the right not to publish advertising it considers inappropriate.

DISPLAY RATES:
Open rate – \$40 per column inch. Call for more information or to set an appointment. The West Texas County Courier reserves the right not to publish advertising it considers inappropriate.

MAIL SUBSCRIPTIONS:
Minimum 50 issues for \$50. Delivery via 1st class mail.

MAIL:
15344 Werling Ct.
Horizon City, TX 79928



Phone: 852-3235
E-mail: wtxcc@wtxcc.com
Website: wtxcc.com

Publisher
Rick Shrum
Contributors
Alfredo Vasquez
Steve Escajeda



Homesteader
Est. 1973
News, Inc.

Water

From Page 1

officials stating only that the announcement will be made by May.

The last time Elephant Butte Reservoir was at or near full capacity was around 2000, when it was filled nearly to capacity for most of the period between 1985 and 2000. This long-term full storage period ended in 2013, when the reservoir dropped to about 3 percent of capacity by late July, the lowest level in 40 years, according to official reports. The 2013 drought was the most severe in decades, with below-average snowpack and minimal monsoon rains, which left the reservoir virtually, empty despite some late-season rainfall.

In contrast, the reservoir had been at or near full storage for much of the 1985 to 2000 period, which means that the most recent full-year storage was likely in the early 2000s. Since then, it has been in a long-term deficit phase, with recent years (including 2025 and 2026) showing only about 12 to 14 percent full.

Water delivery to El Paso County is complex and regulated. The Rio Grande Project, administered by the U. S. Bureau of Reclamation, manages dispatch of water from the reservoir to parts of New Mexico, Texas and Mexico in accordance with the Rio Grande Compact and international treaties.

The Rio Grande Compact – a congressional agreement among Colorado, New Mexico and Texas – was signed in 1938 and equitably apportions the waters of the Rio Grande basin. With many communities depending on this source, water for all must be safeguarded.

EPWater is a customer that receives water through the El Paso County Water Improvement District No.1. Irrigation and water rights held by the utility determine how much water the utility receives. Water rights, often tied to land ownership, are rights of the user to a specified amount of water. In addition to the utility's land ownership, EPWater leases additional rights from the Lower Valley Water District in exchange for a wholesale supply of potable water.

When there isn't enough water for everyone to receive a full allocation, each customer is granted a percentage of their allocation based on the available supply. With only nine inches of rain per year, some might think El Paso is in a perpetual state of drought. Yet, drought hurts El Paso the most when it doesn't receive adequate river flows from the Rio Grande.

Although EPWater has rights to receive water from the Rio Grande, the utility has not received a full allocation in about a decade. To address future water supply needs, EPWater is working to diversify its water sources to ensure that El Paso has sufficient water even during a severe drought when no river water will be available.

For current information and historical trends, visit The Texas Water Development Board's website, where it provides continuous monitoring of Elephant Butte Reservoir water levels. For Elephant Butte is not only a key player in flood control and water storage, but it is also a popular recreational spot for locals and tourists alike. Its impressive size and historical significance make it a fascinating site for water resource and climate enthusiasts to explore and appreciate the engineering marvel that is Elephant Butte.

King Crossword

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
12					13				14			
15					16				17			
18				19			20	21				
			22					23				
24	25	26			27	28	29				30	31
32					33					34		
35			36	37						38		
		39					40	41				
42	43				44		45			46	47	48
49					50	51				52		
53					54					55		
56					57					58		

Average Solve Time 25 Minutes

ACROSS

- 1 Sticks (out)
- 5 Govt. loan agcy.
- 8 Answer an invite
- 12 Canyon comeback
- 13 Chest muscle
- 14 Andy's boy
- 15 Israeli airline
- 16 Dumpster explorer
- 17 Spoken
- 18 Costa Rica neighbor
- 20 "Good as new," for one
- 22 Crow's greeting
- 23 French diarist
- Anais

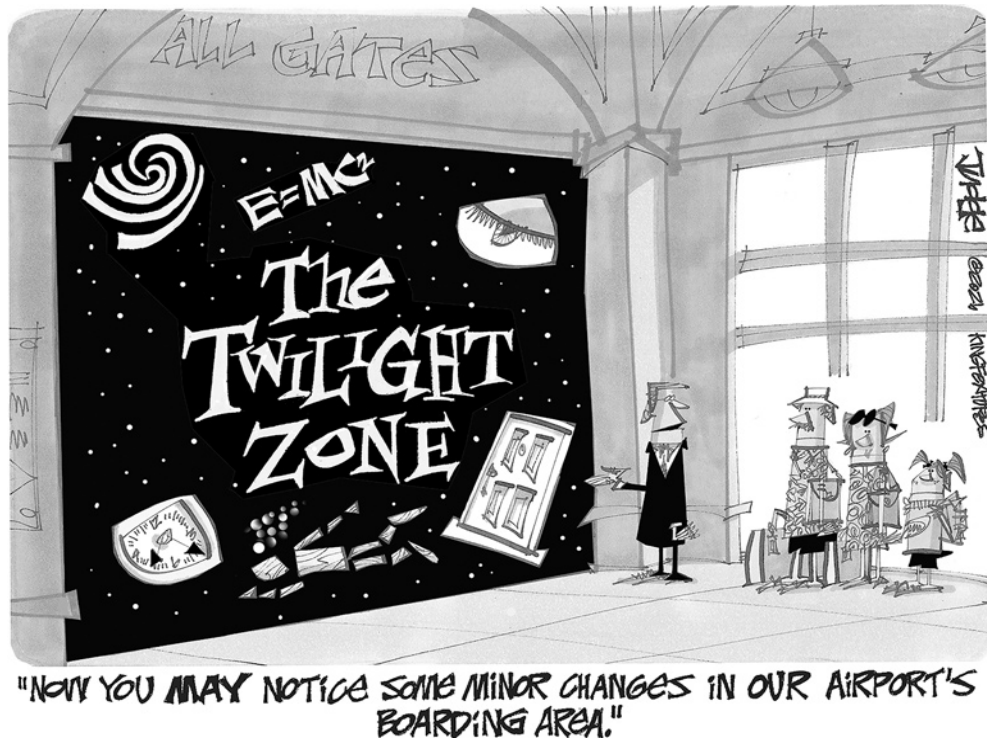
- 24 Pedestal
- 27 Nevada gambling city
- 32 Recipe abbr.
- 33 "Sixth sense"
- 34 U.K. recording label
- 35 Document destroyer
- 38 Love god
- 39 Numerical prefix
- 40 Discoverer's call
- 42 Aid
- 45 More serene
- 49 La Scala melody
- 50 Genesis vessel
- 52 "Othello" villain
- 53 Taxpayer IDs
- 54 Fish eggs
- 55 Streetcar
- 56 Wise one

- 57 Summer hrs. in D.C.
- 58 Robust

DOWN

- 1 Army transport
- 2 Golden State sch.
- 3 Compared to
- 4 Comfort
- 5 Really spread out
- 6 Actress Arthur
- 7 Performs
- 8 Rent sharer
- 9 Spaniel type
- 10 Test tube
- 11 Soccer legend
- 19 Bell or Barker
- 21 Bill of sale (Abbr.)
- 24 "Dynamite" band
- 25 Blond shade
- 26 Tidying (up)
- 28 Enzyme suffix
- 29 Toothed wheel
- 30 "I love," to Ovid
- 31 Bro's sib
- 36 Sheathe
- 37 God, to Galileo
- 38 Crude stone artifact
- 41 "That's a laugh!"
- 42 Lip
- 43 _ Major
- 44 Exceptional
- 46 Kate of "The Martian"
- 47 Alike (Fr.)
- 48 Apple variety
- 51 Scepter

Answer Page 4



Senior moment By Matilda Charles

Stopping Medicare fraud

Medicare fraud is one of the big scams that thieves love. Approximately \$60 billion per year is stolen from taxpayers through Medicare theft and fraud.

Here's how: Treat your Medicare number as though it's as valuable as a credit card or access to your checking account.

If anyone calls asking for your Medicare card number, hang up. If you receive a text message asking for the number, delete it.

When you get a Medicare summary statement, go over it line by line to be sure that you actually received every service.

It's true that now and then a service listed on your statement is genuine, even if it doesn't seem to be. It's possible that a coding error in the doctor's office was wrong.

correct or not. Ask specific questions about tests and lab work, as these are sometimes lumped together.

Sometimes, if the scammers do contact you, they'll try to get you to accept delivery of a medical device that you don't actually need in exchange for giving them your Medicare number.

Occasionally, too, you might be contacted with an offer to "review" your medical records to see if you need any additional services or devices or if you "need" genetic testing.

Remember: Medicare isn't going to call you or send text messages or show up at your door.

If you think someone is trying to commit Medicare fraud, report it. Call 800-MEDICARE (800-633-4227).

©2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Food for thought By Dr. Glenn Mollette

Turn on some good music

We are bombarded daily with news, advertisements, telemarketers, text advertisements and annoying phone calls. All of this is physically and emotionally draining.

For the last 20 years I have listened to, watched and read the news. Sadly, most of the news is bad, negative and depressing. Actually, so much of television is filled with bad news, violence and sad stories.

We need more music and we need it daily. Too many people only get a little music while driving in their cars, if they remember to turn their radio on.

There are many ways to obtain your favorite music today. Turn your radio on. There are so many good hard-working stations that are playing music you enjoy.

you can find something to listen to.

Listen to music when you are exercising. I used to try to treadmill when watching the news. That's okay, but I move faster and longer if I'm listening to good music.

We need music like we need sunshine. Music is like a B-12 shot to the spirit and we need an hour or more of it daily to boost and sometimes calm our spirit.

There is so much intensity in life today. People are stressed over Iran. We are stressed about the price of gasoline, groceries and the cost of daily life.

I am not saying we should hide our heads in the sand. Just give your spirit a break. Turn off the news for a while and listen to music for an hour or two.

Dr. Glenn Mollette is a syndicated columnist read in all fifty states. He is also the author of numerous books and can be heard each weekday morning on XM Radio 131.



On April 6, 1930, James Dewar needed a good way to occupy the Continental Baking Company's shortcake-baking machinery while strawberries were out of season.

On April 7, 1940, Tuskegee Institute founder Booker T. Washington became the first African American to be honored with a postage stamp bearing his likeness.

On April 8, 1993, astronaut Ellen Ochoa became the first Hispanic woman in space when the shuttle Discovery lifted off from the Kennedy Space Center.

On April 9, 1945, Berlin University lecturer, Lutheran

pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer was hanged at Flossenburg concentration camp in Germany, just days prior to its liberation by American soldiers.

On April 10, 1866, the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) was founded in New York City by philanthropist and diplomat Henry Bergh.

On April 11, 2004, Phil Mickelson won the Masters Golf Tournament at Augusta National Golf Club, his first major championship in nearly 12 years as a professional golfer.

On April 12, 1954, Bill Haley and His Comets recorded "(We're Gonna) Rock Around The Clock," which they'd been performing live for months, during the final 40 minutes of a three-hour recording session in New York City.

©2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Word search grid with letters: J U T S, S B A, R S V P, E C H O, P E C, O P I E, E L A L, R A T, O R A L, P A N A M A, S I M I L E, C A W, N I N, B A S E, L A S, V E G A S, T S P, E S P, E M I, S H R E D D E R, E R O S, U N I, O H O, S U C C O R, C A L M E R, A R I A, A R K, I A G O, S S N S, R O E, T R A M, S A G E, E D T, H A L E

Number grid with numbers: 4 5 1 9 6 3 2 7 8, 3 7 2 5 4 8 6 9 1, 8 6 9 2 7 1 5 3 4, 9 8 7 4 5 2 3 1 6, 5 3 6 1 9 7 8 4 2, 1 2 4 3 8 6 7 5 9, 2 9 5 8 3 4 1 6 7, 7 4 8 6 1 5 9 2 3, 6 1 3 7 2 9 4 8 5

Arithmetic problems: 2 + 9 - 7 = 4, + + +, 4 + 5 ÷ 1 = 9, ÷ x x, 3 + 8 - 6 = 5, = = =, 2 112 48

Crossword puzzle grid with words: BLASE, OPLEASE, OOT, SKIING, L OAK, KEPT, I A, SOLD

CryptoQuip Answer

At the mollusks' saloon, one of the most popular cocktails they offer is a rusty snail.

CryptoQuip word search grid with words: ISTO, CHIT, BOSS, APPLES, SEEP, LENO, EVIL, CLAUDE, ATLIBERTY, RARA, CANADA, WHENAFODDELIVERYGUY, PER, OOF, DUD, LIDA, BROUGHT, ASIDE, ORDER, NOTS, APP, VON, HORSE, TOHISCUSTOMERBUTSITE, WRITHES, EMBERT, PEDALED, OSCAR, FLED, ATNO, LES, TOTALLY, FORGOTTO, LAP, OHMY, OLEO, EPSOM, ELLAMAI, BARDS, MADEIRA, PLAN, INCLUDETHEBURGER, EATUP, OED, ADA, ANON, WHATSONGDI, DHESING, ISE, AFT, EEL, OAF, IONLY, HAVIE, FRIE, SFORYOU, COMETO, DARE, TREADMILL, UNITER, ASIA, EGAD, INLA, RETIRE, MEET, SOLE, EGAN

Advertisement for TexasSure: If you're not covered, you'll be discovered. An estimated 1 in every 5 vehicles on our Texas roads has no automobile insurance, but that's about to change. TexasSure Vehicle Insurance Verification matches vehicle registration information to insurance policy data to immediately tell law enforcement officers and tax assessor-collectors who's driving without insurance. So, if you're not covered, better get insured! To learn more, visit: www.TexasSure.com

To Advertise Call 852-3235 Archives: www.wtxcc.com



– Photos by Rick Shrum

FRIED CIRCUIT – This mini-server, cracked open on the right, was overloaded when Spectrum’s inadequate ground allowed current into the LAN through Spectrum’s coaxial cable and modem. While it retained stored information the component at left had to be replaced before the server could reconnect to the LAN.

Ground

From Page 1

claims when their equipment is at fault. So he files claim #95409022 on my behalf for a whopping \$236.

Christian sends out a man to remove the equipment and he’s a nice guy. But when I ask him to make note of the lousy ground connection he gives me the, “I like my job look,” shrugs and leaves. The ground strap was put on a painted pipe and only the tip of the screw holding the ground strap in place was in contact with metal.

Then Spectrum sends out an adjuster that does not look too optimistic. They must be trained to say no first and foremost and his body language and tone are all pointing that direction. He looks at the pile of components and equipment. He looks at the ground point. And then he asks, “You’re only asking for \$236?” “Yep,” I say. He turns friendly and takes a couple of pictures, takes copies of my receipts, actually smiles at me and says, “I’m going to get this pushed through for you.”

Then the time wasters takeover – the reason I didn’t file to begin with. The first caller wants more information than I had already provided. I’m not even sure what more I could have given them. Then followed by the call – and nobody would have had to guess what she was going to say, her demeanor and tone said no before she said those magic, penny pinching, not going to go bankrupt, corporate words, “We are denying your claim because it was an act of nature.”

She tells me I can appeal and we have a bit of a conversation that includes the point that Spectrum has literally spent much more money denying the claim (I’m guessing at least four to five times the amount at this point), sending people to my home, several phone calls, office time, etc. than the sum total of the claim itself. I also point out that the only reason companies run ground lines IS nature. A few days later the official denial letter arrives.

So I double down, knowing it probably won’t change a thing. It’s the arrogance involved. They know it’s too much effort to sue them. I send Spectrum a second, longer letter, on company letterhead – that plainly identifies my business as the *West Texas County Courier*. In the letter I include definitions of grounding, electrical current, path of least resistance and so forth, pointing out, again, that nature is the only reason companies like Spectrum run ground wires. The letter closes:

“Spectrum should pay the claim – a claim

made at Spectrum’s insistence. That way when I tell the story – because that’s what people do, tell their horror stories – about Spectrum’s service and claims department, Spectrum at least comes off like any other big business using the deny, delay, distort and defend tactics instead of simply being untruthful and blaming ‘nature’ to avoid paying a small, reasonable claim. I’m sure Spectrum is besieged by false claims day in and day out, but this is not one of them. Spectrum needs to own it. And then count their blessings that it was not much worse. I have.

*Cordially,
Rick Shrum
Publisher
West Texas County Courier”*

So Spectrum should have had no doubt about my business. A few days later I get a call. And I think it’s the same lady! It’s definitely the same attitude. She tells me nature is still the culprit and Spectrum is not going to pay. On January 21, 2026 I received the second “denial because of nature” letter. This letter also closes with the time wasters telling me if I want to appeal, I can.

So, as I informed Spectrum, both on the phone and in writing, I share my stories.

Folks, forget about Spectrum. A larger point



JUST WAITING TO HAPPEN – The loose ground strap, above, is literally being held off of the bare metal by the retaining screw. Paint covering the conduit around the backside keeps the strap off of bare metal.

here is that if you have outside equipment that runs connections inside your home, no matter what company is providing the service, double check and inspect the ground wires for any damage. Make sure the ground wires are securely attached to bare metal. Make sure that metal is also actually grounded properly. If not, get it fixed or you might get to play the ridiculous claim game. I bet Spectrum claimed their loss on the modems. Probably got paid.

And as for leaving the equipment in place and hoping to get my business back? Fat chance. But Spectrum is persistent. I’ve had at least eighteen mailers and two people come to my home looking to get me back to Spectrum services since the claim was twice denied by phone and by letter. An inadequate ground is a completely foreseeable problem.

Strange BUT TRUE

By Lucie Winborne

- The Beast from “Beauty and the Beast” is a combination of several different animals, with a lion’s mane, buffalo’s head and beard, gorilla’s brow, tusks of a wild boar, bear’s body, legs and tail of a wolf ... and eyes of a human.

- Sweden is so efficient at waste disposal that only 1% of its garbage goes to landfills.

- Viking burials included board games.

- When making badminton shuttlecocks, the most prized feathers are said to come from a goose’s left wing.

- The 1967 Outer Space Treaty prohibits any nation from trying to own the moon.

- A young man from Arizona saved a woman’s life by using CPR he’d learned from watching an episode of “The Office.”

- The German version of the term “average Joe” is Otto Normalverbraucher, or “Otto normal consumer.”

- In parts of Europe, folks believe that if you light a

cigarette from a candle, a sailor will die.

- Spiders recycle webs by eating them.

- The term mortician was invented as part of a public relations campaign by the funeral industry, which considered it more customer friendly than undertaker.

- Beethoven was notably particular about his coffee, ensuring that his morning brew was made with precisely 60 beans per cup.

- A study has shown that dunking an Oreo in milk for three seconds renders the optimal balance between soggy and structural integrity.

- Sloths may be the only animals that don’t fart.

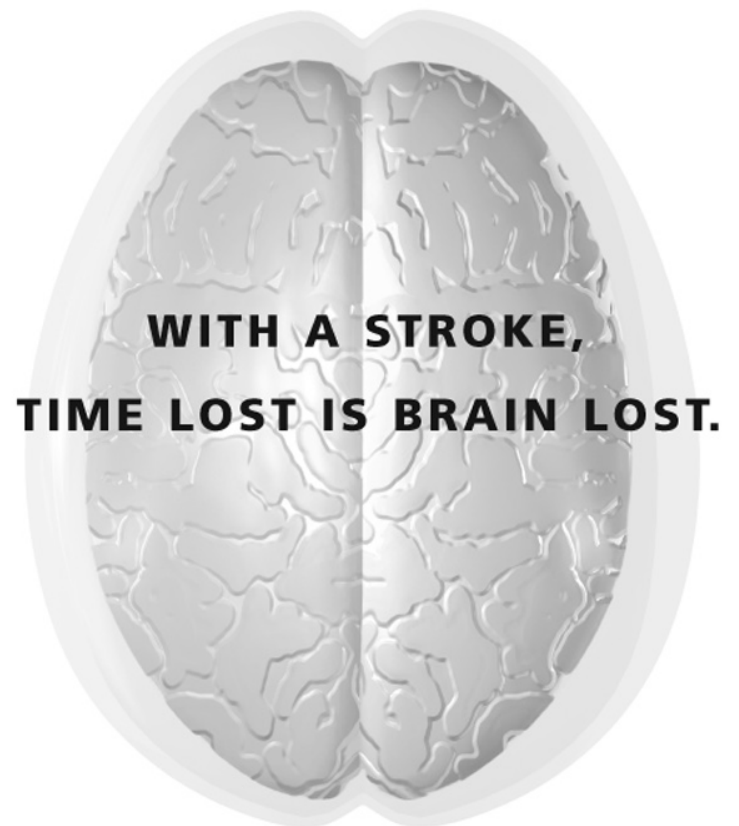
- “Family Feud” host Richard Dawson met his second wife, Gretchen Johnson, when she was a contestant on the show – and yes, he kissed her.

- Polar ice cap temperatures can plunge to a bone-chilling -189.67 degrees Fahrenheit.

Thought for the Day: “If a free society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich.”

– John F. Kennedy

©2026 King Features Synd., Inc.



If you suddenly have or see any of these symptoms, call 9-1-1 immediately: Numbness or weakness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body • Confusion, trouble speaking or understanding • Difficulty seeing in one or both eyes • Trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination • Severe headache with no known cause

Learn more at StrokeAssociation.org or 1-888-4-STROKE.



©2004 American Heart Association
Made possible in part by a generous grant from The Bugher Foundation.

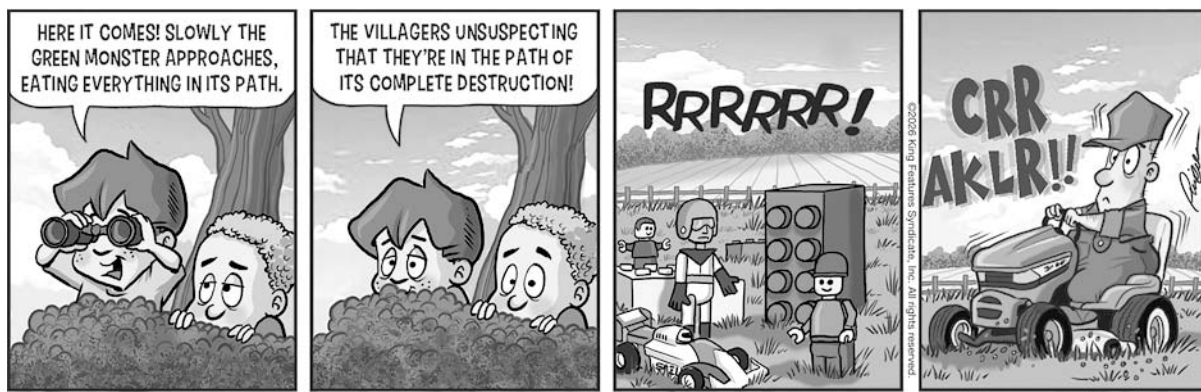


Comix

OUT ON A LIMB By Gary Kopervas



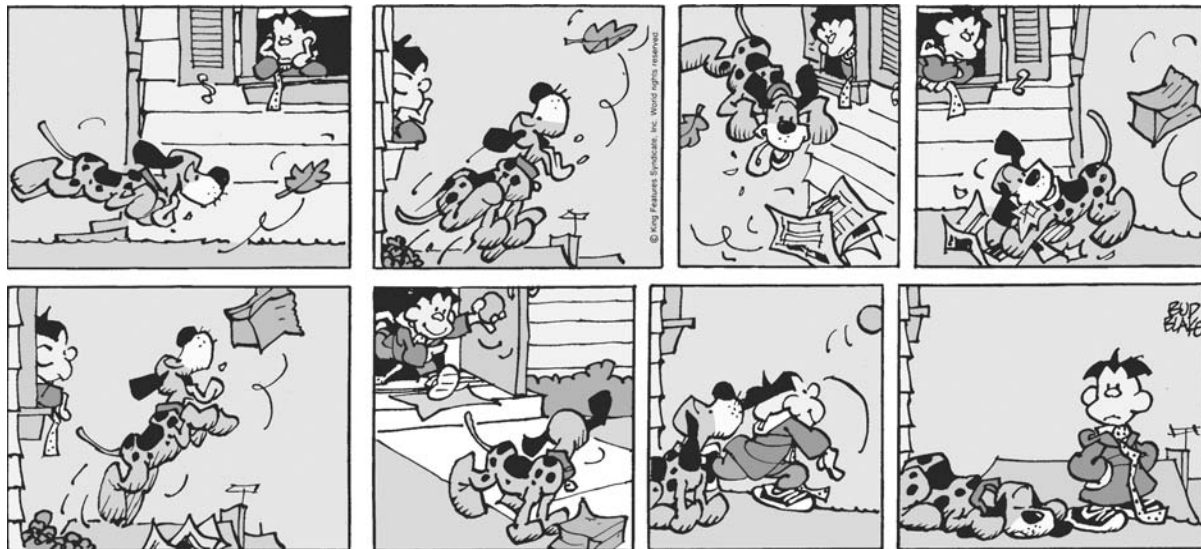
AMBER WAVES By Dave T. Phipps



THE SPATS By Jeff Pickering



TIGER By Bud Blake



Lowry

From Page 2

is a grave danger to these countries, which, prior to the war, tried to keep their heads down or even get closer to Iran as a way to mitigate the threat.

This is the approach that the Saudis tried after an Iran-backed attack hampered the country's oil production in 2019.

That experiment is now done. According to published reports, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammed bin Salman, privately urged Trump to launch the war even as the Saudis talked up diplomacy in public, and now MBS has been telling Trump to go all the way and topple the Iranian government.

The New York Times relates that the Saudi leader "is concerned that if Mr. Trump pulls back now, Saudi Arabia and the rest of the Middle East will be left to confront an emboldened and furious Iran on their own."

The UAE has been a particular Iranian target. Its ambassador to the U.S. wrote in The Wall Street Journal recently, "We need

a conclusive outcome that addresses Iran's full range of threats: nuclear capabilities, missiles, drones, terror proxies and blockades of international sea lanes."

One is tempted to conclude that the Gulf states are "all neocons now." That would be overstating it, though. Despite getting hit by Iran, Oman is maintaining its traditional posture as a mediator and Qatar is always a bad actor.

Much depends on how the war ultimately turns out, but it is easy to see the Gulf states looking to the United States for greater security guarantees and warming up further to Israel, which is demonstrating the military might to confront an Iran that has no compunction about lashing out at states that are doing it no harm.

It may be easy for hostile U.S. observers to portray the Iran war as about Israel and only Israel, but the Gulf states unfortunately know better – and have the battle damage to prove it.

Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review. ©2026 by King Features Synd., Inc.

Anaphylactic shock may be due to medication

DEAR DR. ROACH: My question is about methocarbamol (Robaxin). My relative has been taking this for about two years for back pain. He then developed a sudden severe allergic reaction and went into anaphylaxis. He fought it all night, not knowing what was happening, and by morning, he had to go to the hospital. Could this be due to methocarbamol? If so, can this happen again? He has no known allergies, and this had never happened before.



The only other thing was maybe burning a lemon-scented candle in his bedroom, but he's burned candles before in his bedroom. He is 27 years old and in good health. – B.G.

Anaphylaxis is a severe allergic reaction to a foreign protein or carbohydrate (called an "allergen"). It is caused by a release of inflammatory chemicals from immune cells. It can be antibody-mediated (more common) or occur without antibodies (less common).

These chemicals can cause swelling of the airway and death through asphyxiation. They can also affect the heart and blood vessels, causing shock and circulatory collapse, which can also lead to death. The onset of symptoms is typically minutes to hours after exposure to the allergen.

In 95% of cases, the symptoms disappear, but there are cases of "biphasic anaphylaxis" where symptoms reappear usually within 12 hours. There are unusual cases of very delayed anaphylaxis, such as with alpha-gal syndrome – a meat allergy that is acquired after tick exposure.

Medications are one of the most common causes of anaphylaxis, and I did find case reports of anaphylaxis with methocarbamol in a person who had been taking it previously. I found another case report of a person with prolonged anaphylaxis after methocarbamol. It is uncommon but not impossible to develop anaphylaxis to a medicine that you have been taking for years.

If your relative isn't taking any other medications and had no unusual foods on that day, I strongly suspect that methocarbamol was the cause and recommend never taking it again as it can absolutely happen again.

A candle smoke allergy is documented, and a variety of symptoms can be caused by candle smoke in sensitive individuals. I found a source saying that anaphylaxis from inhaling candle smoke is "rare" but could not find a well-documented case.

Finally, methocarbamol is a muscle relaxant and isn't always a good choice for long-term treatment. My experience is that in many people, the beneficial effects wear off as the body gets used to the medicine, which can happen within a week.

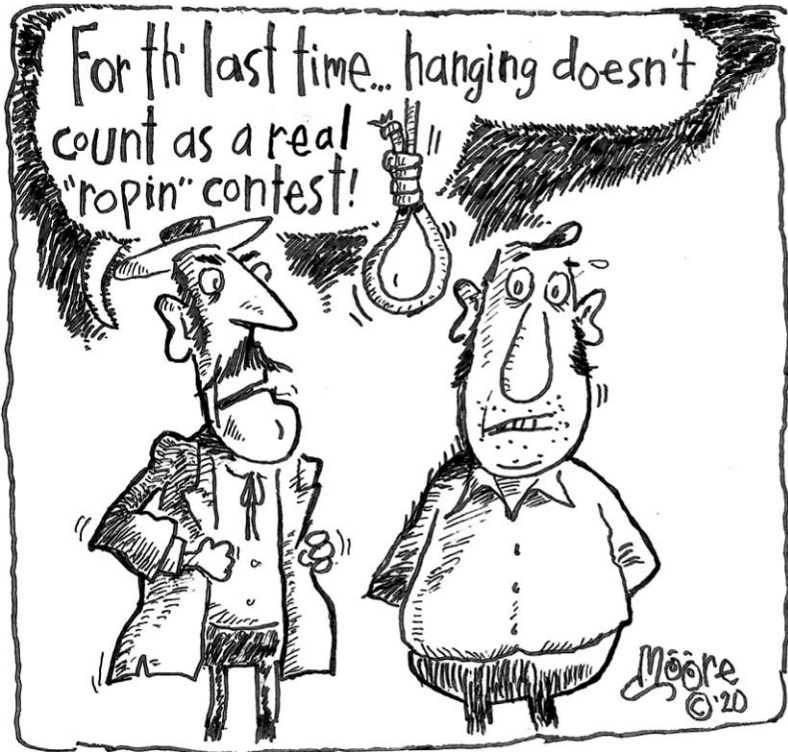
DEAR DR. ROACH: Are there health benefits to taking fish-oil capsules? If so, what's the proper dosage? I'm a fit, healthy 70-year-old male. – C.S.

The benefit of fish oil is one topic in medicine where we seem to keep changing our mind due to studies that yielded some conflicting results.

What is clear is that fish oil reduces triglyceride levels. In people with high triglyceride levels, especially people who are at a relatively high risk due to other reasons (such as diabetes and low HDL cholesterol), then fish oil is a reasonable treatment. Most experts prefer the pharmaceutical-grade icosapent ethyl (Vascepa) or EPA/DHA (Lovaza), which are highly purified and aren't oxidized.

For people who are at a lower risk, the benefit is probably modest; however, fish oil is generally safe. There may be a small increase in the risk of atrial fibrillation with high doses.

Dr. Roach regrets that he is unable to answer individual questions, but will incorporate them in the column whenever possible. Readers may email questions to ToYourGoodHealth@med.cornell.edu. ©2026 North America Synd., Inc. All Rights Reserved.



Moore Texas by Roger MOORE

March 28, 1905: The Texas Legislature passed a law banning roping contests.

CryptoQuip

This is a simple substitution cipher in which each letter used stands for another. If you think that X equals O, it will equal O throughout the puzzle. Solution is accomplished by trial and error.

Clue: R equals T

KR ROY GMHHTLXL' LKHMMC,
 MCY MD ROY GMLR FMFTHKE
 BMBXRKNHL ROYU MDDYE NL
 K ETLRU LCKNH.

Answer Page 4

©2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Weekly SUDOKU

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

Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
 ♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

Answer Page 4

© 2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

Protecting your benefits



by Freddy Groves

On a recent National Slam the Scam Day for 2026, the VA stepped up, along with other federal agencies, with an array of information to keep veterans safe from scams and fraud. Thieves don't just work one day per year, however. We need to stay vigilant all year long to protect our benefits and personal information from getting to the scammers.

Why do they want us? Because we have income and benefits.

How do they approach us? Phone calls, emails, text messages, social media, phishing, impersonation, fake charities -- you name it, the crooks have thought of it as a way to get to us.

If you're approached, whether on the phone or in email, the more urgent the problem, the more likely it's a scam. A scammer might pretend to be from the VA and try to claim there's

something wrong with your benefits -- and that you need to hand over your personal information so they can "fix" the problem. They might want your bank account access info or password, your Social Security number, your date of birth. The answer is no.

Don't do a direct deposit into another person's account -- even if it's a relative! If you need a fiduciary situation (where someone helps you with finances), have that person go through the accreditation process and be authorized to assist you. You're protected that way.

If you're told you need to hand over a fee to get claims assistance from the VA or to apply for increased benefits, it's fraud.

Invest in a shredder and use it to cut up not only VA documents with personal information on them, but any documents that can go astray, even when you put out the trash.

If someone calls and claims to be from the VA and asks you to pay for something with a gift card

or bitcoin, feel free to laugh as you hang up the phone. It's an impostor. Report it to the VA at 800-827-1000.

©2026 King Features Synd., Inc.



• A good non-slip bathmat is essential in the tub to prevent accidents. Grab an extra to drape over the edge of the tub for help when entering and exiting.

• "To remove residue left over from price tags, you can use hairspray. Remove as much paper as possible, then give a good squirt. Use a plastic scraper to lightly scrape off the adhesive." – L.P. in Ohio

• Got bread ends? Store in a bag in the freezer until you need breadcrumbs for a recipe. Pulse frozen chunks in a chopper or blender for instantly usable crumbs.

• "Guacamole is a precious commodity at my house, but sometimes I want a snack, not a whole bowl. I have struggled with how to save the leftovers, because once it browns, it's done. I learned a new trick, though. Simply put the leftovers in the smallest container possible and tamp down to press out all the air. Then carefully add a thin layer of water. Seal and refrigerate for up to three days. When you are ready to dip, pour off the water and stir!" – C.D. in California

• "I have an old cedar chest from my grandmother. It had lost its smell, though. My husband removed all the contents and sanded it with superfine grit sandpaper. It is restored and smells wonderful now." – J.K. in Iowa

• Do you have a screw loose (in your eyeglasses)? This is an easy fix. Paint the screw with a dab of clear nail polish and quickly re-screw. It works like glue. Dab the top of the screw for a little extra insurance.

• Need a quick measure? A paper bill (U.S. currency) is exactly 6 inches long.

Send your tips to Now Here's a Tip, 628 Virginia Drive, Orlando, FL 32803. ©2026 King Features Synd., Inc.

GO FIGURE!

The idea of Go Figure is to arrive at the figures given at the bottom and right-hand columns of the diagram by following the arithmetic signs in the order they are given (that is, from left to right and top to bottom). Use only the numbers below the diagram to complete its blank squares and use each of the nine numbers only once.

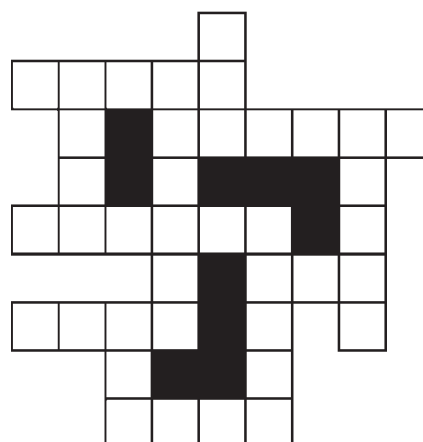
	+		-		=	4		
+		+		+				
	+		÷		=	9		
÷		×		×				
	+		-		=	5		
=		=		=				
2		112		48				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Answer Page 4

©2026 King Features Syndicate, Inc.



- AOK
- GISNIK
- ♥ LESBA
- PKTE
- ♥ SLAPEE
- ♥ GLE
- DSLO
- ♥ KASET
- ♥ SPI
- ♥ PLOSTI
- DOGNA
- OKOL



Answer Page 4

Unscramble these twelve letter strings to form each into an ordinary word (ex. HAGNEC becomes CHANGE). Prepare to use only ONE word from any marked (♥) letter string as each unscrambles into more than one word (ex. ♥RATHE becomes HATER or EARTH or HEART). Fit each string's word either across or down to knot all twelve strings together.

©2026 King Features Syndicate. All rights reserved.