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Upfront

Numbers don't lie.

It's been repeated so many times by so many people that attribution for the phrase is un-grantable. Mark Twain gets credit for saying lots of things, and a variant of the above is one of them: "Figures don't lie, but liars figure." Frank Shorter, the famous American Olympic miler said it without embellishment – "Numbers don't lie" – and, for him, as he measured the value of his life's work in tenths of seconds, his assertion was coldly accurate. An online forum, Quora, asked the Internet for its opinions regarding the phrase. Seventeen of the Internet's representatives responded. One, Makala Doulos, who self-identifies as holder of a "B.A. in Christian Theology and Philosophy and Christian Education (1990)," says, "Mathematics is the least ambiguous language we currently have." I have no way of measuring a language's embedded ambiguity, but Makala's declaration seems reasonable. Another forum-phanta, C.L. Washbrook, whose subheading reads "expertise in language, literature and history – 24 years," is more cynical than Makala. She posits: "The numbers are what they are. But they can be presented in a way which creates a lie. Numbers can be left out, named differently, misrepresented, nullified by purposefully invented reasoning, fiddled, forged, estimated, rounded up/down, never assessed... If accurate, numbers are truths. People using numbers, however, are frequent liars." Based on her posts (and her use of "which" without a preceding comma, I suspect C.L. is a Brit, or at least an Anglophile; and, as to her thesis herein, I'd say she's right.

Humans possess biases. The origins of these biases are fodder for anthropology, sociology, and psychology debate, and beyond (as many things are) my scope (here). Humans analyze numbers. Numbers don't analyze numbers (well, they do, in a way, through Artificial Intelligence, though AI algorithms are borne of biased human minds...so let's just accept numbers as agnostic, left to their own devices). People analyze numbers. It's the people part that's the problem. Numbers don't lie; but they aren't mystically imbued with truth, either.

I was running on a treadmill in a gym. The chyron (the big words at the bottom of cable-news channels' broadcast pictures, designed to scare you into watching) from CNN said something like "COVID-19 VACCINATION RATES PLUMMET TO RECORD LOW." My headphones had a rectangular cord-head and the treadmill offered a round hole...so...I had to wait until I got home to learn more.

Madeline Holcomb and Theresa Waldrop are credited with a CNN online article, titled "Daily pace of new Covid-19 vaccinations is the lowest since the CDC started tracking in mid-January." (What it – the title – lacks in pith, it makes up in hyperbole.) The piece says, "The daily pace of new COVID-19 vaccinations in the U.S. is the lowest it has been since mid-January, CDC data shows. The seven-day average rate of people getting their first shot is 231,695, 31 percent less than last week, almost half – 47 percent – less than a month earlier – and a far cry from the millions a day the country saw in April...according to the CDC data, almost 25 percent of the eligible population – about 70 million people – are not vaccinated...Just over 55 percent of the total U.S. population is fully vaccinated."

That's a lot of numbers. I'm dizzy from reading them (I left some out for clarity/brevity), and I have both an engineering degree and a finance degree. But what do they mean?

The authors refer to 70 million people as the unvaccinated-eligible. If true, the total pool of eligibles (70 million/.25) is 280 million. Current estimates peg U.S. population at 333 million. The authors state that 55 percent of the total U.S. population (333 million x .55) is fully vaccinated, which implies 183 million fully vaccinated people. If 183 million have their shots out of 280 million who are eligible for them, that's a vaccination ratio of 65 percent, or an un-vaccination ratio of 35 percent, while the article (re-see above) cites the CDC's data claims that 25 percent (not 35) of eligibles are not yet fully vaccinated. That's a discrepancy of $((35-25)/25)$ 40 percent for a single statistic (the ratio of unvaccinated eligible Americans) within one article. Do numbers lie? No, but they don't reveal immutable truth when subjected to human hands.

Further, let's say 280 million is the right starting point (eligible Americans). If we vaccinated a million people on day one (1/280), we did 0.35 percent of the eligible population. As people get vaccinated, the pool of unvaccinated-eligibles shrinks (to 70 million today...or as of September 27, per the CDC). The authors point to an alarmingly low number of new first-shotters (approximately 232 thousand). But 232 thousand/70 million is 0.33 percent, which is not a significantly different rate from the million-vax days of February and March. So, are we in vax-crisis mode? You decide.

Lest you think I'm picking on one side: Fox News displayed a disturbing array of numbers this morning, detailing increases in prices for a disparate array of commodities, services and finished goods. Up 10 percent. Up 50 percent. Up 125 percent! But over what time frame? The same span for each? Or did we pick the absolute lows as baselines, tracking one good for 20 years and another for 10 months? I have no idea, since the chart didn't say.

It's fair to characterize statistics as advanced math. Sadly, according to the National Science Foundation, fewer than 3 percent of Americans are "proficient" with "advanced math." Reports of American literacy proficiency rates vary widely (within a band of 65 to 87 percent), implying a maddeningly sizeable pool of no-to-low-literacy adults. Still, as the statistics in this paragraph suggest, our country is home to a huge pool of people who can't use numbers anywhere near as well as they can use words.

We exalt data. We anoint it with specious gravitas. But we rarely double-check it, or examine its sourcing, or question its efficacy, or... well...bother to do the math.

We should...do the math, and question the conclusions, and seek real truths.

Three classes, taken long ago...one in high school and two in college, both during my sophomore year...serve me daily, and more loyally than others. Typing, Economics (I took a bunch but learned most of what I needed at the introductory level), and Statistics (the second-semester mate to Probability...also enormously useful... both required of engineers). Along with reading and writing, numbers are the currency of human experience...our media of understanding. Misusing them might not be lying, but it also isn't telling the truth.



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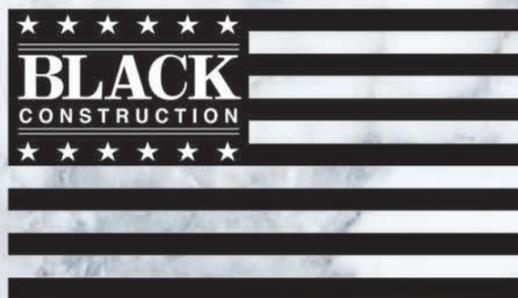
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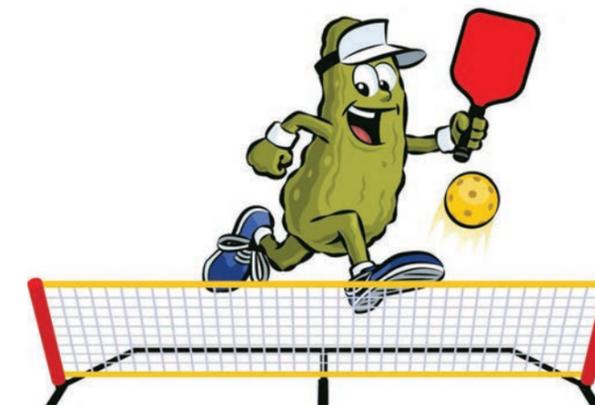
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In a Pickle

By Mike Broderick



One of the fastest growing sports in America involves a court and a net. No, it's not tennis – it's pickleball. Yes, that pickleball, the one your grandma plays. While it may have once been stereotyped as a sport for the elderly, that reputation is rapidly being dispelled, as more middle-aged and younger participants join in the fun.

According to the USA Pickleball Association (USAPA), the game has had a 650 percent increase in players over the last decade. Estimates for active players have grown to 3.3 million in 2019; and, in March of 2021, BBC News reported a 21.3 percent increase among American players in 2020. With increasing appeal, many communities and parks-and-rec departments are setting up courts, opening the game up to a broad range of players.

Pickleball is a blend of tennis, racquetball and ping-pong. Players use paddles and a small wiffle ball – about 3 inches in diameter – commonly playing doubles, although singles is an option. Games in a typical league run only 15 minutes, on courts smaller than their tennis counterparts. Sprinting long distances isn't necessary, so people of any age and ability can play competitively.

The game appeals for several reasons, across demographics and skill

levels. David Eichmeier, whose three kids range from 7 to 15, says pickleball is a great family sport. "Anyone can play, from little kids to 100-year-olds," he says. "It's great for hand-eye coordination for younger kids."

Another factor is the game's mental component. Rather than a contest of strength or experience, it requires players to out-think their opponents. "A lot of strategy goes into playing," says Eichmeier. "It's like chess, in a way. You've got to pick your shots, and make sure that each shot leads to the next."

Pickleball is generally affordable. A combination of a basic wooden paddle and balls costs around \$30, though prices for composite paddles can run much higher. Even league play is relatively cheap when compared to other racquet sports.

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Pickleball was invented in the mid-1960s in Washington state. Legend tells of three friends – Joel Pritchard, Bill Bell and Barney McCallum – returning home from a golf outing to find their families bored one Saturday afternoon. They attempted to set up to play badminton but were unable to find the shuttlecock. They improvised with a wiffle ball, lowered the badminton net, and fabricated paddles of plywood from a nearby shed.

McCallum made the first pickleball paddles on his basement band saw. In 1972, he incorporated Pickle-Ball, Inc., and manufactured wooden paddles to help grow the sport. His son David McCallum now runs the business, still headquartered in Washington.

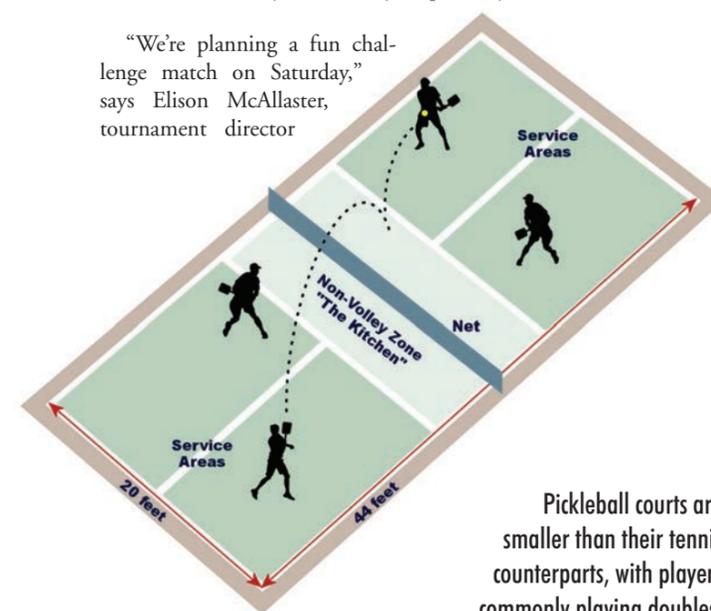
The spread of the sport is attributed to its popularity within community centers, physical education classes, public parks, private clubs, YMCAs, and retirement communities. As seniors began to migrate to the Sunbelt states, the sport caught on in retirement communities and at senior centers.

There are thousands of pickleball tournaments nationwide. Two of the largest are the annual U.S. Pickleball National Championships and U.S. Open Pickleball Championship, as well as numerous international championships.

SPECIAL POPS TOURNAMENT

Beginning November 5, the Landings will host the 5th annual Special Pops (Special Populations) Charity Pickleball Tournament, a fundraiser to support individuals with intellectual challenges in the Savannah community. The three-day event at the Landings Club kicks off with women's doubles on Friday, followed by mixed and men's doubles on Saturday and Sunday, respectively.

"We're planning a fun challenge match on Saturday," says Elison McAllaster, tournament director



Pickleball courts are smaller than their tennis counterparts, with players commonly playing doubles.

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and USAPA Southeast Georgia District Ambassador. "Six mixed doubles teams, all either 4.5 or 5.0 level, and ranging in age from 19 to 65, are challenging each other. Everyone is encouraged to come see some high-level mixed doubles play."

The Special Pops tennis tournament was originally started by Ted Copeland as a small, local round-robin in 2009 at Lake Mayer. It relocated to the Landings Club the following year. McAllaster took over three years ago and has attracted players from all over the Southeast.

"We are thrilled with the response to our fifth annual Special Pops charity tournament," McAllaster says. "We've had to close down registrations this year five weeks early." More than 280 registered players from Virginia, Pennsylvania, the Carolinas, Tennessee, Kansas, Colorado – and even one from Oregon – are expected.

"Our little fundraiser has attracted a lot of national attention due to our advertising it as a featured tournament," McAllaster adds, "and keeping it a fun round-robin format that runs on time."

The event and its sponsors help raise funds for the purchase of equipment and travel expenses (for the athletes) for out-of-town tour-

IF YOU GO:

WHAT: 5th annual Special Pops Pickleball Tournament

WHEN: Friday, Nov. 5 – Sunday, Nov. 7

WHERE: Franklin Creek Tennis Center, The Landings

HOW MUCH: Admission is free

CONTACT: For more information, email elisonmcallaster@gmail.com

WHAT ELSE: More than 280 players are expected from several states. Proceeds benefit the Special Pops charitable organization.

naments and instructional clinics. Several Landings residents serve as on-court coaches, travel chaperones, and volunteers. Additional support is provided by EmployAbility on Eisenhower Drive, which works with a similar population, many of whom are members of Special Pops.

"We've also been working with Special Olympics and USAPA to introduce pickleball as a Special Olympics sport," says McAllaster. She and Mary Smith, the head of Special Pops, have worked with a Special Olympics and USAPA committee to create "adaptive" rules for Special Olympics pickleball.

Chris Kader, Landings director of court sports, will be on hand to help the tournament run smoothly. McAllaster is grateful to the Landings Club for its generosity toward the Special Pops tennis and pickleball programs. "Since this is our sole fundraiser for our charity, the support of all our Landings players, volunteers, and out-of-town players is greatly appreciated," she says.

As the game continues to spread throughout the country, a municipality can easily retrofit tennis courts. The Landings was one of the early locations in the Savannah area to offer pickleball courts. Its growing popularity has led to additional public courts – at the YMCA



People of any skill level and ability can enjoy pickleball, from children to seniors.

and Lake Mayer, among others – to be established.

There are no signs of pickleball slowing down. It's already an intramural sport on many college campuses. Because of its affordability, it would be a natural progression to migrate to the high school level.

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The Feral Golfer

On September 10, 1932, *The Berkshire Evening Eagle*, a Pittsfield, Massachusetts newspaper, ran an article on its sports page under the heading, “This Game of Golf.” An excerpt reads, “Practically every golfer derives great satisfaction from a long drive, a long mashie and two putts for a par. It seems to be the fashion nowadays to strive at all costs for distance off the tee. To be able to hit the ball for great distances, providing it is well controlled, is of vital importance to players who wish to become champions. I have seen players indulge in their blind swiping for days with complete impunity, only to crack suddenly without a moment’s notice and add 10 to 15 strokes to their score.”

Not much has changed in 89 years, but I wonder what the writer would have made of today’s professionals and the length they achieve. I’ve never actually seen a golfer “come out of their shoes” when going at it hard with a driver; but, the full-out, up-on-their-toes technique of Lexi Thompson, Bubba Watson, and Justin Thomas comes very close. And then there’s Bryson DeChambeau. Is his bulking-up through a fanatical diet and fitness regimen what it will take to be dominant at golf in the future? I hope not. Golf has always been a game that could be played at a high level by average people, and not the sole purview of the abnormally big, strong, or tall, as in other sports. I can relate to a Tom Watson, but never to Bryson.

Perhaps it is fitting that in an era of 380-yard drives and 200-yard 8-irons, one statistic remains unchanged. Be it duffer or elite professional, every round is going to have as many as 18 shots that go ten feet or less. Once on the green, it doesn’t seem right that a young bomber’s chances of holing a putt may be equal to those of an 80-year-old codger. This must mean that in the moment a golfer steps onto the putting surface, he or she is no longer considered an athlete, if ever they were. That debate has gone on for decades and remains open. Clearly, athleticism is required in golf, and a toned body is an asset, but endurance and pushing the cardiovascular system to its limits are absent. After a round of golf, a professional will often go to the practice range and then to the fitness center. They are not exactly leaving it all on the course.

Golf is really two separate games, one akin to field hockey, the other much like croquet. Both require excellent hand-eye coordination, but the former also requires a certain amount of strength. Putting can be done by anyone who can stand without wobbling, bend slightly from the waist, and move an object that weighs less than two pounds less than two feet. Yet, the putter is the most important club in the bag.

On a typical golf course, a driver might be used 14 times, whereas a putter is used 27 times on a really good day, or, on a very

Notes From the Deep Rough by Peter Sizer

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bad day, 45 times. At minimum, every golfer should have two putters. You can't stand over a four-foot putt on the first green and be thinking, "Crikey, how many of these did I miss yesterday with this thing in my hands?" A badly behaving putter should be given a red card and sent to the punishment bin where it may contemplate the error of its ways with others of its ilk. The pitfall to this approach becomes evident when the replacement putter behaves just as badly as its predecessor. This explains the presence of the 12 putters currently doing penance in a dark and dingy corner of my garage. I keep buying and swapping them out until one demonstrates its superiority. They never do. Is it, possibly, me?

As we stand over short putts, we often think, "My grandmother could make this one." Unfortunately, my grandmother is long dead. Anyway, that mindset puts undue pressure on the golfer. Who wants the humiliation of missing a putt that Nana would have brushed home with aplomb? Why should a three-foot putt that doesn't drop have more impact than a majestic 2-iron that covers the flag and stops next to the hole?

In golf's early days, holes were dug out with a trowel, and the size could vary depending on the sobriety of the greenkeeper, and from course to course. Golf lore has it that a piece of clay drainpipe was used at Musselburgh Links in England to shore up the sides of holes, and that the diameter of that pipe set the standard. In 1829, Musselburgh purchased a hole cutting device which created a hole 4.25 inches across. If the hole cutter was based on the drainpipe dimension, we will never know.

The Historical Dictionary of Golfing Terms cites an 1858 newspaper article that refers to a six-inch hole. It wasn't until 1891 that the Royal and Ancient adopted the Musselburgh dimension as its standard. Had that pipe or the cutter been constructed with a six-inch diameter, golf would be a much less frustrating game, and the lopsided importance of putting would be somewhat diminished.

The size of the hole will probably never be altered, as it would make comparisons across eras moot. Of course, comparisons are already moot, as golf has gone through several eras defined primarily by the golf ball. The "hairy" was used until early in the 17th cen-

tury, when it was replaced by the "featherie." At the midpoint of the 19th century, the featherie was made obsolete by the "gutta-percha," and at the turn of the 20th century the Haskell, with its wound rubber core and balata cover with dimples, ushered in the modern age. With each advance came added distance. Today, golf balls are designed by physicists, materials scientists, and computer modelling.

Clubs underwent a slower evolution, as steel shafts didn't replace hickory until about 1925. Fiberglass shafts were a failed experiment in the 1960s, and graphite was introduced in the 1970s. Steel, and then titanium, replaced wooden heads in the 1990s. All of these technological advances have produced distances off the driver that Old Tom Morris would never have dreamed possible. The only constant across eras is talent, and one can reasonably assume that the best players in 1920 would be among the best players in 2020.

While young adepts to the game keep finding ways to hit it farther, those of us who have been laboring in the deep rough since the Kennedy administration keep losing distance. Technological innovation can only stuff rags into the cracks of a very leaky dam for so long. At my club, we have a set of tees called "medal" which produce a total course length of about 5,600 yards. Aging members with balky joints and waning muscle mass move up to these tees to keep par 4s within reach of two swings. The Feral Golfer has been accused of medal tee abuse as he can still carry a drive more than 200 yards. To this charge he retorts, "I've been engaged in a prolonged war with the golf gods for well over 60 years now. I've earned my combat medals."

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FLU SYMPTOMS

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue
- Possible vomiting and diarrhea (especially for children)



Laura Floyd, RN

Flu vaccine effectiveness varies each year. But that's not an excuse to skip vaccination. Studies show that getting the flu shot can lower your risk of getting sick by 40 to 60 percent, depending on the season. "It's a good vaccine. It's safe," says Laura Floyd, registered nurse and manager of St. Joseph's/Candler Occupational Health Services. "It's not 100 percent effective, but there is evidence that if you get a strain of the flu not covered in the vaccine, your illness could be shorter and milder."

tions such as lung disease, obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease, cancer or kidney/liver disease, or those over age 65, because they are at greater risk of severe complications of the flu. But even young, healthy adults need to get vaccinated.

Vaccination is the most effective way to protect yourself against the flu, so it's important to get vaccinated each year. And with COVID-19 still rampant, it's more important than ever to get vaccinated now. "I think it's the responsible thing to do because there's a vaccine available so the illness is preventable in a lot of ways," Floyd says. "It keeps us safe, our families safe and our patients safe."

WHO SHOULD GET THE FLU SHOT? (HINT: EVERYONE)

- Anyone six months old and older should get the flu vaccine once a year.

- Pregnant? It is highly recommended that pregnant women get the vaccine.
- Going through chemotherapy treatments? Definitely, get the flu shot.
- Even those with egg allergies, who've in the past been excused from getting the vaccine, are now encouraged to get a flu shot.

The flu vaccine fortifies your immunity. Prevention is the best method to help yourself, your family, and the other people who are around you because the flu can spread very easily.

The flu vaccine is typically administered in the upper, muscular portion of your arm. There are different brands of flu vaccine, but all are either trivalent or quadrivalent, covering three or four types of the flu virus and those similar. There are also high-dose flu

Health System Continues Regional Expansion

St. Joseph's/Candler has submitted a purchase agreement to Bryan County to buy six acres of land near the Interstate 16/Highway 280 interchange in the Interstate Centre Industrial Park. The purchase will allow St. Joseph's/Candler to offer healthcare services that can evolve to meet the needs of a growing community.



St. Joseph's/Candler intends to develop a compact but comprehensive medical office building that can grow up to 40,000 square feet. It will house services that are critical for the healthcare needs of a growing population of employers, employees, families, and the expanding communities in northern Bryan, western Effingham, and southern Bulloch Counties. The development will also house convenient office space for the Development Authority of Bryan County (DABC) to use in marketing its recently acquired 2,200-acre site.

Interstate Centre Industrial Park is situated next to the mega-site, recently acquired by the Savannah Harbor I-16 Corridor Joint Development Authority. The Interstate Centre Industrial Park is already home to a group of thriving companies. St. Joseph's/Candler is one of the first organizations to announce development in the area since the mega-site was purchased.

ABOUT THE ST. JOSEPH'S/CANDLER DEVELOPMENT

Phase 1 of the plan will involve the development of a two-story, 20,000-square-foot building in a location that minimizes travel and time away from family, work or community activities. The preliminary timeline for completion is first quarter of 2024. The estimated investment is \$40 million. The first floor will contain primary and urgent care, occupational medicine, and other in-demand specialties. Additional clinical services might include basic diagnostic services (including lab access), disease management and wellness programs, pre-surgical testing services, and clinical navigation services to expe-

vaccines available for the elderly or people with compromised immune systems. The CDC no longer recommends the nasal spray flu vaccine.

You've probably heard the excuses or used them yourself. 'I've never had the flu so why should I get a flu shot?' or, 'I heard the flu shot makes you sick so I'm not getting one.'

Both are false.

If you haven't had the flu, consider yourself

lucky. It spreads easily. When someone with the flu coughs, sneezes, kisses or even talks to you, you are opening yourself up to contracting the virus.

Some people have a sore arm or redness at the injection site for a few days. Others may experience nausea or fatigue, but it's because your body is building immunity to the flu virus. It takes your body about two weeks as it produces antibodies and immunity to fight off the virus if it attacks in the future. If you don't feel 100 percent, don't panic. It's not the

dite patients' access to any level of necessary care.

Phase 1 includes office and meeting room space for the DABC. Strategically located in an area of rapid industrial growth, this space will allow the DABC to meet with potential partners close to proposed developments.

"In addition to making healthcare more accessible for the people working and living in and around Interstate Centre, St.

Joseph's/Candler's new facility will make the area more attractive to prospects interested in potentially opening a new facility," explains Jon Seagraves, chairman of the DABC. "Having office and meeting space in the new facility will make meeting with these prospects a more streamlined and efficient process. This facility will be a great asset both for the community and the DABC, and we are excited to begin our new partnership with St. Joseph's/Candler."

This property fits with St. Joseph's/Candler's mission to provide access to healthcare where people live and work. "St. Joseph's/Candler has worked very hard in recent years to identify areas of our community that need enhanced access to healthcare services," says St. Joseph's/Candler President and CEO Paul P. Hinchey. "This particular portion of Bryan County has been part of our growth and access strategy for some time. When we approached the DABC about our vision for the area, it became clear that they shared the same vision and enthusiasm as us for the project. We are very excited to partner with them to meet the healthcare needs of employers and residents of that area and the added benefit of having the DABC in our building is a win/win for all. It will create the opportunity for even greater synergy and partnership in the future."

The development of the property will require rezoning from industrial to commercial use. The application has been submitted.

flu. It's your body doing what it is supposed to do when it gets a vaccine.

WHERE TO GO

Flu shots are readily available – oftentimes free, covered by insurance or available at a low cost – at many neighborhood pharmacies, your primary care doctor's office, and the public health department. Talk to your physician or local pharmacy about your options.

Don't wait.

We're Giving It Away!

Football Pick 'Em Pool

NCAA

Oklahoma St. at Iowa St.
BYU at Washington St.
Wisconsin at Purdue
Utah at Oregon St.
Syracuse at Virginia Tech
Oregon at UCLA
LSU at Mississippi
Clemson at Pittsburgh
Maryland at Minnesota
Liberty at North Texas
Boston College at Louisville
San Diego St. at Air Force
Temple at South Florida
USC at Notre Dame
NC St. at Miami
Georgia Tech at Virginia
East Carolina at Houston
West Virginia at TCU
Kansas St. at Texas Tech
Nevada at Fresno St.

NFL

Kansas City at Tennessee
Cincinnati at Baltimore
Houston at Arizona
Chicago at Tampa Bay
Washington at Green Bay

As a tiebreaker this week,
pick the total points in the
LSU/Mississippi game.

The competition is getting stiff in our pick 'em pool. Most recently, we witnessed a five-way tie, with a pentet of pickers each making 19 proper predictions.

The fabulous five are all familiar football poolers: "Dandy" Don Schoenwald, a multiple winner; Crystal "The Crystal Ball" Higgins, who seemingly summons her predictions from the great beyond; "Hollerin'" Pat Holland, who always seems to be in the hunt; John "Do Right" DuRant, who should get a special prize for the nicest looking pick sheet; and, June Richardson, past-champ and perennial powerhouse.

For the first time in our history, we have TWO winners. Penn State/Iowa was our tiebreaker. Two of our players projected a total score of 43 points, which was right on the money! Crystal Higgins and Pat Holland share the spotlight with their respective to-a-t tiebreakers. Congratulations, indeed!

And thank you to all our faithful followers. Keep playing!

The rules are simple. Predict the winning team for each game. And get more winners right than the rest of your friends. For the tiebreaker game, predict the total points that the two teams will score (combined). Twenty college games and five NFL matchups. This slate will be played on Saturday, October 23, and Sunday, October 24. Entries are due by 5 p.m., Thursday, October 7. Email your picks to chendrix@theskinny.com, or send your entry the old-fashioned way to:

The Skinny
15 Lake Street, Suite 280
Savannah, GA 31411

Alternatively, just drop it by our offices in the Lake Side Center across from Publix.

Please, limit one entry per contestant. Good luck and enjoy the games!

ROBERT RAKESTRAW

More than seven decades ago, Robert Rakestraw, USMC, fought against the Japanese military forces during the Guam and Okinawa campaigns.

Since then, World War II veteran has led a remarkable life. Just two years short of a century in age, he remains physically mobile and mentally sharp.

Rakestraw was born in Rome, Georgia, in 1923. While attending Model High School in Rome, he played trombone in the school band, the beginning of his musical career. He was 18 in 1941 when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He promptly enlisted in the Marine Corps, like thousands of other American patriots. "I was influenced by a persuasive Marine recruiting sergeant in a sharp dress blue uniform," Rakestraw remembers with a chuckle. "He promised us we would have it easy, with lots of fun in boot camp, which somehow the drill instructors forgot to provide."

Rakestraw joined fellow recruits aboard a train bound for Yemassee, South Carolina, where a bus carried them to Parris Island Marine Corps Recruit Depot. Because of the sudden military buildup, the private and his fellow Jarheads had only four weeks of basic training. The condensed term led to 18-

hour days for the recruits. After a month passed, they were rushed to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, for three weeks of combat training with then-new M-1 semiautomatic Garand rifles. Rakestraw qualified with a very respectable sharpshooter score of 215, which would serve him well in combat in the Pacific.

Next, Rakestraw traveled cross-country on a crowded troop train to Camp Pendleton, California, where he was classified officially as a band musician. As with all Marines then and now, he was first and foremost a combat rifleman, ready to take up arms when needed. Another journey followed aboard a transport vessel to Pearl Harbor, then on to American Samoa in the heart of Polynesia, halfway between Hawaii and New Zealand. He joined the 22nd Regiment and trained as a member of a .30-caliber machine gun crew.

The 22nd was attached to the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade, participating in the capture of Kwajalein Atoll, for which it earned a Navy Unit Commendation medal. Con-

He Served by Ron Lauretti

Background photo by Pat Gezovich

The Okinawan campaign was the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific Theater during World War II. The island battle was nicknamed the “typhoon of steel...”

quest aside, Rakestraw and his 22nd Regimental Marine buddies then prepped to invade Japanese-held Guam. The tropical island was defended by 18,000 Japanese troops, and American forces trained for several months in the mountainous interior of Hawaii in anticipation of the jungle warfare they would face.

During the Guam campaign, Rakestraw’s primary assignment was machine gun security detail for the Headquarters and Service Company of the 22nd Regiment. The Marines were masters of daytime combat, but Japanese soldiers frequently used the cover of darkness to launch counter assaults, often attacking with knives and hand grenades. No enemy weaponry injured Rakestraw, but the physically fit Marine went “down and out” in sickbay for 48 hours with dengue fever, an unusually short recovery time considering the severity of the disease.

After 20 days, the 3rd Marine Division, joined by the Army’s 77th Division, and benefiting from heavy naval gunfire and close-in air support, secured the island. The campaign cost 8,000 Allied casualties, but the capture of Guam provided two more B-29 bomber airfields for the air war against Japan.

Next up for Rakestraw, then a corporal, was Okinawa. The large island is only 350 miles from the Japanese mainland of Kyushu and

955 air miles from Tokyo. It was defended by 100,000 entrenched Japanese troops. The Allied naval armada was attacked by waves of kamikaze fighter planes. After coming ashore in a Higgins landing craft, Rakestraw was dispatched as a replacement rifleman or machine gunner for Marines wounded or killed in battle.

The decades since have slightly dimmed Rakestraw’s memories of his experiences, but he clearly recalls two key fights – the Battle for Naha City, the capital of Okinawa, and the Battle of Sugarloaf Hill. “Lots and lots of shooting and incoming mortar rounds and too many dead Marines,” he says. “Several mortar rounds almost got me.”

The Okinawan campaign was the largest amphibious assault in the Pacific Theater during World War II. The island battle was nicknamed the “typhoon of steel,” referring to the ferocity of fighting, the intensity of the Japanese kamikaze attacks, and the sheer number of Allied ships and armored vehicles involved in the assault. The campaign was so intense that almost half the civilian population of 300,000 people on Okinawa were killed by collateral fire or suicide. It took Allied forces more than three months to secure the island. Casualties amounted to more than 12,000 Americans and over 100,000 Japanese combatants.

After securing Okinawa, Allied forces began training for the planned invasion of the Japanese home islands. Okinawa provided

an anchorage for the Pacific fleet, troop staging areas, and airfields. The 22nd Regiment returned to Guam for its pre-invasion training, unaware of the coming atomic bomb drops that would lead to Japan’s eventual surrender.

After the welcome news of victory, Rakestraw traded in his rifle for a bass fiddle and joined a musical combo entertaining the brass at the local officer’s club. He says that in spite of the wear-and-tear on his trigger finger, he soon regained the gentle touch of a musician, more to his liking.

Because of his lengthy deployment in three Pacific campaigns, Rakestraw received high priority to return to the U.S. He received his honorable discharge November 2, 1945, at Camp Lejeune, not too far from his home in Georgia. To shield his family from his combat memory nightmares, rather than stay in the family home, Rakestraw rented a room in a local hotel. It was there that he met his future wife, Roberta Audrey Roberts, who was teaching ballet at the hotel.

The newly married veteran began his lengthy renaissance career, first as a ballroom dance instructor, then as a violinist for the Rome Symphony, next as an artist, and finally as a newspaper writer. He and Roberta enjoyed a wonderful marriage until her death in 1998.

Today, Rakestraw lives on Skidaway Island with his nephew, Joel Formby. He demonstrates his dexterity by hand-carving smoking pipes out of wood. “Still going strong,” he says, performing a soft shoe dance of “Take Me Out to the Ball Game” to prove it. He sings along as he dances, his voice a bit weaker than it once was, but still in key.





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ANIMAL ATTRACTION

WHAT: Call for volunteers
WHEN: Flexible hours to meet your needs and schedule, various tasks
WHERE: The Humane Society Thrift Shop, 7215 Sallie Mood Dr.
CONTACT: Volunteer coordinator, Yvonne Hemphill, 603.502.6906
WHAT ELSE: No experience necessary. All proceeds from the thrift shop go to supporting the care of the shelter's animals.

FERAL FRIENDSHIP

WHAT: Skidaway Cat Alliance Team
WHEN: Ongoing
WHERE: Skidaway Island and surrounding
CONTACT: skidawaycats@gmail.com or visit our Facebook page at www.facebook.com/skidawaycatallianceteam
WHAT ELSE: The Skidaway Cat Alliance Team is a group of dedicated animal lovers who provide food, population control (spay/neuter), medical care, and shelter for free-roaming cats in the Skidaway area. We have cats and kittens currently being fostered that are available to new, loving homes.

PET PROJECT

WHAT: Linen drive for the Humane Society of Greater Savannah
WHEN: Ongoing
WHERE: Humane Society Adoption Center, 7215 Sallie Mood Dr.
CONTACT: Call Rosemary Longueira at 598.2875 or drop donations at 22 Long Island Road, Oakridge
WHAT ELSE: Donate old towels, washcloths, pillowcases, sheets, dish towels, pet beds, and chair cushions. Please bring them to the front of the Adoption Center, not the Thrift Shop donation area.



island hopping

*Please email content to mail@theskinnie.com.
Deadline is the Friday prior to publication.*

WHO NEW?

WHAT: New Neighbors
WHEN: Visit www.landingsnewneighbors.com to see our calendar
CONTACT: Visit our website or contact Jody at nnnewmember@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: The club offers more than 250 different activities from biking, golf, pickleball, walking groups or fishing to Mahjong, Bridge, Needle-arts and Canasta. We have exciting military tours and special events for you to enjoy right here on Skidaway Island.

GOTTA LOVE IT

WHAT: Landlovers membership / open to all Skidaway Islanders
HOW MUCH: Each \$30 membership fee covers one household of one or two adults.
CONTACT: Vicki Knapp at landloversmembership@gmail.com or visit www.landingslandlovers.com for more information.
WHAT ELSE: The membership year runs from September 1 through August 31. Landlovers is a philanthropic and social organization dedicated to enriching the Landings community and Skidaway Island at large. Landlovers sponsors year-round social activities and fundraising events to support student scholarships and multiple non-profit service organizations.

OLD GROWTH

WHAT: Tour of Oelschig Nursery
WHEN: Friday, Oct. 22, 10:30 a.m.
WHERE: Oelschig Nursery, 2705 Gregory St.
HOW MUCH: free, pre-registration required
CONTACT: friendsofskidawayaudubon@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: Tour the Southeast's oldest nursery. To register, click on Events at skidawayaudubon.org. Limited to 25 people. The rain date is Oct. 29.

CALLING ALL SINGERS

WHAT: Voces8 Choral Workshop
WHEN: Saturday, Oct. 23, 9 a.m.
WHERE: Cathedral of St. John the Baptist
HOW MUCH: Free
CONTACT: E-mail to friendsofmusic@savannahcathedral.org
WHAT ELSE: Choral musicians from the Savannah area will have the opportunity to hear Paul Smith, director and co-founder of Voces8, work with the Cathedral Choral Scholars, some of the city's finest singers.

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

WHAT: Fall Plant Sale
WHEN: Saturday, Oct. 23, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
WHERE: Savannah Botanical Gardens, 1388 Eisenhower Dr.
HOW MUCH: Free admission and parking
CONTACT: 912.355.3883 or sacgc1388@botanical.comcastbiz.net
WHAT ELSE: The Savannah Area Council of Garden Clubs and the Savannah Botanical Gardens host this fundraiser to benefit the Savannah Botanical Gardens. There will be all sorts of wonderful plants for sale – fall flowers and roses from Oelschig's Nursery, pass-along plants, and some decorative ceramic planting pots and containers. Master gardeners will be on hand to answer gardening questions. You also may explore the gardens.

LIZARD WIZARDS

WHAT: Live Reptile Presentation
WHEN: Saturday, October 23, 1 p.m.
WHERE: The Landings Athletic Fields, 600 Landings Way
HOW MUCH: Free and open to the public
CONTACT: friendsofskidawayaudubon@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: Georgia Southern's Wildlife Education Center is bringing its family-friendly live animal presentation to the Landings, courtesy of Skidaway Audubon. The event features snakes, turtles, lizards and more. Cameras are permitted, but pets and food are prohibited.

OK, KD

WHAT: Kappa Delta Founders Day Meet and Greet
WHEN: Oct. 24, 1 to 3 p.m.
WHERE: The Palmetto Club House at The Landings
CONTACT: savannahkdac@outlook.com or Kappa Delta Savannah Alumnae Chapter Facebook page
WHAT ELSE: Savannah area Kappa Deltas are invited to commemorate the founding of our sisterhood. Registration information will be coming.

PROPERTY VALUES

WHAT: Coastal Conservation Association of Skidaway November Meeting – Coastal Georgia's Legacy of Land Conservation
WHEN: Monday, Nov. 8, 7 p.m.
WHERE: St. Peter's Church

CONTACT: Paulette Hamilton, 610.509.0279
WHAT ELSE: Charles McMillan from the Georgia Conservancy will discuss the history and continuing legacy of land conservation in Coastal Georgia, which has done so much to enhance the district. The CCA's November raffle prize will be a medium-weight spinning rod and reel ideal for fishing in the Landings' lagoons, plus a tackle box with several recommended lures.

BELEW'S BRUSHES

WHAT: The paintings of Dell Belew
WHEN: Nov. 1 – 30; Artist's reception – Nov. 7, 2-4 p.m.
WHERE: JEA Art Gallery, 5111 Abercorn St.
CONTACT: Vicky Lunick, 912.355.8111
WHAT ELSE: Dell Belew has more than 40 years of experience as a minister, artist, English professor, writer, workshop leader, and public speaker.

TIED UP IN KNOTS

WHAT: Landings Garden Club Holiday Bow Sales
WHEN: Saturdays - Nov. 6, 13, 20, 27, and Dec. 4, 11; Mondays, Nov. 8, 15, 22 and 29; Friday, Nov. 26
WHERE: In front of the fountain near the Village Pharmacy
HOW MUCH: \$15-\$20 per bow
CONTACT: www.thelandingsgardenclub.com
WHAT ELSE: Many new ribbon patterns to choose from. Gorgeous bows for inside and outside use. Proceeds benefit conservation and beautification projects on Skidaway Island. Don't delay – we usually sell out early!

THE RIGHT STUFF

WHAT: Ladies on the Right (LOTR) luncheon meeting: "A Tribute to Savannah Veterans"
WHEN: Veterans Day, Thursday, Nov. 11; 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.
WHERE: Palmetto Club in the Landings
HOW MUCH: \$25 for LOTR members; \$35 for non-members
CONTACT: www.ladiesontheright.org or Elena Bennett, 404.510.6042
WHAT ELSE: All interested men and women are invited to attend. LOTR members are encouraged to invite a veteran as their paid guest. Attendees must register for the event, including their veteran guests, by Nov. 8 at www.ladiesontheright.org.

PHIL THE PARK

WHAT: Savannah Philharmonic outdoor concert
WHEN: Sunday, Nov. 14
WHERE: Morris Park, 660 E. Broughton Street
HOW MUCH: Free tickets (required) available at savannahphilharmonic.org
WHAT ELSE: The Savannah Philharmonic will perform classical favorites, pops, movie soundtrack selections, and beloved patriotic pieces.

es. Grounds open at 2 p.m.; live music starts at 3 p.m. Patrons can set up lawn chairs, blankets and picnic baskets. Grab a bite from a variety of local food trucks that will be on hand to join the festive celebration of community and the arts.

GOLF CART GREETINGS

WHAT: Holiday Decorated Golf Cart Parade
WHEN: Saturday, Dec. 4, 3 - 7 p.m.
WHERE: Parade departs from the Landings Association Building, 600 Landings Way South
CONTACT: Email HolidayCartParade@gmail.com for questions and to join the email list
WHAT ELSE: Come early to line up. The last cart will include our own Santa. The parade will end at Landings Harbor for festivities which will include food trucks, hot chocolate, holiday music and performances, Landings tree lighting, and viewing all the decorated carts.

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS

WHAT: Coastal Empire Habitat for Humanity inaugural "Home for the Holidays" gala
WHEN: Saturday, Dec 11, at 6 p.m.
WHERE: Marriott Savannah Riverfront, 100 General McIntosh Blvd.
HOW MUCH: Individual tickets start at \$150
CONTACT: Please visit www.HabitatSavannah.org for more information
WHAT ELSE: The gala will serve as the largest fundraiser for the fourth quarter of the year for the local nonprofit organization. Guests will enjoy dinner, drinks, dessert, dancing, and a fun game!

PI SERVING

WHAT: Pi Beta Phi Alumnae Club of Savannah
WHEN: October through April
WHERE: Skidaway Island and beyond
CONTACT: Beth Holmquist at bholmquist@comcast.net for membership information
WHAT ELSE: This active group of Pi Phi alums enjoys four to five gatherings a year. Plans are underway for a tour of Benedetto Guitars on Oct. 15; a holiday cocktail party on Dec. 3; a Panhellenic Cocktail Party on Feb. 2; and a Founders Day luncheon at Vic's on the River on Apr. 30, featuring popular local speaker, Roger Smith.

WORLD TRAVELERS

WHAT: Landlovers Marco Polo
WHEN: Third Monday of the month, 6:30 p.m.
WHERE: Members' homes
HOW MUCH: An appetizer
CONTACT: Please email Deb Wilson and Sue Souls at llmarcopolo100@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: If you were born in or have lived for at least one year (including an academic year) outside the U.S., you are eligible to join. Attendees are asked to bring an appetizer to share as well as their own beverages. Open to all Landlovers members.

SOUL SISTERS

WHAT: JWOL Membership
HOW MUCH: Annual membership is \$20
CONTACT: Sherri Brecker
WHAT ELSE: Mail or tube check to Sherri at 18 Cricket Court. Membership entitles each member to share in the many wonderful programs and social events JWOL offers.

CAN YOU CANASTA?

WHAT: Landlovers Canasta
WHEN: Every Wednesday, 1-3 p.m.
WHERE: Palmetto Clubhouse, main dining room
HOW MUCH: Free
CONTACT: Patti Heleva at landloverscanasta@gmail.com to be added to the email list.
WHAT ELSE: Maximum 24 players and must have basic knowledge of the game. Because we play in the Palmetto Clubhouse, Landings Club and Landlovers memberships are required.

ALL ABOARD!

WHAT: Mexican Train Dominoes
WHEN: Tuesdays 3:30-5:30 p.m.
WHERE: Palmetto Clubhouse's Byrd Room
HOW MUCH: Free
CONTACT: Laurie Milano at 914.474.4943 or lamilano@aol.com
WHAT ELSE: Landlovers and Landings Club memberships required. Please bring a set of dominoes, if you have one.

FRIENDS OF FRIENDS OF BILL W.

WHAT: Al-Anon
WHEN: Mondays, 4 p.m.
WHERE: Skidaway Island United Methodist Church
WHAT ELSE: A recovery program for families and friends of people who are struggling with addiction.

THE COAST WITH THE MOST

WHAT: Coastal Georgia Living
WHEN: First Wednesday of the month, October through May, 9:30-11:30 a.m.
WHERE: Messiah Lutheran Church
COST: Annual club dues are \$25 for an individual, \$30 for a family; Landlovers membership is required; Guests are welcome for a \$5 fee
CONTACT: Donna Bunn, donnabunn@gmail.com, or Deb Werner, debk.werner@yahoo.com
WHAT ELSE: Formerly known as Green Thumb Club, Coastal Georgia Living focuses on gardening, wildlife, and the coastal Georgia lifestyle. Monthly meetings begin with coffee and socializing, followed by a featured speaker, with occasional field trips to local sites of interest.

Complete Island Hopping listings are now online! Just visit www.theskinnie.com and click "Read."

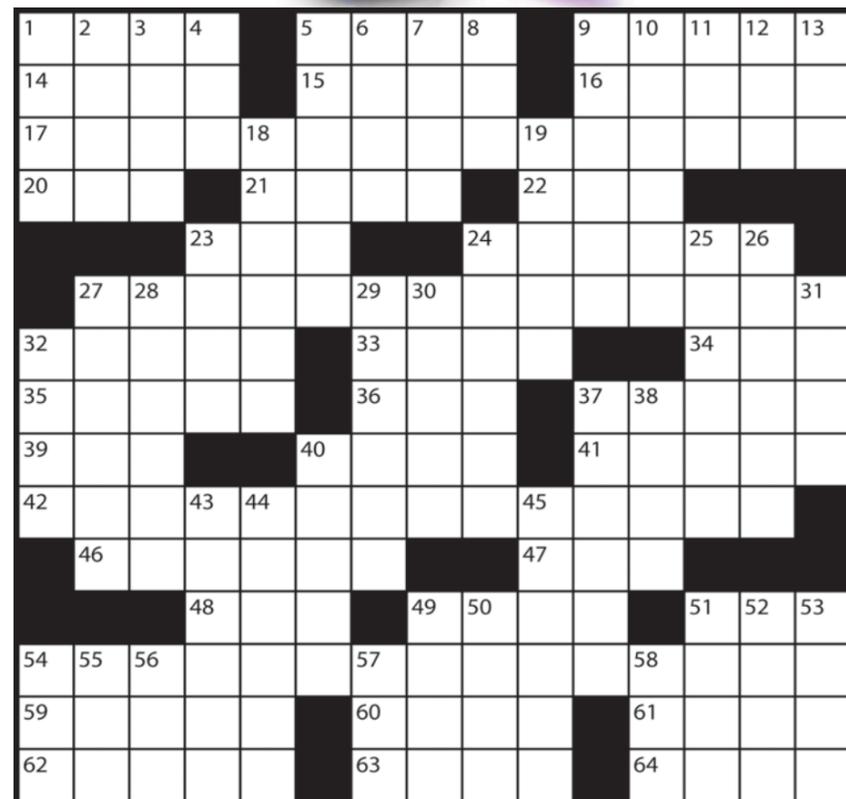
CHALLENGER CLUES*

ACROSS

- 1. 1-Across is 'meta' for this puzzle
- 5. Part of a corset
- 9. Baltimore Orioles' home stadium, Camden ____
- 14. Throw out
- 15. Place for a stud
- 16. Denticulate
- 17. **Pinkerton detective who wrote "The Maltese Falcon"**
- 20. Most of NATO
- 21. Abrupt
- 22. Wranglers' competition
- 23. Part of a bite?
- 24. Carried on
- 27. **The best-selling author of all-time**
- 32. Grover Cleveland's veep, ____ Stevenson
- 33. U.S. Senator from N. Carolina, ____ Tillis
- 34. Key next to the space bar
- 35. Struggles
- 36. Apple CEO Cook
- 37. The whole megillah
- 39. Canada's most populous prov.
- 40. Banana tree, to a botanist
- 41. Sylvia portrayer in "La Dolce Vita"
- 42. **He wrote books of sex and violence before becoming a Jehovah's Witness**
- 46. Most coy
- 47. Neighbor of Ken.
- 48. Prefix meaning 'muscle'
- 49. In re
- 51. Nice ride
- 54. **BBC put his 1939 crime novel on its 100 best books list**
- 59. Twig used for wickerwork
- 60. Niblick, for one
- 61. Place for a canary in a coal mine
- 62. Tree of the genus acer
- 63. Sippy
- 64. See 5-Down

DOWN

- 1. The human genome, basically
- 2. Pacific island blast?
- 3. CCCP, in Washington, D.C.
- 4. Chemical prefix meaning 'two'
- 5. 64-Across, notably
- 6. Let know



- 7. Fitted
- 8. Food Network's "Girl Meets Farm" hostess, Molly ____
- 9. Neighbor of a Djiboutian
- 10. Medieval armor helmets that enclose the entire head
- 11. Caviar, essentially
- 12. The only clock setting in FL
- 13. Stubborn
- 18. Inflammation of the colored part of the eye
- 19. Panic
- 23. False god
- 24. Equilateral quadrilaterals
- 25. Lightweight cotton fabric
- 26. Attenuate
- 27. Lover of Aphrodite
- 28. Computer bug, e.g.
- 29. Verify
- 30. Tweet

- 31. Wonder Woman's best friend
- 32. It's about 100 picometers across
- 37. 231 cubic inches
- 38. Persnickety
- 40. Lucky Dragon Tea
- 43. ABC TV Late Night host, Jimmy ____
- 44. Friend of Tigger and Roo
- 45. Tedious recital
- 49. Phoenician city once called Ptolemais
- 50. Demonstration
- 51. Banausic
- 52. Massive
- 53. Architect of London's St. Paul's Cathedral
- 54. Largest country in S.E. Europe
- 55. Third King of Judah
- 56. Chihuahua's "woof"
- 57. Word used in an admission
- 58. CM minus CC

Puzzle answers, page 31

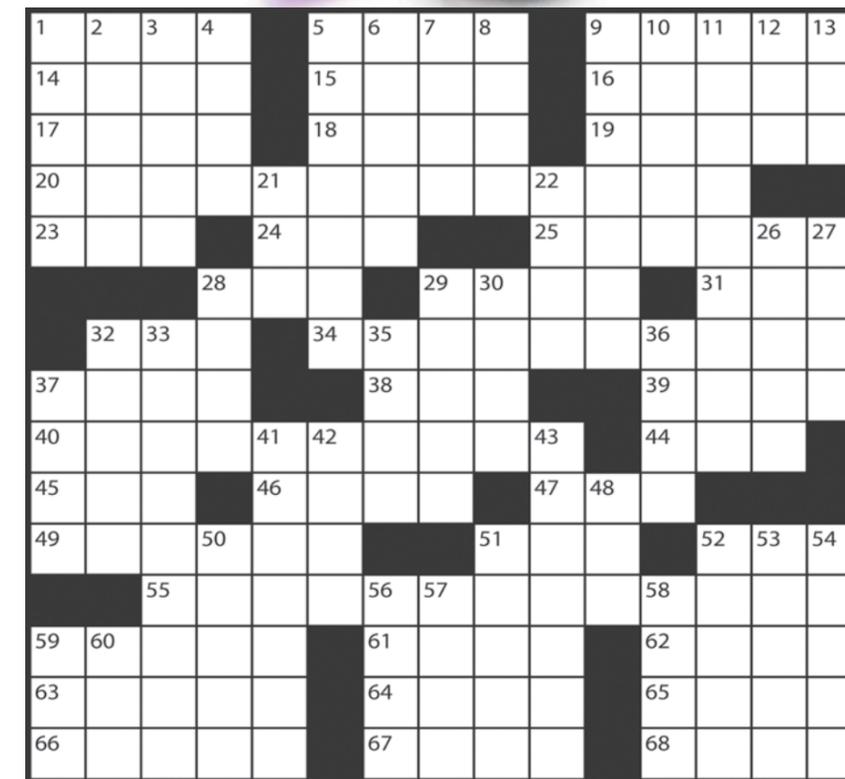
CHALLENGER CLUES*

ACROSS

- 1. Gumshoes
- 5. What buffalo do
- 9. Food made with a mold
- 14. Homebase for Transavia France
- 15. "Anything ____, milady?"
- 16. Stiller and ____ (comedy team)
- 17. The 'T' in LGBTQ
- 18. Last word of a familiar 3-word palindrome
- 19. Launch
- 20. **"Death on the Nile"**
- 23. Location of the Shogun's castle
- 24. Baronet's title
- 25. Sultry
- 28. 3rd person singular past indicative of 'be'
- 29. Evil humanoid of fiction
- 31. Hero of "Exodus" (Leon Uris)
- 32. Stat for Cy Young
- 34. **"I, the Jury"**
- 37. Finished
- 38. Refusal from Robbie Burns
- 39. Word from Miss Piggy
- 40. **"Murder at the Vicarage"**
- 44. Malta to Sicily dir.
- 45. ____ - GLANCE (big name in weekly planners)
- 46. Middle of a familiar 7-word palindrome
- 47. Tarzan's Boy
- 49. Hotel chain owned by Wyndham
- 51. Take off
- 52. **"That'd be MISTER SPADE to you, bub!"**
- 55. **"The Big Sleep"**
- 59. Chinese money plant
- 61. Frequent hero of Tom Clancy novels, Jack ____
- 62. Rafts
- 63. N.Y. home of America's finest cutlery
- 64. Largest river in central Italy
- 65. Force to
- 66. Tony Award winning barbershop?
- 67. Imprimatur
- 68. Rabbit of note

DOWN

- 1. "____ Ends of the Earth" (William



- Golding)
- 2. Showed humanity
- 3. It's lighter than a maduro
- 4. Jibe
- 5. Art movement prior to Impressionism
- 6. Like a big brother
- 7. "Stat," in the E.R.
- 8. Many an email
- 9. California winery with a 13th century castle
- 10. Canary Islands honorific
- 11. They're often in deli windows
- 12. Europe's 3rd largest island
- 13. Minskin, e.g.
- 21. ____ Today
- 22. Yearn
- 26. Chemistry Nobel Curie
- 27. Skean
- 28. Part of VFW
- 29. African mammal also known as the forest giraffe

- 30. Fisherman's aid
- 32. 1996 Best Original Song Oscar movie
- 33. Tried one more chocolate
- 35. Anent
- 36. Delta competitor
- 37. Mathematician Khayyam
- 41. Companions of modes and means
- 42. Major German gas station brand
- 43. Spanish, to a Spaniard
- 48. Poetic contraction
- 50. Antonym of 'later'
- 51. First three words of a 7-word palindrome
- 52. Heliacal
- 53. Roused
- 54. Gas or electric device
- 56. Levin and Gershwin
- 57. Guy Fawkes Day feature
- 58. Gullible one
- 59. Weed
- 60. When doubled, a major Philippine port

*For each puzzle a relatively difficult set of clues (Challenger) will accompany the first printing. In the subsequent issue, the same puzzle will appear with an easier set of clues (Standard) Email questions/comments to puzzler@theskinnie.com

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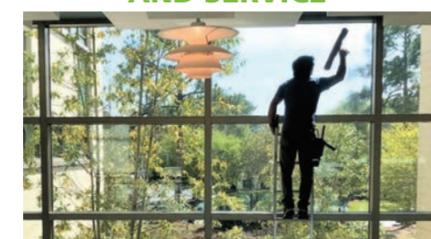
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MYSTERY MAKERS

C	L	U	E	S	T	A	Y	Y	A	R	D	S		
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MYSTERY BREAKERS

T	E	C	S		R	O	A	M		A	S	P	I	C		
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T	O	D	D	S		S	E	A	L		B	R	E	R		

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