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Democracy Dies in Darkness

SATURDAY, APRIL 27, 2024 • \$3

Trial lays bare world of tabloid negotiation

During first week, details of Enquirer's deals with Trump and stars emerge

BY SHAYNA JACOBS, TOM JACKMAN, DEREK HAWKINS AND DEVLIN BARRETT

NEW YORK — Donald Trump fought mightily before and after he was elected president to keep secret the embarrassing details of his private life, but often failed despite having a fat checkbook and a well-connected tabloid editor in his pocket, according to the first week of evidence at his trial.

Former presidents typically spend their post-White House years writing memoirs, making well-paid speeches and cementing their place in history. By becoming the first former president to face criminal trial, Trump is instead sitting in court, watching someone else try to define his legacy even as he campaigns for a second term in the Oval Office.

Over four days of testimony this week, former National Enquirer executive David Pecker told the jury not just how deeply involved Trump's team was in using the supermarket tabloid to fuel his 2016 presidential campaign, but also how celebrities and politicians generally try to buy, trade or bully their way out of scandalous stories.

Prosecutors tried to show that Trump was acutely aware of the machinations being made on his behalf by the tabloid executive and Michael Cohen, Trump's former lawyer and fixer. After Pecker's testimony concluded Friday, jurors heard from Trump's long-time assistant and Cohen's former banker.

Evidence shows Cohen paid
SEE TRUMP ON A2

In ruby red Arkansas, a long-odds campaign

Activists hope to topple the state's abortion ban with a ballot initiative

BY HANNAH KNOWLES

BRYANT, ARK. — Tony Chism pulled up to the library in a red pickup truck with a "Don't Tread on Me" plate on the front and a "Biden Sucks" sticker on the back. He settled into a lawn chair and held up a sign showing solidarity with abortion rights activists gathered nearby: "LET PEOPLE VOTE."

The 60-year-old conservative was there with his daughter Lela Chism — a 37-year-old liberal — to advance a shared cause: gathering enough signatures to put abortion and five other issues on the ballot this fall, allowing Arkansans the chance to override their state's total ban on the procedure.

"I think that should be a matter between the mother and her doctor," said Tony, a two-time Trump voter.

Voters have backed abortion rights in every statewide referendum.
SEE ABORTION ON A6



JABIN BOTSFORD/THE WASHINGTON POST

At Columbia, the seeds of a revolt

Through covert meetings and social chatter, students lit a fire now consuming U.S. campuses

BY TIM CRAIG, HANNAH NATANSON AND RICHARD MORGAN

When police raided a protester encampment at Columbia University last week, the students at Yale were ready, tracking every minute of the chaos that followed with their smartphones on social media.

If students at the New York City Ivy League school were going to risk arrest, they would, too. By the next morning, Yale demonstrators had pitched their own tents. On a Zoom call that day, more than 200 students from dozens of other colleges across the country were strategizing on how they could replicate Columbia's protest.

"We talked about what it was like to recruit people and join, and what it meant to stand in solidarity together, and what it would look like if these camps started popping up everywhere," said Soph Askanase, 21-year-old junior at Barnard College who was arrested at Columbia.

What followed was the start of what historians now call one of the most consequential student
SEE PROTESTS ON A5



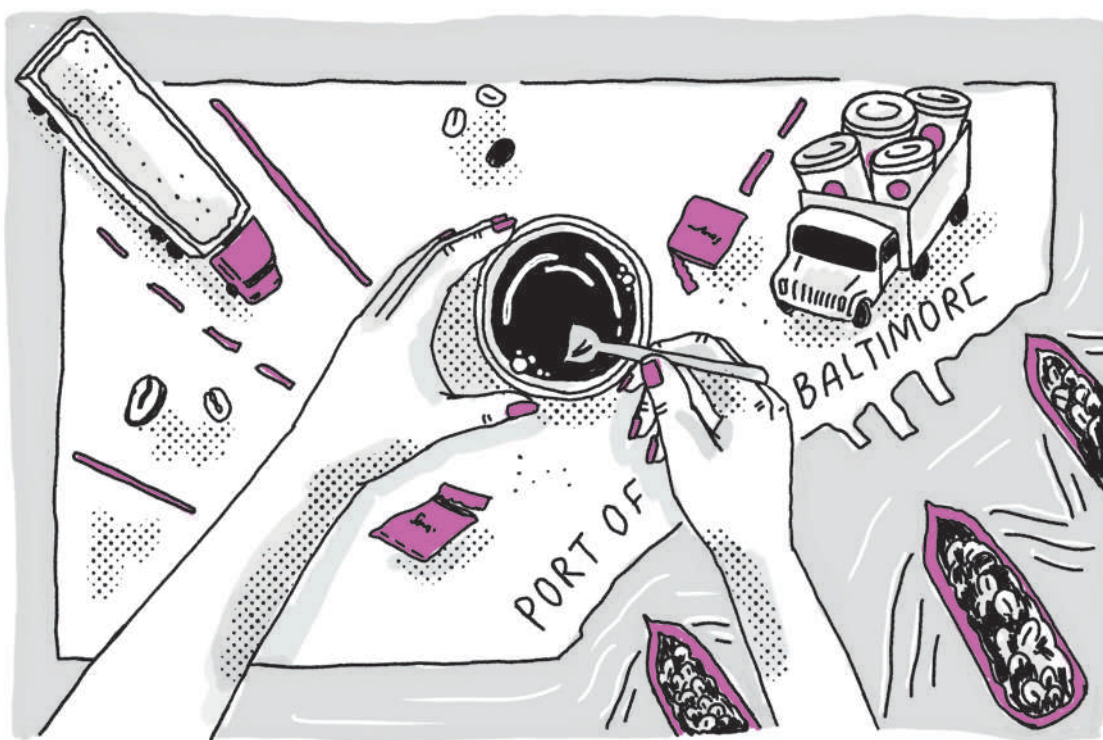
JAY JANNER/AUSTIN AMERICAN-STATESMAN/AP

FROM TOP: An encampment Thursday at Columbia for protesters of the war in Gaza. A woman is arrested Wednesday at the University of Texas.

Task force: Columbia's senate will examine school leadership, deployment of police. A4

'Divest' demands: Students push schools to pressure Israel, but it wouldn't be easy. A4

D.C. encampment: Local students flock to GWU as school threatens suspensions. B1



Down the East Coast and into your hands

After the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge, Compass Coffee had to reroute a lot of items that normally came through the Port of Baltimore. We show how its process has changed. Story, B2

ILLUSTRATION BY HANNAH GOOD/THE WASHINGTON POST

A fake rant, an arrest and new fears about AI

Md. principal's racist tirade was fabricated by a co-worker, police say

BY PAUL SCHWARTZMAN AND PRANSHU VERMA

The 42-second voice recording, purportedly of a Maryland high school principal in the midst of a racist rant, derided Black students as "ungrateful" and unable to "test their way out of a paper bag."

"I'm just so sick of the inadequacies of these people," sneered the voice on the recording, which was posted on social media in January, igniting outrage and prompting the school district to place the principal on leave.

But the recording was not what it seemed, according to Baltimore County police. A school employee, investigators charged Thursday, had used artificial-

intelligence tools to fabricate the audio with the intention of falsely depicting the principal, Eric Eiswert, as bigoted and antisemitic.

The employee, Dazhon Darien, 31, the former athletic director at Pikesville High School, was taken into custody at Baltimore-Washington International Marshall Airport on Thursday as he was about to fly to Houston. Airport security personnel, after detaining Darien because he was carrying a firearm, discovered that a judge had just issued a warrant for his arrest in the AI case.

Darien, in a text message, declined to comment Friday and referred questions to an attorney who was not immediately available. He was released on a \$5,000 bond at a hearing Thursday where he was charged with disrupting school activities, retaliating against a witness, stalking and theft, according to court records.

Eiswert did not respond to a
SEE PRINCIPAL ON A14

IN THE NEWS

A threat from Belarus Ukraine evacuated two hospitals after the comments of the head of the KGB set off fears of an airstrike. A10

Key Bridge update A new temporary channel opened for bigger vessels, and the owner and manager of the Dali face their first lawsuit over the crash from a private entity. B1

THE NATION

Arizona defendant Christina Bobb serves on the RNC's election integrity team. A3
Trump's Cabinet was marked by turnover, but Biden's has largely remained unchanged. A8

THE WORLD

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King Charles III will resume public appearances, months after his cancer diagnosis. A10

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The FTC's banning of noncompete contracts brings cheers from workers and concerns from companies over their trade secrets. A13

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at the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration question whether Tesla's recall went far enough in preventing Autopilot crashes. A13
Facing political concerns, the Biden administration announced it will again delay a ban on menthol cigarettes. A14

STYLE

A glimpse into "The Stare," that D.C. tradition in which everyone is looks over shoulders for a better conversation. C1

SPORTS

Candace Buckner on Jayden Daniels, the Commanders' shiny new rookie, who, we should remember, is still a kid. D1

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