

BUNKHOUSE: Image in American mirror is not flattering

Continued from page 16

revealed that his nickname was, or perhaps still is, "Coonman."

Hours later — this is how this stuff works — Lieutenant Governor Justin Fairfax was accused of sexual assault. Hours later, he was accused of rape by somebody else. The lieutenant governor denies these allegations and is now calling for the FBI to investigate. One presumes innocence until there is evidence enough to convict, but his dreams of ascending to the throne are presumably in tatters.

Hours later, the state's attorney general, Mark Herring, issued a classic "Let's get out in front of this" apology for "put(ing) on wigs and brown makeup." Read: blackface. This apparently happened way back in the 1980s, so that he could sing and dance at a party while looking like some rapper named "Kurtis Blow."

What is this weird obsession with blackface? When did it ever seem like a good idea? It was repugnant behavior in the 19th century, when it first started, and I'm aware of nothing that has happened in the considerable interim to make it any better.

The State of the Union address was no less disgraceful, an utterly puerile demonstration of the state of American politics. For pure theater, which is what government has become, it was at least fascinating in the same way that a freight train derailling onto a dirt road is fascinating.

A host of erstwhile lawmakers showed up wearing dazzling lab-coats, one of them was seen doing a crossword puzzle, and an oft-bullied schoolkid with the unfortunate name of Trump was caught in a full Red Bull crash up in the balcony. Nancy Pelosi spent much of the speech appearing lost, distracted, angry, or bewildered, it's hard to know which, and more importantly how behaving so poorly, on purpose, advances any cause at all.

The theater of disdain was tightly choreographed, naturally, and meant as a kind of dog-whistle to left-leaners in the national audience, but it was mostly an embarrassing and childish reflection. Later, Pelosi was praised for "throwing a special kind of

shade" on Trump, whatever that means, and for whatever good it does the country.

One of the finer SOTU moments came when the U.S. Army's Chief of Staff, General Mark Milley, after Trump uttered some pandering nonsense about the United States having the most bestest, and so beautiful bigly military in the world, was caught on camera leaning over to ask Air Force Chief of Staff, General David Goldfein, "Should we stand?"

It was a legitimate question. Stand, sit, snooze? At least we were spared the image of Ruth Bader Ginsburg, having slammed a few Harvey Wallbangers before the big performance, passing out and drooling on her robes. Not that that's ever happened before.

But last week's astonishingly accurate mirror-image of our union wasn't quite finished with us. Newspaper editors may live many lifetimes before being afforded the opportunity to publish a headline as beautiful and as true as the *New York Post's* front-page masterpiece: "Bezos Exposes Pecker."

Am I alone in my consternation, my utter bewilderment, that in today's America whole segments of the nightly news actually are a *National Enquirer* story? In this case, the *Enquirer* somehow acquired pictures of Amazon's Jeff Bezos in flagrante delicto, and threatened him with blackmail if he didn't play ball. So to speak.

The irony, of course, is that Bezos — who now may sue the *Enquirer* and its chief, David Pecker — collects information on virtually anybody and everybody who uses his products, and then sells it to the highest bidder without any regulations or accountability whatsoever. No blackmail required, since everybody just happily signs up to be exploited when they log on to Amazon, or Google, or Android, or whatever.

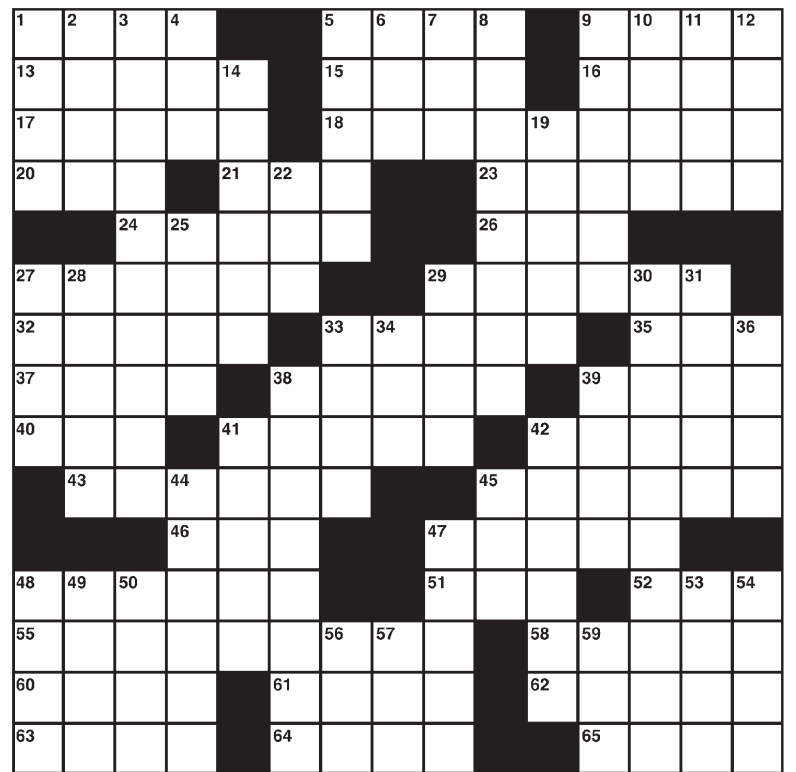
These are strange days we are living in, kids, and anybody who actually thinks about this stuff, reflects on it, and tries to put it all in historical context, might be forgiven for losing faith in the institutions we look to for solutions. There is a hard lesson in that, because our institutions are only ever a reflection of us. They are who we are, and it would be hard to argue that what we see in the big American mirror is even remotely flattering.

The Nugget Newspaper Crossword

By Jacqueline E. Mathews, Tribune News Service

- ACROSS**
- 1 On the ___ with; not speaking to
 - 5 Slightly open
 - 9 Black bird
 - 13 Plant pest
 - 15 White fish
 - 16 Vesuvius' output
 - 17 Steed
 - 18 Walked unsteadily
 - 20 Family card game
 - 21 Behold
 - 23 Revolutionary rider Paul
 - 24 Damp
 - 26 Very late bedtime
 - 27 Zsa Zsa & Eva
 - 29 ___ Rico
 - 32 Wed secretly
 - 33 Saves
 - 35 Wheel center
 - 37 Feel the loss of
 - 38 Does an usher's job
 - 39 Crumbly cheese
 - 40 ___ pants; Jean-Claude Killy's attire
 - 41 Arial & Times New Roman
 - 42 Female animals
 - 43 Personal writings
 - 45 Baffling questions
 - 46 "...a miner, forty-niner, and ___ daughter, Clementine..."
 - 47 Fraternity letter
 - 48 Hut near a swimming pool
 - 51 "___ Lazy River"
 - 52 Truman's predecessor, for short
 - 55 Topples
 - 58 Numerical comparison
 - 60 Follow orders
 - 61 Outer garment
 - 62 Mattress pad covering
 - 63 Likelihood
 - 64 Nervous
 - 65 ___ and crafts

- DOWN**
- 1 Where 2/3 of Hawaiians live
 - 2 "Once ___ a time..."
 - 3 Clot in a blood vessel
 - 4 Malia, to Sasha
 - 5 Thing worth having
 - 6 ___ down; make a note of
 - 7 Chicken ___ king
 - 8 Reassembles the ranks
 - 9 Ingenious
 - 10 Seldom seen
 - 11 Finished; done
 - 12 Get one's feet wet
 - 14 Hope to get
 - 19 Autry & Kelly
 - 22 Curvy letter
 - 25 Klutz's word
 - 27 Diamonds & rubies
 - 28 Similar
 - 29 Animals in the house
 - 30 From then on
 - 31 External
 - 33 Griffey Sr. & Griffey Jr.
 - 34 Break a fast
 - 36 Lowest singing voice



Created by Jacqueline E. Mathews

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— Last Week's Puzzle Solved —



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2/12/19

- 38 Teriyaki marinade
- 39 Quick
- 41 Pass out
- 42 Back teeth
- 44 Shattered glass fragments
- 45 Get-up-and-go
- 47 Singer Springfield
- 48 Singer Perry
- 49 Enthusiastic
- 50 Be flexible
- 53 Count calories
- 54 Decays
- 56 Slender stick
- 57 Henpeck
- 59 ___ moment; instant of realization

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