

DEAR ABBY

Write to Dear Abby online at dearabby.com or by mail at P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069



Dear Abby: My mother has become very "spiritual" over the last eight years or so. Recently, it has become all-consuming and on the verge of becoming detrimental. She often refers to her "guides" (she says they are feelings, but I think she's getting brain-washed by human "guides" online), who have convinced her to withdraw thousands of dollars from her bank before the second wave of COVID-19 hits.

I recently became engaged. We don't plan to be married until 2022 so our guests can have a fun, safe time at our wedding. Mom wants to take a "mediumship certification" class, which will run for 18 months. The actual certification is scheduled for the month we told her we may want to get married, so now she's trying to guilt me into changing the date. She copied me on the email she sent to the teacher in which she said she would try to "direct me to choose a different date." I let her know she's not going to dictate our wedding day, but is there something more here that needs to be addressed?

— *Certifiably Annoyed*

Dear Annoyed: I don't think so. Your mother's spiritual life is her personal business, and it would be a mistake to attempt to make it yours. Unless you are convinced her spirit guides cheated her out of the money she withdrew — in which case you should contact the authorities and report it —

let her live her life as you are pursuing your own.

Dear Abby: My husband and I have been married 22 years. They have been a rough 22 years, and I'm no longer in love with him. I will not be looking for another husband should we get divorced.

We tried counseling as well as a Retrouvaille weekend, which was hard emotionally as we learned a new way of communicating. However, after the weekend, I would always initiate the skills we learned, but he would not.

He's retired. I'm still working, yet nothing is getting done around the house. I'm tired of feeling stressed. I don't like cleaning up after him and our daughters, and I'm thinking of moving out.

I feel overwhelmed and want to live by myself for a period of time, but something is stopping me from signing a lease. Our daughters are in college, and my door will be open to them anytime. Should I move out?

— *On the Verge in Texas*

Dear on the Verge: Perhaps. However, before you sign anything — including divorce papers — please consider discussing your feelings of stress and being overwhelmed with a licensed psychotherapist. Some time away from your stressors might be helpful for you, and a therapist may be able to help you determine how long a period that should be before making anything permanent.

Militias

Continued from A1

"Militias moved in to take up some of that work, to act as first responders," he says.

The three most common Oregon searches in Moonshot's data — and five of the top 10 — are tied to QAnon conspiracy theories. Coming in fourth is "Anarchist Cookbook," a reference to a 50-year-old manual for bomb-making and related DIY activities.

The London-based company's February report, "From Sh--posting to Sedition," also found that Oregon has spread a conspiracy theory that falsely claims there are "FEMA concentration camps."

The report references a 2020 YouTube video, shot outside a fenced-off empty lot at NW Broadway and Glisan streets in Portland, that insists there's a "sinister plan dealing with the homeless" in the city.

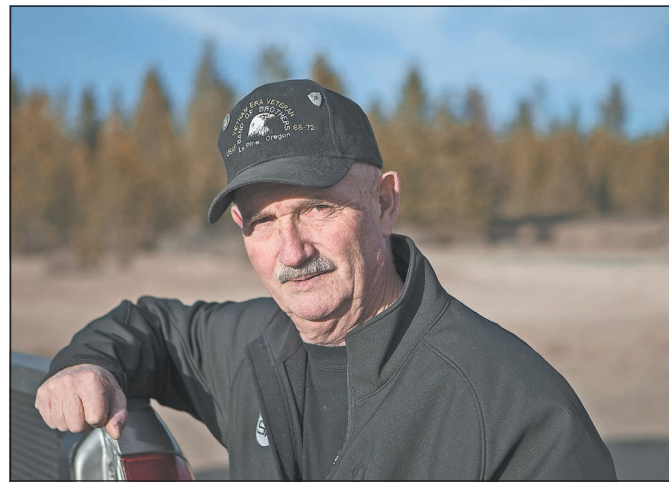
"The homeless will be fenced in. Barbed wire," the video's narrator says, before adding:

"Everything that Alex Jones talked about for decades now, this stuff is becoming a reality."

(Jones, the founder of InfoWars, is a well-known conspiracy theorist who has been banned from Twitter and Facebook because of his false claims about school shootings and other events.)

Lowndes, co-author of the 2019 book "Producers, Parasites, Patriots: Race and the New Right-Wing Politics of Precarity," sees the decadeslong development of conspiratorial thinking in Oregon as especially relevant.

The state could be viewed as a "case study of where the



Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin file

La Pine resident Mike McCarter is leading the Move Oregon's Border effort that aims to transfer rural Oregon counties to Idaho. "Divisions in Oregon are getting dangerous," he said recently.

national Republican Party is headed now," he says.

Moving the border as a way to 'keep the peace'

Michael McCarter, who heads up Move Oregon's Border, a longshot effort to flip most of Oregon's rural eastern and southern counties into Idaho, said in an email to supporters last week that the Moonshot report was proof that his objective is necessary. He argued that the liberal state government in Oregon "protects Antifa arsonists, not normal Oregonians."

"Divisions in Oregon are getting dangerous, so we see the relocation of the border as a way to keep the peace," he wrote.

The Moonshot report found that, with population weighting, Oregon led all states in internet searches for armed groups. Oregon was followed by Wyoming, Tennessee, Arizona and Idaho. Moonshot, in partnership with the Anti-Defamation League, defines armed groups as "non-state actors and

organizations that bear arms to challenge the government's authority."

Oregon also topped the list of searches for conspiracy theories, followed by Arizona, Washington, Illinois and California. And the state made the top 5 in searches that showed an "interest in political violence."

Curry was the Oregon county with the most per-capita searches "related to election violence."

Lowndes calls the Moonshot report, which he's read, "sound enough as a research method; it provides good hard evidence." He adds that one does have to be "cautious about what you extrapolate" from the data, pointing out that researchers don't know why people searched for terms related to militia groups and election violence.

What is Moonshot CVE?

Moonshot CVE, which is funded by the United Nations, various governments and big-tech companies such as Google, develops "databases of

tens of thousands of keywords which indicate risk — for example, 'join Oath Keepers' — and runs ads against those keywords," says company manager Clark Hogan-Taylor.

The private company was initially founded as an effort to derail Islamic State online recruiting. Now it has expanded to address white supremacy and anti-government activities.

Moonshot just opened an office in Washington, D.C.

"It's a very scary moment in America right now," Moonshot co-founder Vidhya Ramalingam recently told The Hill newspaper. "I mean, the implications are so wide-reaching. There's just the potential for so much more violence right now."

Those implications reach deep into Oregon, the report concluded.

Violence in Portland last summer motivated militia groups "to employ disinformation and propaganda to mischaracterize protest-related activities by their Black Lives Matter (BLM)/Antifa opponents," the study states.

It added: "Significant events (in Oregon), such as the West Coast wildfires and the Black Lives Matter demonstrations, have given rise to even further disinformation in the state. For instance, disinformation regarding Antifa's role in the wildfires and alleged Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) concentration camps in the state grew throughout Oregon's wildfire season."

The report argues that the contentious 2020 election and its violent aftermath "wasn't the beginning of the end, it was the end of the beginning."

YOUR HOROSCOPE By Madalyn Aslan

Stars show the kind of day you'll have

★★★★★ DYNAMIC | ★★★★★ POSITIVE | ★★★ AVERAGE | ★★ SO-SO | ★ DIFFICULT

HAPPY BIRTHDAY FOR MONDAY, MARCH 1, 2021: Extremely sensitive to beauty and your environment, as well being technical and ambitious, you are quite a mixed bag. A touch of genius, when grounded in reality. This year, you achieve your greatest masterpiece yet. Bravo. Don't get swallowed up in your role, and you'll be successful. If single, you're devastatingly attractive, so you can have many partners, but you won't commit this year. If attached, you've found your twin, and you can only delight in each other. LEO adores you.

ARIES (March 21-April 19)

★★★★ Associates have different thoughts and conflicting information. Observe facial expressions and body language to aid in communication. Your beloved is easier to understand. You can guide the course of a close relationship. Tonight: The use of your intuition helps you win over others.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

★★★★ It's the perfect day to toss out debris and get your workspace neat and organized. Minimize stress with efficiency. Other people need time to discuss ideas and views. Patience and listening will bring you rewards. Tonight: Those who lack confidence welcome your kind words.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

★★★★ There will be some divided loyalties between associates. Remain impartial if there are conflicts and competitive feelings brewing. A liberal and tolerant attitude carries you a long way. You will be understood. Tonight: You experience major changes in self-awareness.

CANCER (June 21-July 22)

★★★★ You feel a sense of hope and encouragement today. Insights are revealing. Your optimistic, confident use of words will draw others to you. Elderly and very young family members have new thoughts and needs. Tonight: Make sure you communicate with them.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

★★★★ Making a game out of chores or adding humor to lighten an intense conversation will be helpful today. There is a new alertness and cleverness to your perceptions. Something that seemed hard to grasp before is now less elusive. Tonight: Calls and emails.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

★★★★ There are some conflicting ideas voiced at work. Be patient and compromise for best results. There is an element of the unpredictable in financial matters. Set aside a little extra money for an unexpected purchase or expense. Tonight: Keeping a sense of humor.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

★★★★ Your mental attitude is more positive today. Your confidence and concern inspire others to seek your advice. A group discussion can be especially fruitful in providing information and ideas. Tonight: If you sense you're expecting too much, pull back.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

★★★★ Today makes you aware of your own deepest needs and desires. Recognize that there is power in discretion and silence. Patience helps with any difficult people. Support and recognition come as the day ends. Tonight: Communication is a delicate matter.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

★★★★ Today allows you to release regrets concerning a long-lost love. Friendly calls and emails arrive from old friends. Your keen intuition assists in negotiating and sales. Those who have resisted your ideas can be won over to respond more favorably. Tonight: An internal euphoria.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

★★★★ It's a day for freshness and enthusiastic, dynamic expansion. Be daring about trying a new interest or type of work. You'll become highly visible and can assume a position of leadership. You'll enjoy exploring ways to make a difference. Tonight: Family provides a broader perspective.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

★★★★ Others depend on you to make daily routine more agreeable. The application of your natural genius for diplomacy helps. Your social calendar becomes alive with attractive invitations. A courtship may ensue. Tonight: You're newly aware of how important you are to others.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

★★★★ Today draws a mystery into the open. You will display a flair for research and detective work. Your desires can be directed toward making a special acquisition or into establishing a personal relationship. Tonight: Reach out to those you love and admire.

Testing

Continued from A1

The drop mirrors declines across all major virus measures since January, including new cases, hospitalizations and deaths.

Officials say those encouraging trends, together with harsh winter weather, the end of the holiday travel season, pandemic fatigue and a growing focus on vaccinations are sapping interest in testing.

"When you combine all those together you see this decrease," said Dr. Richard Pescatore of the health department in Delaware, where daily testing has fallen more than 40% since the January peak. "People just aren't going to go out to testing sites."

But testing remains important for tracking and containing the outbreak.

L.A. County is opening more testing options near public transportation, schools and offices to make it more convenient. And officials in Santa Clara County are urging residents to "continue getting tested regularly," highlighting new mobile testing buses and pop-up sites.

President Joe Biden has promised to revamp the nation's testing system by investing billions more in supplies and government coordination. But with demand falling fast, the country may soon have a glut

First J&J vaccine shots set for Tuesday

Nearly 4 million doses of the newest COVID-19 vaccine were shipped Sunday night and will begin to be delivered to states for injections starting Tuesday.

White House COVID-19 coordinator Jeff Zients announced that the entire stockpile of the newly approved single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine will go out immediately. J&J will deliver about 16 million more doses by the end of March and 100 million total by the end of June.

Though the new shot is easier to administer and requires only one dose, the administration is not altering its distribution plans. Zients says, "We're distributing the J&J vaccine as we do the Moderna vaccine and the Pfizer vaccine."

— *Associated Press*

of unused supplies. The U.S. will be able to conduct nearly 1 billion monthly tests by June, according to projections from researchers at Arizona State University. That's more than 25 times the country's current rate of about 40 million tests reported per month.

With more than 150 million new vaccine doses due for delivery by late March — and a new single-dose vaccine approved for emergency use over the weekend — testing is likely to fall further as local governments shift staff and resources to giving shots.

"You have to pick your battles here," said Dr. Jeffrey Engel of the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists. "Everyone would agree that if you have one public health nurse, you're going to use that person for vaccination, not testing."

Some experts say the country must double down on test-

ing to avoid flare-ups from coronavirus variants that have taken hold in the U.K., South Africa and other places.

"We need to use testing to continue the downward trend," said Dr. Jonathan Quick of the Rockefeller Foundation, which has been advising Biden officials. "We need to have it there to catch surges from the variants."

A week ago, Minnesota began urging families to get tested every two weeks through the end of the school year as more students return to the classroom. "To protect this progress, we need to use all the tools at our disposal," said Dan Huff, an assistant state health commissioner.

But some of the most vocal testing proponents are less worried about the declines in screening. From a public health viewpoint, testing is effective if it helps to quickly find

the infected, trace their contacts and isolate them to stop the spread. In most parts of the U.S., that never happened.

Over the holiday season, many Americans still had to wait days to receive test results, rendering them largely useless. That's led to testing fatigue and dwindling interest, said Dr. Michael Mina of Harvard University.

"It doesn't exactly give you a lot of gratifying, immediate feedback," Mina said. "So people's willingness or interest in getting tested starts to go down."

Still, U.S. test manufacturers continue ramping up production, with another 110 million rapid and home-based tests expected to hit the market next month.

Government officials long assumed this growing arsenal of cheap, 15-minute tests would be used to regularly screen millions of students and teachers as in-person classes resume. But recent guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention don't emphasize testing, describing it as an "additional layer" of protection, behind basic measures like masking and social distancing.

Even without strong federal backing, educational leaders say testing programs will be important for marshaling public confidence needed to fully reopen schools, including in the fall when cases are expected to rise again.

We have had great results with Whiteboard Media's digital marketing program. I have a quarterly meeting with Makenna Frickey, where she covers everything in detail and helps me make any adjustments. She is very thorough and helpful. Can't wait to see our results for this quarter!

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