

People & Places

People

'Jeopardy' 2nd chance

Craig joins scientists on UK's Honors List

LONDON, Jan 2, (AP) — Scientists and medical chiefs who have led Britain's response to the pandemic were awarded knighthoods Friday in the country's annual New Year Honors List, which recognized the achievements of hundreds of people from James Bond star Daniel Craig to teenage tennis star Emma Raducanu.

Queen Elizabeth II also made former prime minister Tony Blair a Knight Companion of the Most Noble Order of the Garter, the oldest and most senior British order of chivalry.

In another year dominated by the coronavirus pandemic, officials said almost one in five of the honors were for coronavirus-related service. Chris Whitty and Jonathan Van-Tam, England's chief and deputy medical officers, were awarded knighthoods. Jenny Harries, head of the UK Health Security Agency, and June Raine, chief executive of Britain's medicines regulatory body, were made dames.

In total, the Honors List recognized more than 1,200 people in the UK this year, including scientists, actors, politicians, Olympic athletes and people who worked to raise funds for charities.

Craig, who made his final outing as 007 in the blockbuster "No Time to Die," was made a Companion of the Order of St Michael and St George -- the same honor given to the fictional Bond -- for his services to film and theater.

The title is often given to diplomats, and Bond was described as holding it in the film franchise and the books by Ian Fleming.

Elsewhere in entertainment, veteran actress Vanessa Redgrave is to be made a dame, while former Spice Girl Melanie Brown, known as Mel B, was recognized for her work with domestic violence charity Women's Aid.

In sport, 19-year-old US Open champion Raducanu becomes an MBE, or a Member of the Order of the British Empire.

"This year has been full of amazing surprises for me so to end 2021 with this appointment is very special," Raducanu said.

Awarded

Other athletes who were awarded included Olympic champion cyclists Jason Kenny and his wife Laura, diver Tom Daley and swimmer Adam Peaty.

British monarchs have awarded honors as part of orders of chivalry since the Middle Ages. In modern times, nominations are submitted to the government's Cabinet Office and vetted by a committee before being passed on to the prime minister and the queen for approval.

The knighthood given to Blair, who served as prime minister from 1997 to 2007, was separate from the main list because it was decided by the queen and made without government advice.

The queen also appointed two others to the Order of the Garter: Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall, and Baroness Valerie Amos, a Labour member of the House of Lords, who will become the first black person to be appointed to the order.

Also:

NEW YORK: A New York resident who was stumped by a "Jeopardy" question about his state's governor got a do-over Friday, joining Gov. Kathy Hochul's virtual COVID-19 briefing to tell her he knows who she is now.

"Here in New York we actually believe in second chances," Hochul said before introducing Ben Walthall, the Brooklyn resident who failed to buzz in on the clue, "In 2021, she became the first female governor of New York state."

The clue was read again Friday by a Hochul staff member who at first said "first female president" and then corrected himself to "governor of New York state." Walthall correctly responded, "Who is Kathy Hochul?"

None of the contestants in the episode that aired Wednesday answered the question about Hochul, even Amy Schneider, the "Jeopardy" juggernaut who had won 22 consecutive games as of Thursday's broadcast.

Walthall told Hochul that his episode was filmed "a couple months ago, right when you took office, so that's part of the reason why I may have sat out on that question."

Hochul, the former lieutenant governor, took over as governor in August when fellow Democrat Andrew Cuomo resigned amid sexual misconduct allegations. A "Jeopardy" spokesperson said Wednesday's episode was filmed Oct. 12.

Walthall said he grew up in Massachusetts but has lived in New York for 11 years. He said his girlfriend is a New York City public school teacher, and he thanked Hochul for her efforts to promote COVID-19 vaccinations among eligible children. "It's really important to keep both teachers and kids safe," Walthall said, "so I definitely appreciate all you're doing there."

Hochul told Walthall there are no hard feelings. "I don't have a long memory," she said, "so we're good."

NEW BEDFORD, Mass.: This year's Moby-Dick Marathon, the annual cover-to-cover reading of Herman Melville's iconic man-versus-whale novel hosted by the New Bedford Whaling Museum, kicks off on Jan. 7.

This year's celebrity reader, who traditionally gets things started with the words "Call me Ishmael," is actor Sam Waterston, who was nominated for a best male actor Oscar for the 1984 movie "The Killing Fields" and is known for his work on the "Law and Order" television series.

The nonstop reading, again a virtual event this year, takes about 25 hours to complete.

Although this is his first time at the museum, Waterston is a Melville aficionado who once read the part of Ishmael in a 2001 celebration of the 150th anniversary of "Moby-Dick" at Tanglewood.

The marathon, which has been held since 1997, ends Sunday Jan. 9.

"Over the years, the Whaling Museum has hosted an outstanding array of celebrities, academics, and public officials for the Moby-Dick Marathon," said Amanda McMullen, President and CEO of the museum. "We are thrilled to have the participation of all our readers — 200 strong — and know that their passion for Melville and heartfelt commitment to New Bedford will help make the 2022 marathon the most exciting and engaging yet."

Several other interactive virtual events are also scheduled.



Craig



Actress Betty White poses for a portrait following her appearance on the television talk show 'In the House,' in Burbank, Calif., Tuesday, Nov. 24, 2009. Betty White, whose saucy, up-for-anthony charm made her a television mainstay for more than 60 years, has died. She was 99. (AP)



Ashanti performs at the Times Square New Year's Eve celebration on Friday, Dec. 31, 2021, in New York. (AP)

Variety

MONTGOMERY, Ala.: The Alabama Supreme Court has ruled against the US Space and Rocket Center's efforts to overturn a \$1.3 million arbitration award granted to the developers of an animated series.

Justices directed an Alabama court to dismiss a lawsuit filed by the Alabama Space Science Exhibit Commission, which operates the Space and Rocket Center, challenging the award on immunity grounds. Justices said the issue had already been litigated in New York.

"The United States Constitution requires courts in Alabama to give full faith and credit to the judicial proceedings of every other state... It is clear that the jurisdictional issue was indeed fully and fairly litigated in the New York trial court," Justice Will Sellers wrote in the opinion.

The ruling stemmed from a contract dispute between the Space and Rocket Center in Huntsville and a company named Space Race that had been hired to produce an animated series aimed at promoting the interest of children in space exploration and science.

Space Race claimed it was owed \$1.3 million when the contract expired for the work it had completed ahead of schedule.

According to the court ruling, the Alabama space center argued NASA had ended a grant for the project so it was no longer required under the contract to pay Space Race. However, Space Race argued the grant ended because the Space and Rocket Center "in bad faith, had failed to provide NASA with documentation required to continue funding the project." (AP)

MILAN: Italy's culture minister welcomed the return of 201 prized antiquities valued at over 10 million euros (\$11 million) that had been located in prestigious US museums and galleries after being illegally trafficked in recent decades.

They were among thousands of antiquities seized from traffickers or returned to Italy this year in major operations that also targeted trafficking rings in Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland and Germany.

Of the 201 works returned by US officials earlier this month, 161 have been repatriated to Italy while 40 are on exhibit at the Italian Consulate General in New York through March 2022.

"These artworks will not end up, as has happened many times in the past, all in one big museum," Culture Minister Dario Franceschini told a press conference. Instead, they will be returned to the places where they were stolen for display in museums there.

"This too is a great homecoming operation that will add value to our extraordinary country as a vast museum. They are artworks of absolute importance that will attract people to those places and territories," Franceschini said.

The US haul includes 96 pieces that had been in the collection of the Fordham Museum of Greek, Etruscan and Roman Art, including ancient pottery and amphora; a terracotta statue titled dating from the

Obituary

Celebrities, politicians pay tribute to TV legend

White, TV's Golden Girl, dies at 99

LOS ANGELES, Jan 2, (AP) — Betty White, whose saucy, up-for-anthony charm made her a television mainstay for more than 60 years, whether as a man-crazy TV hostess on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" or the loopy housemate on "The Golden Girls," has died. She was 99.

White's longtime agent and friend Jeff Witjas confirmed her death Friday. She had no diagnosed illness, and it was unclear if she died Thursday night or Friday, he said. She would have turned 100 on Jan. 17.

Her death brought tributes from celebrities and politicians alike.

"We loved Betty White," first lady Jill Biden said as she left a Delaware restaurant with President Joe Biden, who added: "Ninety-nine years old. As my mother would say, God love her."

"She was great at defying expectation," Ryan Reynolds, who starred alongside her in the comedy "The Proposal," tweeted. "She managed to grow very old and somehow, not old enough. We'll miss you, Betty."

White launched her TV career in daytime talk shows when the medium was still in its infancy and endured well into the age of cable and streaming. Her combination of sweetness and edginess gave life to a roster of quirky characters in shows from the sitcom "Life With Elizabeth" in the early 1950s to oddball Rose Nylund in "The Golden Girls" in the '80s to "Boston Legal," which ran from 2004 to 2008.

But it was in 2010 that White's stardom erupted as never before.

Impersonated

In a Snickers commercial that premiered during that year's Super Bowl telecast, she impersonated an energized dude getting tackled during a backlot football game.

"Mike, you're playing like Betty White out there," jeered one of his chums. White, flat on the ground and covered in mud, fired back, "That's not what your girlfriend said!"

The instantly-viral video helped spark a successful Facebook campaign to have her host "Saturday Night Live." The much-watched episode won her a seventh Emmy.

A month later, cable's TV Land premiered "Hot In Cleveland," which starred Valerie Bertinelli, Jane Leeves and Wendie Malick as three past-their-prime show-biz veterans who move to Cleveland to escape the youth obsession of Hollywood.

They move into a home being looked after by an elderly Polish widow — a character, played by White, who was meant to appear only in the pilot episode.

But White stole the show, and became a key part of the series, an immediate hit. She was voted the Entertainer

of the Year by members of The Associated Press.

"It's ridiculous," White said of the honor. "They haven't caught on to me, and I hope they never do."

By then, White had not only become the hippest star around, but also a role model for how to grow old joyously.

"Don't try to be young," she told the AP. "Just open your mind. Stay interested in stuff. There are so many things I won't live long enough to find out about, but I'm still curious about them."

White remained youthful in part through her skill at playing bawdy or naughty while radiating niceness. The horror spoof "Lake Placid" and "The Proposal" were marked by her characters' surprisingly salty language. And her character Catherine Piper killed a man with a skillet on "Boston Legal."

Causes

Her role as "Happy Homemaker" Sue Anne Nivens in "The Mary Tyler Moore Show," which was already a huge hit, was planned as a one-off appearance in 1973, but it would last until the show ended in 1977.

"While she's icky-sweet on her cooking show, Sue is really a piranha type," White once said. The role brought her two Emmys as supporting actress in a comedy series.

In 1985, White starred on NBC with Bea Arthur, Rue McClanahan and Estelle Getty in "The Golden Girls." Its cast of mature actors, playing single women in Miami retirement, presented a gamble in a youth-conscious industry. But it proved a solid hit and lasted until 1992.

White played Rose, a gentle, dim widow who drove her roommates crazy with off-the-wall tales of childhood in fictional St. Olaf, Minnesota.

The role won her yet another Emmy, and she reprised it in a short-lived spinoff, "The Golden Palace."

White began her television career as \$50-a-week sidekick to local Los Angeles TV personality Al Jarvis in 1949. White proved to be a natural for the new medium.

"I did that show 5½ hours a day, six days a week, for 4½ years," she recalled in 1975.

A sketch she had done with Jarvis turned into a syndicated series, "Life With Elizabeth," which won her first Emmy.

Off-screen, White tirelessly raised money for animal causes, hosting a syndicated TV show and writing three books on her animal love, which she said stemmed from her family taking care of as many as 15 dogs at a time during the Depression.

Are there any critters she doesn't like?

"No," White told the AP. "Anything with a leg on each corner."

Then what about snakes?

"Ohhh, I LOVE snakes!"

She was born Betty Marion White in Oak Park, Illinois, and the family moved to Los Angeles when she was a toddler.

"I'm an only child, and I had a mother and dad who never drew a straight line: They just thought funny," she told The Associated Press in 2015. "We'd sit around the breakfast table and then we'd start kicking it around."

Her early ambition was to be a writer, and she wrote her grammar school graduation paper, giving herself the leading role.

At Beverly Hills High School, her ambition turned to acting, and she appeared in several school plays. Her parents hoped she'd go to college, but instead she took roles in a small theater and played bit parts in radio dramas.

After two very brief marriages in the 1940s, White wed her third and final husband, actor and game show host Allen Ludden, in 1963. They remained married until his death in 1981.

When asked in 2011 how she had managed to be universally beloved during her decades-spanning career, she summed up with a dimpled smile: "I just make it my business to get along with people so I can have fun. It's that simple."

Charmed

Betty White was America's naughty sweetheart.

With a wholesome smile and a dirty joke she charmed millions of viewers decade after decade, rising from \$50-a-week to ageless superstar who advised her fans, "Don't try to be young. Just open your mind."

Even in her 90s, in defiance of time and expectations, she still enjoyed a wide-eyed interest in the world around her. "There are so many things I won't live long enough to find out about, but I'm still curious about them," she declared.

It helped that she only needed four hours of sleep each night.

White, who died Friday at 99 just weeks before her birthday, launched her TV career when the medium was still in its infancy and never lost touch.

Her saucy, up-for-anthony appeal certified her as a television mainstay. Her combination of sweetness and spice gave life to a roster of quirky characters in shows from the sitcom "Life With Elizabeth" in the early 1950s to man-crazy TV hostess Sue Ann on "The Mary Tyler Moore Show" in the 1970s, from loopy housemate Rose Nylund in "The Golden Girls" in the '80s to courtroom drama "Boston Legal," which ran from 2004 to 2008.

But all that proved to be only a warm-up for even greater stardom in the new millennium when White's stardom erupted, by public demand, as it never had before.



Franceschini



Sellers

4th century BC seized from a New York gallery; and six items returned from the Getty Museum, including a large ceramic Etruscan vessel. (AP)

POOLESVILLE, Md.: A Maryland home was accidentally burned to the ground by an owner trying to get rid of a snake infestation, officials said.

The homeowner in Poolesville, a town about 25 miles (about 40 kilometers) out-

side of Washington DC, was attempting to use smoke to purge the snakes from the house, according to Montgomery County Fire Department officials.

In the process, the homeowner caught the house on fire, causing about \$1 million in damage, The Washington Post reported.

The fire broke out around 10 pm on Nov 23, officials said. Pete Piringer, a spokesman for the county fire department, said on Twitter that 75 firefighters were called to put out the blaze that started in the basement. (AP)