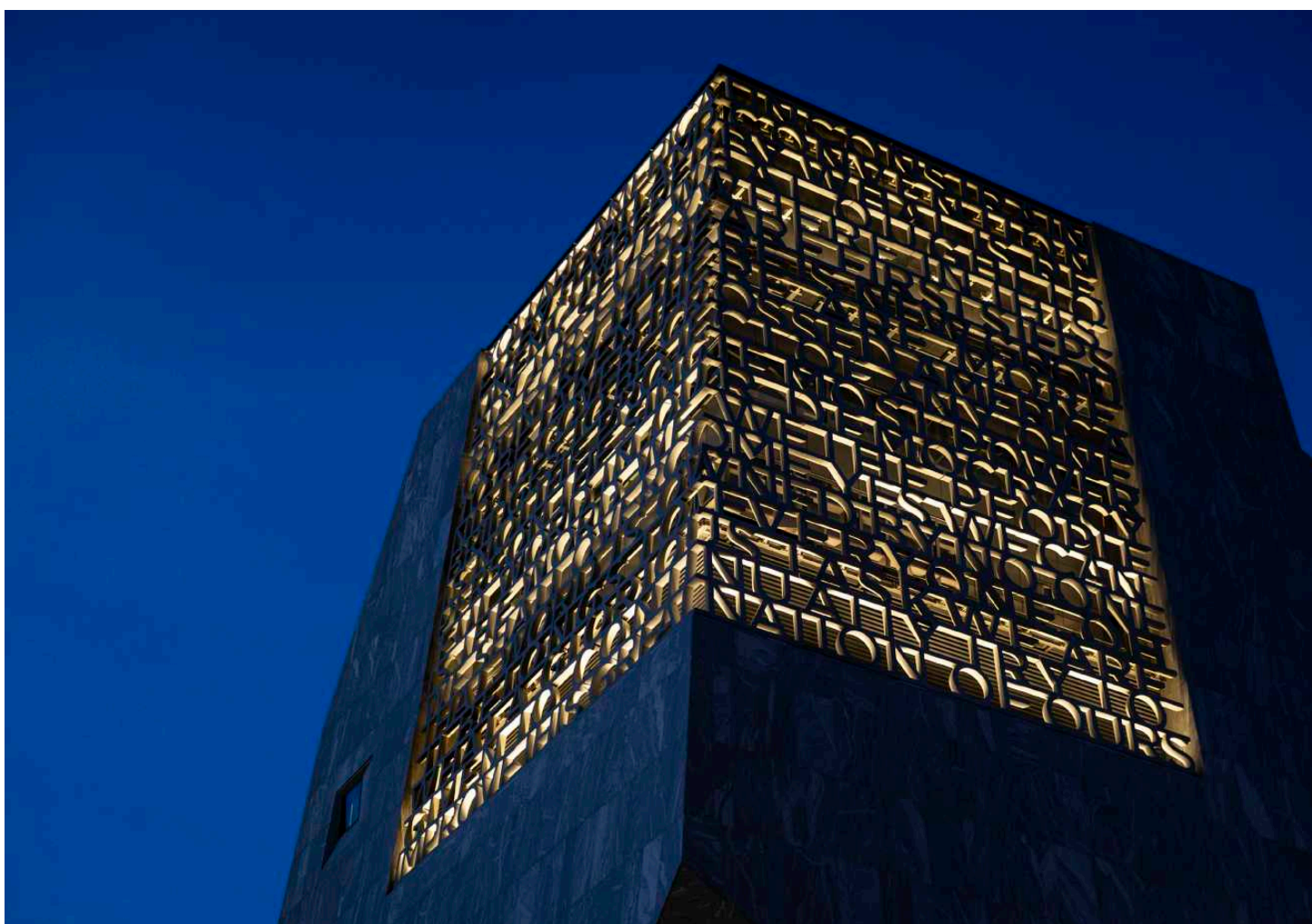


Chicago Tribune



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FEMA denials raise scrutiny

Illinois has struggled to secure federal disaster relief under Trump

By Daniel C. Vock
FOR THE CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Flooding on Chicago's Southwest Side is nothing new, but Ald. Marty Quinn was shocked by the damage last July's storms caused.

The July 25 deluge dumped 3.25 inches of rain on Midway Airport in one day, with some areas of the city receiving 5 to 6 inches. The down-pour quickly overwhelmed the city's sewer system, and even the regional network of deep tunnels and reservoirs couldn't keep up.

"All along 59th Street, the power of the water was popping off manhole covers in the middle of the street," the 13th Ward alderman said. The flooding even dislodged two sewer covers over deep shafts that were so big it took a city crew with a backhoe to reset them. "I've never seen anything like it."

More than 4,200 Chicago residents called 311 to report basement floods. When the sewers filled, water mixed with raw sewage and the toxic mixture backed up into people's homes, destroying floors, walls and appliances and leaving behind mold, foundation damage and destroyed vehicles. Many had to leave their homes or stay home from work. Most lacked insurance to cover the costs, officials later said.

The storms hit the south suburbs and broader Illinois hard, too, with state officials tallying nearly 5,000 structures affected. The state of Illinois put the average household damage at \$16,784 and asked Washington for federal disaster relief.

But President Donald Trump said no.

In fact, on the same day, Trump said no twice, denying Illinois' request for the July storms and rejecting a second request for

See DENIALS on Page A2

INSIDE

Trump says peace deal with Iran is at hand

President Donald Trump said the United States and Iran would sign a peace deal Sunday, though Iran said the timeline could be slower. **Nation & World, Page B5**

The real Ferris Bueller?

For the film's 40th anniversary, we found the man who most likely inspired the iconic character. **Arts & Entertainment**



'HOPE HAS A HOME'

Radical vision of the Obama Presidential Center: Rethinking what a presidential library can be

By Christopher Borrelli
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

The Obama Presidential Center, which opens to the public on Friday, on Juneteenth, hugs the north end of Jackson Park, runs alongside a lagoon, rises 225 feet at its highest, and rolls backward down Stony Island Avenue, settling into 58,000 square feet of brilliantly green sloping lawn. Michelle Obama wants you to sled here in the winter. Nearby are picnic tables and a sprawling fruit and vegetable garden and cast-iron BBQ pits for grilling — Barack Obama would like you to use those in the summer. Need a book, and there's a new branch of the Chicago Public Library, one of the center's four buildings. Want to exercise, and there's 60,000 square feet of athletic facilities, rooted around an NBA-regulation court, the Obama Foundation's rising-sun at its hub.

Everything about the Obama Presidential Center feels inviting, packed with meaning, deliberate, more than you expect of what is ostensibly an \$850 million community center.

Or rather, a museum with a remarkable, warm-hearted community center attached. Initially, it can be hard to explain exactly how this place should be described. But on your first or second visit, do not expect to dip in and dip out. This is an all-day place.

ObamaLand. That is not meant glibly, but literally: the Obama Presidential Center is a world unto itself, a self-contained universe, a self-described space where "hope has a home," where every cynical thought you bring in is met with a history lesson and call to action, where the former president is like the Mickey Mouse, steadfast optimist,

See OBAMA on Page A12



Above: A bust of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. displayed in a replica of the Oval Office at the Obama Presidential Center. Top: The Obama Presidential Center on June 3 ahead of its opening. BRIAN CASSELLA/CHICAGO TRIBUNE PHOTOS

TRIBUNE EDITORIAL: The editorial board says the Obama Presidential Center represents an unprecedented \$850 million investment in Chicago's South Side, coming at a time when Chicago really can use the shot in the arm. **Opinion, Page B1**

Rollback of coal ash rules sparks outrage

Environmentalists find EPA's proposed changes worrisome for those living along the Great Lakes

By Christiana Freitag
CHICAGO TRIBUNE

TOWN OF PINES, Ind. — In the herb garden beside her home on Colorado Avenue, Cathi Murray digs through the soil and pulls out two glittering black rocks.

They're not ordinary stones, she said. They're pieces of coal ash — waste from coal burned at the nearby Michigan City Generating Station, less than 3 miles away on the southern shores of Lake Michigan.

The rocks and dust she finds in

her backyard and along the overgrown right of way behind her home — places where her two daughters played growing up — are a constant reminder of the contamination that has shaped life for the three decades Murray and her family have lived in Town of Pines, simply called Pines by residents.

"It's everywhere," Murray said. Beginning in the late 1970s, the plant's owner, Northern Indiana Public Service Co., distributed excess coal ash, which contains heavy metals and other pollutants, throughout the community as fill

material for roads, landscaping projects and residential properties, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Exposure to those substances has been linked to cancers, neurological disorders and other health problems, the National Institute of Health says.

Until the 1990s, the power company disposed of over 1 million tons of coal ash in an unlined storage area in Pines, later contaminating the groundwater that supplied the town of 700. More than 20 years after being declared a Superfund site, Pines is still struggling with pollution.

"Once you make a mess, it takes

See RULES on Page A10



Ashley Williams, executive director of Just Transition Northwest Indiana, stands in Pullman Park in Michigan City, Indiana, on May 21. Williams moved to Michigan City in part to close NIPSCO's Michigan City Generating Station, seen behind her. EILEEN T. MESLAR/CHICAGO TRIBUNE

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Bavaria charms with castles, cute towns



Rick Steves

Cute villages, dirndls and lederhosen, fairy-tale castles. ... Like so many travelers, my images of Germany come from Bavaria, in the foothills of the Alps. You could easily spend a week here, soaking up culture as you bike along fragrant fields, tour the sights, and hop between quaint towns.

My favorite home bases for exploring the Bavarian Alps are Füssen and Reutte, which straddle the Austrian border. They put you an easy drive from the region's most popular sights: the wood-carving capital of Oberammergau and the popular "King's Castles" with their fairy-tale turrets and romantic aura.

The romance starts with the older castle, Hohen-schwangau — the hunting palace of King Ludwig II of Bavaria (a.k.a. "Mad" King Ludwig). Its mostly Neo-Gothic interior looks much like it did in 1835, with paintings inspired by Romantic themes.

Ludwig, who inherited the throne at age 18, did not want to deal with politics. He instead focused on constructing the fanciful Neuschwanstein Castle just up the hill and decorating it with images of medieval lore: brave knights, fair maidens and scenes from Wagnerian operas. Just a few months after he moved into Neuschwanstein, Ludwig — who was already planning an even more extravagant castle — was declared mentally unfit to rule. Two days later, he was found dead in a lake. People still debate: Was it murder — as he was nearly bankrupting his kingdom with his costly castle building — or suicide? But today nobody complains about the cost of his castles. In fact, within



Bavaria is dotted with cute, colorful, cobble towns like Füssen, above, near the Austrian border in the Alps. CAMERON HEWITT

six weeks of his funeral, tourists were already paying to visit them.

It's a quick drive or bike ride (or pleasant hike) to the King's Castles from Füssen. The town itself, dramatically situated under a renovated castle on the lively Lech River, is a mix of real-world and cutesy-cobble sights, with a colorful church (painted in a fresco technique called Lüftlmalerei) and a pleasant path to Lech Falls. Füssen's one must-see sight, the Museum of Füssen, spans a thousand years of the town's history. A highlight here is the Dance of Death, painted shortly after a plague devastated the community in 1590. It shows 20 social classes, each dancing with the Grim Reaper — starting with the pope and the emperor.

A 20-minute drive across the border is the Austrian town of Reutte. Although its setting — surrounded by alpine peaks — is striking, the town itself is unremarkable. But I like Reutte for its fine countryside accommodations (the farther from the town center, the more rustic, authentic and relaxing) and its proximity to one of my favorite ruined castles in all of Europe: Ehrenberg.

Ehrenberg was built to defend against the Bavarians and to bottle up the strategic Via Claudia trade route, which connected Italy and Germany. Now the castle is in ruins (though with explanatory signage), with hiking paths, a museum and a 1,200-foot pedestrian suspension bridge that sways 300 feet above the valley floor.

The German village of Oberammergau is as commercial as it is cute — busy with tour groups and the venerable shops of the town's famous woodcarvers. It's just a 45-minute drive from the King's Castles, and near several other worthwhile sights, including Ettal Monastery (with a splendid Baroque church), Linderhof Castle (a Baroque and Rococo palace also built by Ludwig II), and the German lift to the Zugspitze (Germany's highest mountain).

Oberammergau is famous for its once-per-decade Passion Play. Back in 1633, in the midst of the bloody Thirty Years' War and with horrifying plagues devastating entire cities, the people of Oberammergau promised God that if they were

spared from extinction, they'd perform a play telling the story of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, the Crucifixion and the Resurrection every decade thereafter. The town survived, and the people of Oberammergau are still making good on the deal. Every 10 years, about half of the town's population (a cast of 2,000) are involved in the production of this extravagant five-hour Passion Play. Their next curtain is in 2030.

While Oberammergau is much sleepier in non-Passion Play years, its onion-domed churches and colorful houses — painted with biblical and fairy-tale scenes — give it a memorable aesthetic. Shop windows and the local museum display crafts from this wood-carving mecca. For

thrills, nearby attractions include a gondola, alpine coaster, summer luge and swimming/sauna complex.

Biking through Bavarian fields, I savor that moment when the setting sun warms up all the colors and the newly cut hay fills the air with a sweet and fertile humidity. Coasting home into my village, it occurs to me that the Alps hold a symphony of experiences that can endlessly delight lovers of culture, history, and nature. They certainly have for me.

Rick Steves (www.ricksteves.com) writes European travel guidebooks and hosts travel shows on public television and public radio. Email him at rick@ricksteves.com and follow his blog on Facebook.

CELEBRITY TRAVEL

'Obsession' star hopes for journey to Taipei

By Jae-Ha Kim
TRIBUNE CONTENT AGENCY

Megan Lawless stars as Sarah in the hit horror film "Obsession."

"My character is one of four in the main friend group," the Los Angeles-based actor said. "Sarah acts as a foil to the toxic relationship between Bear and Nikki and is fundamental to the theme of this cautionary tale. She is representative of the loss that comes with obsessive, toxic attachment and how one person's actions can affect far more than just themselves. I love this character and am so glad to play such a fundamental part of this story."

This interview has been edited for clarity and length.

Q: How creepy were the sets on "Obsession"?

A: The sets we ended up filming at really informed the tone. Bear and Ian's homes in the film were wonderful sets. There was such character and grit to them. I stepped into Bear's house and there was a rawness to it, a set design that felt a bit unsettling, aged and unkempt. Even the bar we used for trivia night was so moody. Vivian Gray, our production designer, killed the set design. It served the story and made every frame darkly beautiful.

Q: As a mixed-race actor, did you feel that it would be difficult for you to get cast in parts because of your ethnicity?

A: That was not a concern on this film. But generally, that thought crosses my mind now and again. I try not to focus on it, because I don't feel it is a narrative



Actor Megan Lawless, who plays Sarah in "Obsession," would love to film a project in Asia. JACK MORRIS

that serves me. The projects that are right for me, whether they are open to any ethnicity or are specific to mixed-race stories, will find me. But of course in auditioning, there are roles and projects I connect to but have doubts I would actually work on because I am harder to match with family members of the same race. But that is OK. Honestly, those are not my stories to tell. And day by day, Hollywood is diversifying and AAPI stories — and even Wasian stories — are being represented.

Q: Where would you like to go that you have never been to before?

A: Taipei, Taiwan. My mother was born there and while I want to go to so many parts of Asia, Taiwan and China are the biggest priorities for me. I want to see where my mom grew up, get in touch with my roots and eat the best Chinese food the world has to offer.

Q: If you could pick a location to film a project, where would it be?

A: I would love to film in Asia. I just have never been and so many countries in Asia are on my list. I've been waiting for an opportunity where I can afford to leave home for several weeks. Whenever I make it out there, I would love to stay for a long time.

Q: Do you have any upcoming trips planned?

A: I am hoping to go to Brazil for New Year's this year. I had a couple friends do that trip this last holiday season. They had a blast, so now I've been influenced and am working on organizing that trip.

Q: What is your best vacation memory?

A: My best vacation to date was visiting Jamaica with my Jamaican friend, Peter, and several other college friends. He and his family took us around the entire island through the eyes of a local. They were the most generous hosts and we had a beautiful two weeks on the island. But to top it off, we spent the last couple days back in Kingston celebrating Carnival. We spent 12 hours straight jumping to dancehall in our cute outfits. It was the time of our lives.

Q: What's the most important thing you've learned from your travels?

A: How to be flexible. I wouldn't quite consider myself type A or B, because I feel like I fall right in between. I like to be prepared but also leave space for spontaneity. Ultimately, when I travel, I love meeting people and partaking in what the locals do. I've really learned to let my plans adjust and seize opportunities that arise. Also, keeping my phone charged. Always!

For more from the reporter, visit www.jaehakim.com.

TRAVEL TROUBLESHOOTER

Alamo charges renter \$1,000 after vehicle battery dies in Switzerland

By Christopher Elliott | KING FEATURES SYNDICATE

I rented a car from Alamo at Geneva Airport in April for a six-day trip through Switzerland. The car worked perfectly for the entire rental period until the last morning. We woke up to a cold, frosty morning. We needed to return the car and catch our flight from Geneva.

When we tried to start the car, nothing happened. Four people tried to get it going, but the car was completely dead. We called Alamo's emergency number, and they told us to leave the car where it was since we didn't have time to wait for a technician. Three of us had flights to catch, so we arranged alternate transportation to the airport at a considerable expense.

Two months later, Alamo charged roughly \$1,000 to my credit card without any prior agreement or warning. They sent me two invoices with different totals — one for 395 Swiss francs and another for 489 Swiss francs. Neither amount corresponds to what they actually charged to my account. I later learned that the garage checked the battery and had to replace it entirely. It wasn't simply discharged from negligence — it needed a full replacement because it was defective and couldn't handle cold weather.

When I contacted Alamo's customer service in Switzerland, they refused to refund the charge. They said that I should've purchased their Roadside Assistance Protection, which would have covered the towing costs. They also claimed that because I selected an insurance policy with a 1,500 franc deductible, I was responsible for all these charges. Can you help?

— Kjell-Erik Berggren, Oslo, Norway

A: You're right, if the battery was defective, Alamo should've never charged you for it. A battery that dies on a cold morning after functioning normally for five days suggests a preexisting problem — not customer fault.

Here's what you should have done: First, document everything immediately. Take photos of the car, the dashboard and the surroundings. Get the names of everyone who tried to help start the vehicle. Create a written timeline of events while the details are still fresh. And as soon as you see an unexpected credit card charge, contact the company in writing.

Then appeal to a higher authority. When a customer service representative closes your case, escalate it

to the executive contacts. I publish a list of Alamo's contacts on Elliott.org for this purpose. A brief, polite email to a senior executive often produces better results. After I contacted Alamo on your behalf, the company conducted a thorough review of the case. "After checking all previous rentals, we confirmed that no prior customer reported any issues or faults with this vehicle or its battery," a representative told me.

The company suggested that repeated start attempts after the initial failure may have permanently damaged the battery. But what were you supposed to do? Not try to start the car? When a rental car won't start, most people will naturally try multiple times before calling for help. It's common sense.

To Alamo's credit, it recognized that this case wasn't clear-cut, and it agreed to cover the cost of the battery as a goodwill gesture. Your case highlights an important issue with rental car breakdowns. Companies often have policies that seem reasonable on paper and become problematic in real-world situations. The lesson? Always purchase travel insurance that covers rental car mishaps, document everything, and dispute suspicious charges to your credit card immediately.

Christopher Elliott is the chief advocacy officer of Elliott Advocacy, a nonprofit organization that helps consumers resolve their problems. Contact him at elliott.org/help or chris@elliott.org.