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Grand celebration pays tribute to life of Sacramento-born author Joan Didion

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Conceptual plans, drawings for proposed Elk Grove zoo unveiled

Facility would replace current zoo in William Land Park

By Lance Armstrong
vcneditor@gmail.com

The Sacramento Zoological Society (SZS) and the city of Elk Grove on Nov. 17 released conceptual plans and drawings for the proposed zoo in Elk Grove.

Earlier this year, these parties completed a six-month feasibility study that identified a potential relocation of the Sacramento Zoo to Elk Grove as a viable option.

If built, the new, regional zoo would be located on city of Elk Grove-owned property off Highway 99 at the northwest corner of Kammerer Road and Lotz Parkway.

That land was purchased by the city of Elk Grove for $9 million last February. The property totals 100 acres, of which about 70 acres is proposed for the zoo – about 60 acres for animal habitat and 10 acres for parking.



Photos courtesy of city of Elk Grove

This image is among the recently released artist conceptual renderings for the proposed Elk Grove zoo.

The zoo's current site in William Land Park totals 14.7 acres. This facility is home to more than 400 animals.

Prepared by SHR Studios and Mangolin Creative, the recently unveiled drawings reveal a state-of-the-art, modern zoo, featuring expansive savannas where African wildlife would roam, and guests would be immersed in the animals' surroundings.

Sacramento Zoo Executive Director/CEO Jason Jacobs noted that the most exciting aspect about the proposed, multi-phased zoo's conceptual renderings are their depictions of the interactions between the animals and people.

"An incredible zoo doesn't just take care of animals; it also takes good care of people," he said. "We want this new zoo to be one of the best in the United States and something that Elk Grove and the entire region can really be proud of."

Included in the drawings are a variety of possible options for guests of the zoo to obtain close views of such animals as a white rhinoceros and a Masai giraffe.

Visitors could also have the opportunity to feed a hippopotamus or spend a night at the zoo in a luxury tent-cabin with views of a hippopotamus lake.

Elk Grove City Manager Jason Behrmann shared his thoughts about the conceptual drawings.

"The renderings really help show the vision and the possibilities for this project and what it could bring to our region, but there is a lot of work that needs to be done," he said. "The renderings help us to better understand the costs and how we might be able to construct the zoo in phases. But it also presents an opportunity to start a dialogue with other sources for funding and collaboration."

Behrman mentioned that much effort went into determining what options would be presented in the conceptual drawings.

"(There were) a lot of meetings, a lot of discussion of understanding what makes for a successful zoo – habits for animals with priorities, animal care, conservation, what will make a great experience for visitors to the zoo," he said. "It's a very in-depth process."

Behrmann shared what he likes about the conceptual plans for the zoo.

"There's a lot to it," he said. "I love the natural aspects of the habitats. So, trying to create natural environments for the species, the animals, that mirrors as closely as we can their habitat from where they're from.

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Email stories and photos to: vcneditor@gmail.com
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Zoo:

Continued from page 2

"So, if you look at the savanna or the African highlands in Ethiopia, where the gelada monkeys (live) – just that creating (of) space that people can almost be transported to those places from far across the globe."

Regarding the timeline for this proposed project, Behrmann noted that in a best-case scenario, the construction of a zoo in Elk Grove would begin in 2025, and the facility would be completed and opened in 2027.

However, Behrmann mentioned that it is important for people to understand that this project is still "very much in the conceptual phase."

"We're not going to build exactly what you see in these drawings," he said. "Part of the process is to put (these renderings) out there, and then continue to get community feedback and input. As we go through subsequent phases, it's going to be fine-tuned and modified. There are going to be some animals that will change; added, (taken) out."



An artist conceptual rendering depicts how zoo visitors could be able to view wildlife in an environment similar to their natural habitat.

SZS Board President Elizabeth Stallard stressed that extensive community support will be needed in the efforts to

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Grand celebration pays tribute to the life of Joan Didion

Sculpture of the late, renowned, Sacramento-born author unveiled at event

By Lance Armstrong
vcneditor@gmail.com

A celebration of the life and legacy of Joan Didion took center stage on Nov. 10, as about 300 people gathered at downtown Sacramento's Golden 1 Center for a tribute event honoring this Sacramento-born author.

Didion, a renowned novelist, essayist, journalist and screenwriter, died last December at the age of 87.

While growing up in the Golden State's capital city, this fifth generation Californian attended local educational institutions, including C.K. McClatchy High School and Sacramento Junior College – today's Sacramento City College (SCC).

She would later attend the University of California, Berkeley as an English major, and during that time she won first place in an essay contest sponsored by Vogue fashion and lifestyle magazine.

Didion would eventually become one of that publication's editors, and she would also author such notable books as "Slouching Towards Bethlehem," "Run River," "The White Album" and "The Year of Magical Thinking."

The Nov. 10 event, the Golden Land Joan Didion Celebration, featured many speakers, videos played on the venue's large screens, a silent auction, and the unveiling of the Joan Didion sculpture, which was later installed in the Sacramento Room of the Sacramento Public Library's Central Library at 828 I St., where Didion spent many hours during her youth. High praise was given to Didion by the speakers, including the Sacramento-born Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis, who referred to her as "the most famous of Sacramento's daughters."



Photos by Lance Armstrong

Lisa Reinertson, left, unveils her Joan Didion sculpture with Delta Pick Mello, executive director/CEO of the Sacramento History Museum and the Sacramento History Alliance.

"Joan Didion is one of America's most prolific writers, novelists, screenwriters, a founder of the New Journalism movement, providing us both sharp as a steel blade and deeply personal (writings)," she said.

Kounalakis expressed her gratitude to Gregg Lukenbill and Maurice Read for their efforts to make the Nov. 10 Didion tribute event possible.

Their work on the Didion sculpture project and the creation of a Joan Didion Sacramento City College literary scholarship led to their latter efforts to organize the event at the Golden 1 Center.

Lukenbill is best-known for bringing the Kansas City Kings National Basketball Association team to Sacramento in 1985, and Read met Didion while he was attending Sacramento Junior College (now Sacramento City College) in 1952.

Although not in attendance

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Sacramento Zoo to receive white rhino

By Lance Armstrong
vcneditor@gmail.com

Sacramento Zoo Executive Director/CEO Jason Jacobs recently spoke about the zoo's plans to acquire a southern white rhinoceros.

Jacobs mentioned that this animal could potentially be living in Elk Grove, if the proposed relocation and expansion of the zoo in that city becomes a reality. That zoo could open as early as 2027.

"Obviously, it takes several years to assemble animals for the potential of a new zoo, and one of the species we're looking at is (the) white rhinoceros," he said.

Jacobs noted that there is no set date for the arrival of the rhino, but that it would be acquired "sometime in 2023."

He added that the animal will become the first rhino resident in the history of the Sacramento Zoo.

In preparation for the rhino exhibit, the zoo is converting a habitat that formerly held its bongo antelope exhibit within the southern portion of the zoo.

Jacobs mentioned that it is not yet known where the rhino will come from, but he assured that it would be acquired from an Association of Zoos and Aquariums accredited zoo.



Photo by Jason Jacobs
When the Sacramento Zoo receives its southern white rhino, it will mark the first time in the zoo's 95-year history that it will be home to a rhinoceros.



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Didion:

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at the event, former Gov. Jerry Brown shared his thoughts about Didion through a video that was shown on the large screens above the arena's basketball court.

Brown mentioned that he met Didion, as well as her husband, John Gregory Dunne, at their Malibu home in the 1970s, but that he did not truly get to know her until he was her guest at her New York apartment during his presidential campaign.

He also recalled hearing about Didion from his sister, Barbara, who, like Didion, was also majoring in English at the University of California, Berkeley in 1953.

"She and Joan would share a smoke together and talk about the novels they were reading," he said. "Years later, my sister's most vivid memory is that of Joan coming down for breakfast in a pink, chenille robe, drinking a cup of coffee and smoking cigarettes."

Brown concluded his speech by praising Didion as a unique Californian.

"Joan Didion was a Californian, all right," he said. "She was gentle, and she was fierce. Sadly, very sadly, we won't be seeing the likes of her again – ever."

Prior to unveiling her Joan Didion sculpture, Lisa Reinertson gave a speech about her work as an artist. The speech was accompanied by images of some of her completed artworks, as well as photographs of her Didion sculpture at various stages of its creation.

Another feature of the event was the presence of the Sacramento literary luminaries painting by artist Jerald Silva. The painting, which includes an image of Didion, was prearranged to be later placed on permanent display in the Sacramento Room.

Both Sacramento County Supervisor Don Nottoli and Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg praised Didion and presented resolutions in her honor.

Nottoli noted that as a government journalism major at California State University, Sacramento, he was required to read "Slouching Towards Bethlehem." "We would hope that her works and her words will continue to inspire and motivate folks to read," he said. "I would hope that they would continue to inspire and motivate folks to write, to put down on paper (and present) their reflections, their recollections of their hometown."

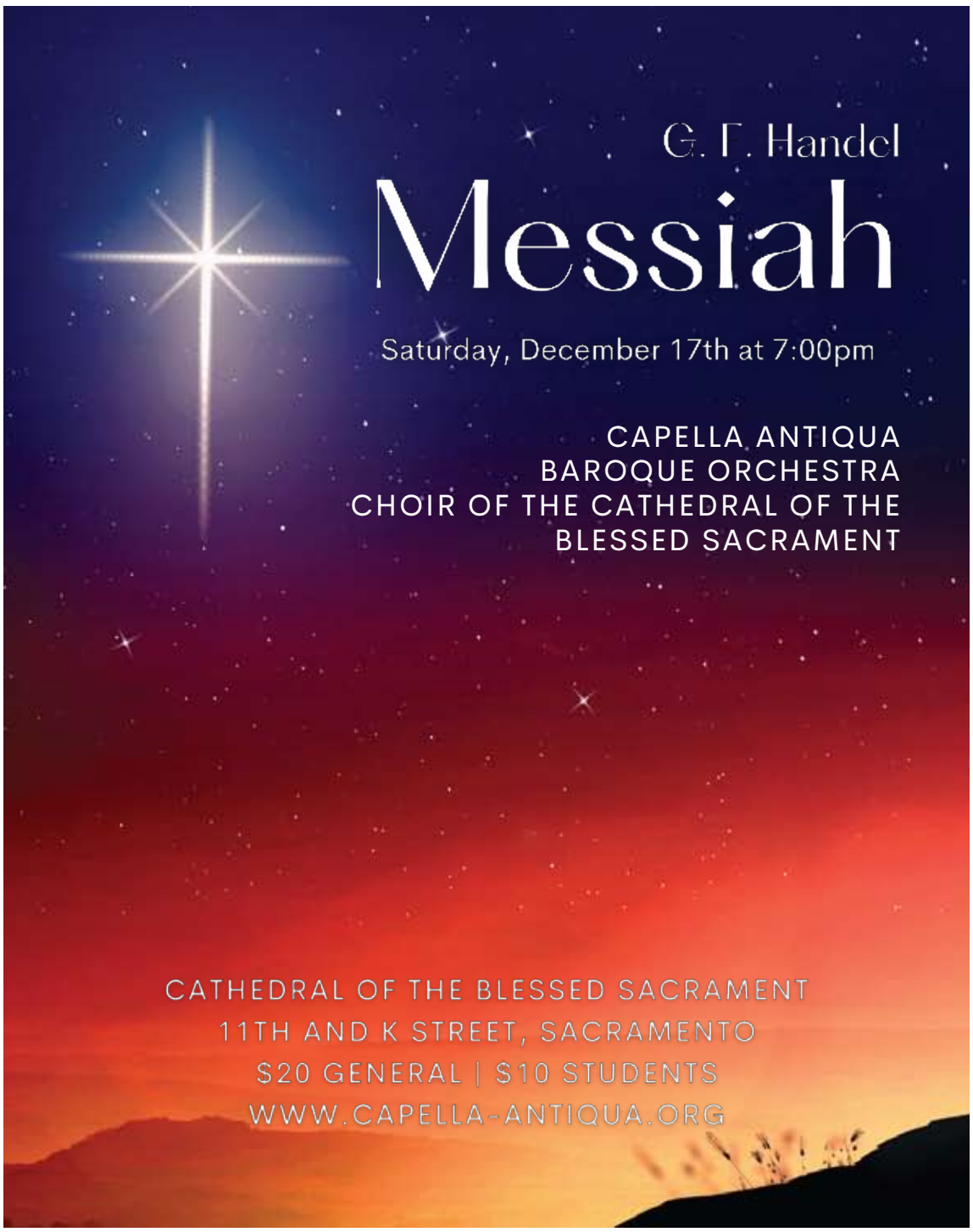
Nottoli also spoke about the county resolution that he said serves the purpose to remember her birthday, Dec. 5, as Joan Didion Day in Sacramento County.

Steinberg also shared his thoughts about Didion.

"Joan Didion taught us all about the power of the written word and the importance in life of reading and writing – which has sort of become, if we really admit it to ourselves, a bit of a lost art; not that there aren't great writers," he said.

"But for Sacramento to be the birthplace, the high school graduation place, the historic place of

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From left, Lisa Reinertson, Maurice Read and Gregg Lukenbill stand alongside Reinertson's Joan Didion sculpture at the Nov. 10 event at the Golden 1 Center.



Joan Didion is shown on a large video screen at the Golden 1 Center during a presentation of videos of this Sacramento-born author.





Left: Zoo guests could have the opportunity to spend a night in one of the proposed zoo's luxury tent-cabins, which could have views of a hippopotamus lake. Right: The proposed Elk Grove zoo would include opportunities to view a variety of birds.

Zoo:

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have a new zoo constructed.

"We hope that the release of these incredible images will inspire and motivate individuals and entities to want to be a part of creating this incredible new zoo," she said.

Efforts to find a new site for the zoo have been extensive.

The zoo board unanimously voted in the spring of 2019 to have the zoo relocated from its current site to a 50- to 60-acre site in time for a grand opening during its centennial in 2027.

In September 2021, following unsuccessful efforts to find a suitable new site for the zoo in Sacramento, the city of Elk Grove and the Sacramento Zoological Society entered into an exclusive negotiating agreement to evaluate the creation of a new, modern zoological park in Elk Grove.

Since that time, the feasibility study and economic impact analysis was completed, and arrangements were made for SHR Studios to create the proposed zoo's conceptual plan.

Future steps in the process to potentially relocate and expand the zoo in Elk Grove includes developing a schematic design and financing plan, and completing an environmental impact review.

The proposed Elk Grove zoo project could be presented to the Elk Grove City Council for their consideration as early as the latter part of next year.

To view the conceptual drawings and learn more about this project, visit the website, www.SacZoo.org.



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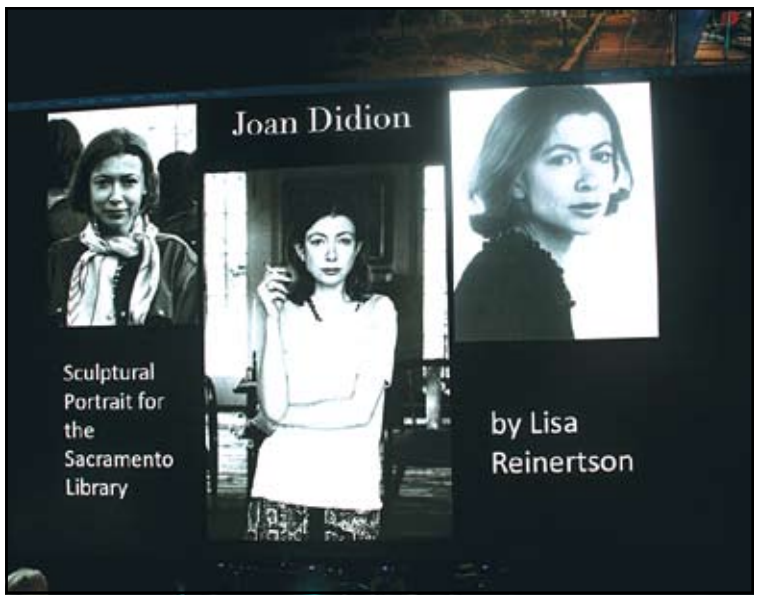
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Photographs of author Joan Didion are shown on a large video screen at the Nov. 10 event.

Didion:

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Joan Didion's life, I hope we will use this – not just this occasion, but the subsequent months and years – to tell young people the story of Joan Didion, and the importance and the beauty of (reading and writing)."

The city resolution that Steinberg presented recognizes Dec. 5 as Joan Didion Day in the city of Sacramento.

Post-event commentary

Following the event, this paper caught up with John Didion, a first cousin of Joan Didion.

While standing outside of the doors of the north side of the Golden 1 Center, John, 80, complimented the event.

"This (event) was very touching in a way, because there's a lot of things that I didn't know about Joan that came out tonight," he said. "(She) was a unique individual and very feeling, observant and (a) very, very deep person.

"We're a very reading family and we're a family that's very awash in strong women. (Joan) was wonderful."

John additionally spoke about Joan's love for Sacramento.

"I think she really loved it," he said. "She was touched by the landscape and the people and the traditions and everything around here that are maybe not appreciated by a lot of people. But she saw things and wanted to know the background of them and all the stories behind them.

"And there are some fascinating stories here, and she brought them on, and then she carried this on into her writing life, (and) got into the political end of things. I think she did that because she's a very kind of a moral individual."

John added that he shares Joan's love for Sacramento, which he noted is a fascinating place that is rich with diversity and is very open to ideas.

"I think (Sacramento) is just a wonderful place to live," he said.

Lukenbill, who also serves as vice president of the Sacramento Historical Society, also shared his afterthoughts on the event.

"It was the perfect Joan Didion showcase for the impact that she has had on Sacramento, California and America," he said. "(It also) was a perfect place to do that, because (the Golden 1 Center) is clearly a state-of-the-art, national-scale facility, without a doubt. And she was clearly a state-of-the-art, national celebrity and tal-

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Didion:

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ent, without a doubt. So, it was a perfect match.

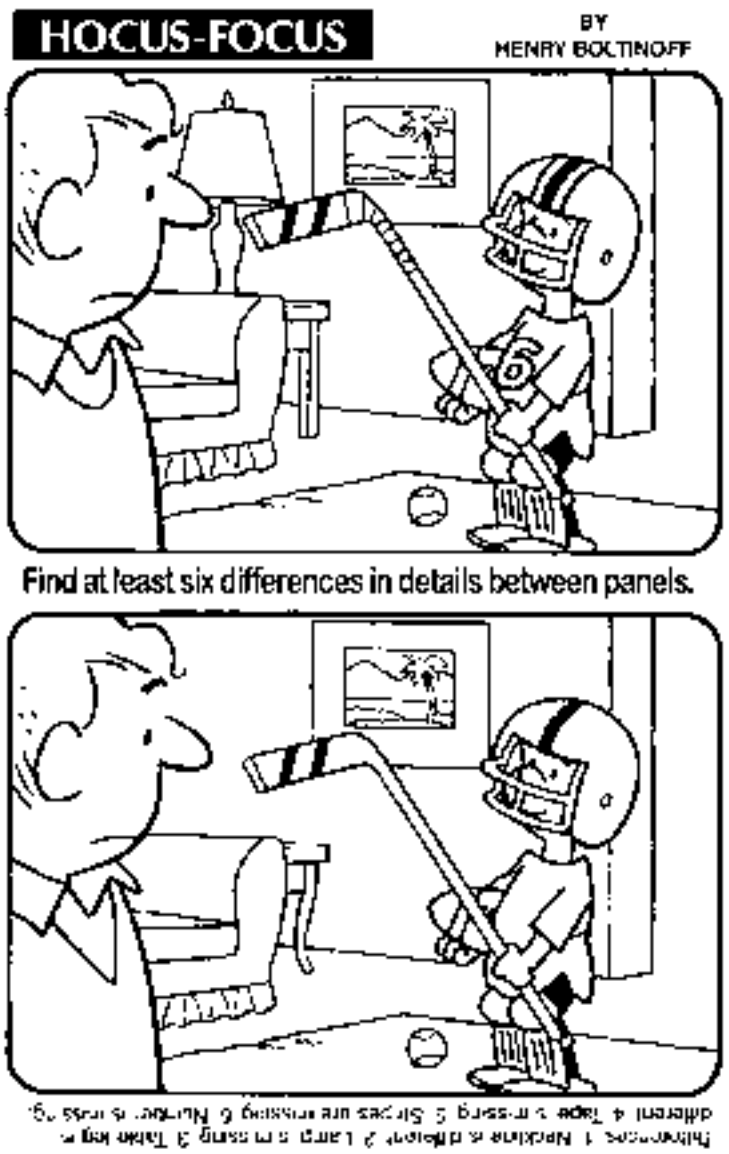
"And it was the biggest event the (Sacramento) Historical Society ever put on. So, I was really proud of showcasing that kind of history in that facility."

Lukenbill concluded that the legacy of Didion remains strong and is worthy of a continuous celebration.

"The truth of it is, there's a little bit of a radiant light that comes out of Joan Didion's mind that's still alive and well today, and will continue," he said. "Her mind has created the footprint for a living, interactive legacy that's going to go on into the future – as far as this organization is concerned – because she was, in her manner and way of thinking and living, a genius."



Sacramento County Supervisor Don Nottoli speaks at the event, prior to presenting a county resolution in honor of Joan Didion.



Trivia test

by Fifi Rodriguez

1. GEOGRAPHY: Which country is the most forested in the world?
2. HISTORY: When were tanks first introduced in war?
3. TELEVISION: What is the name of the Netflix sequel to the "Karate Kid" movies?
4. MUSIC: Which music prodigy was signed to a record deal at age 11?
5. ASTRONOMY: In which year will Halley's Comet reappear?
6. LAW: Which justice served on the Supreme Court for the longest?
7. ANIMAL KINGDOM: What kind of dogs did President Obama's family have in the White House?
8. FOOD & DRINK: Where did the first White Castle restaurant open?
9. ANATOMY: What is the rarest human blood type?
10. LITERATURE: What is Harry Potter's middle name?

Answers

1. Russia.
2. 1916, Battle of the Somme.
3. "Cobra Kai."
4. Stevie Wonder.
5. 2061.
6. William O. Douglas (36 years).
7. Portuguese water dogs.
8. Wichita, Kansas.
9. AB negative.
10. James.

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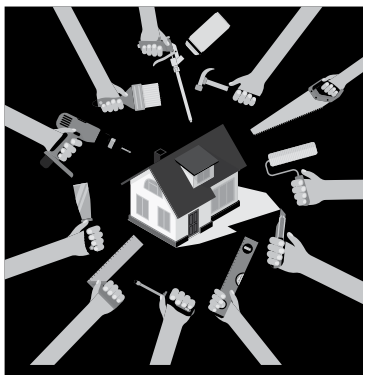
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