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SUNDAY, MAY 8, 2022

Last civilians flee Mariupol plant

UKRAINIAN FIGHTERS MAINTAIN POSITIONS IN LEVELED STEEL MILL

BY ELENA BECATOROS AND JON GAMBRELL
ASSOCIATED PRESS

ZAPORIZHZHIA, Ukraine—Russian forces fired cruise missiles at the southern Ukrainian city of Odesa on Saturday and bombarded a besieged steel mill in Mariupol, hoping to complete their conquest of the port in time for Victory Day celebrations. Officials announced that the last women, children and older adults had been evacuated from the mill, but Ukrainian fighters remained trapped.

In a sign of the unexpectedly effective defense that has sustained the fighting into its 11th week, Ukraine's military flattened Russian positions on a Black Sea island that was captured in the war's first days and has become a symbol of resistance. Western military analysts also said a Ukrainian counteroffensive was advancing around the

FIRST LADY'S FEARS >>
Biden talks with refugees. **A7**

country's second-largest city, Kharkiv, even as it remained a key target of Russian shelling.

The largest European conflict since World War II has developed into a punishing war of attrition that has killed thousands of people, forced millions to flee their homes and destroyed large swaths of some cities. Ukrainian leaders warned that attacks would only worsen in the lead-up to Russia's holiday on Monday celebrating Nazi Germany's defeat 77 years ago, and President Volodymyr Zelenskyy urged people to heed air raid warnings.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Saturday that Zelenskyy and his people "embody the spirit of those who prevailed during the Second World War." He accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of trying "to twist history to attempt to justify his

SEE UKRAINE, A16



TRISTAN LOREI / FREE LANCE-STAR

Viola Stevens, who is 100 years old, sits in the Stafford County home in which she was born.

THREE CENTURIES OF LIFE WELL-LIVED Church celebrates a trio of mothers

BY CATHY DYSON
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Three women affiliated with Ramoth Baptist Church in Stafford County have several things in common—beyond the fact they're all 100 years old and devoted to family.

"They're all known to be very kind people, very sweet in nature and godly women," said church member Pam Null. "They've all been examples of the way to treat other people."

Along with other mothers across America, the trio of Lillian Gordon, Gertrude Raines and Viola Stevens undoubtedly will be celebrated this Mother's Day. The three also will be guests of honor during a special event at Ramoth Baptist Church, starting at 11 a.m. on May 22.

Null, whose late father, the Rev. Ray T. Vinson, pastored Ramoth for 43 years, doesn't believe it's a coincidence that the honorees have so much in common. They represent a generation of homemakers who not only birthed and raised their babies, but also canned produce they picked from gardens they planted and hoed. They scrubbed their family's laundry on a

SEE MOTHERS, A16



PROVIDED

Gertrude Raines is known for her big heart, the loving care she provided to relatives, and her homemade pound cake.

They're all known to be very kind people, very sweet in nature and godly women. They've all been examples of the way to treat other people.

—PAM NULL



PROVIDED

Known as Grandma or Granny Gordon, Lillian Gordon has taken care of her family and many local youngsters.

What happens when inmates are let out?

NEW LAW ALLOWING EARLIER RELEASE TAKES EFFECT THIS SUMMER

BY JAMES SCOTT BARON
THE FREE LANCE-STAR

Virginia Department of Corrections officials say thousands of inmates who have accumulated enough early release credits to lessen their sentences will be released from custody this summer.

"Right now, our current estimate is approximately 4,500 inmates will qualify in this program," Benjamin Jarvela said, director of communications for the Virginia Department of Corrections. "What that means is, they're going to be released during a 60-day window that's going to spread from July 1 through Aug. 30."

The early outs are the result of a July 1 start date of House Bill 5148, a law

that allows certain inmates to earn up to 15 days off for every 30 days they are confined. Under the previous law, inmates could only earn only a maximum of 4.5 days off for every 30 days served.

The provisions of the bill—one of many criminal justice reform laws signed by former Gov. Ralph Northam in 2020 and opposed by every GOP lawmaker in Richmond—requires the calculation of earned sentence credits to apply retroactively to the entire sentence of any inmate who is confined in a state correctional facility and who is participating in the earned sentence credit system.

Joshua Cole, the former delegate for House District 28, supported the bill while he was serving in office. Cole said he voted in

SEE INMATES, A13



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