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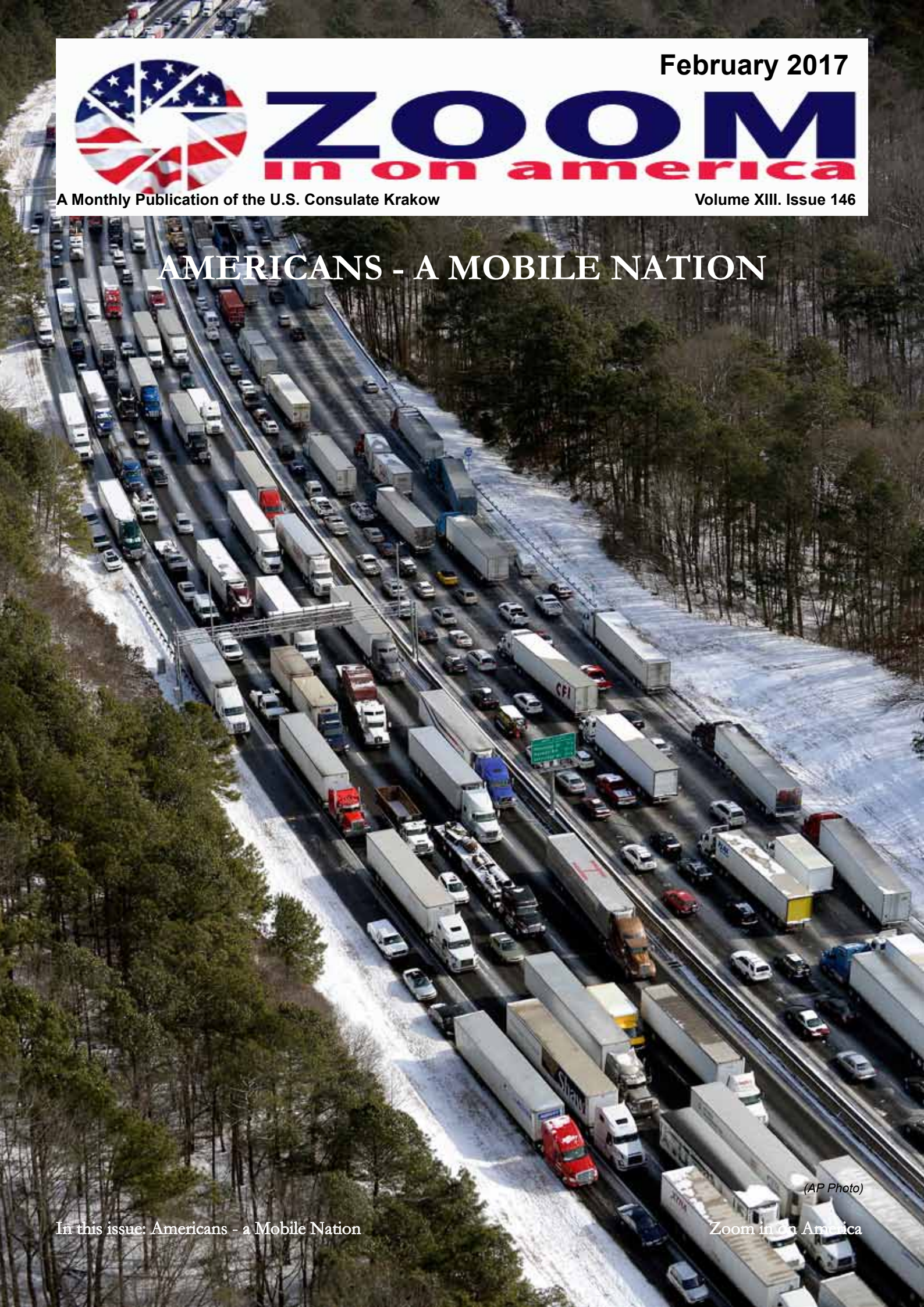
ZOOM

in on america

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AMERICANS - A MOBILE NATION



(AP Photo)

In this issue: Americans - a Mobile Nation

Zoom in on America

American Mobile Culture

Statistics show that Americans move far more often than Western or Central Europeans. According to 2016 statistics, one in four American adults has moved within the last five years, and despite that high figure, the overall number of moves has actually been on the decline in the last several decades. Why then is mobility so common in the average American's life? The reasons are multitudinous and most often come from an interesting combination of personal and cultural expectation; understanding the mobile culture in America can give a person insight into the overall culture of America.

The most practical reasons for more mobility come from generally high living standards that stretch across a vast expanse of land full of people who speak the same language and share labor laws. For example, moving from Massachusetts to California is, in most cases, far less overwhelming than moving from the United Kingdom to Germany. But more than language and laws unite Americans who are moving across country.

To determine what "America" is one should know more than the names of presidents or the nation's political history. America's history is a decidedly social history, and America's social history has encouraged and welcomed a mobile and enterprising spirit since the very beginning. America itself of course was founded by immigrants. From the initial colonization of the Eastern Coast to the surges of Americans who moved Westward in search of new opportunity decades and centuries later, mobility has always been a part of America's identity.

The American Cowboy—the mythological epitome of the free individual who travels ceaselessly in search of a

purpose and home — is still a beloved part of American history and his story captures the social and mobile spirit in American character. The cowboy's mythically free life was captured in American cinema through men like John Wayne and Burt Lancaster who are still considered some of America's favorite actors; their names have lasted now for a century and the majority of their characters were cowboys. American film is a great window into American culture. Westerns often capture the spirit of adventure and search for new opportunity in American history, while very different movies such as *The Sandlot*, capture more simply and realistically the troubles and joys of moving, and finding one's way in a new place. On the other end of the spectrum, some films, such as *The Grapes of Wrath* (based of John Steinbeck's well known book) capture the disillusionment that can occur after moving and searching for new opportunity

Overall, the reasons for America's great mobility are varied. However, undoubtedly, one of the reasons originates in a centuries old culture of movement that comes from people's desire for better opportunities and freer lives.



Cowboys race down the slopes in a mad dash for the finish line at the annual Cowboy Downhill in Steamboat Springs, Colorado on Tuesday, Jan. 16, 1996. (AP Photo)

What's Your Experience of Moving? A Closer Look at the Realities of Moving with Michaela Cheffers

Q: Michaela, are you a typical American as far as moving is concerned?

A: I think I am. I've moved a few times already in my young life. And I think the average American moves a few times in his life at least. So, perhaps I've moved a little more than people my age, but moving isn't new to most Americans, I don't think.

Q: And was the first time you moved the hardest?

A: Well, actually no. I moved 4 times, twice within states, so my first move was when I was younger and I just moved cities; I moved from a bigger city in Massachusetts to a rural area. And it wasn't that difficult because I could go back home, to my city when I wanted to. But the second move was from Massachusetts to Florida. And that was a much more difficult move because I was a different age, and I was going to a high school, which in America is when you're about fifteen. So it was in a brand new school with people who knew each other, and it was a completely different state, so I couldn't go back home if I was uncomfortable; or I couldn't go back home to see familiar places and familiar people. So, my second move was the most difficult, I think.

Q: But did you stay in touch with your friends?

A: Yes, which made it easier. Usually, through social media, through e-mail because I was little. Facebook wasn't really something I used yet, but it definitely made it easier to move, to have my friends in contact.

Q: What do you move for?

A: Well, I guess generally people move for a lot of reasons. A lot of people move for job reasons, [or] wanting, you know, a better house. Personally, we moved for a better job location—closer to where my Dad's work was and closer to where my siblings went to school. And when we moved to Florida, we moved there because my mom was accepted into law school, a good one, so we moved for, you know, job and, or education reasons then too.

Q: So is mobility part of American character?

A: Yes. I think so. I think it is very much a part of American culture, because when you think about it, the first people ever in America were immigrants coming from very, very far away. And that sort of culture and spirit has never changed in America. So, absolutely, I think that's why so



The Pennsylvania Railroad's Broadway Limited train is shown on June 7, 1938. The train was in service between Chicago and New York City June (AP Photo)

many people do end up moving. Because you're looking for more and more opportunity—you're looking for a better life. And sometimes you think that might include moving.

Q: Yeah, but at the same time, the overall number of moves is on the decline, so is something changing?

A: I mean, I think maybe part of it is that a lot of the movement in America, historically, happened when people were searching out new territory to the West, so in the past there was always new territory to explore and to find. Perhaps that's one of the reasons why the number of moves has declined recently. I think, besides that, people can usually find what they are looking for closer to them because so much of America is developed and there is kind of a different thing for everyone, everywhere. So I can't give any scientific answer, but that would be my guess.

Q: Is there a connection between your attitude to moving and the American heritage of the cowboy culture?

A: I think so. Because the American cowboy culture is historic, and has been kind of epitomized and enshrined in film. You can watch a lot of westerns and you see that cowboys are the essence or epitome of the American independent, enterprising spirit. So the American cowboys in the films and in the stories are always the kind of lone rangers who travel from city to city, and kind of bring a new spirit to every place they go—always looking for a better and better place to be. And I think that a lot of Americans still have that same Western spirit of always looking for more and more, better and better.

Q: Finally, can you comment on a popular saying, "Home is where the heart is"?

A: Yes. I feel that way most certainly. After having moved four times, what we mean by "home is where the heart is," is that no matter where you go, no matter how different a place is from where you were before, or even how different the people are, your home is where you love—is what you love. For me that was my family. My home was with my family. We always moved together, so that was most important in moving from one place to the next—remembering that there was always something that I could depend on, and always something to love.

Q: Any plans for moving right now?

A: Ah no, I am currently a student, so I am finishing my studies. And then perhaps I will move, as young students often move after college as they try to find jobs and seek, like I said, new opportunities. So maybe in a few years, yeah, I'll move, but to where? I don't know we'll see.

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(AP Photo)

MOVies about MOVing

Moving is a popular subject with script writers and film directors. The below list of movies whose plot is built around the idea is by no means complete.

The Gold Rush (1925) starring Charlie Chaplin is a movie about traveling to gain financial benefits and become rich. No conditions are harsh enough, no obstacles too formidable to deter a prospector who goes to the Klondike in search of gold.

Western films typically focus on the idea of traveling westward, settling down, undertaking efforts to uphold law and order against outlaws. An extremely famous, classic example of the kind is *High Noon* with a lone sheriff (Gary Cooper as Hadleyville marshal Will Kane,) relentlessly fighting the Miller gang. Another famous movie showing the American mobile spirit is *Stagecoach* (1939) starring John Wayne, Claire Trevor, and Andy Devine. All the people traveling on the stagecoach have chosen to leave familiar things for a reason, and the wildness forces them to come together and drop their pretensions. *Lonesome Dove* (1994-1995) is a miniseries which makes you feel like you are in the Wild West. Newt Call, the main character, sets out to make his way in the world, and he participates in some of the major events of the Western era and encounters some of its legendary figures.

Easy Rider, released in 1969, turned out to be so popular that it began a new trend of Hollywood counterculture

movies devoted to social issues, the hippie movement and communal lifestyle that were made in the early 1970s. The movie tells the story of two bikers (played by Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper) who travel through the American Southwest and South.

Karate Kid (1984) starring Ralph Macchio (Daniel), is about a New Jersey kid that moves to California. He finds it hard to make friends after his move, but finally manages to befriend Mr. Miyagi who teaches him the secret and ancient art of Karate.

Moving into a newly bought house may cause a lot of stress. It may even put a relationship in jeopardy when it turns out that the costs of repairing the building get unreasonably high. This is the theme of *Money Pit* (1986), starring Tom Hanks and Shelley Long, who play a couple who are led to believe that the house they decided to buy was a real bargain. Well, it was not, and the hardships of bringing the mansion to a habitable state nearly ruin their love.

Mermaids (1990) is a story of a single mother who relocates with her two daughters to a small Massachusetts town in 1963. Moving is her remedy for failure. Is it not for many of us? Cher, Bob Hoskins, and Winona Ryder play the main characters.

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The American Queen, the largest steamboat ever built, arrives in the port of New Orleans May 4, 1995. (AP Photo)

Toy Story (1995), the first feature-length computer-animated film, is about a boy named Andy whose toys, unbeknownst to him, come alive when he is not around. The main characters are Woody, a pullstring cowboy doll (voiced by Tom Hanks), and Buzz Lightyear, an astronaut action figure (voiced by Tim Allen). The two go from being rivals, who compete for Andy's affections, to being friends who work together to be reunited with Andy when his family prepares to move to a new home.

It is never an easy thing to move, but for a family with 12 kids it truly is a challenge. *Cheaper By The Dozen* (2003) is exactly about this. Steve Martin plays the lead role in this film. The relocation turns out to be hard and the kids

cause chaos in their new home until they learn all together that...home is where the heart is!

The 2015 film *Inside Out* follows the story of a girl, Riley, whose feelings are pushed into disarray after she moves to a totally new city. All of her feelings are left to vie for control within her after Joy, who normally guides the young girl, must leave her captain's post to go with Sadness on a journey through Riley's mind. The film literally follows the tumult of emotions that follow upon leaving familiar things, for strange things.

Please write to us at KrakowAIRC@state.gov about your favorite movie about moving. We will include them in one of the next issues of *Zoom in on America*.



(AP Photo)

ACTIVITY PAGE

FEBRUARY 2017 TRIVIA QUESTION

What is the main reason why Americans move?

Send the answer
(with your home address) to:
KrakowAIRC@state.gov

The 3rd, the 8th and the
10th correct answer will be
awarded with a book prize

Deadline: March 10

January 2017 Answer:

Florida

The winners are:

Tomasz from Szczecin,
Dominika from Pielgrzymo-
wice and Alicja from Krakow

CONGRATULATIONS!!!

The prizes will be sent to you
by mail.



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Exercise 1 SPEAKING

Work with a partner. Find out what he or she thinks about moving house. You may use some of the questions below, but please think of at least 3 other questions you want to ask to learn what your partner thinks about moving:

1. Have you ever moved house? If yes, what kind of experience was it for you?
2. What are advantages and disadvantages of moving house?
3. How can a person arrange their moving so as to minimize the stress and work connected with it?
4. Should people be free to live where they want? What pros and cons would freedom to choose the place of living have?

Exercise 2 SPEAKING

Work in a group of 4 people. Each student prepares a scenario of their moving house in a near future. Choose a place. Decide on what items you would like to take with you (make a list of about 10-15 items which you couldn't live without in a new place.) Imagine yourself moved to a new place and decide what you do to make a living, what kind of home you are going to have, who your new friends are, and how you will keep in touch with what is left behind.

Exercise 3: SPEAKING

Work with another student. Divide the photos between the two of you. First, describe your photo to the other person. Then, in a conversation, compare and contrast the pictures. Finally, say if you would like to live in the place presented in your photo, why, why not.



(AP Photos)



(AP Photo)