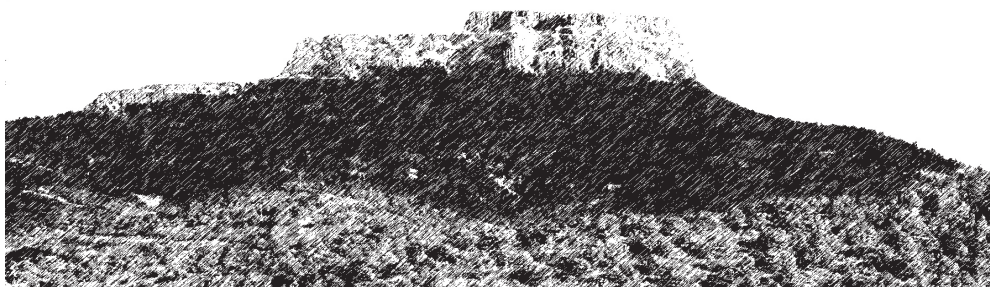


OVER THE PASS



"Safeway and Walmart. I don't drive. I take COG. If I can get everything I need there, I get it at Safeway. Otherwise I get a ride to Walmart. I don't do restaurants or haircuts. I don't have a computer. I order from catalogs—shoes, dresses, coffeemaker, vacuum cleaner, anything I need."

— Starlene Alworth, retired, Trinidad



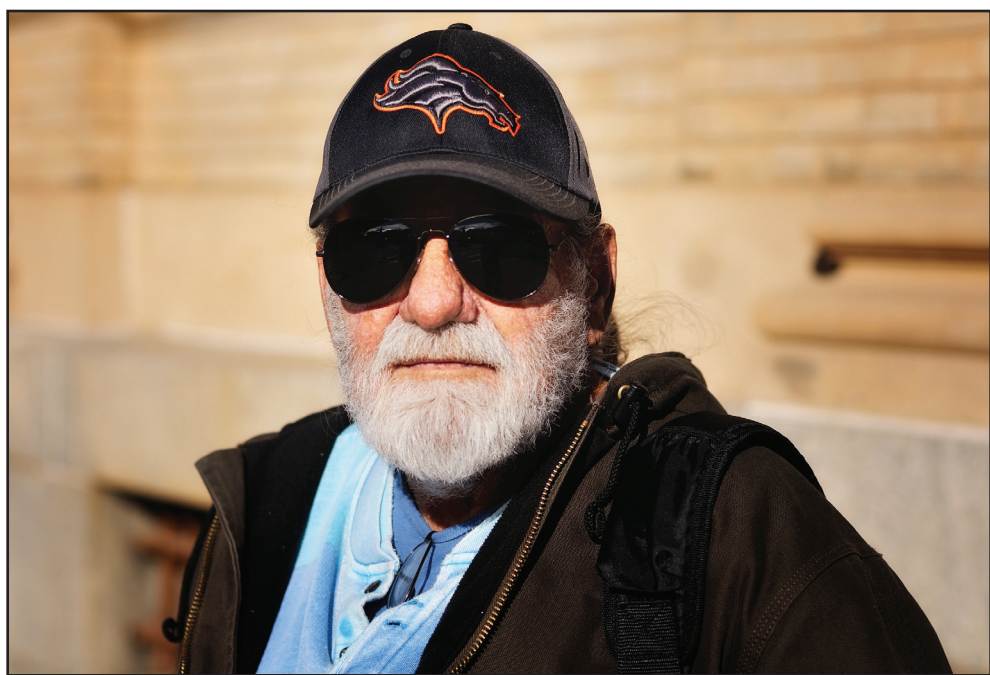
"I just use Amazon a lot. There's no tax or shipping charges and it's quick. Returns are easy. Customer service is great, unlike some places here in town. When I buy something here, it's probably Walmart, Safeway and Bealls. There's not a whole lot else, is there?"

— Carol Brister, retired customer service, Trinidad

TIM KELLER'S CONNECTIONS

"What stores do you use most often?"

Photos by Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News



"Walmart and Safeway. Walmart seems cheaper but Safeway is more convenient, closer to home. That's about it here. Some things I have to get out of town, in Denver, Colorado Springs or Pueblo. The last thing was a hand meat grinder. It got it in Colorado Springs, and now they have them at Walmart. That was the first place I looked."

— James Breedlove, disabled construction worker, Trinidad



"The store I shop at most is Lowe's, the building supply store. We eat out most often at McCallister's Deli. I don't shop online much. For gas, it's all Loaf & Jug; in fact, that's probably more than everything else combined."

— John Venditti, engineer, BNSF, Pueblo

SUPER BOWL BOUND

Brady's Patriots crush Roethlisger's Steelers in 36-17 win

WILL GRAVES
AP Sports Writer

PITTSBURGH (AP) — The roll that carried the Pittsburgh Steelers from adrift at midseason to the cusp of the Super Bowl came to a sudden and emphatic stop in New England.

The pain of the one-sided 36-17 loss to Tom Brady and the Patriots will linger. If the Steelers want to find a way to take the next step in what has become a methodical march back to prominence, it needs to.

Two winters ago Pittsburgh's season ended in the wild card game. Last January, it was the divisional round. On Sunday, it came in the AFC title game. That's very real, tangible progress. It's also not enough for a franchise where the only real measure of success lies in Lombardi trophies collected.

"It's disappointing that we couldn't get this one for (chairman emeritus Dan) Rooney," quarterback Ben Roethlisberger said. "I really wanted to do it for him, but we'll evaluate."

There's plenty to digest. The Steelers (13-6) reaching the NFL's final four isn't exactly a surprise. The winding route they took to get there, however, could pay off down the

road. Adrift during a four-game losing streak that dropped them below .500 in mid-November, Pittsburgh reeled off nine straight wins, clinching a third straight playoff berth for the first time in Mike Tomlin's tenure and doing it with a nucleus of young players that aren't going anywhere anytime soon.

"We went from 4-5 to the championship game," Roethlisberger said. "If there's going to be any silver lining, it's that."

Even if the lining was a bit hard to discern under the lights in Foxborough with Brady on the other side of the field. The defense invigorated by the rapid growth of rookies Sean Davis, Artie Burns and Javon Hargrave put up little fight. The offense forced to rely on improbable contributors like Eli Rogers and Cobi Hamilton couldn't match the Patriots score for score. The result? A quiet plane ride home and an offseason that starts two weeks too soon.

Yet when defensive end Cam Heyward — who missed the second half of the year with a torn pectoral muscle, an injury that made his team's surge even more remarkable — takes the long view, one stumble at a place where many seasons for many teams have gone to die this millennium isn't necessarily the end of something so much as the beginning.

"There was a multitude of guys that took drastic steps," Heyward said. "That's very encouraging. I know it hurts now, and it should, but there are a lot of things to be optimistic about. We have to grow from this."

Some takeaways from 2016 and some things to look for in 2017 for a team that should be in the mix again next fall:

MONEY, MONEY, MONEY: Few teams rely on developing and keeping their own talent more than the Steelers. That notion will be tested this spring. Running back Le'Veon Bell — who led the league in average yards from scrimmage — can become a free agent in March. Pittsburgh will place a franchise tag on him if the two sides can't agree to a long-term deal, but finding money to do that while also giving All-Pro wide receiver Antonio Brown a new deal will

take some financial ingenuity.

SEE YOU IN 2017?: Linebackers James Harrison and Lawrence Timmons will both hit the open market in March. The 38-year-old Harrison said there's still plenty of gas left in the tank, and considering his production in 2016 (in which he recorded five sacks and played nearly every snap the second half of the season) it's hard to argue. Timmons will turn 31 in May and continues to be a tackling machine but may come at too high a price on the open market to keep.

RESET BUTTON: Martavis Bryant's drug suspension and tight end Ladarius Green's season-long struggle to stay healthy partly led to the Steelers relying on the likes of Rogers and Hamilton. Bryant is eligible for reinstatement this spring while Green is eager to get past a "frustrating" bout with ankle issues and a concussion that limited him to six games. If both are on the field in September, Pittsburgh's offense gets dramatically better without having to spend a dime in free agency.

DRAFT NEEDS: A deep playoff run means the Steelers will be near the rear of the draft order yet again. They'll have the 30th overall pick in April and have serious depth concerns at linebacker with former first-round pick Jarvis Jones not expected to return and Timmons' status uncertain. The secondary could also use another set of fresh legs to pair with Burns on the boundary, particularly if impending free agent Ross Cockrell lands elsewhere.

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