

EPOCH INSIGHT

THE FALL OF CRYPTO'S TOP STAR

By Liam Cosgrove



The Fall of Crypto's Top Star

CRYPTOCURRENCY MARKETS HAVE BEEN in chaos for the past month.

Sam Bankman-Fried's crypto exchange, FTX, failed in a matter of days in early November following a report that exposed potential leverage and solvency problems with his trading firm, Alameda Research.

The report showed a leaked balance sheet that raised many questions, including that a big portion of Alameda Research's assets was made up of the FTT token, which was invented by FTX.

The story, which also revealed "unusually close" ties between the two firms, made investors uneasy and prompted a massive sell-off of FTTs.

Billions of dollars left the FTX exchange within 72 hours. Attempts to save the business at the last minute by selling to rival exchange Binance also failed, resulting in FTX's demise.

The company collapsed in such a shocking and rapid fashion that many see it as the cryptocurrency industry's Lehman moment of 2008.

In this week's edition, we trace the chain of events that ultimately led to the downfall of crypto billionaire Bankman-Fried and his business, which is one of the biggest financial meltdowns of the decade.

JASPER FAKKERT
Editor-in-chief



ON THE COVER

How the crypto star Sam Bankman-Fried and his empire collapsed in a matter of days.

CRAIG BARRITT/GETTY IMAGES FOR CARE FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN

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Auctions highlight the tensions between Forest Service and preservationists.

Former Soviet military officer Viktor Bout (C) was sentenced to prison for selling millions of dollars worth of weapons to a designated foreign terrorist group based in Colombia to kill Americans there, U.S. prosecutors said. Bout has been released in a prisoner swap for U.S. basketball player Brittney Griner, who was arrested after Russian customs officials found drugs in her luggage.

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When you head onto the skating rink, remember to bring your manners.



SPOTLIGHT

Christmas Nativity

PEOPLE TAKE A SELFIE WITH A CAMEL during the annual "Live Nativity on Capitol Hill," organized by Faith and Action in Washington on Dec. 7, 2022. The event included actors portraying Mary, Joseph, baby Jesus, the three wise men, shepherd boys, and townsfolk, as well as a camel, a donkey, and goats.

PHOTO BY OLIVIER DOULIERY/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The Week



A trio of Alpine wild horses keep a wary eye at the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group sanctuary in Prescott, Ariz., on Nov. 30.

PHOTO BY ALLAN STEIN/THE EPOCH TIMES

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A nonprofit group starts matching unvaccinated blood recipients and donors. **46**

INSIDE

“The mother of all economic crises looms, and there will be little that policymakers can do about it.”



Nouriel Roubini, economist, warning about an impending economic crisis in the global economy that policymakers likely will not be able to handle.

“The dignity of human rights is absolute priority.”



Illinois state Rep-elect Delia Ramirez (D-District 3), saying that U.S. politicians should defend Chinese protesters who fight against Beijing’s stringent zero-COVID policies.

\$428 MILLION

The United States is approving \$428 million in **new arms sales to Taiwan** as part of its effort to help the island nation deter a Chinese communist invasion.



55%

A Gallup poll found that a record-high 55 percent of **Americans said in November that inflation caused them some financial hardship.**

41%

A LendingTree survey has found that 41 percent of **Americans believe the housing market will crash next year.**

253 Organizations

Billionaire George Soros, a Democratic mega-donor, has connections with 253 global media organizations, according to the Media Research Center.

THIS PAGE FROM TOP: JOHN LAMPARSKI/GETTY IMAGES FOR CONCORDIA SUMMIT; JEFF SCHERER/GETTY IMAGES FOR LIND COALITION; SHUTTERSTOCK; RIGHT PAGE FROM TOP: SARAH SILBBERG-POOL/GETTY IMAGES; MIKE BLAKE/REUTERS

439 Congregations — Two regional governing bodies of the United Methodist Church in Texas, The Northwest Texas Conference and the Texas Annual Conference, have finalized the split of 439 congregations from the denomination.



Steven D'Antuono, assistant director in charge of the FBI Washington Field Office, speaks at a press conference in Washington, on Jan. 12, 2021.

FBI

Top FBI Official Steps Down as Republicans Prepare to Probe Into Bureau

A TOP FBI OFFICIAL has stepped down just as House Republicans have announced plans to investigate recent operations and actions at the bureau.

In a Dec. 2 post to his LinkedIn profile, Steven D'Antuono, assistant director in charge of the FBI Washington Field Office, announced his retirement.

“After a 26-year, 10-month career with the FBI, I chose to retire,” D'Antuono wrote. “Yesterday was my last day.”

News of D'Antuono’s retirement comes just weeks after Republicans on the House Judiciary Committee named him as one of nine FBI employees they would “require prompt testimony” from as they seek to investigate potential political bias at the bureau.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Elon Musk Fires Twitter’s General Counsel

TWITTER OWNER ELON MUSK has confirmed that one of its top officials, James Baker—a former FBI general counsel—was “exited” from the company on Dec. 6 amid concerns that were raised about his “possible role in suppression of information.”

“In light of concerns about Baker’s possible role in suppression of information important to the public dialogue, he was exited from Twitter today,” Musk wrote on Twitter. Musk didn’t offer any more details on Baker’s exit or what role he played at the firm.

Musk, the new owner of Twitter, was responding to an article penned by Jonathan Turley, a George Washington University law professor and political commentator, who noted that Baker was a former FBI general counsel. Baker hasn’t issued a public comment about his apparent departure from the social media firm.



Tesla CEO Elon Musk speaks at a gaming convention in Los Angeles, on June 13, 2019.

DHS

Deadline for Real IDs Extended Until 2025: DHS

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT of Homeland Security (DHS) is pushing the deadline for Real IDs by two years, meaning Americans will have until 2025 to get their new identification cards.

The DHS announced in a press release that it’s moving the Real ID deadline to May 2025 citing the “lingering impacts” of the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the reason.

ECONOMY

Billions in Pandemic Relief Sent to Hospitals That Didn’t Need Funding: Report

BILLIONS OF DOLLARS in federal pandemic relief were sent to hospitals throughout the United States that didn’t need the funding, while other hospitals failed to meet their needs, according to The Wall Street Journal.

Washington distributed pandemic aid by using average hospital revenue as a proxy for size in order to calculate need, while not relying on COVID-19 caseloads, the outlet reported.

The Provider Relief Fund, which was created by Congress in 2020, was designed to assist hospitals during the pandemic, as facilities were filled with patients who were sick from the virus, while refusing non-life-threatening surgeries that normally provided revenue.

Profitable hospitals with large endowments that didn’t need the massive influx of funds and medical institutions that were overwhelmed with sick patients and needed additional funds received the same amount of cash, according to The Wall Street Journal’s review of financial disclosure reports.



Russian President Vladimir Putin attends an online conference in his residence Novo-Ogaryovo outside Moscow, on Nov. 22.

RUSSIA

Russia's Putin Issues Warning on Mounting Risk of Nuclear Conflict

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN has warned of an “increasing” threat of nuclear war following months of steadily escalating rhetoric between Moscow and Washington.

“This risk [of nuclear conflict] is increasing,” Putin said at a meeting of Russia’s Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society and Human Rights. “Why deny it?”

Putin made the remarks in answer to a question by Svetlana Makovetskaya, director of Russia’s Grani Center of Civil Analysis and Independent Research.

PERU

Peru’s Socialist President Removed From Office After Attempting to Dissolve Congress

PRESIDENT PEDRO CASTILLO was detained and removed from office on grounds of “permanent moral disability” on Dec. 7 after attempting to dissolve Congress and implement a nationwide curfew.

Legislators unanimously denounced the former head of state’s decree as a coup against democratically elected officials.

A few hours before his interception by local authorities, Castillo announced his plans to disband Congress in a televised broadcast.

With visibly shaking hands, the president said he planned to disband the legislative body, which would be replaced by a newly elected assembly with “constituent powers to prepare a new constitution within a period not exceeding nine months.”

During the speech, Castillo declared that a nationwide curfew of 10 p.m. would be effective immediately. He said that starting Dec. 7, “we will only rule by decree.”

Both public and political outrage arrived swiftly on the heels of the former president’s announcement.

CHINA

China Relaxes COVID Restrictions Following Mass Protests

CHINA’S HEALTH OFFICIALS HAVE issued new national guidelines to ease strict COVID-19 measures, following protests that erupted across the country late last month. Residents welcomed the news as cities gradually return to normalcy.

The relaxation of COVID-19 measures—such as allowing infected people with mild or no symptoms to quarantine at home and dropping testing for those traveling within the country—marked the most significant changes since Beijing first implemented the draconian zero-COVID policy three years ago. The measures have inflicted pain on tens of millions of people, dragged down China’s economy, and isolated the nation from the world.

The 10 new guidelines released by the National Health Commission came after several Chinese cities and regions relaxed the restrictions at different levels following the boldest street protests the country has seen in decades.

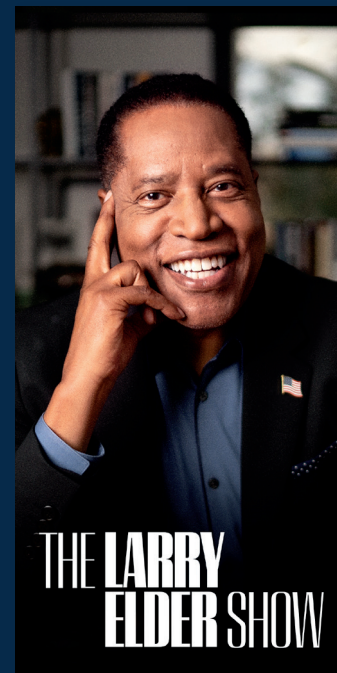
ARGENTINA

Argentina’s Vice President Found Guilty in \$1 Billion Fraud Trial

ARGENTINA’S VICE PRESIDENT, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, has been found guilty in federal court of having committed fraud in a scheme that embezzled about \$1 billion through 51 public works projects while she served as president.

A three-judge panel convicted Fernández de Kirchner, marking the first time a vice president of Argentina has been convicted of a crime while holding office.

Fernández de Kirchner, who served as president of Argentina for two terms between 2007 and 2015, was sentenced to six years in prison and received a life-time ban from holding public office.



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The Week in Photos



1. A Christmas market with lights, decorations, booths, and carousels in Heidelberg, Germany, on Dec. 6.



2. A dog, dressed in festive attire, prepares to take part in the annual five-kilometer Santa Dash in Liverpool, England, on Dec. 4.



3. Ballet dancers wait in the wings during "The Nutcracker," a ballet primarily performed during the Christmas season, by the Dance Centre Kenya with the Nairobi Philharmonic Orchestra at the National Theatre in Nairobi, Kenya, on Dec. 4.

4. A local resident, living in a modular town after her house was destroyed, sits in a tent for warmth amid the Russian invasion of Ukraine, in Borodyanka, Ukraine, on Dec. 4.

5. A man dressed in a Santa Claus costume drives his motorcycle during the 12th edition of the Santa Claus "Papa Noel" rally in Turin, Italy, on Dec. 4.

6. People stand before Mount Semeru following a volcanic eruption at Kajar Kuning village, Indonesia, on Dec. 5. Mount Semeru erupted on Dec. 4, spewing hot ash clouds a mile high and rivers of lava down its side while sparking the evacuation of nearly 2,000 people.



6.



4.



5.

A JOURNEY FROM
**PAIN TO
PEACE**

BY TERRI WU

FATHER OF

VIRGINIA

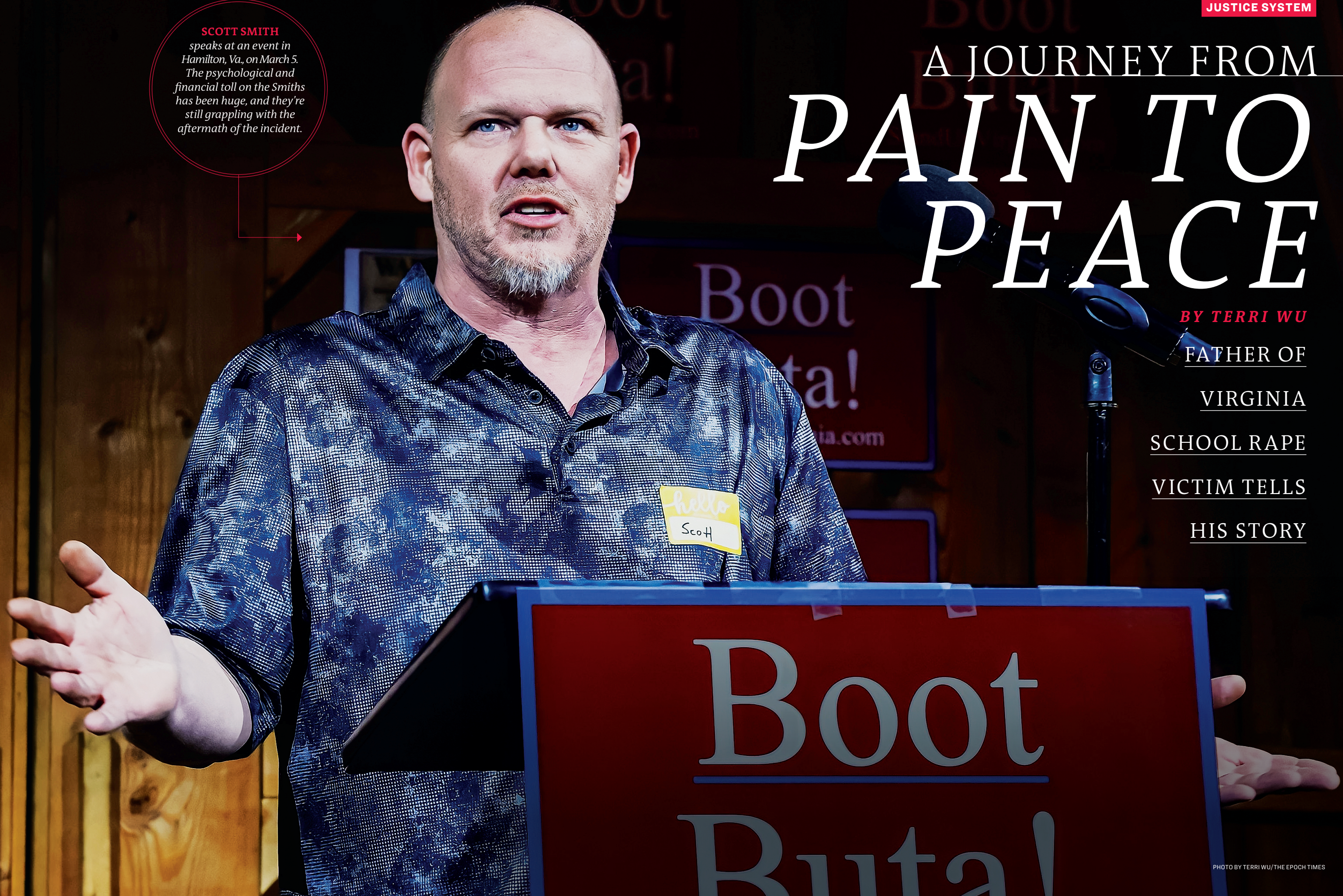
SCHOOL RAPE

VICTIM TELLS

HIS STORY

SCOTT SMITH

speaks at an event in
Hamilton, Va., on March 5.
The psychological and
financial toll on the Smiths
has been huge, and they're
still grappling with the
aftermath of the incident.



LOUDOUN COUNTY, VA.—To say the Smith family has had a tough year and a half would be an understatement.

In May 2021, Scott and Jessica Smith's then-ninth-grade daughter was raped in a school bathroom by a teenage boy wearing a skirt.

The family's ensuing quest for justice has seen them pitched against the school district, county prosecutors, and those supportive of pro-transgender school policies.

Along the way, Scott was arrested after getting into an argument about his daughter's sexual assault at a school board meeting. The incident was later cited as an example of alleged "domestic terrorism" committed by parents targeting school boards.

The psychological and financial toll on the family has been huge, and they're still grappling with the aftermath.

"We live this every day. I do, at least," Jessica told The Epoch Times.

May 28, 2021

"My daughter was beaten up by a boy in the girls' bathroom. That's what I was told," Jessica said, recalling how she was notified by the school about her daughter's rape.

She remembers the exact time of the call: "At 1:27 p.m. on May 28, 2021." It was the Friday before the Memorial Day long weekend.

Unable to reach her husband, she called an employee at their plumbing business to relay the message before heading to the school, Stone Bridge High School in Ashburn, Virginia.

"Why? What really happened?" her thoughts were racing during the 15-minute drive.

When she reached the school, an administrator received Jessica and led her to join her daughter in the vice principal's office. The administrator told Jessica to not ask any questions. So Jessica asked her daughter a few short questions and learned that her daughter had been raped.

About half an hour later, Scott arrived at the school but didn't have an ID on him. The school security didn't allow him in. So he called Jessica and asked her to help him gain access.

"Scott, this is not a physical [assault]. This is a sexual assault," Jessica recalled telling him.

"Okay, I'm coming through the door," Scott immediately said to himself. He kicked the building door a few times.

Then he told the officer: "You need to make a decision right now. You're either going to tackle me, or you're going to have to peacefully escort me to my wife and child."

Scott said, "I was coming through the door one



(Top) Scott Smith is detained by police during a Loudoun County School Board meeting in Ashburn, Va., on June 22, 2021. Scott was arrested for disorderly conduct and obstructing or resisting a police officer without force. **(Above)** Stone Bridge High School, where the Smiths' daughter was raped in a bathroom by a teenage boy wearing a skirt, in Ashburn, Va.

FROM TOP: REUTERS/EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/FILE PHOTO, VAHURZPU/CC BY-SA 4.0 VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

way or the other."

"When your wife and child are behind the door, it gets to a point real quick. I'm not that kind of guy. I'm not going to just turn around and go home. Nor am I going to just turn around and go call my lawyer. I'm coming through the door to get my wife and child. And that's what I did."

He barged through the building doors and arrived at the reception area outside the vice principal's office. Jessica was expecting his arrival. Through the glass on the office door, she could see school security, the School Resource Officer (SRO) and the principal surrounding Scott.

"Oh my God, no, no, no. This is not happening. This right here is not happening," Jessica remembered saying to herself.

Meanwhile, the school staff was dealing with Scott, who was getting more frustrated at how he was treated. Jessica recalled that the SRO, who was supposed to be the Sheriff's deputy, held Scott at the door, protected the principal, and didn't answer Scott's questions.

"Oh yeah, I'm yelling. Yeah, you're damn right," Scott said.

The father said he told them how he felt about them. The staff then called 911.

Scott was then escorted outside the school building. When the police arrived, the officers convened with the SRO and principal, while Scott watched from a distance. They told him that they would let him know the things he would need to know. At this point, his wife and daughter were still inside the vice principal's office.

Two hours after Jessica's arrival at the school, the family finally got a police escort to the sheriff's office, where they met the special victim's unit. Tensions eased up a little when they got to talk to the police.

AT A LOUDOUN COUNTY SCHOOL board meeting, another parent told Scott Smith that the rape of his daughter didn't happen and threatened to ruin his plumbing business on social media, according to Scott.

The detective at the unit was "awesome," said Scott, who said that once they were off the school property, the sheriff's office took care of them.

That Memorial Day weekend went by as a blur. "That weekend ... I don't even remember the weekend," Scott said.

It took months for the rape kit to come back in September 2021. Finally, in July 2021, the teenage boy was arrested and charged with two felonies: forcible sodomy and forcible fellatio.

School Board Meeting Arrest

Before the teenage boy faced charges, it was Scott who found himself on the other side of the law over what happened during a contentious Loudoun County School Board meeting on June 22, 2021.

Scott had just finished up a plumbing job in the area and made a last-minute decision to attend the gathering. It was his first-ever school board meeting. He wanted to check out the debate on a proposed policy, an issue that had now become too close to home. On the agenda was a proposed pro-transgender student policy that would allow students to use school bathrooms ❖

in accordance with their self-defined gender identity. It was a hot-button issue, and the board room was packed with hundreds of concerned parents, residents, and LGBT groups. More than 250 people had registered to speak during the public comment session.

When former state Sen. Richard Black criticized the board for the draft policy, the crowd burst into cheers. The school board immediately ended the public comment session, citing a disruptive crowd. The meeting then entered into a recess, during which the remaining 200 registered speakers continued their public comment through self-organization.

Soon after, Loudoun County Public Schools Superintendent Scott Ziegler declared the meeting an “unlawful assembly” and called for everyone to leave the premises.

Around this time, Scott got into an argument with a woman whose daughter and Scott’s daughter used to be in the same Girl Scouts group. The woman said the rape of Scott’s daughter didn’t happen and threatened to ruin his plumbing business on social media, according to Scott.

When another person tried to grab Scott, he didn’t realize it was a police officer.



Loudoun County Superintendent Scott Ziegler at a school board meeting in Ashburn, Va., on June 22, 2021.

“I turn around, the police are grabbing me, and next thing I know, I’m tackled to the ground,” Scott told Fox News in October 2021. “I’m just shocked and horrified.”

He was arrested for disorderly conduct and obstructing or resisting a police officer without force.

Scott saved the T-shirt that he wore that evening.

“Never been washed,” he said as he pointed to various parts of the shirt. “Blood over my heart. Blood on my back. This hangs next to my bed.”

Jessica said, “We feel injustice throughout the process. It’s been a fight.”

After the public was cleared out of the room, the school board meeting resumed, during which board member Beth Barts asked the superin-



Scott Smith points to the blood stain on the T-shirt he wore on the night of arrest at his residence in Leesburg, Va., on Dec. 10, 2021. He hasn’t washed the T-shirt since his arrest at a Loudoun County School Board meeting on June 22, 2021.

FROM L: LCPs/SCREENSHOT VIA THE EPOCH TIMES, TERRI WU/THE EPOCH TIMES, TERRI WU/THE EPOCH TIMES

tendent if assaults were happening regularly in bathrooms or locker rooms—a key concern for opponents of the policy.

“To my knowledge, we don’t have any record of assaults occurring in our restrooms,” Ziegler responded, noting later that “the predator transgender student or person simply does not exist.”

But emails made public in October show that Ziegler knew about the sexual assault of Scott’s daughter on May 28 and informed the school board on the same day. Ziegler also knew about the 15-year-old’s arrest in early July 2021 but decided to send him to another high school, where another girl became his victim on Oct. 6, 2021.

After the disclosure of the emails, Ziegler acknowledged on Oct. 15, 2021, that his June statement before the school board meeting was false but said he had misunderstood the question.

Injustice in the Justice System

As the cases of his daughter’s rape and his arrest proceeded, Scott’s frustration with the county justice system grew.

“Do you know that guy tried to steal my daughter’s justice?” he said, referring to Barry Zweig, deputy commonwealth’s attorney at Loudoun County.

According to Scott, Zweig told his daughter that her case wasn’t strong enough because she knew the teenage boy and had consensual sex with him before the rape.

“Our daughter was pissed at Barry and came home angry that she wasn’t going to get to go on the stand and fight for her justice, that they were going to make this plea deal and take the word sodomy away, so the charges were completely lesser,” Scott said.

“Barry made it very clear it was his case. The crime was committed against the Commonwealth ... and our daughter just happened to be the victim. And it was going to go his way. So we were kind of hamstrung on that. Well, what are we going to do?”

“Well, next thing we know, we get a phone call that the boy did it again.”

On Oct. 6, 2021, a parent called Jessica and told her about the second incident that happened earlier that day.

But Scott didn’t believe it. As per the court order in late July 2021, the couple had expected the boy to be under house arrest with an ankle monitor until the next court hearing on Oct. 14.

“That particular boy is at his home on an ankle monitor. This must be something else; we don’t

have time for that problem right now,” Scott recalled thinking.

A few hours later, their attorney confirmed that it was the same boy. The boy had been transferred to Broad Run, a different high school in Loudoun.

The plea deal was now off the table.

Zweig didn’t respond to a request by The Epoch Times for comment by press time.

In late October 2021, the 15-year-old boy was found guilty on counts of forcible sodomy and forcible fellatio for raping Scott’s daughter. In November, he pleaded no contest to his sexual assault of a fellow student at Broad Run High School.

On Jan. 12, Judge Pamela L. Brooks of the Loudoun County Juvenile Court sentenced the teenage boy to probation at a residential treatment facility until his 18th birthday in July 2024 and ordered him to be placed in the sex offender registry.

Before announcing her ruling, Brooks said she had dealt with many juvenile

sex offenses, crimes more common than the public realized. She noted that she had read many psychosexual and psychological evaluations, but the defendant’s report “scared” her.

“Yours scared me for yourself, your family, and society in general,” Brooks told the boy. “Young man, you need a lot of help.”

She said even though his attorney argued that the May 28 incident was “consensual,” the court had ruled otherwise.

“When someone says ‘yes’ one day, it doesn’t mean they say ‘yes’ every day,” Brooks said. “‘No’ means no. You exhibited predatory behavior.”

She said she had never put any juvenile on the sex offender registry but would rule so in this case.

The victim impact statements at the beginning of the sentencing hearing noticeably impacted the teenage boy. He cried, shoulders shaking, when Scott spoke directly to him: “You could change. You are young. I don’t believe you are a monster. I thought you looked like a monster, but you really don’t.”

Later, the boy said he didn’t know how much hurt he had caused until he heard the victim’s testimonies.

“I sincerely apologize to the court, families, victims, you, and you,” he said while turning to the two victim families in the room.

For Scott’s daughter, the first victim to give her impact statement at the hearing, the moment the boy started crying was impactful.

“I felt like he finally understood what the other victim and I went through,” she told The Epoch Times. ♦



WE FEEL
injustice
throughout
the process. It’s
been a fight.

Jessica Smith,
mother of victim

Epoch Times afterward.

But two weeks later, Brooks reversed her sex offender registry placement decision, saying she had mistakenly accepted an oral motion from prosecutors asking for the registration and that the prosecutor's office hadn't submitted a written motion. She also revealed that she was aware of a third victim, but that girl hasn't come forward yet.

"My wife and I are not just heartbroken about today's ruling, we are quite frankly mad at how the justice system and the Loudoun Commonwealth's attorney have let down both our daughter, as well as the other victims of his predatory actions," Scott told The Epoch Times on the day of the reversal decision.

"We are now concerned more than ever that this change in his legal status [not having to register as a sex offender] may put other parents' daughters at risk of harm in the future."

In his own case, Scott was found guilty on both charges in mid-August 2021. He felt the county's prosecutors were very strict with him yet lenient with the rapist. During his appeal, he insisted on seeking to remove Loudoun County Commonwealth's Attorney Buta Biberaj from his case, even though it meant an extra cost of a few thousand dollars in legal fees. Scott didn't think he would get a fair case with Biberaj on the other side.

Scott was relieved that Virginia Circuit Court Judge James Plowman dismissed Biberaj from his case in mid-September, citing "concerns" over Biberaj's "impartiality."

'Domestic Terrorist'

After the teenage boy harmed another victim, Scott, in mid-October 2021, decided to come out to speak to the media. Previously, he didn't see the point of "exposing himself" to publicly stand against the pro-transgender policy because he thought the measure was a done deal already. However, the second incident changed everything for him.

Since coming forward, he was thrust into the national spotlight. And, at about the same time, his arrest in June 2021 was included in a National School Boards Association (NSBA) letter as an example of "domestic terrorism" in Virginia school board meetings.

On Sept. 29, 2021, the NSBA sent a controversial letter to President Joe Biden requesting "federal assistance to stop threats and acts of violence"

against public school board members, administrators, teachers, and staff.

The letter, for which the NSBA later apologized, states that "acts of malice, violence, and threats" against school board members over issues such as masking and equity policies could be equivalent to "a form of domestic terrorism."

Within days of the letter, Attorney General Merrick Garland issued a memo to the FBI to direct resources to address an alleged "spike in harassment, intimidation, and threats of violence" against school board officials.

On Oct. 12, 2021, Scott appeared on Fox News and criticized the Department of Justice: "You know that our government is going to weaponize itself against parents and they're using my video [of arrest] across the nation to spread fear? That's wrong."

At roughly 6 p.m. the next day, two military Black Hawk helicopters flew directly above his house. That had never happened before since they moved to their current residence in January 2004, according to the couple.

Scott described the state of national politics as being similar to watching a bad movie.

"Then all of a sudden, I'm starring in it," he said.

"A lot of people get frustrated with me because they're like, 'Scott, you're just all over the place.' But I'm like, 'Okay, guys, sit in my [expletive]

shoes for a second.'

"I've been arrested; my daughter's been raped, beaten up, the prosecutors clearly got a vendetta against us, and we can show you a whole list of things.

"And then next thing I know, I'm a domestic [expletive] terrorist by the Biden administration in the lying DOJ!

"I'm pretty sad that we have to pay money for justice."

Scott said the lawyer fees were bankrupting him, and it was a full-time job for the family to do their own crime fighting.

At the sentencing hearing of the rape case on Jan. 12, the Smiths said the economic and emotional toll on the family was "immeasurable." Their daughter is "managing her days day by day, hour by hour," according to Jessica. The couple also had to spend so much time on legal matters that they didn't have time to do their family plumbing business.

Scott said their business lost customers because his family was accused of lying about the rape, and

THE ABUSER
of the Smiths' daughter was transferred to a different high school as the Smiths were expecting him to be under house arrest.



Scott and Jessica Smith said that following the incident, the economic and emotional toll on the family was "immeasurable."

TERRI WU/THE EPOCH TIMES

these customers "chose not to call us." He also told The Epoch Times that he spent more than \$20,000 on fences and security cameras to protect his home.

"Anytime my wife, my daughter, and myself walk out of those fences, we are in a jungle, and we are unprotected. The only time I feel safe is when all three of us are sitting here [home]," Scott told The Epoch Times in December 2021.

"I can tell you that every time a helicopter flies over the top of the house, I'm afraid that the ATF [Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives] is coming in because of lies.

"I can't find peace. I can find peace for an hour here and an hour there because I've got a great wife. I've got a great daughter.

"But the problem is that [the anger and frustration] just keeps coming in waves—the people who are supposed to be doing their jobs and protecting us are not, and they just continue to bully us, fail us, and lie."

A Turning Point

When speaking with The Epoch Times in late September, Scott was calmer. He described his commitment to protecting his family as "a personal war."

"This wasn't about getting somebody elected to a school board or getting somebody fired. This was war," he said.

Scott said he was "still very angry at the justice system," but time had calmed him down, along with a few victories, including the dismissal of Biberaj from his appeals case.

An attorney general's special grand jury investigation into his daughter's rape case was announced on the first day Virginia Gov. Glenn Youngkin took office.

On Sept. 2, the Supreme Court of Virginia denied the school district's appeal to block the investigation.

But it was a cross-country trip over the ♣



Scott Smith speaks to reporters during a media interview in front of the Loudoun County District Courthouse in Leesburg, Va., on Jan. 12.

summer with his friend Jon Tigges that helped bring some spiritual healing. Scott called the journey “my spiritual pilgrimage.”

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Scott had wanted to “renew my relationship with God” but didn’t want to do that over Zoom.

“I remember thinking to myself, ‘Whether God’s real or not, whether these people are crazy or not, I haven’t seen a better gathering of like minds than the Christian faith. So why doubt it?’”

He didn’t know Tigges before June 22, 2021. They were arrested at the same school board meeting; Tigges was arrested for refusing to leave the boardroom. After their arrests, they rode on two different sides of the same police van. Scott remembered Tigges’s loud protests of his arrest.

“I’m going to repeat what he said when they came to me,” Scott thought.

But he was sent to jail that night, while Tigges was released on a summons.

He later learned Tigges’s name via the national news. Then both of them were referenced in the NSBA letter.

Tigges later hired Scott to build bathrooms at his agribusiness venue during the first quarter of 2022. While Scott had a repair business before, he didn’t do any building anymore. But he accepted the contract.

“It gave me somewhere to hide out, feel safe, and be part of his family. Eating lunch and dinner

with him and praying before meals ... I just picked up on it from him and his family,” Scott said.

Tigges also started a GoFundMe campaign to help the Smith family cover some legal expenses.

Scott managed to get some respite for a few months after the perpetrator’s sentence. But the peace didn’t last long.

In May, Loudoun County Public Schools shared its Title IX investigation results with the Smith family. The couple received screenshots from the hallway security camera footage of all parties entering and exiting the bathroom where the rape happened, videos of the detective speaking to the perpetrator and his mother, and other information.

“Almost a year later, it was devastating because we had to go through all of these again, testimonies, and listen to all these and go, ‘What?’” Jessica said.

Scott said, “That’s when I started falling apart again.

“I have drawn a horrific picture on my own of the crime scene through all the information we have seen.”

Determined to get all the facts, Jessica made Freedom of Information Act requests to the county Sheriff’s office and paid for the documents. As a result, the family got a stream of new information from May through July that only made Scott angrier.

Finally, on July 31, Scott felt like he couldn’t take it anymore. He reached out to Tigges and asked to join him. Tigges had departed on July 20 on a cross-country tour to share with others the benefit of creating in-person meetings for conservatives to defend citizens’ constitutional rights. Scott flew to Arizona and joined the tour on Aug. 19.

At his first stop in Scottsdale, Arizona, Scott remembered telling a table of 10 people after hearing them say, “We will run this by God,” “What does God have to do with this? I need all 10 of you to act!”

Afterward, one member of the group spoke to Scott.

“You might be frustrated with us, but don’t give up on us,” the person said.

Scott remembered him as very genuine and was impressed by his “nonconfrontational way of de-escalating the situation that made me walk away feeling okay about it.”

Scott had wanted to tell everyone about the wrongs done to his family. But, to Scott’s surprise, people he met on the tour were already aware. On the trip, different groups that didn’t know each other would say the same prayer—Ephesians 6:10-13—for Scott.

“It was crazy,” Scott said.

He asked Tigges if the prayer was popular and that all Christians would have a copy in their wal-

lets, and Tigges said no.

At their stop in Tulsa, Oklahoma, they met another Christian who told them that as she was cooking and cleaning to prepare for their visit, she had the urge to read some scriptures.

Then, the following verse came to her: “Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain. And he shall bring forward the top stone amid shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’”

She thought it was dark and didn’t understand the purpose until Scott walked into her house. It was then she realized that the prayer was for Scott.

Tigges said the messages from the prayers throughout the journey were that “your efforts will be glorified, and God will be glorified by you standing firm for your daughter in this fight.”

“And that gave him tremendous peace,” Tigges told The Epoch Times. “I think it’s the first time he’s heard someone affirming that this is going to be dealt with.”

Scott said the pure anger had become more manageable over time and that the family was “more laser-focused and more determined to get them [Loudoun County officials] to tell the truth.”

The father said he was lucky that his daughter had responded to equine therapy, which she started in August 2021, and came around. And the family became closer during the a-year-and-



\$20,000

SCOTT SMITH said that he spent more than \$20,000 on fences and security cameras to protect his home.

a-half ordeal.

The cross-country trip was a gift to Scott. He embarked on the journey without a clear purpose other than sharing his grievances.

“After a couple of stops, spending time with strong Christian believers, my purpose became clear. It was not to spread my message but to hear theirs,” he said.

“The message I received was that God’s door was already open to me, he has a purpose for me. I just had to believe in him, learn to trust him, and he would take care of the rest.

“Once I put my troubles in his hands and let go, a peace came over me, one I hadn’t experienced before.

“And just like that, my questions were answered, my doubts gone. I decided to walk with the Lord, a greater power than myself, something I had been missing all along.” ■

(Top) Scott Smith speaks to Loudoun County School Board members in Ashburn, Va., on Sept. 13.

(Below) Footage from a Loudoun County School Board meeting on June 22, 2021.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: TERRILL/THE EPOCH TIMES; TERRILL/THE EPOCH TIMES; TERRILL/THE EPOCH TIMES; TERRILL/THE EPOCH TIMES; TERRILL/THE EPOCH TIMES

PELOSI ATTACK

EX-GIRLFRIEND OF PELOSI ATTACK SUSPECT SPEAKS OUT

Wants records released, including 911 call audio and police body-camera footage

BY JANICE HISLE

OXANE “GYPSY” TAUB SAID SHE DOUBTS the allegations that her ex-lover faces in the Oct. 28 hammer attack on Paul Pelosi, husband of U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The whole thing is shrouded in secrecy,” Taub, 53, told The Epoch Times on Nov. 22, a day before she released a lengthy open letter to Nancy Pelosi on a website where Taub has posted nudist and other content since 2008. The latest post includes an apology to Pelosi, additional details about her ex-boyfriend David DePape, and a poem promoting peace.

The letter states, “I invite you all to look at the incident that happened at Pelosi’s house with an open mind and an open heart.”

During a series of collect calls from a women’s prison in California, Taub discussed her relationship with DePape, the Pelosi attack suspect, and her knowledge of his past. She also raised questions about the night he was arrested at Pelosi’s San Francisco home.

‘A Really Sweet Person’

Taub noted that officials have refused to release records such as the audio recording of Paul Pelosi’s call to 911, police officers’ body-camera footage, and DePape’s mugshot.

“If things were the way they described, why not show everybody the photos?” Taub said. “Everybody would just believe them.”

Instead, she said in the absence of those records questions swirl.

In her blog post, Taub urges Nancy Pelosi to



Oxane “Gypsy” Taub, 53, longtime girlfriend of David DePape, in a 2021 mugshot.

call for the records to be made public.

“If you have any control of this investigation (which I am not going to assume you do), please tell the authorities to release the security camera footage, the body camera footage from different angles, the entire dispatch tape, and witness interviews instead of spreading

conspiracy theories about David,” Taub wrote.

Authorities allege that DePape, 42, broke into the Pelosi residence, intending to kidnap and interrogate Nancy Pelosi, but she wasn’t home.

When police responded to Paul Pelosi’s 911 call, officers saw the two men struggling over a hammer, according to court records. DePape allegedly wrested the weapon away and used it to strike the 80-year-old victim’s head. Paul Pelosi suffered serious injuries but survived; DePape is charged with attempted murder and other offenses.

Taub said it makes no sense for someone like DePape, who long held “progressive” ideals, to harbor ill will toward Pelosi, a longtime standard bearer for the Democratic party.

“David was a peace activist. He never expressed any desires to solve political problems through violence. He went to a lot of anti-war protests



and participated in nonviolent resistance,” Taub’s blog post reads.

However, Taub had fallen out of touch with DePape in recent months, and more recent acquaintances told the New York Post that DePape had abused drugs and was spouting right-wing conspiracy theories.

Taub at one point conceded that she suspected that he could’ve been under the influence of drugs. Still, she emphasized that violent behavior would be “out of character” for DePape.

“David is a really sweet person, and I really don’t believe that he did what he’s accused of,” she said.

To support her contentions, Taub asserted that DePape had shown no aggressive tendencies during the 22 years she has known him. She said DePape is extremely reserved.

‘Afraid of People’

When they first met, DePape hardly spoke to her. But Taub said she sensed “a beautiful soul” inside of him.

“That’s what I love about him, is the true David that is in there,” she said, hidden beneath “the rubble of trauma.”

After a while, DePape started opening up more to her, and he told her about his traumatic childhood. DePape told her he grew up in a family in which he would be punished if he expressed his emotions or violated other household rules, Taub said.

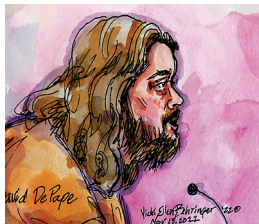
She believes that DePape was severely abused. “[A caregiver] poured a pot of boiling water on him when he was 2 years old, and he nearly died,” she said. “And his shirt, the design on his shirt got imprinted on his skin. That’s how hot that ♦♦

Police tape near the home of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) in San Francisco on Oct. 28.

FROM L. COURTESY CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES



(Above) David DePape's former house and camper van, which currently belong to his ex-lover, Oxane Taub, in Berkeley, Calif., on Oct. 30. (Below) A courtroom sketch of David Wayne DePape.



As his ex-girlfriend, Oxane Taub asserted that David DePape had shown no aggressive tendencies during the 22 years she has known him.

water was.”

DePape eventually made his way from his native land, Canada, to Hawaii. That’s where he and Taub met in 2000. She was born in Russia and immigrated to New York in 1988. Twelve years later, she went to Hawaii when she was eight months pregnant to tap into social services for single mothers.

“I thought it would be a beautiful place to raise a baby,” Taub said.

She ran into DePape when they were both looking for a place to live.

“He was afraid to even talk,” Taub said. “My landlord in Hawaii said, ‘I never met anyone who was more afraid of people than David.’”

15 Years Together

Taub described DePape as a man who was so painfully shy that he had difficulty getting a job. That rendered him perpetually homeless and lonely.

“I was the only person he could talk to for many years,” she said. “I was the only person he wasn’t afraid to have a conversation with. So he’s very shy, very submissive.”

In contrast, Taub is outgoing. They became a couple. They moved to California and had two children together, in addition to the child fathered by another man. Taub said their relationship suffered because of DePape’s inability to communicate well.

She and DePape didn’t really function as “a couple” but stayed together to raise the children “because he was always helping me,” Taub said. Although he couldn’t contribute financially, he would help watch the children, she said.

Taub said she taught him meditation techniques to help him cope with the emotional pain from his past.

“There were times when he definitely experienced joy being with us, and he got better,” she said.

They lived together as a family for about 15 years, except for 18 months when DePape lived on the streets alone.

“When he came back, he was paranoid. He thought people were following him,” she said. And, according to her children, “He thought he might be Jesus.”

Apart but In Touch

Taub and DePape parted ways about seven years ago, but they remained in touch periodically. DePape was so poor that he relied on meals from soup kitchens, she said.

The last time she contacted DePape was about two weeks before the Pelosi attack. Reflecting on her life while incarcerated, Taub felt terrible that many months had elapsed since their last communication. So she mailed a note to a post office box that DePape rented in Berkeley, California.

“I sent him a letter saying that I love him and I miss him. And I really want to help him heal and I want to, like, see him on a regular basis,” Taub said.

She didn’t get a response, but she assumed the letter was delivered because the postal service didn’t return the letter to her.

The next thing she knew, DePape had been arrested in the Pelosi attack.

Based on everything Taub understood about him, it made no sense.

“He’s not going to break into someone’s house and start threatening, you know, politicians and their family members and physically assaulting them,” she said. “If anyone knew David, they will tell you that is the complete opposite of what he would behave like.”

Suspect’s Transportation a Mystery

Taub wonders how DePape made his way to the Pelosi residence. He didn’t have enough money to buy a car and used a bicycle for transportation.

“He had no way of getting to San Francisco at 2 in the morning. Someone had to bring him there,” she said.

She thinks DePape was still living in Berkeley, about a 20-minute car ride from San Francisco.

Taub also said details about DePape’s injuries are lacking. She would like to know more about the extent and type of injuries he suffered.

Authorities have disclosed that Paul Pelosi underwent surgery to repair a skull fracture and was hospitalized for six days as a result of the attack. But she said she hasn’t heard descriptions



of DePape’s injuries.

Whatever happened, “David deserves justice, and the American people deserve to know the truth,” Taub said.

She feels sympathetic to Nancy Pelosi. “I still feel bad this has happened to her because she did not deserve it.”

No Political Disagreements

Taub also said she wanted to set the record straight on a few points.

First, she acknowledges that she practices nudism, which she calls “body freedom.” However, DePape was “not really that much of a nudist,” she said. Rather, he attended nudist events to help with her crusade.

“He basically just always supported me and my activism,” Taub said.

She said she likes Nancy Pelosi and can’t remember DePape saying anything bad about her or her politics in years past.

“We never had any disagreements about a political issue,” Taub said.

Future Plans

About her August 2021 conviction on 20 charges related to her repeated contact with a teen boy, Taub said, “I’m innocent,” noting that the case is “under appeal.”

Her trial lawyer, Christopher Dobbins, has said that Taub “never touched” the youth and that her overzealous intentions of helping him were misinterpreted.



Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and her husband, Paul Pelosi.

Footage of damage done to the home of House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) in San Francisco on Oct. 28.

Taub noted that officials have refused to release records such as the audio recording of Paul Pelosi’s call to 911, police officers’ body-camera footage, and DePape’s mugshot.

Taub said, “I’m just tired of being slandered over the media. ... The last thing I would do is hurt a child. ... I protect people. That’s why I’m here—because I was trying to protect him. I was trying to help him get to the youth shelter.”

She’s scheduled to be freed from prison on Jan. 4, 2023. Taub has been unable to communicate with DePape while she remains incarcerated; she wants to see him.

“I’m definitely going to visit him,” she said. “And that’s the first thing I want to do.” ■

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: LILIAN ZHOU/THE EPOCH TIMES; KGO-TV VIA ABC VIA REUTERS; JOSHUA ROBERTS/REUTERS; REUTERS/WICKI BERRINGER

Laura Kronen, a Fulton County election worker who was fired along with her son shortly before the polls opened on Nov. 8.

PHOTO BY BE YOU ONLY BETTER

2022 ELECTIONS

GEORGIA MOM FIRED FROM POLLS, DOXXED

Election worker, teen son fired on Election Day faced a deluge of hate and harassment

BY STEVEN KOVAC



A SIMPLE ACT OF CIVIC involvement has turned the lives of a Georgia family into a nightmare.

Shortly before the polls opened on Nov. 8, Fulton County election workers Laura Kronen and her 16-year-old son were fired and ordered out of the polling place. The reason for the dismissals remains in dispute.

After media outlets picked up the story that Kronen had made posts on her social media accounts while at the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, an aggressive doxxing and cancellation campaign sprouted up. Kronen said her family have since been the target of numerous death threats and thousands of other “vile and threatening messages.”

“The woke social media mob searched out people I know and organizations I do business with to tell them I am a terrorist. Some of my contacts and associates dropped me. Even some conservatives dropped me out of fear,” Kronen told *The Epoch Times*.

“Doxxers have called our employers, customers, and my publisher making slanderous accusations. This ruined the ratings of the two books I authored and cost my husband’s business suppliers and clients.

“Doxxers posted pictures of us on terrorist watch websites and sent 20,000 social media messages tagged to the police, FBI, and even Child Protective Services.”

William “Trey” Kelly, the chairman of the Fulton County Republican Party, told *The Epoch Times* he found the Kronen family’s situation “disturbing.”

“Laura Kronen and her family have a good reputation. She loves her country and is concerned about what’s going on in Fulton County,” Kelly said. “I believe Laura was targeted for her political views and her son was fired for no reason.”

The Kronens intend to file a complaint with the Georgia State Elections Commission and are contemplating further legal action.

Election Day

Kronen told *The Epoch Times* that she believes she and her son were thrown out because of their conservative political beliefs.

According to Kronen, Johns Creek ❖

polling place supervisor J. Campbell O’Keeffe walked up and abruptly told the pair they had to leave the building immediately or he would call the police.

“When I asked him the reason, Mr. O’Keeffe gave us no clear answer,” said Kronen. “I told him I wasn’t leaving until I spoke with a higher election official.”

O’Keeffe didn’t respond to The Epoch Times’ requests for comment.

Kronen said she then spoke by phone with Fulton County Elections Director Nadine Williams.

An audio recording of the conversation made by Kronen captures Williams explaining to Kronen that she was fired because of some recent tweets.

When pressed by Kronen for specifics, Williams hung up.

Kronen told The Epoch Times that she didn’t accept expressing an opinion on Twitter as a valid reason to fire her and told O’Keeffe she wasn’t leaving until she received an explanation.

As Kronen continued to defend her constitutional right to free expression, she said someone from within the polling place called the police to report a “disorderly person.”

“We were not disorderly. We left the building without incident. Look at the police report. We were not arrested,” she said.

“So, they fired me for exercising my right to free speech. Why did they fire my son? He had nothing to do with my tweets. Was he kicked out merely because of his relationship with me? That’s guilt by association. It’s un-American.”

One of the six Johns Creek police officers that responded to the call from the polling place phoned Williams.

The officer wrote in his report that Williams told him that Kronen had made a derogatory post on social media that mentioned “taking photos/videos in the polling place.”

The police report says, “Williams stated that her office sent the information to the Secretary of State’s office.

“Williams stated that the Secretary of State’s office reviewed Kronen’s social media page and found other posts of concern.”

A spokesperson for the Secretary of State’s (SOS) office told The Epoch Times, “Concerns were expressed by Fulton County, not by our office.”



Observers watch as Fulton County, Ga., election officials count the votes in Atlanta on Jan. 6, 2021.

The spokesperson also said the SOS office was “not aware” of any review or search of Kronen’s social media conducted by SOS personnel.

“Fulton County ultimately made the decision (to fire the Kronens),” the spokesperson said.

Williams didn’t respond to a request for comment.

In a Nov. 3 tweet, Kronen encouraged her Twitter followers to “Stay alert! Report everything you see! Take videos of anything you think might be shady,” but made no mention of taking videos inside a polling place.

“I never said anything about election workers or poll watchers working in precincts using cameras,” Kronen told The Epoch Times. “I never urged anybody inside the polling places to do that and would not do it myself.

“I think the authorities inferred something from my words that wasn’t there and used that as a pretext for my firing. What happened to the presumption of innocence until proven guilty?”

Kronen said that she believes she first came under scrutiny from Williams after she asked a couple of questions during a Zoom pep rally for election

workers held on Nov. 6, before the election.

“About 120 of us attended. They were singing the song ‘Ain’t No Stopping Us Now,’ and saying things like ‘This is our final push. ... We are going to make history in Fulton County ... It’s all coming down to us.’”

Kronen recorded the 15-minute pep rally on her cellphone.

“My son and I were surprised to hear such things coming from poll workers, so I asked in the chat box why they were chanting and how they intended to make history,” she said. “That’s when I believe Williams flagged me as not one of them.”

Kronen’s contention was confirmed in a Nov. 7 statement from Fulton County that was reported by the fact-checking organization Lead Stories.

The statement says that the day after the pep rally, a Fulton County poll worker complained on social media “about comments made by another poll worker during a virtual event held on Nov. 6.

“Fulton County Registration & Elections shared those concerns with the Secretary of State’s office, who contacted

us this morning with additional concerns.”

The statement says that after further discussion with the SOS office, Fulton County decided to terminate the two poll workers.

Jan. 6

The news reports about Kronen’s presence on Jan. 6, 2021, at the U.S. Capitol stemmed from a tweet she sent that day.

“I stood up for what’s right today in Washington D.C. The election was a sham. Mike Pence is a traitor. I was tear gassed FOUR times. I have pepper spray in my throat. I stormed the Capitol Building,” Kronen wrote. “And my children have had the best learning experience of their lives.”

She told The Epoch Times that she pulled down that tweet within 10 minutes.

“I realized it was composed in the excitement and enthusiasm of the moment with poorly chosen words that did not accurately describe my actual experience.”

While she never entered the building that day, media reports falsely claimed that she stated in an interview that she had gone inside, Kronen said.

“We were outdoors on the side of the building and so far back in the enor-

“The woke social media mob searched out people I know and organizations I do business with to tell them I am a terrorist.”

Laura Kronen, election worker, Fulton County

mous crowd that we couldn’t even see what was going on. We were four inconspicuous dots in a sea of people.

“My husband, our two sons, and I had walked to the Capitol following the program in front of the White House, in which President Trump told the large audience to go peacefully to the Capitol and make our voices heard.”

According to Kronen, it was a windy day and tear gas was carried by the breeze over thousands of bystanders surrounding the Capitol.

“My throat was burning, and my eyes were watering, causing my makeup to streak over my face,” she said.

“We were just standing there. We did nothing wrong. We were not arrested or charged with anything.”

FBI

Federal law enforcement paid a visit to the family’s Georgia home on Jan. 18, 2021, less than two weeks after the events at the Capitol.

“They came to the door and said they wanted to talk to me. I’m not sure if they were FBI or Secret Service,” Kronen said.

“I told them my lawyer would be happy to answer any questions they might have, so send them to him. They never did.

“Strangely, the federal agents informed me that President Biden was coming to town and that it would probably be better if I did not attend the event—as if I ever would.”

The agents visited her again on April 22, 2021.

“I was on my way to play tennis. When I arrived at the court, two cars pulled up.

It was the FBI,” she said. “I didn’t realize they had been following me. Once again, I directed them to my lawyer. They never contacted him.

“They weren’t investigating. They were all about intimidation and control. That’s what they do.

“I’m a law-abiding citizen. I’ve never been in any trouble and don’t have so much as a parking ticket.

“Suddenly, I’m Public Enemy Number One!”

The firing of Kronen and her son on the morning of Election Day is to her a great wrong and evidence of a double standard of justice.

“The radical leftist Tom Hayden was arrested, charged, and tried for several felonies in connection with the riots at the Democrat National Convention in 1968.

“He was tried in a Chicago court. Of course, he was acquitted! But the point is, he was there. In fact, he was all over the country inciting protests, especially in California.

“Later, the socialist Tom Hayden was elected to the California state legislature as a Democrat—Yet, my son and I can’t even serve as lowly poll workers in our hometown because we are conservatives and supporters of President Donald Trump.” ■



Laura Kronen said that doxxers have made slanderous accusations and posted pictures of her and her son on terrorist watch websites.

FLORIDIANS STILL COMBATING COVID POLICIES

*Immunity for hospitals,
treatment protocols, and vaccine
mandates still affecting residents*

BY NANETTE HOLT

KISSIMMEE, FLA.—ONE BILLION seconds of being married.

That's the milestone Eric Schrock was planning to celebrate as a surprise for his love, Cynthia, until the 56-year-old real estate broker fell ill with COVID-19.

There won't be a party now. Cynthia Schrock discovered her husband's secret after he was gone.

Now, she blames his death on what she believes was improper care during his three weeks of treatment in a Florida hospital. Because he tested positive for COVID-19, the facility followed protocols for treating the virus, as outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

But a year later, a review of his hospital records by an independent doctor showed he died, not of COVID-19, she says, but from a three-week undiagnosed heart attack.

"They ignored the heart attack and went straight to the COVID protocol," she told *The Epoch Times*.

Schrock and dozens of others with similar stories about loved ones lost have pledged to come to-

gether at medical freedom rallies and press events as often as they can to continue telling of their heartbreak.

Through it, they hope to inspire what they say could be lifesaving changes to Florida's laws.

They hope to protect people still being treated for the disease, even though it's too late for their own loved ones.

On Oct. 13, they spent an hour in prayer together. They asked for comfort and for wisdom for Florida's lawmakers.

They asked for blessings and protection for the state's top executive, Gov. Ron DeSantis, and his wife and three children.

Then they spent three hours sharing their stories through tears.

They'd hoped the recorded event, dubbed "Your Story Counts: The Untold Atrocities of COVID-19" would draw a room full of cameras and reporters.

But the sanctuary of Nacion de Fe church in Kissimmee stayed mostly empty. ♦

*Eric and Cynthia Schrock, before he
fell ill and was treated at a hospital
for COVID-19.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF CYNTHIA SCHROCK



A public relations service had been hired to blast out a statement to media outlets. But the company abruptly canceled the contract, backing away because of what sounded like a plan to spread “misinformation,” according to the notice obtained by The Epoch Times.

Still, desperate for someone to listen, they told their stories anyway to a lone reporter.

Hoping to spur Florida lawmakers to undo a measure giving hospitals immunity in the treatment of COVID-19, they shared their pain, one by one.

They told of pleading with doctors to try alternative COVID-19 treatments they believed would help their ailing loved ones. They told of directives ignored, even though patients and caregivers vehemently refused mechanical ventilation, Remdesivir, and other treatments they considered harmful.

They told of life-altering ailments they say came from COVID-19 vaccines. And they told of on-the-job mistreatment—and termination, for some—after refusing the jabs.

They still believe DeSantis can help, if they can catch his attention.

Before signing a law in February to extend immunity from liability for hospitals, DeSantis spoke passionately about the need to protect doctors. He said they should be able to prescribe alternatives not recommended by the CDC for the treatment of COVID-19.

Some loved ones left behind said they don’t understand why he signed the law that provides immunity only for health care providers strictly adhering to CDC-recommended protocols. They say the measure keeps doctors from doing what’s best for some patients with COVID-19.

They haven’t given up hope that DeSantis or lawmakers will find a way to reverse course.

For now, that’s up to elected officials in the Florida Legislature, the governor’s press secretary, Bryan Griffin, told The Epoch Times.

“At this point, I’d be asking the legislature what they intend to accomplish on this matter,” Griffin wrote in an email. “Our standard practice is to decide on the merits of each piece of legislation when it comes to his desk for signature.”

And it’s still too early to say what Florida lawmakers will do in the next legislative session, Republican Rep. Chuck Clemons said. Clemons was elected within the state House of Representatives as speaker pro tempore, tapped to serve if the speaker of the House isn’t available.

“The [new Legislature’s] first committee week will be in January, so it is too premature as to what legislation may be introduced regarding the subject,” Clemons told The Epoch Times in an email. “As it gets closer to March, and the beginning of the 2023 session, things will become more clear.”

Until then, Schrock and others plan to keep telling their stories wherever anyone will listen.



Vaccine Troubles

Removing hospitals’ immunity from legal consequences related to their treatment of COVID-19 isn’t the only change needed in Florida, says Nick Caturano, a longtime worker at Walt Disney World.

Several times, he’s brought together speakers to share their stories of suffering related to COVID-19. Among them are colleagues at Disney who say they’ve faced burdensome consequences for refusing to take COVID-19 vaccines.

In Florida, companies are required to accept requests for exemption from taking the jab. So Caturano, his colleagues, and co-workers who’ve lost their jobs have filed a lawsuit against Disney.

More than 700 complaints against employers in the state have been filed since vaccine mandates were banned on Nov. 18, 2021. About 140 of those are currently under active review.

Investigators found “probable cause” in nine cases, according to Kylie Mason, press secretary for Florida Attorney General Ashley Moody. Un-

700 COMPLAINTS
 MORE THAN 700 COMPLAINTS against employers in Florida have been filed since vaccine mandates were banned. About 140 of those are currently under active review.



(Top) Family members upset about hospital treatment for COVID-19 are displayed on posters at a press conference in Kissimmee, Fla., on Oct. 13. (Above) Cynthia Schrock speaks about the death of her husband at the same event.

der Florida law, that triggers a formal administrative complaint and a hearing before an administrative law judge.

The remaining 550 cases were closed because the

facts presented were “insufficient to show a violation of the law,” Mason said.

The Epoch Times requested information about how long it takes for complainants to know the disposition of their cases, and whether any penalties had been imposed against employers.

“As our reviews are ongoing, we cannot comment further at this time,” Mason said.

Employees facing discrimination or firing for not taking COVID-19 vaccines need help now, Caturano told The Epoch Times.

And legal measures that keep hospitals locked into strictly following CDC protocols to treat COVID-19 need to be reversed, he said. That way, doctors will be free to do what they think is best for patients.

“We will continue to appeal to Gov. DeSantis to repeal hospital immunity and to get straightforward laws that protect our rights to choose our medical treatments, [to have] informed consent, and to abolish any and all avenues, loopholes, and powers of discrimination based on health status and medical choices,” Caturano said.

“The experts have been proven to be outright, compromised liars that have politics in mind, not real science, data, and the welfare of constituents” since the pandemic began, he said.

“They must never have the power to override our consciences, personal choices, and the abilities to protect ourselves and loved ones to the best of our ability. The power and freedom to choose medically what is best for us and our families must be given back to ‘we the people.’”

He’s determined to see Florida’s laws changed to prevent leaders and “so-called experts” from having “special powers” again, he said.

“They had it, grossly abused it, and the system can never be trusted—and so be empowered—again.

“There needs to be real transparency and checks and balances put into place, and it starts with all medical choices being up to the individual, not the state or medical-system machine. Not our employers or service providers. The choices are ours and ours alone, so help us God.”

It’s too important to stay silent, Schrock said, as she spoke at Nacion de Fe church, surrounded by others still in mourning. Too much was lost when her husband was taken from her. There was too much left uncelebrated.

While he fought COVID-19, his 57th birthday passed and his first granddaughter was born in the same hospital, a few floors below his room. He never met her.

So now, Cynthia Schrock is the one keeping track of passing moments in time, vowing, along with the others, to use them to keep fighting for changes in Florida’s laws.

Because “today,” she said, “marks 34,070,400 seconds I have been without the love of my life.” ■

Participants dressed as cuddly animals arrive for the annual Eurofurence “furries” gathering at the Estrel hotel in Berlin on Aug. 22, 2018.



PHOTO BY MICHELE TANTUSSI/STRINGER/GETTY IMAGES

Convicted pedophile says predators use online forums, “furry” fad to groom children

A CONVICTED PEDOPHILE is warning parents that the “furry” craze, in which students dress up and act like animals, may seem like harmless fun but could expose children to sexual predators.

Furries often describe themselves online as anthropomorphic—half-human, half-animal—or as animals with human attributes. They dress in animal costumes that reflect those identities.

Though the trend is becoming popular in schools, adults have been participating in “furry fandom” for years, attending conferences and congregating online and in person.

Furries often identify as LGBT, according to Furscience, a furry research group. Some adult furries have complained that they are unfairly stigmatized in the media.

While children dressing up as furries may seem harmless, it could open the door for sexual predators.

Some adults participate in furry activities to gain access to children and “groom” them for sexual activity, a convicted pedophile told The Epoch Times. He was released on parole after serving four years in prison for crimes that included possession and distribution of child pornography and sexual conduct involving children ages 11 to 14.

At the request of The Epoch Times, and on the condition of anonymity, the parolee provided information through his therapist, Jon Uhler.

Gaining Access

Uhler is a 30-year veteran counselor, who has worked with sex offenders in the Pennsylvania and South Carolina prison systems.

He said the parolee agreed to reveal how sexual predators use the furry phenomenon to groom children. ♦

CHILD EXPLOITATION

‘FURRY’ CRAZE ‘GROOMERS’ AN OPEN DOOR FOR

By Darlene McCormick Sanchez

Sexual predators are motivated by the thrill of the hunt and playing good people for fools, an expert says.

Furry activity is discussed among pedophiles, usually in online forums such as Discord, the parolee said in an email.

Furry costumes disguise predators behind animal masks, allowing them to hide their identity while being able to access children, he said.

“Parents think that it is like Disneyland—that if something looks cute and harmless, it is safe,” the parolee wrote.

“Sexual predators are testing the parents, while they get close to the children. The more trusting a parent is, the easier it is to gain access to the minor.”

Teachers, school administrators, and parents around the country have told *The Epoch Times* that students identifying as furies is a growing and disturbing trend in schools. Yet mainstream media reports have insisted that the existence of furies is a myth perpetuated by conservatives trying to falsely sound alarms about public schools.

A parent group in Colorado filed records requests to prove that school officials knew about students showing up to school as furies while publicly denying it. Records showed that the parents were right.

Furies—sometimes known among students as “animal avengers”—may hiss, bark, and claw at the air while dressed in animal tails, ears, fur gloves, or other costume embellishments.

Students portraying themselves as furies sometimes wear collars with attached leashes, which allows them to be “walked” by peers.

Sex Offender Treatment

Alan Hopewell, a Texas clinical neuropsychologist, said that on the one hand, there’s nothing wrong with people dressing up, which is common with reenactors of historical events or characters at Disney.

But on the other hand, research has shown that some people who delve into the world of furies practice predatory behavior.

He noted that at one furry convention in Seattle, police made several arrests for sexual assaults, although it’s unclear if any of the victims were minors.

“The point is, at that end, nobody can deny that’s not pathological and a problem with mental illness,” Hopewell said.

The parolee who shared insights into how furies lure children into sexual relationships is now in sex offender treatment after his release from prison, his therapist confirmed.

Sophisticated sexual predators have no conscience, empathy, or remorse, Uhler said. They morph into sexual deviance, a state of mind that makes traumatizing victims the primary goal, he said.

“Predators know us better than we know them, because they once were normal,” Uhler said.

Sexual predators are motivated by the thrill of the hunt and playing good people for fools, he explained.

“They love game theory,” he said. “They love tactics—that’s half the fun of it. So they like beating the system.”

Making Contact Online

The parolee confirmed that grooming often starts with furry online games, where sexual predators can start conversations with young players. Predators can pretend to be any age or gender to unsuspecting children.

Once predators get children interested in furies, they start suggesting to the children that they attend events, such as furry conventions, the convict said. At those, participants usually dress in full costumes, making them resemble sports team mascots.

“Parents don’t understand that a lot of us work with others, who will also groom the minors,” he wrote.

Many adults in the furry community are involved in sexually deviant behavior anyway, so they are not likely to object to grooming, the parolee said. Once a predator establishes a relationship with a child, it’s only a matter of



“Furry” enthusiasts gather at the Eurofurence 2015 conference in Berlin on Aug. 21, 2015.

time until they engage in sexual contact, he added.

Predators use furry art, drawings, and videos that look like cartoons to introduce children to pornography, he said.

“That is when it becomes easier for pup play and leashes and other ways to cross their boundaries,” he wrote. “They think it is fun, and we help them understand it is our little secret.”

Pup play usually involves gay men role-playing as dogs using collars, leashes, and masks, according to online forums. Furies also may participate in sexual activity with live or dead animals, sometimes called zoophilia.

Children on the autism spectrum are the easiest to be groomed, the parolee said. And sexual predators easily spot the most vulnerable children.

Uhler hosts “Journey to Healing” on TECN.TV and is director of SurvivorSupport.net and ChurchProtect.org. He has been a vocal critic of furies, posting online that they are sexual predators targeting children.

That drew anger from furies and a

zoophile and resulted in Uhler being kicked off Twitter for “hateful” comments about two years ago, he said.

He’s been forced to take down photos of furies, drag queen shows involving children, and other activities or associations that may be harmful to children, he said, after critics complained to Twitter.

Critics published his professional license information and filed a complaint with the Pennsylvania Bureau of Professional and Occupational Affairs, claiming he made “homophobic remarks and posts.”

The state closed the case and declined to prosecute, *The Epoch Times* confirmed. But his employer fired him after being inundated with complaints, Uhler said.

Psychopaths Stalking Children

Uhler said that sexual predators are often psychopaths, which is different from sociopaths.

Psychopaths love to feel empowered and need to have the last word, he said. They have no conscience and calculate their moves.

Sociopaths analyze the cost versus the benefit of their behavior and won’t

engage unless they feel the odds are in their favor, he said.

Psychopaths understand that people, including parents, want to give them the benefit of the doubt.

“That’s all a predator needs,” he said. “So they prey upon people’s goodness.”

Uhler said he first heard about furies about 10 years ago when assessing an inmate—a sophisticated sexual predator.

The inmate was arrested after attempting to meet a 3-year-old and 4-year-old through an undercover agent posing as a mother. When police arrested him, they found shackles, leashes, and sexual paraphernalia in his truck, Uhler said.

When Uhler was assigned to interview the inmate in Philadelphia, the man told him how furies were the perfect cover for sexual predators.

He said furry costumes that look like mascots are “the best way to access kids,” Uhler said. And the trend was growing.

“He says, ‘Well, you hide 100 percent of your identity, and parents will hand kids over to you, because they think it’s safe. So it is the best method of grooming. Everybody knows it,’” Uhler said, recalling the inmate boasting.

Parents, Beware

Intuition is one of a parent’s best defenses against pedophiles, Uhler said.

Sexualized activities or events that include children should give parents pause, he said.

“If any adult man shows an unusual interest in being around kids, especially if it has to do with sex, sexuality, and sensuality, you likely have a predator on your hands,” Uhler said.

The transgender movement leaves children confused and open to predators, he added. That’s because there’s a growing movement to give minors the power of consent over their bodies, even if their parents object, he said.

Sexualizing children’s education environment with events such as drag queen story time can also help groom children, he said.

In the 14 years he’s analyzed and treated pedophiles, he found only 1 percent of them were the “snatch-and-grab” type of stranger.



“Predators know us better than we know them, because they once were normal.”

Jon Uhler, therapist

Sophisticated pedophiles often have hundreds of victims by the time they’re arrested, he said. It becomes part of the game if they get into a position of responsibility and respectability at a school or church, he added.

They often become sexual deviants, and enjoy causing trauma through sexual contact.

“That’s what makes this so heinous,” he said. “I didn’t understand this until working with the sexual offenders and digging deep. That’s what the general public does not understand.” ■



SPOTLIGHT

Ongoing Unrest

A WOMAN WHO LEFT HER VILLAGE DUE TO the war between M23 fighters and the Congolese army found refuge with her family in a classroom where she spent the night with more than 33 other families, in Kanyaruchinya, Democratic Republic of Congo, on Dec. 5. Tens of thousands of people who fled the clashes are camped along the roadside in makeshift tents on the outskirts of Goma.

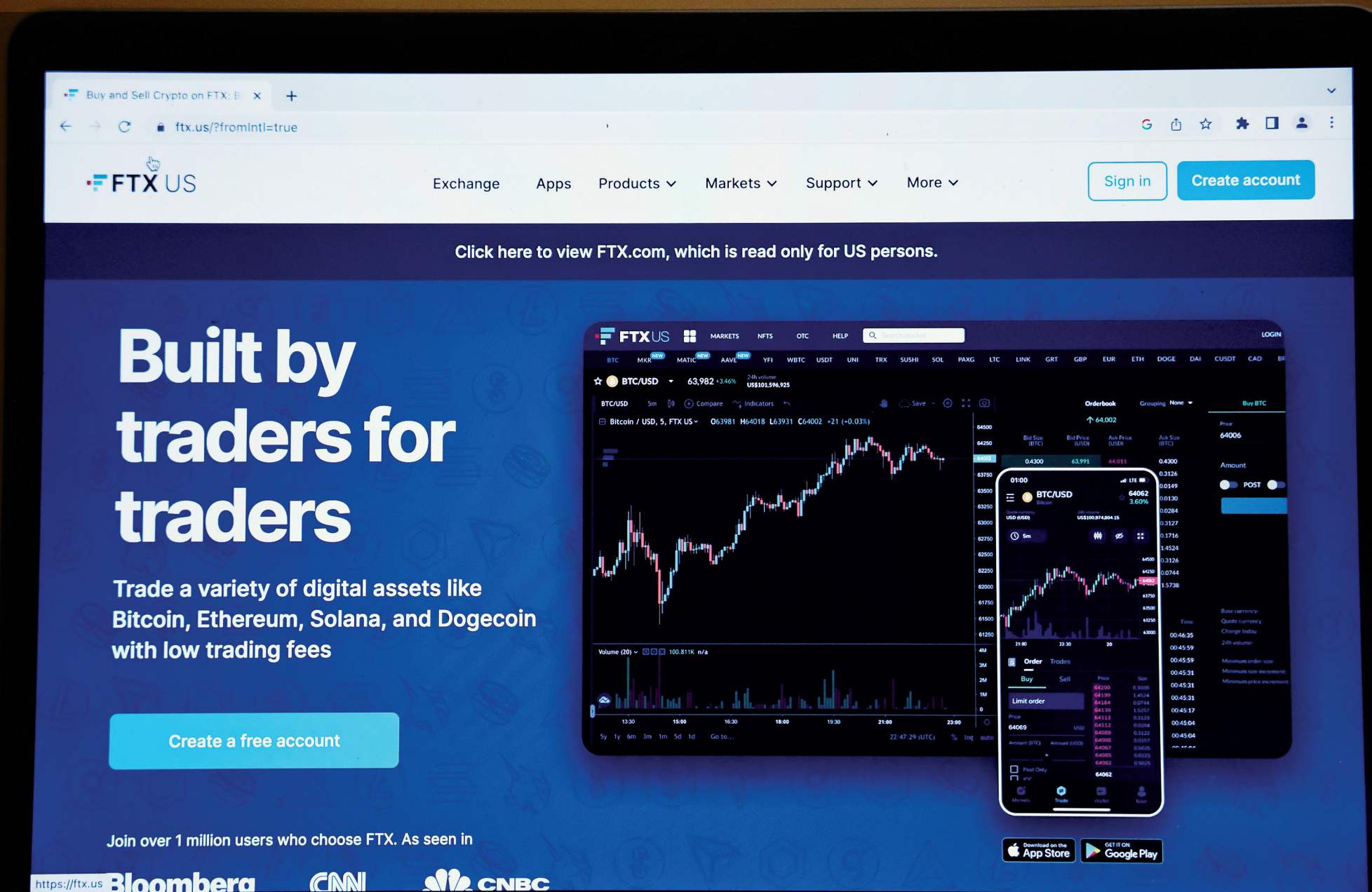
PHOTO BY GUERCHOM NDEBO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

THE FALL OF FTX:

A TIMELINE

THE CRYPTO EXCHANGE COLLAPSED WITHIN DAYS, RESULTING IN A FINANCIAL DISASTER

BY LIAM COSGROVE



The FTX website is displayed on a computer in Atlanta on Nov. 10.

PHOTO BY MICHAEL M. SANTIAGO/GETTY IMAGES

SAM BANKMAN-FRIED, A 25-year-old MIT graduate, left the quantitative trading firm Jane Street in 2017 to start his own hedge fund, Alameda Research. At first, the crypto-centric fund focused on low-risk algorithmic trades.

After two years of running the business, Bankman-Fried embarked on the ambitious goal of starting a crypto trading exchange that would become FTX.

During crypto's bull run, things went smoothly for Bankman-Fried as big names in finance such as SoftBank and Sequoia backed his venture. His net worth ballooned to \$26.5 billion toward the end of 2021, around the time when Bitcoin's price was hitting all-time highs.

Asset values plummeted this year, however, as Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell has ushered in a new era of tighter monetary policy. Crypto, particularly FTX's own token FTT, was no exception.

After reaching an all-time high of \$84.18 in the fall of 2021, FTT plummeted to \$1.43 per token at the time of writing. Many have posited, including Bankman-Fried himself, that the sharp fall in the currency's value is at the root of the FTX collapse.

NOV. 2: FTT COLLATERAL

An article published by CoinDesk on Nov. 2 triggered a chain of unfortunate events for FTX. The crypto outlet claimed to have verified documents denoting balance sheet entries of Alameda Research.

The two largest assets on the balance sheet were "unlocked FTT" at \$3.66 billion and "FTT collateral" at \$2.16 billion. Eyebrows were raised within the crypto community, particularly at the prospect that Alameda might have taken on massive loans while pledging its sister company's illiquid tokens as collateral.

The magnitude of these loans made many crypto experts nervous.

As pointed out by Dylan LeClair, the founder of the crypto research firm 21st Paradigm, when the story broke, the total market value of all tokens was only \$3.35 billion, compared to the \$5.82 billion on Alameda's books.



Sam Bankman-Fried, an MIT graduate, started his own hedge fund, Alameda Research, in 2017 when he was 25 years old.

FTT balance—\$529 million in total—at \$22 per token. Many speculated that this was an act of desperation to avoid further drops in the token's value, which could endanger the trading firm's solvency given the billions in FTT collateral.

The Binance founder's declaration commenced a dash for the door. An estimated \$6 billion in funds left the FTX exchange within 72 hours.

NOV. 8: BINANCE OFFERS BAILOUT

On Nov. 8, Zhao announced an emergency buyout of FTX to "help cover the liquidity crunch." He said his company would be conducting full due diligence in the coming days. Before his announcement, Bankman-Fried took to Twitter to assure customers that they are protected and that "all assets will be covered 1:1."

NOV. 9: BINANCE WALKS AWAY

However, the deal fell through on Nov. 9 as Zhao cited "way too many issues" in a private chat with Bankman-Fried and his employees, according to The New York Times. Amid the chaos, the price of FTT fell to below \$2 from \$25, more than a 92 percent drop in a matter of days and a 98 percent tumble from the highs.

While FTX had frozen client withdrawals on Nov. 8, it began facilitating withdrawals for Bahamian residents on Nov. 10. Bankman-Fried would later claim in an interview that he made this decision to avoid being stranded in a country with a bunch of "angry people."

Despite the freeze, funds continued to flow to Alameda, shown by the crypto transaction tracking website Etherscan. Reuters also re-

leased a report on Bankman-Fried's "back door," which was allegedly used to funnel \$10 billion from FTX to his investment fund.

He alluded to the futility of trying to liquidate such a massive balance at market price, which was \$25 at the time.

"You couldn't sell \$1 million of this thing without pushing the market significantly lower," LeClair posted on Twitter on Nov. 2, after the CoinDesk story broke.

NOV. 6: BINANCE AND FTT

The story caught the attention of several big players in the industry, most notably Changpeng Zhao, the founder and CEO of competing crypto exchange Binance. On Nov. 6, Zhao announced that Binance would "liquidate any remaining

98 PERCENT FTX'S OWN TOKEN, FTT, reached an all-time high of \$84.18 in fall of 2021, before plummeting to \$1.41 nowadays, a 98 percent drop.

\$40 MILLION FTX DONATED ALMOST \$40 million to Democrat candidates ahead of 2022 midterms, surpassed only by billionaire George Soros.

FTT" held by the company.

On the same day, Alameda CEO Caroline Ellison responded to Zhao with an offer to buy the entirety of Binance's



Binance co-founder and CEO Changpeng Zhao speaks at the Web Summit, Europe's largest tech conference, in Lisbon, Portugal, on Nov. 1.

to Republicans, doing so confidentially to avoid press scrutiny.

Millions were funneled to various mainstream media outlets, including The Intercept, which confessed the FTX bankruptcy left a "significant hole" in its budget. Various celebrities participated in the crypto exchange's widespread advertising campaign, including Tom Brady, Matt Damon, Gisele Bündchen, Stephen Curry, and Larry David, many of whom are now named in a class-action lawsuit.

The U.S. Department of Justice is reportedly looking into FTX for alleged fraud and other possible wrongdoing, while Bahamian Attorney General Pinder says his country's investigations are still in the "early stages." Bankman-Fried, meanwhile, appears to be residing at his family's condominium in the island nation.

THE FUTURE OF CRYPTO

It has been a chaotic couple of weeks for the crypto markets, with Bitcoin down more than 18 percent on the month. The future of cryptocurrencies remains uncertain, but some see the recent price declines as relatively mild considering the magnitude of the FTX collapse.

"I'm a trader, and when really bad news comes out and the asset class doesn't detonate, it gets me sort of curious," Harris Kupperman, CEO of hedge fund Mongolia Growth Group, said in a recent episode of the Market Huddle podcast. "A neutron bomb just went off in crypto."

"The Economist came out talking about how it's the end of crypto, and they haven't melted yet!"

Michael Green, a portfolio manager at Simplify Asset Management, expressed a more pessimistic outlook.

"There was never a future for crypto," he told The Epoch Times.

He added that crypto's demise will likely be delayed by the FTX meltdown, and that the digital securities industry "is likely to be more regulated and much more state-controlled."

U.S. officials on both sides of the aisle have called for more regulation of the asset class. ■

Bankman-Fried has since claimed that he has no knowledge of any "back door" nor played a hand in building one.

NOV. 10: 'I'M SORRY'

On Nov. 10, the former billionaire conceded in a Twitter thread, stating "I'm sorry. That's the biggest thing."

He also said that all available cash would be put toward refunding users and that FTX.US, which is the U.S. subsidiary of the company, remained "100% liquid."

NOV. 11: CHAPTER 11

On Nov. 11, FTX filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy, including FTX.US.

During this time, a hold was issued on certain FTX assets by the Securities Commission of Bahamas, who Bahamian Attorney General Ryan Pinder would later praise for acting with "remarkable" speed.

In their initial bombshell piece that kicked off the collapse, CoinDesk noted that FTX and Alameda Research were "unusually close."

FTX had loaned Alameda \$10 billion in customer funds. That represented well over half of total client cash as the exchange held \$16 billion in third-party assets, according to The Wall Street Journal.

As Alameda's investment strategy shifted to high-risk directional bets from low-risk quant trades, FTX user

funds were allocated to various reckless investments. As Sam Trabucco, Alameda's then co-CEO, announced in early 2021, "We've held a long DOGE position for months."

DOGE is the abbreviation for Dogecoin, a dog-based cryptocurrency created as a joke. Trabucco acknowledges that the impetus for Alameda's investment was "all based on noticing how it goes up when Elon tweets."

Valued at 27 cents per token at the time of Trabucco's announcement, DOGE has fallen by 63 percent at the time of writing.

Large chunks of funds were allocated for insider spending sprees as well.

Bankruptcy filings revealed over \$4 billion in loans from Alameda to a small handful of executives, with Bankman-Fried himself receiving a \$1 billion personal loan and a \$2.3 billion loan to an entity he controlled. In addition, at least \$300 million in company funds purchased real estate in the Bahamas for Bankman-Fried's family members as well as FTX senior staff.

DONATIONS

Funds flowed in many directions, including into politics, media, and entertainment.

The crypto entrepreneur donated almost \$40 million to Democrat candidates ahead of the 2022 midterms, surpassed only by billionaire George Soros. Bankman-Fried would later claim to have given "about the same amount"

FROM L: CRAIG BARRETT/GETTY IMAGES FOR CARE FOR SPECIAL CHILDREN; PATRICIA DE MELO MOREIRA/AP VIA GETTY IMAGES



Vials to hold blood at Vitalant blood donation center in San Francisco, on Jan. 11.

HEALTH CARE

CHOOSING UNVACCINATED BLOOD TRANSFUSIONS

Nonprofit blood donation service starts matching unvaccinated patients with donors

BY ALLAN STEIN

SWISS NATUROPATHIC physician George Della Pietra believes that people worldwide should be free to choose whether to get a COVID-19 vaccine injection.

He believes that the same should hold for those receiving transfusions with “vaccinated” blood.

“The problem is right now we have no choice,” said Della Pietra, founder of the nonprofit SafeBlood Donation service, which matches unvaccinated blood recipients with donors in 65 countries.

“It was very clear from the beginning that the COVID hype was way out of control,” Della Pietra said. “It was not as dangerous as they say it was.”

“As a naturopath, I can make no sense

of this pandemic, which was never really a pandemic. It leaves space for so many explanations.”

Della Pietra believes that an mRNA injection is more dangerous than pharmaceutical companies are willing to admit. He said the growing numbers of adverse reactions are reason to question their safety and effectiveness.

Data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention show that vaccinated and boosted people made up 58.6 percent (6,512) of the COVID-19 deaths in August—up from 41 percent in January.

“We can no longer say this is a pandemic of the unvaccinated,” Cynthia Cox, vice president of the Kaiser Family Foundation, told The Washington Post in an article on Nov. 23.

Nearly 70 percent of the world’s 8 billion people have received at least one mRNA injection for COVID-19 since the vaccines began rolling out in 2021 at the height of the virus’s spread.

Each of the three primary mRNA COVID-19 vaccines contains COVID-19 “spike protein” fragments, which bind at the cellular level to stimulate an immune response to the virus.

Della Pietra believes that these spike proteins produce “classic symptoms”—namely blood clots—that “horrified” him.

“I’ve never seen anything similar—and I’m not talking only about spike proteins,” he told The Epoch Times in a phone interview.

“It’s unbelievable because we never had this problem before. It’s been only two years. They want to keep the narrative [that an mRNA vaccine] is not dangerous.”

Although donated blood and plasma must undergo a cleansing process be-

fore transfusion, SafeBlood Donation says this isn’t enough to remove all mRNA ingredients.

“I’m talking about graphene oxide and nondeclared inorganic components in the vaccine, which we can see in the blood. When I see them, I have no idea how we can get rid of them again,” Della Pietra said.

Looking at the abnormalities in vaccinated blood, he said, “OK, we have a problem.” People are receiving the vaccine “more or less through the back door.”

“You can not avoid it anymore,” Della Pietra said.

In the United States alone, there are approximately 16 million units of donated blood annually. Of those units, about 643,000 are “autologous”—self-donated—and the number is increasing yearly, according to BloodBook.com.

Della Pietra said, to his knowledge, Safe Blood Donation, based in Switzerland, is the first unvaccinated blood donation service of its kind.

“So, there is no blood bank with mRNA-free blood yet, not even with us,” Safe Blood Donation stated on its website.

“And, although we have already asked hundreds of clinics, at the moment—at least in Europe—all of them still refuse to allow the human right of free blood choice with them—or at least do not want to be mentioned because otherwise, they fear reprisals.”

Della Pietra said the main goal of Safe Blood Donation isn’t to start an mRNA-free blood bank. Rather, it’s to make it possible to match unvaccinated blood donors and unvaccinated recipients, “which we bring together in a clinic (medical partner) that allows the choice of blood donor.”

Medical website Seed Scientific stated that blood banks and biotech companies will offer as much as \$1,000 monthly for blood donations.

While Della Pietra said there are no unvaccinated blood banks, he sees the demand for unvaccinated blood rising.

“This is why I decided to do [SafeBlood Donation]. I wanted to make a network for unvaccinated people looking for a blood donor because they need it—whether they have scheduled surgery or an emergency,” he said.

SafeBlood Donation began working in the United States about a month ago,

building an infrastructure of medical partners.

However, in the current medical environment, central blood banks such as the Red Cross don’t segregate their blood donations based on their vaccinated or unvaccinated status.

“The American Red Cross does not facilitate designated donations for standard blood needs, as this process often takes longer and is more resource intensive than obtaining a blood product through our normal process,” the Red Cross told The Epoch Times in an email.

“In a small number of situations, there is an exception for rare blood types where compatible blood types are extremely difficult to find. A rare blood type is defined as one that is present in less than 1/1000 people.

“We want to emphasize that the Red Cross adheres to all donor and product requirements as determined by the FDA to ensure the safety of the blood supply and is committed to continuing to provide life-saving blood products for patients across the country.”

The National Library of Medicine stated that “across study sites, the average hospital cost per unit transfused was \$155 and the average charge per patient was \$219.”

Still, the Red Cross, which provides 40 percent of the nation’s blood donations, said “no studies” demonstrate adverse outcomes from transfusions

of blood products collected from vaccinated donors.

On the contrary, “blood saves and improves the lives of millions of individuals every year.”

The organization also provides an autologous blood donation service for clients who wish to store their blood for themselves or their friends and relatives.

Vitalant, a nonprofit blood donation collector and provider, “does not directly interact with patients, so we cannot offer any insight on how frequently hospital patients may make such requests” for unvaccinated blood, said Liz Lambert, strategic communications manager at Vitalant.

The Food and Drug Administration, which sets blood safety standards in the United States, “does not require blood product labeling to differentiate between donors who have or have not been vaccinated,” Lambert told The Epoch Times.

The World Health Organization is seeking the authority to determine global health policy against future pandemics, which includes the standard use of mRNA vaccines.

Della Pietra said this is an insidious sign of what’s to come as quantities of unvaccinated blood supplies become shorter and more costly to procure.

“It will become rarer,” said Della Pietra, who wants people to have a choice—“the same choice we had 10 years ago.” ■



A man donates blood at Vitalant blood donation center in San Francisco, on Jan. 11.

FROM L. JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES; JUSTIN SULLIVAN/GETTY IMAGES

Mike Lindell speaks at the “Women for America First” rally at Freedom Plaza in Washington, on Dec. 12, 2020.

PHOTO BY LEO SHI/THE EPOCH TIMES



POLITICS

MYPILLOW CEO LOBBIES FOR RNC CHAIR

Mike Lindell challenges Ronna McDaniel, calls for ‘America First’ GOP revamp

By John Haughey

FORMING A COMMITTEE TO analyze the Republican Party’s lackluster 2022 midterm performance and hone its appeal to minorities and suburban women comes “too little, too late” to retain Ronna McDaniel as chair of the Republican National Committee (RNC), says Mike Lindell, the MyPillow CEO and avowed ally of former President Donald Trump.

“She has failed for so many years that I now call her Ronna ‘McFail,’” Lindell told The Epoch Times. “Ronna, the past three elections, you get an F, an F, an F. You should have resigned already. Ronna, resign, don’t run again, let’s get someone who can win.”

That “someone who can win” is Lindell, according to Lindell, who announced his “Save America” candidacy for the RNC chair on his Frank Speech Online platform on Nov. 29.

McDaniel, Trump’s pick to chair the national committee following his 2016 election, took the helm in 2017. She has been broadly criticized for the GOP’s electoral shortcomings over the past three electoral cycles, especially after a 40-year high in inflation and an unpopular Democrat in the White House failed to produce a forecast “red wave.”

Nevertheless, McDaniel is seeking a fourth two-year term as chair when the RNC convenes Jan. 25–27 in Dana Point, California. After announcing her bid, she released a letter with endorsements from 101 members, far more than the 85 necessary, making her reelection a procedural fait accompli.

Presumed Ascension Rankles Critics

Her presumed ascension has angered many conservatives, spurred demands

for new RNC leadership—including high-profile leaders such as South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.), and Fox News host Tucker Carlson—and induced Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-N.Y.), fresh off his near-upset New York gubernatorial bid, to openly ponder a run for the RNC chair.

Lindell said he’s compelled to “step into” consideration to ensure McDaniel doesn’t go unchallenged, warning that her return to the party helm would “leave the country to be run by the uni-party and the Democrats.”

Trump, at least through Dec. 2, had not commented on McDaniel’s retaining the RNC chair, but her proponents note he praised her for doing a “tremendous job” in an April 2022 video.

Republicans for National Renewal Executive Director Mark Ivanyo and staunch Trump supporter Anthony Sabatini, whose Florida Freedom Action PAC aims to derail Rep. Kevin McCarthy’s (R-Calif.) election to speaker of the House, are among America First advocates who want McDaniel out.

“We have endorsed Lee Zeldin, but we also welcome Mr. Lindell entering the race,” Ivanyo told The Epoch Times. “Even if it’s just for the sake of reducing votes for Ronna.”

“There’s dozens and dozens of good names—Lee Zeldin is a pretty good choice; Lindell is not a bad choice—that we could be having a conversation about but there is not a discussion about that, nor questioning of it,” Sabatini told The Epoch Times.

An “honest discussion” about McDaniel’s continued suitability as RNC chair won’t happen, he said, because “the whole system is rigged.”

For example, Sabatini said, “my state national committeewoman (Kathleen King) is already supporting Ronna ‘McFail’” without gauging if fellow Florida Republicans agree.

A former Florida lawmaker who lost his 2022 Congressional bid in the August primaries, Sabatini is an attorney and a Fellow at the Claremont Institute, a conservative think-tank that works closely with Trump in advancing his election fraud allegations and in advocating for election integrity reform.

The RNC is “run by the establishment and very corrupt,” he said, and can only

be changed by “empowering bottom-up leadership.”

Sabatini called on America First supporters to not stop at merely deposing McDaniel as party chair, but demand a complete overhaul of RNC and GOP leadership.

“All the leadership should be wiped out,” he said. “They should all be deported from the United States.”

Panel a Plank for Shaky Chair

On Nov. 29, McDaniel announced the formation of a 12-member Republican Party Advisory Council “to inform the Republican Party’s 2024 vision and beyond.”

McDaniel said the council’s “diverse range of respected leaders” will advise the RNC on “growing the party with Hispanic, Asian, and Black voters” while “engaging with suburban women, winning the youth vote, holding Big Tech accountable, supporting law enforcement, and delivering for Americans of faith.”

McDaniel formed the panel as “an attempt to make up for her failures,” Ivanyo claimed.

Lindell agreed.

“Ronna thinks she can keep her job,” he said, calling the council cover to curry favor with the insiders resisting rank-and-file Republicans’ calls for change.

“Why do you need an advisory committee? I’ll give advice: Get someone to lead the party who can win with the big donors” as well as with grassroots conservatives, he said. “You don’t need to bring in any advisory team to know Ronna needs to be fired.”

The 12-member council includes two incumbent lawmakers—Rep. Carlos A. Giménez (R-Fla.), and Rep. Michelle Steele (R-Calif.)—and three Washington newcomers, Sen.-elect Katie Britt (R-Ala.), Rep.-elect Monica De La Cruz (R-Texas), and Rep.-elect John James (R-Mich.).

Defeated Arizona 2022 Senate candidate Blake Masters and Ohio 2022 Congressional hopeful Madison Gesiotto Gilbert are on the panel, as are former Trump adviser Kellyanne Conway, Family Research Council President Tony Perkins, and Virginia Attorney General Jason Miyares.

The council is co-chaired by Mississippi RNC Committeeman Henry Barbour, co-author of the party’s post-2012 “election autopsy,” and California ♦♦



Republican National Committee Chair Ronna McDaniel mingles with guests during the “America First Agenda Summit,” at the Marriott Marquis Hotel in Washington, on July 26.

RNC Committeewoman Harmeet Dhillon, who chairs the Republican National Lawyers Association.

Dhillon, in a series of Nov. 29 Twitter posts, called on Republicans to contact their state reps among the RNC’s 168 members and urge them “to vote for leadership that will guide us to victory” when they meet in January.

The RNC comprises three members from each of the 50 states, five territories, and the District of Columbia. They are the state party chair, a national committeeman, and a national committeewoman.

Dhillon said the council will be “soliciting input from ALL Republicans, not just DC elites,” but that outreach sounds hollow unless preceded by McDaniel’s departure, critics say.

As the granddaughter of former Michigan Gov. George Romney, and niece of 2012 GOP presidential nominee, former Massachusetts governor, and current Sen. Mitt Romney (R-Utah)—a Trump critic—many see McDaniel as the epitome of “DC elite.”

“I’m very disappointed with the entirety of the RNC. It doesn’t represent the average Republican,” Sabatini said.

“You talk to Republicans, they don’t want Ronna; even RNC members, they don’t want her either. The only ones who do are the insiders in the clubby corners of the RNC.”

“Does the RNC reflect the typical Republican voter? No, absolutely not, especially under Ronna’s leadership,” Ivanyo said. “Her ‘Mitt Romney style of leadership’ isn’t ‘representative of the grassroots’ that fuels America First candidates and policies.”

Election Integrity Suits, Suitors, Support

Lindell said that McDaniel has “not done anything for election integrity after raising money on the issue” since 2020.

“Shame on you,” he said. “You collected money, solicited money, saying you were going to do stuff, and you have done nothing—zero.”

“It seems like that whole [RNC] election integrity committee was not supported at all” by leadership, Ivanyo said, noting that the panel “spent a lot of money traveling around,” but in the end, “the only people who benefitted were the operatives and consultants who got paid for it.”

RNC national press secretary Emma Vaughn didn’t directly address those assertions but provided The Epoch Times with a fact sheet and comments.

As of Nov. 8, the RNC was engaged in 80 lawsuits across 20 states “directly related to election integrity,” Vaughn wrote, adding that since 2021, the RNC has invested \$30 million “into building an unprecedented Election Integrity legal and political ground game to ensure transparency at the ballot box.”

To build that “ground game,” the RNC reports since 2021, it has hired 17 in-state election integrity directors, 38 state-based election integrity counsels, conducted more than 5,300 election integrity training sessions, recruited more than 80,000 poll watchers and workers, and engaged more than 130,000 unique volunteers.

Lindell said that McDaniel opposed his 2021 effort to file a 70-page voter fraud complaint with the U.S. Supreme Court that he claims documents alleged 2020 election fraud in Arizona, Pennsylvania, and Georgia.

McDaniel even went behind his back, he said, to stymie the suit by discour-

aging state attorneys general from supporting it, and by then admitting publicly in November 2021 that “Biden won, fair and square.”

“Things like that are disgusting,” he said.

McDaniel spokesperson Vaughn did not readdress the claim, which has repeatedly been refuted by the committee and GOP state AGs who didn’t support the filing based on its legal paucity.

Lindell said McDaniel’s alleged ambivalence in fully prosecuting Trump’s election fraud claims cost the party the Senate and, perhaps, the Arizona governor’s race during the 2022 midterms.

With “no RNC money to support lawsuits,” such as those being filed on behalf of Arizona GOP gubernatorial candidate Kari Lake, the RNC “backed out of Arizona completely” and “headed over to Georgia,” Lindell said.

“They said, ‘We got to help [Herschel] Walker,’ but the focus in Georgia was to raise money,” seeing it as a fund-raising opportunity, he said.

“[McDaniel] abandoned Arizona. If Arizona fails, we are done as a country.”

Vaughn provided a lengthy fact sheet documenting what the RNC has done in Arizona, refuting Lindell’s claims without directly addressing them.

Neither the RNC nor McDaniel have disengaged in Arizona, Vaughn said, noting that the national committee has filed 14 election integrity lawsuits since 2021 in the state that “include defending Arizona’s verification of citizenship for voter registration, its procedures for ensuring only eligible voters receive mail ballots, and its ballot curing deadlines.”

“It was also responsible for coordinating the Republican Party’s milestone win at the U.S. Supreme Court upholding the state’s ban on ballot harvesting,” she said.

The RNC committed significant resources to election integrity issues before and after the Nov. 8 election, Vaughn said.

For Election Day, the RNC reports it recruited 40 volunteer attorneys to represent the party across Arizona, with another 40 attorneys manning its Election Day war room. The RNC also trained 2,257 poll watchers and 586 poll workers in Arizona, it says.

On Election Day, the RNC, Lake, and

Blake Masters campaigns jointly sued to extend voting hours after technical issues at several Maricopa County voting sites forced voters to wait to cast ballots. The suit was unsuccessful.

On Nov. 22, the RNC joined 2022 Arizona GOP Attorney General candidate Abe Hamadeh in filing a lawsuit against Secretary of State Katie Hobbs—a declared gubernatorial election winner—contesting the Nov. 8 election.

“The RNC legal team has collected approximately 40 affidavits detailing the disenfranchisement of Arizona voters on Election Day,” Vaughn said. “These accounts paint a picture of Maricopa County’s extensive failures and will be useful in any potential future legal action undertaken by Republicans.”



“[The RNC] doesn’t represent the average Republican.”

Anthony Sabatini, attorney

Lindell said that under McDaniel, the RNC also blatantly failed to fully support many Trump-endorsed America First candidates during the 2020 midterms.

“Every single candidate [who spoke about] how they were going to fix these elections, going to get all these laws put in, [was] abandoned [by the RNC], he said.

Among them, he said, were Matthew DePerno, a Trump-backed Republican nominee for Michigan attorney general, and Kristina Karamo, a Trump-endorsed candidate for Michigan secretary of state.

“Ronna didn’t even congratulate them for winning their primaries,” Lindell said.

RNC’s Vaughn didn’t respond to Lindell’s claims, but pointed out that the national committee availed its resources to all GOP candidates, including the America First, Trump-endorsed Lake.

RNC’s Arizona Victory committee knocked on more than 350,000 doors and made 1.4 million phone calls “with Kari Lake at the top of our scripts and messaging,” Vaughn wrote, noting that the RNC and Lake campaign collaborated to “push positive coverage and attack Katie Hobbs.”

As a successful businessman, Lindell said he can spearhead fundraising and focus party leadership on what rank-and-file members are telling them.

While traveling widely during the midterm primaries and elections, Lindell said he “got to know a lot of the players” involved, “spoke with every state party chair,” and witnessed widespread dissatisfaction among rank-and-file Republicans with the RNC in general and McDaniel specifically.

“The donors want change; they want results,” he said, and grassroots conservatives, including many Trump-supporting America First voters, have lost faith in McDaniel’s RNC stewardship.

“This would be so easy to fix because I know where the problems are,” he said, claiming that the most obvious “very, very fast fix” would be firing McDaniel.

Under new leadership, especially his, “We’d hit the ground winning on Day One,” Lindell said.

The RNC is “missing many bold leaders” now pushed to the periphery by establishment Republicans, Ivanyo said. There are “plenty of options” to succeed McDaniel, he said.

But with “morale already low” among conservatives, he warned, if McDaniel is reelected, “people are going to be disenfranchised” with the GOP.

“There will be some thinking, ‘If it’s not a Trump America First party, I don’t want anything to do with it anymore,’” Ivanyo said. ■



A voter fills out a ballot for the 2022 midterm elections.

FROM L. DREW ANGERER/GETTY IMAGES; COURTESY OF REP. ANTHONY SABATINI'S OFFICE; CHRIS DELMAS/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

ANIMAL MANAGEMENT

The Tussle Over Arizona's Wild Horses

Auctions highlight tensions between Forest Service and preservationists

Text & Photos by Allan Stein



An Alpine wild mare stands guard beside an injured stallion in the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests on Oct. 17. At least 41 wild horses have been fatally shot in a recent unsolved killing spree.

PRESCOTT, ARIZ.—SIMONE Netherlands grabbed a handful of green alfalfa hay and called out to Apache, who was guarding a small band of Alpine wild horses at the opposite end of the corral.

The young stallion lowered its head warily and remained motionless at seeing a visitor standing beside her.

“C’m on,” Netherlands said to the horse gently, waving the hay and coaxing the animal to come over.

Slowly, Apache stepped forward to the edge of the metal fence, poked his nose through, and began munching on the moist straw until it was all gone.

To her visitor, Netherlands said, “He has a gorgeous mane. They’re so cute. You want to pet them.”

But it was still much too soon for Apache.

When Apache first arrived at the wild horse sanctuary weeks ago, he was depressed—grieving, Netherlands said.

Several in his band had been shot and killed in early October in an organized act of cruelty deep inside the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests in eastern Arizona.

Heartless Acts

Two months after the killings, Netherlands, who is president of the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group, still can’t fathom the motive behind them and the sheer heartlessness of it all. The group is dedicated to the protection and humane management of the Salt River Wild Horses in the state’s Tonto National Forest.

The horse death toll is now at 41. Some had gunshot wounds in the belly, lungs, and face, and were left to die where they fell.

Somehow, a few managed to survive their wounds.

There are still no suspects, and “nobody takes responsibility for it,” Netherlands said. “There’s just a lot of unjustified hate over wild horses. It’s hard to understand.”

The U.S. Forest Service buried several dead horses in mass graves, their locations revealed only by the newly turned soil.

Netherlands said it’s only a matter of time before volunteer field watchers discover even more carnage within the 2.7 million-acre forest. ♦

“We believe there were over 50 killed,” Netherlands said. “We have 11 still missing.”

Volunteers with the Salt River group and Alpine Wild Horse Advocates have been keeping track of the horses using a software application with their cellphones.

Each horse has been given a name, logged, and photographed.

“So, we let the public name them because they love to be involved. That personalizes them: ‘Oh, they caught Apache.’ But to see them butchered, shot in the woods—” Netherlands said that was the work of “monsters.”

And it has shaken her faith in humanity.

In Apache’s band, Kiowa and Amari are the few last ones standing. Those shot and killed will live in pictures on the wild horse advocacy groups’ Facebook pages.

The Forest Service plans to round up the remaining Alpine herd—some 200 horses—and sell them at online auctions as “unauthorized livestock” until they are all sold.

105 Horses

THE SALT RIVER GROUP PURCHASED

105 of the original 400 wild horses in the Apache-Sitgreaves herd with public donations. The total cost was around \$11,000.

Even after the October killings ceased, the Forest Service didn’t stop rounding up the horses, Netherlands told The Epoch Times.

“Almost every day, we continue to find more [carcasses], and we still think they are all from the same event.”

In light of the unexplained shootings and systematic roundups, wild horse advocates feel they’re in a race as they scramble to buy as many horses as they can before the “kill buyers” do. The kill buyers will transport and sell the horses to slaughterhouses in Mexico.

Buying Time

The Army for Alpine Wild Horses, a collaboration of wildlife sanctuaries and horse advocates, purchased 105 of the original 400 wild horses in the Apache-Sitgreaves herd as a result of public donations. The total cost was around \$11,000. Netherlands said the volunteers would



(Top Left) Simone Netherlands, president of the Salt River Wild Horse Management Group in Prescott, Ariz., feeds a group of rescued Alpine wild horses on Nov. 30. **(Top Right)** Netherlands takes a hay bucket to recently rescued Alpine wild horses housed at the group’s sanctuary.

(Bottom Left) She shows the private stalls where newly arrived Alpine wild horses will stay for the foreseeable future. **(Bottom Right)** A band of newly arrived Alpine wild horses huddle for safety at the Salt River Wild Horse Management sanctuary.

Netherlands said.

“This year, we only had one foal in the entire year. That compared to 100 foals in 2019. So everyone can see now that it’s working.”

Still, the Forest Service said it has no legal authority to implement a birth control program since the horses don’t come under federal jurisdiction.

Another alternative solution would be to craft legislation to protect the horses. Wild horse advocates are working to accomplish this at the state level, though it may come too late to save the remaining horses.

As for the recent killings, Arizona has only confirmed that 30 horses died in the October incident. Because the Forest Service does not have jurisdiction, “and because of the ongoing nature of the investigation, we cannot offer further information,” the agency said.

Investigation Under Way

The Arizona Department of Agriculture is in charge of the investigation. Netherlands said the evidence includes DNA samples and bullets taken from the dead horses, including a knife with fingerprints found at the scene.

The Forest Service said its policy to remove the horses is a “necessary step” to ensure that the forest is “healthy and sustainable for years to come.”

As feral horses, they don’t receive protection under the 1971 Wild Horse and Burro Act.

“These feral horses cause substantial problems for not only native plants and animals ... but they also destroy watersheds and negatively impact ♣

only stop buying them once they could save as many horses as possible and place them in permanent homes.

“It’s a lot of money,” she said. “The sad thing is that there’s not a lot of interest or good homes for them. It’s hard for the public to handle wild horses. You’ve got to know the method; sometimes it fails.”

The Forest Service will hold another online auction on Dec. 10.

It’s an unhappy dilemma, Netherlands said. If the wild horse advocates can’t find good homes for the horses, “we can’t

rescue them.”

In the worst-case scenario, many horses could end up in meat processing factories south of the border to be sold internationally.

“It’s very desperate. It’s just so much stress on the people that love them,” Netherlands said.

Fortunately for Apache and 11 other recent wild horse rescues, the Salt River sanctuary will be their home—perhaps for the rest of their lives.

Netherlands described the relation-

ship between wild horse advocates, the Forest Service, cattle ranchers, and certain environmental groups as complicated—an unhealthy collision of opposing interests.

The Forest Service views the horses as invasive livestock, subject to removal. Wild horse advocates consider them a historic breed dating back to the early Spanish explorers of North America.

Netherlands said that an Arizona state historian is confident these are authentic wild horses worthy of federal and

state protection. However, the Forest Service said there’s no evidence the horses are anything but “feral” livestock encroaching on government land.

“They are considered unauthorized livestock and therefore fall under livestock regulations over which the state has jurisdiction,” the Forest Service told The Epoch Times in an email.

The Salt River group used humane birth control to limit the growth of the herd population, even though the Forest Service didn’t show much interest,



Simone Netherlands comforts a rescued wild horse.

ecosystems,” the Forest Service said on its website.

The Salt River group disagrees with the government’s label and recently commissioned horse geneticist Gus Cothran to examine tissue samples from the carcasses to determine if they are, in fact, Alpine wild horses.

A favorable determination could change everything—legally.

Since the Forest Service considers the horses a threat to endangered species like the New Mexico meadow jumping mouse, the solution is to round up the horses and sell them at auction.

“It truly is an outrage. We’re buying [the horses] because we have no other choice,” Netherlands said. “But sadly, only about 100 are left in areas still accessible where people can see them.”

The highest recent bid price for a horse sold at auction was \$975. Others have sold for as little as \$50, Netherlands said.

The Salt River group hopes to purchase bands of horses to keep the family bonds intact.

“There are only two options. Either we buy them, or the kill-buyer buys them. We only want to bid against the bad buyer.”

To complicate matters, the Forest Service recently announced a series of controlled burns involving thousands of acres of the Apache-Sitgreaves forest where many Alpine wild horses live.

“It’s just another attack on the wild horses and their habitat. If fences are in the way, they get stuck and burn,”

Netherlands said.

“They’re trying to convince us that the wild horses eat all the growth, they’re bad for wildlife, they can’t live together with cows—that is the propaganda causing all the anger.

“So now, they’re burning this forest. Do you think the [endangered] mice won’t burn?”

The Forest Service said its management program of utilizing controlled burns took years to plan and assess changing conditions, “including any unauthorized livestock gathering operations.”



“We believe there were over 50 killed. We have 11 still missing.”

Simone Netherlands, president, Salt River Wild Horse Management Group

“If the conditions on the ground are appropriate, along with many other factors including potential air quality and available resources, then prescribed fire projects move forward.”

If any part of the process falls “beyond allowable limits,” the Forest Service said it will reschedule the project until a “more appropriate window of opportunity arises.”

Wild horse advocates such as Netherlands say they’d prefer the horses to coexist with ranch cattle and wildlife and that there’s plenty of space and

grassland.

“It’s about learning to share our public lands. Everyone gets a piece of it,” she said. “There’s a win-win solution in this for everyone.

“The herd is declining in population numbers. The public still gets to see them. They buy a day pass; the Forest Service gets the revenue. So they are an important recreational resource.”

Sanctuary From the Hunt

At least for now, the Salt River sanctuary is the next best habitat for rescued wild horse Apache, with a private stall, acres of fenced grassland, and plenty of food to eat.

When Apache arrived at the sanctuary, the trauma of losing members of his band was evident in his sullen behavior. The sight of humans was a further cause for anxiety.

Netherlands said it took her weeks to gain a measure of Apache’s trust.

Even now, the chocolate brown stallion is skittish and aloof with strangers, like many other new arrivals. They include yearlings, adult mares, and stallions.

“So, in the beginning, we had to feed [the yearlings] milk pellets. Because horses that young can’t live only on grass,” Netherlands said.

“What’s up, gals?” she said to a pair of Alpine mares coming to eat hay out of her hand.

Netherlands said she tries to stay positive through it all, hoping those who oppose the wild horses one day will see the national forest for the historic trees.

“It would be an absolute atrocity if we got rid of this animal that has always been a part of Arizona. It is the animal that brought us here—the animal on whose back we built this country,” Netherlands said.

“We have such little respect for them. We paint pictures of them. We have statues of them. But when it comes to the real horse, nobody cares.” ■

Perspectives



A TikTok building in Culver City, Calif., on Nov. 17, 2020.

PHOTO BY VALERIE MACON/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES



TIKTOK’S THREAT

Cyberspace is where the CCP wages a subtle, lengthy war against the United States. **58**



DON’T MOURN JIANG ZEMIN

The CCP leader was arguably responsible for a genocide. **59**



THE CRYPTO LOBBY

FTX’s main lobbying focus was on regulations, not pandemics. **61**

INSIDE

THOMAS MCARDLE was a White House speechwriter for President George W. Bush and writes for IssuesInsights.com.

Thomas McArdle



TikTok's Threat

Cyberspace is where CCP wages a subtle, lengthy war against the US

THINGS WERE A LOT simpler when we were fighting the Redcoats nearly 2 1/2 centuries ago. Before he famously rode into history in the midnight hour, alerting Colonial militia of the approach of British troops, Paul Revere arranged for Boston's North Church to use lanterns in its steeple to signal to colonists which route the British were taking in their invasion—"One if by land, two if by sea."

Cyberspace, rather than the land or the water, is the battleground upon which communist China is waging a subtle, sophisticated long war against the United States and the rest of the free world. Instead of hearing the warning that "the British are coming," Americans were told earlier this month by the director of the FBI that the Chinese not only had already arrived but had placed their personal information, computer, and smartphone capability at risk.

FBI Christopher Wray warned the House Homeland Security Committee that "the Chinese government could use" the China-owned social media app TikTok, geared for sharing home-made videos, now a billion users strong and especially favored by teens, "to control data collection on millions of users or control the recommendation algorithm, which could be used for influence operations if they so chose or to control software on millions of devices, which gives it an opportunity to potentially technically compromise personal devices." In 2019, Tiktok became the second-most downloaded app in the United States on Apple's App Store. TikTok is owned by ByteDance, a Beijing-based internet giant.

After repeatedly assuring lawmakers that it was prioritizing the security of data that TikTok collects, the firm admitted in a June letter to members of Congress that TikTok "employees outside the U.S., including China-based

employees, can have access to TikTok U.S. user data," albeit subject to the company's security protocols. TikTok also noted that American users' information is stored not only in the United States but in Singapore, "the backup data storage location for our U.S. user data," and that "ByteDance engineers around the world may assist in developing" TikTok's algorithms.

Cyberspace, rather than the lands or the waters, is the battleground upon which communist China is waging a subtle, sophisticated long war against the United States.

Be all that as it may, Beijing has a series of laws in place that give the Chinese Communist Party vast control over all companies with a presence within its borders, should it wish to exercise those powers. Among them are the Counter Espionage Law of 2014; the National Security Law and the Counter-Terrorism Law, both of 2015; the Cybersecurity Law of 2016; the National Intelligence Law of 2017; the Encryption Law of 2019; and the Data Security Law enacted a year ago.

All of these statutes compel businesses operating within the People's Republic of China (PRC) or doing business with a company operating within the PRC to share data with Chinese authorities on demand. That means unlimited access for the Chinese Communist Party to company records, contracts, intellectual property, a firm's internally discussed strategies, and its employees' and customers' personal data. What's more, the Counter Espionage Law, the National Intelligence Law, and the Cybersecurity Law actually give Beijing security

and intelligence personnel license to invade business facilities in person, peruse records and data, question employees, and seize equipment. The Cybersecurity Law and the Encryption Law empower the government to conduct security audits that require the disclosure of source code.

Last year, Forbes revealed that the government of deep blue New York state expended nearly \$15 million on Lenovo computers, systems, and IT services, and more than \$13 million on Lexmark printers and services. Both Chinese government-owned companies are restricted by U.S. military and intelligence agencies after finding that their products could be used for surveillance, espionage, or even sabotage.

As long ago as 2006, the State Department red-flagged Lenovo products and banned their use for the transfer of classified material, such as in networks connecting U.S. embassies and consulates. In 2019, President Trump declared a national emergency and empowered his Secretary of Commerce to block technology transactions associated with Chinese global 5G telecom giant Huawei, which operates in more than 170 countries.

As the Trump White House's 2020 "U.S. Strategic Approach to the People's Republic of China" states, "Beijing's Military-Civil Fusion (MCF) strategy gives the People's Liberation Army unfettered access into civil entities developing and acquiring advanced technologies, including state-owned and private firms, universities, and research programs."

For Americans to assist in that acquisition unwittingly via a TikTok app on their phones or the hardware within their Lenovo computers (the company that makes Motorola phones)—posing a grave risk to their freedoms—is madness.

Allowing a hidden technological war to be waged against us must stop immediately.

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Anders Corr



Don't Mourn Jiang Zemin

The CCP leader was arguably responsible for genocide

FORMER CHINESE communist Party (CCP) chief Jiang Zemin is dead.

Some are misty-eyed, perhaps due to his supposedly friendly demeanor. Jiang performed for world leaders, including singing attempts for the Queen of England, George W. Bush, and Luciano Pavarotti.

But Jiang should instead be remembered for the trail of blood he left behind. In 1989, he took the side of hardliners against pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square and justified the massacre afterward. He started the persecution of the Falun Gong spiritual movement in 1999, which arguably turned into a genocide.

Yes, Jiang and his predecessor Deng Xiaoping transformed China from an inefficient communist economy into a communism that levered markets. They hid China's strength and bided time. That includes China's critical accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001.

But marketization strengthened China for military expansion. The CCP never liberalized, instead continuing the communist ideal of selling capitalism the rope to hang itself. When the West was ready to kick the bucket, Jiang and his predecessor Hu Jintao used their influence to ensure, in 2012, that Xi Jinping and his more aggressive policies were prepared to benefit.

The problem of China's aggression isn't a Xi, Hu, Jiang, Deng, or even a Mao Zedong problem, but an autocracy problem. It's a systemic dictatorial threat that extends from the Marxism-Leninism of 1917 through Joseph Stalin to CCP conquest of territories in Jiangxi in the 1930s, Beijing and Xinjiang in 1949, Tibet in 1950, parts of India in the 1960s, and islands throughout the South China Sea from the 1970s to the present.

Jiang was part of this autocratic system. He captured Mischief Reef

from the democratic Philippines, a U.S. mutual defense treaty ally, in 1995. The reef is the territory of the Philippines, yet the United States did next to nothing in its defense. Now, the People's Liberation Army (PLA) has a naval base there.

While the West hopes for a Chinese Gorbachev, who can simultaneously improve the lives of 1.4 billion Chinese citizens and remove the CCP as a threat by democratizing the country, there's no such leader on the horizon. Jiang was one of those hopes who we realized to be just another bloody opportunist.

Jiang started the persecution of the Falun Gong in 1999, which arguably turned into genocide.

He joined the CCP in 1946, and an American ice cream company gave him his first job. He returned the favor by helping expropriate the company after the revolution.

Jiang participated in the Anti-Rightist Campaign, which lasted from 1957 to 1959, and sent some of his colleagues to "reeducation."

Rather than stand against the tide of intellectual destruction during the Cultural Revolution of 1966, he tried to appear the part, getting his hair cut short in a revolutionary buzz cut.

Jiang's "moderate" support for revolution got him leadership positions first in Shanghai, where he not only repressed pro-democracy protesters in 1989 but targeted those in the CCP, such as Zhao Ziyang, who advocated for a nonmilitary response. Hardliners declared martial law and rewarded Jiang with positions of power in Beijing that led to his leadership of the Party. He, in turn, defended their massacre.

During the 1995 to 1996 Taiwan Strait crisis, China's military, with Jiang in the lead, fired missiles to stop the island democracy from declaring independence. In response to human rights lawyers who filed charges of genocide against Jiang in a U.S. court in 2001, Beijing allegedly threatened to bomb Taiwan again.

That year, the PLA sent a Chinese fighter pilot to his death by buzzing a U.S. spy plane too close. The U.S. plane crash-landed on China's Hainan Island. The Chinese disassembled it, apparently for reverse engineering—a form of theft.

Jiang, like other communists, repressed religion. In 1996, when Tibetans identified a new spiritual leader, called the Panchen Lama, Jiang disappeared the child and replaced him with one whose parents were more malleable to CCP interests.

Three years later, the CCP attacked Falun Gong in the press. Its practitioners responded with a 10,000–20,000 person protest in Beijing that surrounded the CCP's headquarters near Tiananmen Square. It was the largest protest since 1989, unmatched until today's White Paper protests.

While the demands of the Falun Gong adherents were relatively modest, the response from Jiang was draconian. He banned the spiritual practice, which had a following of tens of millions. Tens of thousands of practitioners were jailed, tortured, or killed, including through forced organ harvesting.

Since then, Jiang and the CCP have tried to eradicate Falun Gong, including by killing its adherents. This is the U.N. definition of genocide.

Any sentimentality surrounding Jiang's death, therefore, is misplaced. He was neither the first nor last bloody opportunist in the history of dictators. Like so many before, he was banal in the perpetration of his own evil.



Hiring Is Poised to Weaken

The pace of hiring is showing signs of a recession

THE DEBATE OVER THE state of the economy has quieted. With the midterm elections done, the side claiming that a recession had already begun has less need to make its case, while the other side has less need to refute it. But even if the politically obsessed have turned away from such matters, economics still matters and so also does the parsing of the arguments used in that mostly political debate. The picture such an effort paints is far from upbeat.

Signs of economic weakness, if not outright recession, are undeniable. The real gross domestic product (GDP) fell in the year's first two quarters. For many, that's the definition of recession. Although real GDP rose modestly during the third quarter, neither the paltry 2.6 percent annual growth rate nor the underlying detail did much to contradict the weakness described earlier in the year.

Other evidence of weakness is widespread. New home purchases have fallen by 28.1 percent since the start of the year. Residential construction, as measured by new housing starts, has fallen by 19.5 percent during this same time.

The consumer has held up on balance, but spending has slowed appreciably. In real terms, consumer outlays expanded at only a 1.4 percent annual rate during the third quarter, less than half the more than 3 percent rate averaged during the second half of 2021. The consumer probably would have slowed more were it not that inflation has induced households to accelerate their buying before prices rise again.

Capital spending by businesses has also slowed. In the third quarter, it grew at an annual rate of 3.7 percent in real terms, well below the 7.9

percent growth rate during the year's first quarter.

Those who talked up the economic situation relied partly on technicalities but mostly pointed to still strong hiring rates. In November, for example, employment grew by 263,000, a strong figure by historical standards. They also noted that the unemployment rate had remained low at 3.7 percent of the workforce. They doubted recession, asking if such high hiring and low unemployment rates could exist in an economic downturn.

It takes a while for labor markets to weaken in a declining economy and strengthen in an improving one.

Three considerations dull the force of this counterargument. First, the pace of job growth has slowed. November's hiring was only about half the 535,000 monthly hiring rate averaged during the year's first three months. At this pace of decay, the early months of next year will hardly offer much encouragement. Second, a Nov. 18 Bureau of Labor Statistics report on state-by-state employment shows that unemployment fell in only one state and rose in 24. Rates remain historically low, but the direction of change is ominous.

Perhaps most compelling is the historical record that shows how it takes a while for labor markets to weaken in a declining economy and strengthen in an improving one. Such lags stand to reason. Employers will wait for confirmation of a slow-down before going through a painful and expensive round of layoffs and

similarly wait for confirmation of growth before engaging in a round of hiring. This lagging pattern seldom, if ever, wavers in more than 70 years of data on economic cycles. If anything, the lag has become more pronounced in recent cycles.

During the Great Recession of 2008–09, for example, the unemployment rate hit a low of 4.4 percent in March 2007 and stayed low even as the economy approached the recession's start in January 2008. At first, unemployment rates rose only slowly. It took seven months after the recession began, until August 2008, to get above 6 percent. When the recession ended in June 2009, unemployment had risen to 9.5 percent. Then, even as the economy began its recovery, unemployment continued to climb, reaching almost 10 percent in September 2009. Jobs so lagged the recovery that unemployment remained above 9 percent until September 2011.

A similar pattern is evident in the data on the milder 2001 recession. Unemployment hit a low of 3.9 percent in November 2000 and only crept up to 4.4 percent as the economy weakened and went into recession in May 2001. The rate rose to 5.5 percent as the recession ended in November of that year but continued to rise, reaching 6.3 percent 19 months later in June 2003.

History never repeats itself exactly, but it does argue that the still seemingly strong jobs market is no reason to dismiss other signs of economic weakness. It will take a long while for the statisticians at the National Bureau of Economic Research to say when the United States entered and exited recession this time. In the meantime, the evidence, if not quite beyond cavil, shows that the economy, if not yet in recession, is pointing to one.



The Crypto Lobby

FTX's main lobbying focus was on regulations, not pandemics

FORMER FTX EXECUTIVES made big contributions to this year's midterm elections in order to gain power in Washington and have a say in how the cryptocurrency industry should be regulated.

For more than a year, FTX founder Sam Bankman-Fried made numerous proposals in interviews and policy papers about how Washington officials could police the burgeoning sector.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, the former billionaire and two other executives poured more than \$70 million into the political parties and groups, making FTX the third-largest donor in the 2022 election cycle.

While Bankman-Fried gave nearly \$40 million mainly to Democratic candidates and liberal organizations, his co-CEO, Ryan Salame, donated about \$23 million to Republicans and conservative groups in 2022, according to the OpenSecrets data. The remaining donations came from FTX engineering director Nishad Singh, who gave nearly \$13 million to Democrats and liberal causes, the data showed.

The majority of Bankman-Fried's donations, about \$27 million, went to the Protect Our Future PAC, a new group committed to preventing future pandemics.

Bankman-Fried claimed he intended to encourage lawmakers to better prepare for the next pandemic, but his true goal was to help regulate the sector in a way that would benefit his business, according to observers.

A former FTX employee who's familiar with the lobbying effort in Washington and wished to remain anonymous said that a significant portion of the executives' political contributions was used to push for “pro-crypto legislation” on Capitol Hill.

Bankman-Fried was a vocal supporter of the bipartisan legislation,



At the crux of Bankman-Fried's lobbying effort was the question of which government body should regulate the cryptocurrency industry.

the Digital Commodities Consumer Protection Act of 2022, proposed by Sens. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), John Boozman (R-Ark.), Cory Booker (D-N.J.), and John Thune (R-S.D.) to fix regulatory gaps in digital commodity trading.

“I'm optimistic that the Stabenow-Boozman's bill will provide customer protection on centralized crypto exchanges,” he wrote on Twitter on Oct. 18, expressing his full support.

At the crux of Bankman-Fried's lobbying effort was the question of which government body should regulate the cryptocurrency industry.

He believed that the Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) should oversee his business. By siding with the CFTC instead of the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), he was essentially choosing the more pliable of the two agencies.

Bankman-Fried also backed a bill sponsored by Sens. Cynthia Lummis (R-Wyo.) and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.).

The Lummis–Gillibrand Responsible Financial Innovation Act, introduced in June, would yield “exclusive jurisdiction” over crypto transactions to the CFTC.

With nearly \$40 million in donations, Bankman-Fried became the Democratic Party's second-largest donor this year, trailing only George Soros, who gave \$128 million.

Only \$235,000 of Bankman-Fried's political contributions went to Republicans. He, however, stated in a recent interview with independent crypto journalist Tiffany Fong that he gave almost the same amount to both parties.

“All my Republican donations were dark,” he said, meaning that they weren't disclosed publicly.

Reporters are so “super liberal” that they would freak out if they knew he donated to Republicans, he added.

“I just didn't want to have that fight so I made all the Republican ones dark.”

Besides significant donations to congressional campaigns, the crypto entrepreneur also gave \$1 million to Beto O'Rourke's campaign for the Texas gubernatorial race, which was the single greatest donation the Democrat received between July 1 and Sept. 29, according to a Bloomberg Tax article. Following the scandal, O'Rourke's campaign announced that they gave the money back.

While most of the focus has been on Bankman-Fried's donations to Democrats, OpenSecrets data also show that Salame, co-CEO of Bahamas-based FTX Digital Markets, donated roughly \$23 million to Republican politicians and campaign groups in 2022.

Salame put \$15 million into his super PAC, American Dream Federal Action, which backed crypto-friendly Republicans in elections.

Bankman-Fried and Salame were also the biggest donors to GMI PAC, a nonpartisan super PAC that supports cryptocurrency. Together, they gave \$3.5 million to GMI PAC.

DANIEL LACALLE is chief economist at hedge fund Tressis and author of “Freedom or Equality,” “Escape from the Central Bank Trap,” and “Life in the Financial Markets.”

Daniel Lacalle



Inflation or Recession

If central banks want to fight inflation, capital destruction is unavoidable

WHILE MANY market participants are concerned about rate increases, they appear to be ignoring the largest risk: the potential for a massive liquidity drain in 2023.

Even though December is almost here, central banks' balance sheets have hardly, if at all, decreased.

In the context of government deficits that are hardly declining, and in some cases increasing, investors must take into account the danger of a significant reduction in the balance sheets of central banks. Both the quantitative tightening of central banks and the refinancing of government deficits, albeit at higher costs, will drain liquidity from the markets.

Our tendency is to take liquidity for granted. Due to the fear-of-missing-out mentality, investors have increased their risk and added illiquid assets over the years of monetary expansion.

Since we could always count on rising liquidity, when asset prices corrected over the past two decades, the best course of action was to “buy the dip” and double down. This was because central banks would keep growing their balance sheets and adding liquidity, saving us from almost any bad investment decision, and inflation would stay low.

Twenty years of a dangerous bet: monetary expansion without inflation. How do we handle a situation where central banks must cut at least \$5 trillion off their balance sheets? Don't believe I'm exaggerating; the \$20 trillion bubble generated since 2008 can't be solved with \$5 trillion. A tightening of \$5 trillion in U.S. dollars is mild, even dovish. To return to pre-2020 levels, the Fed would need to decrease its balance sheet by that much on its own.



Given that capital destruction appears to be only getting started, the dividing effect is probably more than anticipated.

Liquidity is dwindling already in the riskiest sectors of the economy, from high yield to crypto assets. By 2023, when the tightening truly begins, it will probably have reached the supposedly safer assets.

In a recent interview, Bundesbank President Joachim Nagel said that the European Central Bank could begin to reduce its balance sheet in 2023 and added that “a recession may be insufficient to get inflation back on target.” This suggests that the “anti-fragmentation tool” currently in use to mask risk in periphery bonds may begin to lose its placebo effect on sovereign assets. Additionally, the cost of equity and the weighted average cost of capital increases as soon as sovereign bond spreads begin to rise.

Capital can only be made or destroyed; it never remains constant. And if central banks are to effectively fight inflation, capital destruction is unavoidable.

The prevalent bullish claim is that

because central banks have learned from 2008, they will not dare to allow the market to crash. Although a correct analysis, it isn't enough to justify market multiples. The fact that governments continue to finance themselves, which they will, is ultimately what counts to central banks. The crowding-out effect of government spending over private-sector credit access has never been a major concern for a central bank.

Central banks are also aware of the worst-case scenario, which is elevated inflation and a recession that could have a prolonged impact on citizens, with rising discontent and generalized impoverishment. They know they can't keep inflation high just to satisfy market expectations of rising valuations. The same central banks that assert that the wealth effect multiplies positively are aware of the disastrous consequences of ignoring inflation. It would be back to the 1970s.

The “energy excuse” in inflation estimates will likely evaporate, and that will be the key test for central banks. The “supply chain excuse” has disappeared, the “temporary excuse” has gotten stale, and the “energy excuse” has lost some of its credibility since June.

Central banks can't accept sustained inflation because it means they would have failed in their mandate. Few can accurately foresee how quantitative tightening will affect asset prices and credit availability, even though it's necessary. What we know is that quantitative tightening, with a minimal decrease in central bank balance sheets, is expected to compress multiples and valuations of risky assets more than it has thus far. Given that capital destruction appears to be only getting started, the dividing effect is probably more than anticipated. And the real economy is always impacted by capital destruction.

MICHAEL M. SANTIAAGO/GETTY IMAGES

FANYU is an expert in finance and economics and has contributed analyses on China's economy since 2015.

Fan Yu

China Tipping into Chaos, Again

Observers say the stimulus measures can only slow the bleeding

BEIJING HAS BEGUN economic stimulus measures since the 20th National Congress in October. But in typical Chinese Communist Party (CCP) fashion, the signals are mixed and Western investors hoping for broad economic reform will likely be left disappointed.

Chinese stocks have been in rally mode through November, especially the big tech companies, reversing an almost two-year slide. Shares have declined along with news of record-high officially reported COVID-19 infection rates, signaling that the market triumph could be more “dead cat bounce” than “traditional turnaround.”

On the real estate front, the CCP introduced a slew of policy-loosening measures to support developers. Beijing's leadership seems to have finally realized the precarious situation real estate developers were in and the systemic nature of its risks.

China's six largest state-owned banks came out to offer more than 925 billion yuan (US\$130 billion) in credit support to property developers in an attempt to stem contagion amidst a continued liquidity crunch in the country's property sector. China Vanke Co., Midea Real Estate Holding, Country Garden Holding, and China Overseas Land and Investment were some of the developer beneficiaries.

China's central bank and the banking regulator released a joint policy document on Nov. 23, outlining ways the country's financial institutions should set expectations on real estate transactions including down payment ratios and interest rate boundaries to support the real estate sector.

However, these support measures are unlikely to alter the negative trajectory of China's real estate market.

Despite being a key driver of China's economic growth over the last two decades, CCP leader Xi Jinping is still com-



The CCP is following its well-worn playbook of giving just enough for global investors to keep believing in China's economic story while clamping down on political, economic, and ideological control.

mitted to a broad deleveraging campaign that was introduced in 2020.

There are still strict standards that limit developers' ability to borrow, especially non-government-owned developers. “If it is central or local state-owned developers applying for development loans, we will generally approve them as long as there are no significant issues with their projects,” a real estate banker at a state-owned bank told Caixin, a mainland business magazine.

“But when it comes to private developers, we are very cautious, and we must do proper due diligence on them and their projects.”

Most economic observers don't expect these stimulus measures to do anything except slow the bleeding. For a broad recovery in property sales, a confluence of factors must improve including consumer confidence, economic policy shift,

a broad COVID reopening, and other financial incentives.

“Because of the Zero-COVID policy, all the ongoing property easing might not be transmitted into the property sector recovery,” Hui Shan, Chief China Economist at Goldman Sachs, told Bloomberg TV in a Nov. 23 interview.

The faint hope investors had of China reopening post-COVID is all but dashed. Western investors had hoped for a moderation of China's “zero-COVID” policy. Chinese authorities had trimmed quarantine length and announced other measures to somewhat relax COVID controls, but Beijing's bungled reopening has instead sent positive cases soaring and putting large swaths of China's population back in lockdown mode.

A significant flare-up in COVID cases has now sent officially reported daily positive cases soaring above the worst days of the Shanghai lockdowns earlier this year. The biggest hit cities include Beijing, the southern cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen, and China's western population center Chongqing. New lockdowns were announced in the northeastern city of Changchun as well as Shanghai.

On-and-off lockdowns have caused social issues, including the widely reported worker protests at Foxconn's iPhone factory in Zhengzhou, and the censoring of a viral WeChat post criticizing CCP's tough COVID policies. Protests have also erupted across the country, demanding the easing of restrictions.

Wall Street remains optimistic though. “While we think the direction toward re-opening is clear, the ups and downs along the way mean possibly heavier headwinds to near-term growth,” Morgan Stanley's Chief China Economist Robin Xing wrote in a note to clients on Nov. 23.

The CCP is following its well-worn playbook of giving just enough for global investors to keep believing in China's economic story while clamping down on political, economic, and ideological control.



“It seems to be a dose-accumulated effect, with the spike protein from the injections having a dose-dependent toxicity.”

Dr. Ryan Cole, a pathologist and founder of Cole Diagnostics

THOUGHT LEADERS

The Dangers of Spike Protein and mRNA Vaccines

‘We now know the vaccine is more dangerous than the virus itself,’ says Dr. Ryan Cole

JOSEPH PREZIOSO/AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES

The cells don’t lie. The clots don’t lie. The damaged organs don’t lie,” says pathologist Ryan Cole.

On this episode of “American Thought Leaders,” host Jan Jekielek speaks with Dr. Ryan Cole on the alarming trends he and some of his colleagues have noted since the rollout of the mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, including a rise in cancer rates and the emergence of large blood clots affecting many organs in the body.

JAN JEKIELEK: When we last talked, you were seeing viruses that typically only occur in children, occurring in adults. You were seeing upticks in rare cancers. Where are things now?

DR. RYAN COLE: Same story, different day. Still being attacked for trying to share science and data, even though I have no agenda other than science and data. For example, we’re still seeing unusual cancers in unusual age groups at slightly higher rates. This is now confirmed by certain federal data sets. The cancer trends are markedly up, and that’s from the CDC’s own trend data sets. So I’m not just a voice in the wilderness. There’s statistical data, and other nations are seeing the same.

MR. JEKIELEK: I want to talk about these cells that clean things up, phagocytes, if I recall correctly.

DR. COLE: You have an immediate-reacting arm of the immune system and a

slow-acting arm. Your immediate arm is your innate immune system. That’s your phagocytes, your natural killer cells. They’re the Marines of the immune system. They’re ready at a moment’s notice when something comes to attack. Your adaptive immune system, that’s your antibodies. That’s the delayed response.

They work in tandem, but there are now countless papers on the Pfizer vaccines showing that these Marines of the immune system were no longer reacting in the robust manner they normally do.

Now, you have a perfect storm for the ability of other infections to infect the human body. We saw this last year when RSV (respiratory syncytial virus) in children was out of season. Then, we saw adults getting RSV and being hospitalized, which is usually only threatening to newborns and children under the age of 1 due to the size of their windpipe. That immediate responsive arm isn’t as robust as it should be in the majority of people who have received the shots, and we don’t know how long these individuals are going to remain in this immune-suppressed state.

But it does seem to be a dose-accumulated effect, with the spike protein from the injections having a dose-dependent toxicity. The more spike you get, the longer your body keeps making it, and the more adversely systems are affected.

MR. JEKIELEK: Before we go there, I want to find out more about what’s happened with your career. Eight, nine months is a long time.

DR. COLE: I’ve had a 26-year-long career being a physician. Now, all of a sudden, I find myself in the crosshairs for sharing science. I lost one of my major insurance contracts for the “unprofessional behavior” of talking about ivermectin and helping save a handful of lives. My business has gone down. My name is mud in my region, though I seem to be a folk hero in some people’s eyes. I’m taking it on the chin financially, with six daughters—four in college—and a family to feed. I’ve invited anyone in the world who disagrees with me to bring me better data. Crickets.

Some universities, thankfully, are starting to do some studies. It’s nice to see other scientists stepping up and doing what I know the profession can do. These are smart people, and they shouldn’t be afraid of real science.

MR. JEKIELEK: How often is it the disease versus the vaccine spike?

DR. COLE: Early on, COVID primarily was a clotting disease. With Omicron, we don’t see the same pathophysiology. I call it COLVID now, not COVID, because, in the majority of people, it’s a common cold. But the vaccinal spike is still the original Wuhan spike. That’s the clotting spike.

The Omicron spike is not the clotting spike. When I see individuals, it’s roughly a 20-fold less clotting effect from Omicron, compared to the Wuhan and the earlier variants. It’s acting differently because of the mutations it has acquired.

So we now know the

“Now you have a perfect storm for the ability of other infections to infect the human body.”

vaccine is more dangerous than the virus itself, because the vaccine still has all those pro-clotting abilities, all those inflammatory abilities, whereas the spike from Omicron does not. The fact that the Wuhan spike was left in any of these vaccines, when it went extinct more than 1 1/2 years ago, is really perplexing. We're vaccinating against something which doesn't exist anymore, technically, and that brings all the risks with zero benefit. The vaccine can still cause the clotting and trigger those inflammatory pathways. It can get into our mitochondria and destroy our mitochondrial function, which is the respiration of every cell in our body.

I don't judge what people do—whether they got a shot, or didn't get a shot, people did what they thought best at the time. What I say now is, if you got one, don't get two. If you got two, definitely don't get three. If you got three, please don't get four. Because Wuhan is gone.

Every pathologist in the world, not just me, can find that spike protein in those cardiac tissues. It can destroy any tissue in the body. The spike itself doesn't destroy the tissue. The spike lands and triggers an inflammatory reaction. The body wants to react to it. Then, all those inflammatory cells release

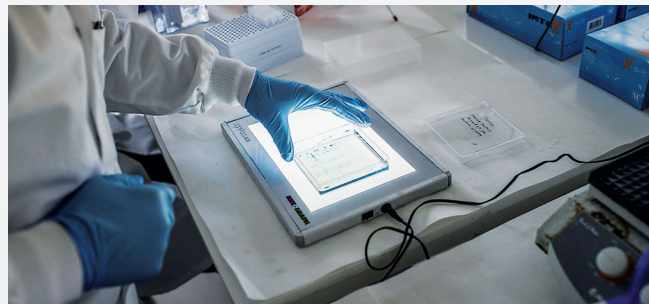
cytokines and chemicals that will end up munching away those tissues.

You look at the country of Iceland, a small country, around 350,000 some people, one of the most compliant nations in terms of the shot. And in July, just a few months ago, their excess mortality rate above a five-year average was 56 percent. That's astronomical.

Every coroner, every medical examiner needs to test for a spike protein in a nucleocapsid stain on every organ in the body of every young deceased person. Simple as that.

MR. JEKIELEK: Recently, the surgeon general of Florida, Joseph Ladapo, offered guidance saying men under 39 shouldn't get these genetic vaccines, because of the dramatic increase of myocarditis harms or deaths.

DR. COLE: Dr. Ladapo did the required studies that have been done historically,



A researcher works on a vaccine against COVID-19 at the Copenhagen's University research lab in Copenhagen, Denmark, on March 23, 2020.

and I think it's a rational conclusion. Young men don't have a risk for death from this disease, especially with Omicron—COLVID not COVID—but we're still requiring our military and some young healthy people to get vaccinated. A study last year looked at myocarditis in athletes. For half of athletes, it was subclinical, meaning they didn't know their heart was inflamed, but on scan, their heart was inflamed. I would encourage every surgeon general in this nation to follow Dr. Lapado's example.

MR. JEKIELEK: We've had some shocking reporting about these clots that embalmers pulled, white fibrous clots. Have you seen these?

DR. COLE: I have several from the embalmers and several from clinicians who pulled them from living patients. We have lots of proteins circulating in our blood. We have antibodies, complements system, and our blood cells proper. These are induced into a clumping pattern by the spike protein.

I have some samples of clots that are a couple of feet long. I've looked at them under the microscope, and that spike protein is really what's inducing this clotting pathway. And this spike

goes everywhere. The lipid nanoparticle takes the gene everywhere, and the spike goes everywhere.

MR. JEKIELEK: It's incredible.

DR. COLE: My question is, why are we still doing this? We know the pathways of harm. The cells don't lie. The clots don't lie. The damaged organs don't lie.

MR. JEKIELEK: Why are so few pathologists talking about this?

DR. COLE: Institutional fear. A lot of them talk about it privately, just not publicly. A lot of them in the universities also have large grants. They know if they speak out against the NIH's narrative, they won't get funding. Some of the private groups fear cancellation by their medical community and insurance companies.

Silence is contagious, but so is courage. I would encourage my colleagues to be courageous. Tell the truth. Say what you're seeing. See something, say something.

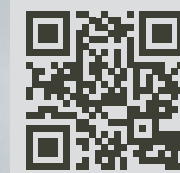
MR. JEKIELEK: Dr. Cole, any final thoughts as we finish?

DR. COLE: That's a silver lining in this chaos: Health and wellness have become more important. More people are health conscious. And the world is still a good place with good people, in spite of all of this. Let's focus on each other. Let's be kind. Let's not allow politics to mess up medicine. It's always a new day, and let's be grateful for it. ■

This interview has been edited for clarity and brevity.

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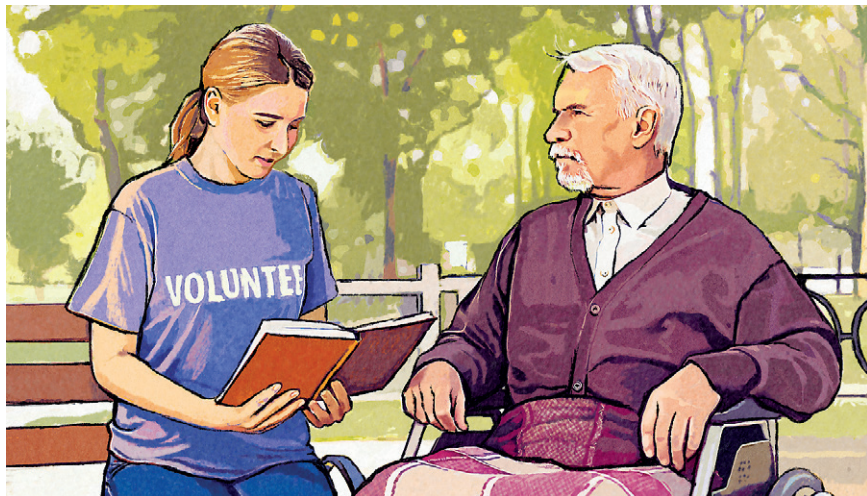
AN EPOCH TIMES DOCUMENTARY

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Comfort comes from overcoming obstacles

We are defined by how we respond to difficult situations

By Jeff Minick



NATE, A BRIGHT, articulate 20-year-old I recently interviewed, surprised me with this observation, which I've paraphrased here: "When I was in high school, I was bored and played a lot of video games, and I tried to think of ways I could make a lot of money and have a comfortable life.

"But one day, I realized that comfort wasn't what I wanted. I wanted a hard life that would challenge me."

Nate has spent the past two years aiming to make that desire a reality, traveling around the country to different churches with a team of other young people of faith, giving talks, and conducting workshops for teenagers. He's now considering the ministry or becoming a missionary.

This young man's desire for a challenging life brought several thoughts.

For one, we Americans do treasure our creature comforts. Like most human beings, we value security. We want a nice home, good food on the table, and money in the bank.

For some, however, the definition of comfort includes such activities as filling every evening with television, playing games on a screen, or popping open too many beers. Pleasure and ease become anesthetics, ways of escaping daily work and obligations, or as substitutes for more rigorous options. Many young men Nate's age, for example, prefer playing "Call of Duty" to joining the Marine Corps.

On the other hand, most adults don't need to go hunting for challenges in life. Every grownup I've ever known has faced the misery brought by hardships: the deaths of friends and family members, broken romances, bankruptcy, the loss of a job.

Other challenges—a newborn baby, the opening of a small business—bring more positive ramifications, but they still pump up the adrenalin and throw our minds into overdrive.

Life comes barreling in, and people are forced to stand and fight or run away.

And we shouldn't forget that for many people, finding comfort and security is the challenge. The father of two who works a full-time job while caring for his ailing wife may dream of a day when the weekend will bring rest rather than more responsibilities. The 40-year-old entrepreneur who battled her way out of the poverty and crime of North Philly may have attained what seemed an impossible dream—a house in a nice neighborhood—and feels she has overcome enough challenges for a lifetime.

This list of trials and tests that are a part of the human condition, good and bad, is as long as my arm. Life comes barreling in and people are forced to stand and fight or run away. Most of

them face the fire.

Even so, I understand Nate's point. His ambitions brought to mind something Pope Benedict XVI said: "The world offers you comfort, but you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness."

I think that's what Nate meant, and seeking the best in ourselves is certainly a worthy goal. Many of you readers are in pursuit of this very same goal. If you're striving to make your corner of the world a better place, whether by your work or by volunteering for a worthy cause, if you're raising children as best you can, if you are honorable and kind, you've put comfort aside and accepted a challenge.

Challenges are tough, but does comfort therefore equal happiness? Probably not, most of the time. One simple example is that of the newborn mentioned above. Before that little bundle appeared, her parents slept through the night and dined out several times a week. But would they give back that baby to regain these lost comforts?

As for Nate, I suspect that whatever road he walks, he likely won't have to chase down challenges. They'll find him with no trouble at all.

Jeff Minick lives and writes in Front Royal, Va. He is the author of two novels, "Amanda Bell" and "Dust on Their Wings," and two works of nonfiction, "Learning as I Go" and "Movies Make the Man."



Unwind



Lake Superior ice is fickle. About once every couple of decades, the lake freezes over completely. Or as little as a third.

PHOTO BY LMARU/GETTY IMAGES

A Winter Visit to Lake Superior 72

CHEF SOL HAN'S ABILITY TO seamlessly combine Korean flavor with French culinary techniques has made LittleMad a favorite of NYC gourmands. 75

WITH SO MANY GREAT SPACE and aviation museums located up and down the East Coast, planning a road trip in the spring may be the best way to see them all. 76

ADD ANY—OR ALL—OF these favorite arcade games to instantly transform a basement, entertainment room, or man cave into a fun factory. 79

INSIDE

A Storybook French Chalet

The perfect getaway for a skiing family

This lovely chalet in the French Alps is straight out of a fairy tale, enjoying a commanding view of the countryside.

By Phil Butler

THIS CHARMING DOUBLE CHALET in Courchevel, France, set in the French Alps, looks like it sprang straight from the pages of a book of fairy tales. Built in the style of traditional French ski chalets, the eight-bedroom, eight-bath, two-story chalet is the epitome of coziness, with natural wood and stone running throughout and exterior stone walls complimented by a traditional stone roof.

Inside, rustic beamed ceilings, practical yet attractive fireplaces, and more features create a welcoming atmosphere to entertain friends or settle in with a large family.

With a total of 3,345 square feet of living area, the chalet has plenty of room for the owners and their guests to relax and enjoy themselves in the welcoming living room or rest in the bedrooms before gathering for a meal in the dining room. The adjacent, well-equipped country kitchen has dinette seating for casual meals. Every inch of the entire interior is finished or accented in wood, from the floors to the walls to the exposed-beam ceilings, all working together to create the ultimate ski lodge effect.

That's especially evident in the master suite, with its vaulted ceiling, a stone fireplace to ward off the cold, and a gleaming brass chandelier above. One of the baths features a vintage copper bathtub that's perfect for enjoying a hot, relaxing soak after a day on the slopes.

Outside, a huge deck with a broad balcony above affords a relaxing view of the garden and adjacent mature orchard, as well as the surrounding forested mountain scenery. In addition to the residence, the property features a garage, a barn, and a storage cellar.

The chalet is located about 10 minutes by car from Courchevel's town center. In addition to shopping and dining venues, the town is a world-class ski destination that's linked to the Three Valleys Ski Area. The cities and airports of Geneva, Switzerland, and Lyon, France, are two hours away.

The property is scheduled to be sold by Sotheby's Concierge Auctions on Dec. 14. ■

Phil Butler is a publisher, editor, author, and analyst who is a widely cited expert on subjects ranging from digital and social media to travel technology.



**COURCHEVEL CHALET
LA NOUVAZ,
COURCHEVEL, FRANCE**

PRICE ON REQUEST

- 8 BEDROOMS, 8 BATHS
- 3,345 SQUARE FEET
- SURROUNDING GARDENS & ORCHARD

KEY FEATURES

- FRENCH ALPS VIEWS
- TRADITIONAL DESIGN
- CLOSE TO WORLD-CLASS SKI SLOPES

AGENTS

SOOTHEBY'S CONCIERGE AUCTIONS
CAMILLA PETERS - PROJECT MANAGER/AUCTION REPRESENTATIVE
+33 646 760 8109



(Above) The property provides a commanding view of the ski resort town of Courchevel, which is part of the world-class Les Trois Vallées ski area.

(Top Right) This bathroom with its vintage copper tub and sinks, radiator heater, and wood floors, walls, and ceiling is the ideal place to enjoy a long, hot bath after a day of skiing.

(Right) The master bedroom is a perfect example of ski lodge chic, featuring a fireplace and gleaming chandelier, accenting the wood floors, walls and exposed-beam ceiling.



ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF SOTHEBY'S CONCIERGE AUCTIONS

Icing on the Lake

Wintery experiences along a frozen Lake Superior

By Kevin Revolinski



Ice caves on the Apostle Islands.

THOSE WHO LIVE UP NORTH in Wisconsin—Lake Superior country—know a thing or two about the hazards of winter, a season that sometimes drags on like an eternity.

But for those who choose to live there, ice is just something you learn to negotiate and even incorporate into your leisure time.

The wintery event Book Across the Bay is a fine example. The bay in question is Chequamegon Bay on Lake Superior, where the cities of Ashland, Washburn, and Bayfield look across at each other from along the curving shore tucked under that little horn at the top of Wisconsin, the Bayfield Peninsula. In 1996, a group of locals thought it would be a pretty good idea to ski across the ice, and the idea caught on.

For years, Book Across the Bay has reliably drawn more than 2,000 participants each year—more than the population of Washburn itself—who come to ski or snowshoe on a 10-kilometer route (6.2 miles) that crosses the frozen lake between Ashland and Washburn. The unusual race is a night to remember, but there are other icy opportunities that merit a trip north.

The Ice Caves

The peninsula's Apostle Islands aren't a national park, but a national lakeshore. So in addition to the federally protected 21 (of the total 22) namesake isles, there's also a good chunk of protected coastline with some stunning sandstone cliffs. Battered and weathered by the relentless forces of Lake Superior's wind and waves, these cliffs feature sculpted colored rock, caves, crevices, and tunnels. In summer, sea kayakers venture a mile east of Meyers Beach to get up close and paddle through—when the lake and its frequently changing wave patterns allow.

Likewise in winter, if the ice and weather are just right, visitors come out—this time on foot, skis, or snowshoes crossing along the frozen lake surface. The cliffs and their caves take on beautiful layers of ice and massive icicles and formations. When the rising and setting sun lights them up orange, it will take your breath away.

The ice caves—which enjoyed international acclaim and nearly 140,000 visitors in 2014—are only as reliable as the lake ice, which means “not very.” Some years, the ice is right for only a few days; other years, not at all. The National Park Service monitors the conditions and posts warnings online, or you can call the Ice Line (715-779-3398, ext. 3) before you make the drive to the Meyers Beach parking area. Plan B is perhaps a snowshoe/hike along the Lakeshore Trail, ♦

Lake Superior contains
3
quadrillion
gallons
of water.



A car traveling
around Lake
Superior covers
around 1,300
miles.

The last
time Lake
Superior
completely
froze over
was 1979,
though 2014
came close.

Book Across
the Bay draws
more than
2,000 people
each year who
come to ski or
snowshoe.



CLOCKWISE FROM L: JUSTIN MEISEN/CC BY-SA 2.0, THE EPOCH TIMES; ZHUKOVY/VIAD/SHUTTERSTOCK



Skiers make their way along the race course.

which leads from the parking area out along the cliff tops and offers some views. But beware of slipping hazards; these are cliffs after all!

The Ice Road

Another option is a drive on the ice. Check out Madeline Island, the only one of the 22 Apostle Islands not included in the National Lakeshore status. People reside there year-round, and a car ferry makes the 2 1/4-mile trip up to eight times per day in season. But when the ice forms, you can simply drive there.

Each year, the ice has been coming later and later and lasting fewer days. Some years have shown no roadworthy ice—2012, for example—and either the ferry runs all season or a wind sled helps out when neither cars nor ferries can get across. That mainland connection keeps residents from going stir-crazy.

Icefalls and Luminaries

Several photogenic waterfalls in the area look quite fine in their frosty state as well. Big and Little Manitou Falls at Pattison State Park and



Madeline Island is the only one of the 22 Apostle Islands not included in the National Lakeshore status.

Amnicon Falls State Park, both less than about an hour west of Ashland, are good bets, as are the two main waterfalls at Copper Falls State Park to the south. The latter has an evening hike/ski event on Feb. 5 that's lighted by ice luminaries. For a hidden beauty on the Bayfield Peninsula, snowshoe into the woods to find the diminutive Lost Creek Falls just south of Cornucopia.

Gone Fishing

Visit Ashland works with River Rock Inn & Bait Shop to keep updated ice-fishing conditions along Chequamegon Bay. The necessary equipment includes an ice auger to cut a hole, bait, fishing rods, tip-ups, and whatever you need to keep warm, whether that's a parka, good boots, an actual shelter, or a heater. One might catch perch, walleye, brown trout, whitefish, northern pike, or even Coho out on the bay or out toward the islands. Guides are also available, whether you're on the big lake or one of the many inland ones.

My relatives told me of three fellows whose ice once broke free from the mainland and floated a day or six (depending on the storyteller) before bumping into one of the Apostle Islands (Hermit Island, according to Grandmother). There they waited to be rescued—and presumably, kept fishing. Sounds crazy, but then recently, Green Bay (the actual bay, not the city, although they're connected at the hip) made national news when a large group of anglers took an unintended iceberg cruise and needed rescuing. These things happen, but when the fish are biting, what's a fellow to do? ■

Kevin Revolinski is an avid traveler, craft beer enthusiast, and home-cooking fan.

If You Go

Getting There:

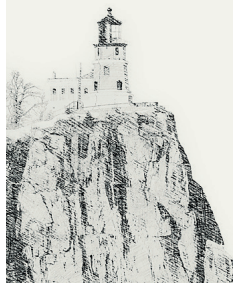
The nearest airport is Duluth (DLH). From there, take a taxi, buses, or a rental car for the final two-hour drive to the Apostle Islands.

Attractions:

If visiting between December and March, take a dog sledding tour in Bayfield Country with Wolfsong Adventures in Mushing. For bookings, visit WolfsongAdventures.com

Take Note:

February 2023 marks the 26th anniversary of Book Across the Bay, which began as a fundraiser for the local library. For more information, visit batb.org



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: COURTESY OF BOOK ACROSS THE BAY; HENRYK SAOURA/SHUTTERSTOCK; JACOB BOONEMA/SHUTTERSTOCK

THE NON-STOP CHEF: SOL HAN INVITES DINERS TO JOIN HIM ON A METHODICALLY MAD CULINARY ADVENTURE

At LittleMad in New York, the confident young chef shows off his French training, Korean American upbringing, and penchant for tireless experimentation

By Crystal Shi

ALICE HAD MAGICAL “eat me” cakes; chef Sol Han has bungeo-ppang. The fish-shaped pastry, a popular Korean street snack, is traditionally a springy, waffle-like shell stuffed with sweetened red bean paste. Han flips it savory by nixing the filling, flavoring the batter like a scallion pancake—a nod to a childhood staple—and serving it with black garlic butter, as part of a quartet of snacks that opens a five-course tasting menu.

“It’s our bread-and-butter service without being bread and butter, which is boring,” Han said. “When you take a bite of the bungeo-ppang, you’re entering our world of craziness. You’re entering LittleMad’s world.”

This is a world supercharged with the energy and bravado of a young chef with a vision: creating a one-of-a-kind restaurant where diners can only expect the unexpected.

Born in Seoul, Han moved to the United States with his family when he was 7 and grew up in Long Island, New York. His parents worked long hours to save up to buy their own restaurant, a Japanese spot, where Han helped out as a teenager and first began concocting his own dishes.

After culinary school and working in fine-dining French and Italian kitchens, Han teamed up with Hand Hospitality to open LittleMad, in Manhattan’s NoMad neighborhood, in June 2021. The cuisine-blending menu melds French techniques with the Korean flavors of his childhood—and an irreverent dose of playfulness.

“It’s got to have the tradition,

The scallion-infused bungeo-ppang are among the chef’s snacks that open the \$75 five-course menu.



The lobster entree, brushed with pine nut-garlic butter and stuffed with tomalley fried rice, is a menu staple.



The interior of LittleMad.



Sol Han, executive chef and partner at LittleMad in New York.

SOL HAN

Age: 34

Born: Seoul, Korea

Lives: New York

Comfort Food: Shin ramen

Drink of Choice: Soju and beer (with Korean snacks)

Underrated Ingredient: Soy sauce

Best Advice He’s Received: “Work like you own it—and you’re going to get it.”

but it’s also got to be outside the box and different,” Han said. “It’s got to be fun.”

Take the chou farci, a classic French dish of stuffed cabbage leaves: Han makes his with a mandu (Korean dumpling) filling, then floats the translucent parcel in a pool of tarragon oil and frothy lobster sabayon. Meanwhile, the buh-sut, tempura-fried maitake, reflects his American upbringing: It’s served with a chips-and-dip-inspired sour cream and onion dip, presented in a whole onion.

A kalbi entree is marinated for 48 hours, grilled and brushed with brown butter, and served with confit garlic and housemade ssamjang and apples; a lobster option includes a tomalley-fried rice stuffing, a white kimchi salad with the claw and knuckle

meat, and a miso soup made with shell-enriched lobster stock.

A few items are menu staples, but Han says the rest changes at least weekly, a challenge for a nimble and hardworking team and an outlet for a restless stream of creativity.

“I don’t stop thinking about food—when I’m in bed, when I wake up [at] two, three in the morning to get a glass of water, throughout the entire night,” he said. Once inspiration strikes, “I need to make it the very next day. If you’re a rapper and you come up with a rhyme, you need to write it down, right? Same thing.”

Far from finding it draining, Han clearly thrives on this particular brand of madness.

“I don’t stop thinking about what I’m going to be creating tomorrow,” he said. “What’s next?” ■

Those seeking a fun, educational springtime road trip may enjoy these East Coast air museums

THE HISTORY OF *Flight*

By Bill Lindsey



Americans have been at the forefront of aviation ever since the Wrights lifted off a lonely North Carolina beach, making aviation museums educational and quite possibly inspirational for the kids.

AVIATION HAS COME A LONG way since Orville Wright's flight in 1903, making air and space collections a must-see on many bucket lists. With so many incredible museums spread across the United States, this list focuses on those on the East Coast—we promise to cover the others in subsequent issues.

Smithsonian Greats

The best place to start is the Big Daddy of them all, the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, located in Washington, with a second facility in nearby Chantilly, Virginia. This collection stands out by providing its guests the opportunity to get a rare, up-close look at a World War I Sopwith F.1 Camel—yes, just like the one Snoopy flies—the space shuttle Discovery, and a Lockheed SR-71 Blackbird spy plane that flew faster than the speed of sound. Other notable aircraft include the Enola Gay, the bomber that dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and hastened the end of World War II.

Budget a day at each location in order to take advantage of the various exhibits of space and aviation-related gear, as well as seminars and presentations in the IMAX theaters at both locations. Savvy travelers will check ahead to review the schedules and plan visits accordingly.

An ideal destination is in North Carolina, where manned flight quite literally got off the ground.

Overnight in New York

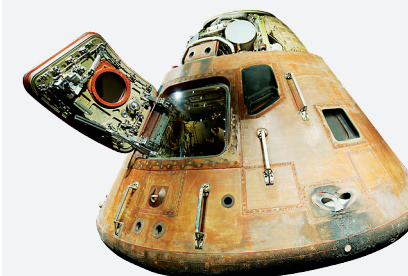
New York City is now the home of the aircraft carrier Intrepid and the Intrepid Experience. The ship, which was decommissioned in 1974, is now permanently berthed on the Hudson River. The ship's rotating exhibits include 3D documentaries on World War II, female astronauts, submarine warfare, and more. Several notable items in this collection include the USS Growler, the only guided missile submarine open to the public; the space shuttle Enterprise; and a British Airways Concorde that set an air speed record for crossing the Atlantic.

For a truly memorable experience, make reservations for Operation Slumber, in which guests are allowed to spend the night aboard and take part in a number of unique events, including meals on board, after-dark tours of the flight deck, access to the planetarium, and a 60-day pass for return visits.

Exploring aviation museums helps guests realize the huge strides made since the Wright Brothers' historic flight.



An Apollo command module is just one of many spacecraft on display at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida.



An aviation buff must-see is the Kill Devil Hills site where Orville Wright made man's first powered flight.



Visitors enjoying a close-up look at World War I Sopwith Camel aircraft.

LEFT PAGE: EVERETT COLLECTION/SHUTTERSTOCK; THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM L: ALENA YEASEY, SPATULETAIL/SHUTTERSTOCK, MIA2YOU/SHUTTERSTOCK, GARY CARTER/BETTY IMAGES



Florida's Kennedy Space Center is a repository of a wealth of spacecraft and related equipment.

North Carolina's Lift-Off

Continuing the trek south, an ideal destination is North Carolina, where manned flight quite literally got off the ground, making it a very appropriate location for the Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kill Devil Hills. Visitors can watch videos on the history of manned flight, visit the actual spot where Orville lifted off, and walk through a reconstruction of the hangar and the living quarters used by the Wrights.

Asheville has the North Carolina Aviation Museum and Hall of Fame. This facility preserves significant examples of military and commercial aircraft, including a Piper J-3 Flitfire flown by Orville Wright and a Boeing Stearman biplane, plus numerous educational exhibits. The group also hosts an exciting annual air show in October.

Launches at the Space Center

The Sunshine State's bright blue skies have seen everything from paragliders over the beach to SpaceX flights, making it a natural for any road trip to aviation museums. At the top of the list is the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex, where guests can explore the future of space travel in the Deep Space Launch Complex. There, they participate in a virtual journey through the solar system and see a SpaceX Falcon 9 booster, a Cargo Dragon that delivered supplies to the International Space Station, and equipment that will soon return man to

the moon via the Artemis missions.

Other attractions include the space shuttle Atlantis, a walk through missiles and rockets in the Rocket Garden, the U.S. Astronaut Hall of Fame, a realistic moon-scape diorama, a guided bus tour of the grounds, and a recreation of the Apollo 8 launch from Mission Control. To get the most from a visit to this impressive facility, plan your arrival to coincide with a scheduled launch.

Florida's Aviator Displays

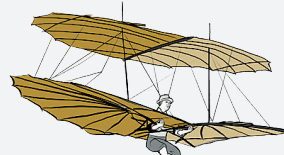
Not too far from Cape Canaveral is the city of Lakeland, home to the Florida Air Museum. This collection includes aircraft owned and flown by Howard Hughes, who was a driving force in aviation technology, as well as multiple U.S. Navy fighter craft—including the unique Vertical Riser and a full-scale recreation of the Wright Brothers' Wright Flyer—along with educational exhibits chronicling aviation technology.

If your visit to the Lakeland area will take you there in early April, make sure to attend the annual EAA Sun 'n Fun Aerospace Expo, an epic fly-in that puts hundreds of military, commercial, and experimental aircraft on display on the ground and overhead as they perform acrobatic maneuvers and fly-overs. Sponsored by the Experimental Aircraft Association, this fly-in at Lakeland Linder Airport is a must for aviation buffs and an amazing adventure even for those who prefer to keep their feet on the ground. ■



LIFESTYLE HIGH-ALTITUDE ADVENTURE

Get Your Head
in the Clouds



1

Experience History

Tremendous advances have taken place over the 11.9 years of manned flight, making a visit to any of these museums an opportunity to be amazed by tales of bravery and creativity.



2

Special Events

When planning a trip to any of these museums, check in via their websites or call to learn about any upcoming special events such as fly-ins or, in the case of Florida's Kennedy Space Center, scheduled launches.



3

Learning Is Fun

Many collections include hands-on demonstrations or films that make learning about flight a lot of fun for the whole family.

THIS PAGE: MARK WILSON/GETTY IMAGES

YOUR OWN ARCADE

Life has become more complicated, so we've collected some classic arcade games that bring back simple, unadulterated fun for kids of all ages

By Bill Lindsey



A High-Tech Coffee Table 3-SIDED COCKTAIL ARCADE MACHINE

\$1,749

Your friends might suspect you "borrowed" this classic game from a nearby pub, because it has everything found on commercial machines except a slot for quarters. It features two sets of controls to allow two-person play in horizontal mode or single-player use in vertical mode. More than 1,000 games, including Pac-Man, Frogger, Dig Dug, Asteroids, and many more keep even the most demanding players hooked. The added Bluetooth option allows it to play your favorite music in between games.



Slam Dunk HALL OF GAMES 2-PLAYER ARCADE BASKETBALL GAME

\$316.99

ArCADE games are a proven way to improve hand-eye coordination, but this one takes it to a much higher level by involving your entire body. Twin hoops let you compete with friends or simply alternate between them to unwind after a busy day at work. Unlike many other arcade games, this one doesn't have flashing lights or loud buzzers, just the satisfying sound of the ball going through the net, watching your points increase on the LED scoreboard.



Velociraptors in the Game Room! JURASSIC PARK PINBALL MACHINE BY STERN

\$4,999

Pinball wizards will find themselves going back in time 65 million years to Isla Nubar and experiencing the thrill of being chased by dinosaurs every time they play this arcade-style machine. A roaring T-Rex dominates the playing field, while players work the flippers to corral the raptors in their pen. Flashing lights, movie-themed music, and loud pings as the balls bounce off interactive targets provide a lively and mesmerizing experience.



Bowling With a Twist BARRINGTON COVENTRY COLLECTION 10' ROLL AND SCORE GAME

\$1,193.99

This game of skill requires players to roll a ball up the 10-foot wooden deck, making it leap up the ramp and into the scoring rings protected by a metal cage. High scores are rewarded with exciting sound effects. The LED scoreboard, a handsome oak finish, and antique-style graphics give it a classic appearance straight out of a 1950s-era arcade, making it great décor for a man cave or enjoying a prime location in the family entertainment room.



The Real Arcade Experience LEGENDS ULTIMATE

\$599.99

Many of us spent countless hours playing stand-up arcade games virtually identical to this one, converting stacks of quarters into flashing lights and throbbing sound effects and manipulating the trackball, spinners, and joysticks. Equipped with a 24-inch high-definition screen and stereo speakers, it's an ideal way to liven up a home entertainment room or the office breakroom. It arrives ready to play more than 300 games, including classic Space Invaders, Tetris, and Centipede, with an additional 200 available via ArcadeNet.

RECOMMENDED READING

This week, we feature a visual celebration of Albert Einstein and a helpful guide to parenting based on the principles espoused by Aristotle.

FICTION

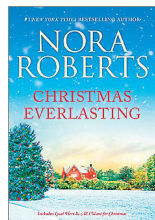


'ISOM'
By Eric July

A Comic Book Hero That Isn't Woke

Eric July grew up a huge comic book fan and despises the current woke trajectory of the industry. His response? Create his own hero and his own comic universe. Great storytelling, high-level artistry, and characters that are a throwback to what made comics great.

RIPPAVERSE COMICS, 2022, 96 PAGES



'CHRISTMAS EVERLASTING'
By Nora Roberts

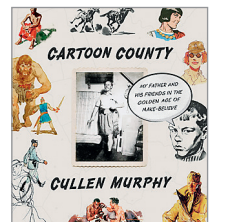
Reading for Pleasure

This bestselling queen of romance introduces two novels to her readers. "Local Hero" features Hester Wallace, a busy single mother who gradually falls in love with her next-door neighbor, a cartoonist who offers to watch her son. "All I Want for Christmas"

finds piano teacher Nell Davis in a new town, where she becomes attracted to the father of her twin students. They want a new mom, and she's falling for their dad, but he's not sure she'll fit into the family. Light reading and some sweet recreation.

SILHOUETTE REISSUE EDITION, 2021, 320 PAGES

MEMOIR



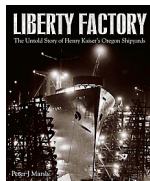
'CARTOON COUNTY'
By Cullen Murphy

Life Among Cartoonists

In the mid-20th century, the cartoon was king. The Sunday comic section was as large as today's Section 1. Cullen Murphy's father, John Cullen Murphy, drew Big Ben Bolt and later Prince Valiant. From 1945 to 1995, many who created comic strips lived in Fairfield County, Connecticut. Murphy grew up around talents such as Mort Walker, Dik Browne, Alex Raymond, and Stan Drake. This book tells of the magic of growing up among these artists. Lavishly illustrated, this book recaptures a vanished era.

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX, 2017, 272 PAGES

HISTORY



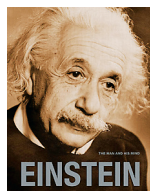
'LIBERTY FACTORY'
By Peter J. Marsh

Building Ships in Bulk

During World War II, Portland evolved from a run-down lumber town into a major shipbuilding center. This book details how Henry Kaiser established shipyards in Portland and neighboring Vancouver, building Liberty ships, Victory ships, escort carriers, troop transports, and tankers by the score. This fascinating industrial history is as much about people as ships. It offers an absorbing look at World War II Home Front America.

NAVAL INSTITUTE PRESS, 2021, 192 PAGES

BIOGRAPHY



'EINSTEIN'
By Gary S. Berger and Michael DiRuggiero

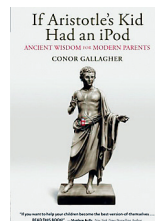
Remembering a Visionary

To celebrate the 100-year anniversary of Albert Einstein receiving the Nobel Prize for physics in 1921, this beau-

tifully produced book remembers the man and his works. Contributors have assembled Einstein's personal letters, writings, and signed photographs largely from a private collection, creating a visual feast for readers.

DAMIANI, 2022, 209 PAGES

CLASSICS



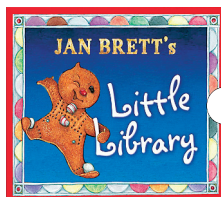
'IF ARISTOTLE'S KID HAD AN IPOD'
By Conor Gallagher

Ancient Wisdom for Modern Parents

Here, the principles of Aristotle's "Nicomachean Ethics" are applied to parenting today. Along the way, we meet a dog whisperer, receive advice on why you should tell your kid to "get lost," and learn why posting on Twitter isn't real conversation. Tolkien, "Star Wars," The Beatles, and more are mixed into this Aristotelian stew, along with help from "Aristotle's Parenting Assessment Test." Gallagher's graduate studies in philosophy and law—and the wisdom he's gained as the father of eight children—shine in this helpful guide.

SAINT BENEDICT PRESS REPRINT EDITION, 2014, 244 PAGES

FOR KIDS

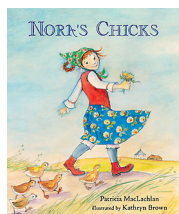


'JAN BRETT'S LITTLE LIBRARY'
By Jan Brett

5 Stars for This One

This box set of board books gives toddlers "The Mitten," "The Hat," and "Gingerbread Baby"—three favorites by this talented writer and illustrator. An ideal gift for children on their birthdays or for the holidays. This book is for children up to 3 years old.

G.P. PUTNAM'S SONS, 2003, 98 PAGES



'NORA'S CHICKS'
By Patricia Maclachlan

The Challenge of Change

When Nora moves with her family from Russia to the American frontier, she finds herself struggling with the transition and wishing for a friend. Then, her father offers her a chance to take care of a dozen chicks all on her own.

CANDLEWICK, 2013, 40 PAGES



Ian Kane
is a U.S. Army veteran, filmmaker, and author. He enjoys the great outdoors and volunteering.

MOVIE REVIEWS

This week, we feature an inspiring documentary about a music icon's redemption and a warm family drama about an orphan trying to solve a mystery.

NEW RELEASE



'Johnny Cash' (2022)

In this moving film that focuses on Johnny Cash's spirituality, we follow the legendary musician's mercurial rise to fame and fortune and subsequent fall into drug addiction and depression. It also shows how Cash managed to get out of this rut by returning to his faith in God.

This outstanding biopic not only features interviews with numerous country stars but also rare, insightful conversations with Cash, which illuminate the Man in Black's various ups and downs. It's a truly inspiring real-life tale of hope and redemption.

DOCUMENTARY

Release Date:
Dec. 5, 2022

Director:
Ben Smallbone

MPAA Rating:
Not Rated

Where to Watch:
Theaters

★★★★★

A WESTERN AHEAD OF ITS TIME



'Cheyenne' (1947)

James Wylie (Dennis Morgan) is a gentlemanly gambler who's wanted by the law. The authorities offer him a chance

at exoneration if he helps them catch a much more dangerous criminal.

This entertaining Western takes you on a ride through the rough and tumble Old West. It

features some surprisingly good dialogue, unexpected comedy, and some spurts of visceral action.

WESTERN

Release Date:
June 6, 1947

Director:
Raoul Walsh

Starring:
Dennis Morgan, Jane Wyman, Janis Paige

Running Time:
1 hour, 39 minutes

Not Rated

Where to Watch:
Apple TV, DirecTV, Amazon

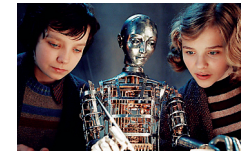
★★★★★

FAMILY PICK

'Hugo' (2011)

After his father tragically dies, young Hugo Cabret (Asa Butterfield) has to live with his alcoholic uncle at a train station. There, the boy maintains a complex clock. But when his uncle vanishes, the youth must dodge the train station's inspector while trying to fathom the mysteries of an automaton left behind by his father.

With an impressive cast and an endearing, fairytale-like story, this is a perfect dish of impressive cinematic art, a history of filmmaking, and



family-friendly fare, with a healthy dollop of inspiration.

ADVENTURE | DRAMA | FAMILY

Release Date:
Nov. 23, 2011

Director:
Martin Scorsese

Starring:
Asa Butterfield, Chloë Grace Moretz, Ben Kingsley

Running Time:
2 hours, 6 minutes

MPAA Rating:
PG

Where to Watch:
Vudu, DirecTV, HBO Max

★★★★★

THOUGHT-PROVOKING FILM ABOUT ILL-GOTTEN GAINS

'Quiz Show' (1994)

"Twenty-One" is a popular 1950s quiz show and Herb Stempel (John Turturro) is its best contestant. But when charming newcomer Charles Van Doren (Ralph Fiennes) suddenly begins to out-compete Stempel, idealistic attorney Dick Goodwin (Rob Morrow) senses that something's off.

This brilliant historical drama draws viewers in gradually with crisp writing, nuanced acting, and an ever-thickening plot. At its core, it's a tale about



the seductive power of money and fame, juxtaposed with ethics and morality.

BIOGRAPHY | DRAMA | HISTORY

Release Date:
Oct. 7, 1994

Director:
Robert Redford

Starring:
Ralph Fiennes, John Turturro, Rob Morrow

Running Time:
2 hours, 13 minutes

MPAA Rating: PG-13

Where to Watch:
DirecTV, Hoopla, Redbox

★★★★★



Icy Manners

Skating is a winter tradition made better when everyone behaves

Strapping on skates and sailing across the frozen surface is as close to a superpower most of us will ever experience, but with power comes responsibility, so take care to ensure everyone has a great time.

By Bill Lindsey

1 Ice Rules

One of the most important unwritten rules of skating says that more-seasoned, experienced skaters are expected to do whatever it takes to avoid collisions. When coming up on slower skaters, pass them on the outside by a wide margin, saying “excuse me” if you’re unavoidably close to them. Don’t rocket past slower skaters—besides being rude, it could be dangerous if they unknowingly get in front of you. When approaching skaters coming in the opposite direction, pass to your right of them.



2 Be Helpful

If you see a skater struggling to stay upright, or who has fallen, carefully approach them and offer a helping hand to get back up. They may well be embarrassed, so think twice before offering unsolicited advice or technique suggestions, making sure to phrase whatever you say so that it comes across as friendly, like, “It took me forever to learn to skate until a friend showed me this trick.” If they are receptive, give them a few pointers.

3 Be Respectful

Not everyone on the ice has spent many years perfecting their skills, so it’s important that those with well-honed skills take care to not look down on those who are new to the ice or simply less talented. Just as sound travels across water, so too does it travel across ice, meaning that any less-than-flattering comments about awkward skaters might be heard by them and others. If you can’t say something nice, don’t say anything at all.

4 Control the Kids

An ice skating rink or frozen lake isn’t a substitute day care facility, so don’t simply turn the kids loose while you look for hot chocolate or check your email. Being a good parent, older sibling, or responsible babysitter means keeping an eye on your kids. This includes safety concerns and proper behavior; if they are having problems skating, make sure they don’t get hurt. Also make sure they politely share the ice with other skaters and don’t get rambunctious.

5 Share the Ice

You may well be the next Wayne Gretzky, and yes, hockey is played on ice by folks wearing skates, but that doesn’t mean you should skate aggressively or in a manner that might intimidate those around you. That goes for budding Olympians who want to practice spins and leaps as well as coaches who are giving lessons. If you’re practicing a routine that requires you to cover a lot of ice, plan ahead to skate when the rink isn’t crowded.

OSAI IMAGES/GETTY IMAGES

Courageous Reporting

We believe that investigating and exposing the truth is the only way that we can remain safe and free

CROSSFIRE HURRICANE

ON MAY 25, 2017, The Epoch Times published an article headlined “Despite Allegations, No Evidence of Trump–Russia Collusion Found.” The article detailed that—despite a media frenzy at the time—no actual evidence had been uncovered that President Donald Trump or anyone associated with his campaign had colluded with Russia to influence the 2016 presidential election.

OUR REPORTING was proven accurate with the conclusion of the investigation by special counsel Robert Mueller.

NOT ONLY DID WE NOT BUY INTO the false narrative that Trump colluded with Russia, but we have also been a leader in reporting on the irregular and apparently politicized nature of the FBI’s investigation of the Trump campaign. During the past five years, we have published dozens of articles on the topic, many of them exclusive.



ELECTION INTEGRITY

FOLLOWING THE 2020 ELECTION, The Epoch Times was at the forefront of investigating and reporting on the questions surrounding the integrity of the election. Through our fact-based and independent reporting, we were able to uncover multiple irregularities.



ORIGINS OF COVID-19

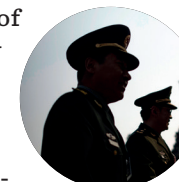
ON APRIL 15, 2020, The Epoch Times published its documentary “Tracking Down the Origin of Wuhan Coronavirus.” The film, which received over 100 million views, explored the origins of the virus, including the possibility of a lab leak. It presents scientific data and interviews with top scientists and national security experts.



YEARS AFTER THE RELEASE of this groundbreaking documentary, the possibility of a lab leak is considered by government officials and experts as the most likely explanation for the virus’s spread.

CHINA THREAT

SINCE ITS INCEPTION in the year 2000, The Epoch Times has been at the forefront of reporting on the infiltration of the United States by the Chinese Communist Party. Numerous times over the years, we’ve broken major China-related stories ahead of other news organizations. In 2003, The Epoch Times was the first media outlet to systematically and continuously report on the spread of SARS, well ahead of most other Western media. We were also the first to report on state-sponsored forced organ harvesting in China—one of the most underreported atrocities of our time—in



which prisoners of conscience are killed for their organs, which are then sold for profit on a large scale.

THE EPOCH TIMES also published the editorial series “Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party,” revealing the true nature and history of the Communist Party and inspiring a movement that so far has seen more than 400 million Chinese people quit the Party and its affiliated organizations. Another of our series, “How the Specter of Communism Is Ruling Our World,” systematically exposes the evil nature of communism, as well as the harm it has brought and continues to inflict on the United States and the world.

What Our Readers Say

“It’s a magazine that’s
FOR the American people,
not against.”

Vanessa Morrison, medical records clerk

“Well thought out material,
thoroughly investigated,
and I trust [the] sources.”

Gail F. Sauve, homemaker

“It is straightforward, rather
than a lot of speculation or
pontificating.”

Jan Hamilton, retired professional

“[Insight] reminds me
that there are still a LOT
of wonderful, good, and
dedicated people in this
country.”

Creed Haymond, surgeon

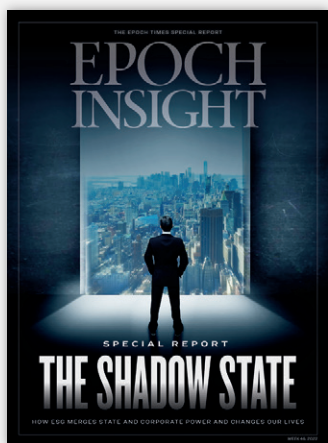
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impactful articles.”

Mark Naumann, photographer

“I can trust what I read and
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I feel about the subject.”

Jim Edwards, retired

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