



Broken Bow: (308) 872-8327
Kearney: (308) 767-2650

Grand Island: (308) 767-2695
North Platte: (308) 221-6204

Lincoln: (308) 767-2061
Omaha: (402) 401-2864

May 2021

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 The Best Financial Advice I've Ever Received
- 2 Brighten Up Your Space With These May Flowers!
Mila Kunis Got Sued for That!? (And 2 Other Weird Celebrity Legal Cases)
- 3 Thai Minced Pork Salad
Will Europe Be Able to Pay Its \$3.2T Pandemic Debt?
- 4 Influencer in Florida Accused of Voter Fraud

Influencer in Florida Accused of Voter Fraud

A February 2016 analysis by MIT Media Lab revealed that Twitter account "Ricky Vaughn" was the 107th most important influencer in the then-upcoming election. That's a higher ranking than many other groups and individuals like NBC News (114), Stephen Colbert (119), and Newt Gingrich (141). Everyone had one question: Who in the world is Ricky Vaughn?

As it turns out, the Florida man was really stepping up his game. Douglass Mackey, aka Ricky Vaughn, is based in West Palm Beach and gained an audience on Twitter with over 58,000 followers by 2016. Many would describe him as an internet troll, or someone who posts hurtful comments for his own amusement. He's posted anti-Semitic memes in the past, though, those offenses were hardly illegal. That changed when Mackey allegedly went too far.



Using hashtags like #go[candidate], Mackey posted false, edited campaign images to convince people to "vote" by text instead of going to the polls or using the mail-in ballot. In one instance, he posted an image depicting an African American woman holding a sign, reading "African Americans for [candidate]." The images would then include instructions on how to vote by texting a specific number. Mackey and his associates also created images with Spanish instructions, obviously targeting minorities as well.

Of course, voting by text is not a legitimate way to cast a ballot, yet the deceptive campaign duped over 4,900 unique phone numbers. William F. Sweeney Jr., assistant director in charge of the FBI's New York Field Office, reported in their press release, "Protecting every American citizen's right to cast a legitimate vote is a key to the success of our republic. What Mackey allegedly did to interfere with this process — by soliciting voters to cast their ballots via text — amounted to nothing short of vote theft."

It's certainly fascinating and terrifying to see just how influential social media can be on an election and even go as far as to lure people into wasting their vote. We're glad, however, to see these types of cases being brought to court — Mackey was recently arrested on federal charges of election interference for this 2016 voter disinformation campaign. Some influencers are taking their title much too seriously!

The Best Financial Advice I've Ever Received

In a previous lifetime, I operated a business called Nebraska Barnwood. Most of my income came from creating picture frames, which I sold to retail and art shops across Nebraska. I wanted to expand the business, and one day, I was discussing a few ideas with a very successful craft retailer in Omaha. Afterward, though, I shook my head and said, "These are my ideas, but I'm never going to afford it."

The businessman told me, "Why not let the other guys pay for it?"

Frankly, that wasn't an aha! moment for me — yet. I didn't understand what he was saying until I gave it more thought. Eventually, I discovered a whole different approach to accumulating wealth. It was simply flipping my mindset from "I can't afford that" to "I can afford that, but I need to find a way to make the idea attractive to others as well so it'll be more affordable."

It changed my strategy from scarcity thinking to abundance thinking. As a business owner, it can be easy to rely on yourself, but when you consider other people in your plans from the beginning, you'll naturally make your plans more attractive for others to invest in or become a part of.

Many business ideas begin with a need. When there's a big market demand, you can really profit from collaborating with that market. Why does this demand exist? What makes it so important to consumers? Using this information really worked for my wife and me when we began real estate investing.

"We barely had enough money when we started buying property. However, after researching, we did discover a market niche — our area was sorely in need of small family homes."



We barely had enough money when we started buying property. However, after researching, we did discover a market niche — our area was sorely in need of small family homes. After scraping up a down payment for our first project, we found a few trustworthy renters, and they paid off the bank loan with their monthly rent. It was a win for us and for the renters. After the first, we did the second and so forth.

Thankfully, real estate investing is forgiving over time. If you wait long enough, it pays off. It took time to realize the value that we had imagined. However, we wouldn't have been able to do it without researching and asking ourselves what we had to offer to others.

Business can't be successful in a vacuum. As a part of society, we work with people to make a living. So, the best question we can ask is why? What do we have to offer that helps us stand apart? This can be a key part of recognizing great business opportunities and persuading others to financially support your dreams.

I think it's important for young entrepreneurs to see that living a life of abundance isn't about what you currently have but about recognizing that wealth is out there and available. Even if you're not a millionaire on May 20, National Be a Millionaire Day, you could be. Thanks for joining me, friends, and we'll chat next month.

-Bill Steffens

Bring Spring Indoors

The Most Beautiful May Flowers for Your Home or Office

The April showers came and went, so now we get to enjoy May flowers! You might not buy flowers for yourself often, but it's totally worth treating yourself and your visitors, all while supporting your local florist!

To start off, **anemones** are the most mythological May plant around because of two famous Greek myths surrounding these jewel-toned flowers. Anemones are said to have sprung from blood shed by the death of Aphrodite's lover, Adonis. The ancient Greeks also believed that the god of the west wind favored anemones — hence their second name, the windflower.

Attach them as pops of color to any bouquet for a classic, romantic, or modern arrangement, or mix them with roses and trailing greenery for a more boho look.

Carnations are also fantastic flowers to display in May. Some people may see carnations as a cheap flower, but, when used en masse, they can have a truly breathtaking effect in a room. Try using natural-colored carnations to create a fresh, contemporary space.

You can also freshen up the room with **sweet peas**, which have a wonderfully mild perfume. They come with an enormous range of colors — one of the biggest ranges in the flora kingdom, in fact!

Delicate, ruffled, and feminine, sweet peas are sure to delight anyone who sees them.

Lastly, although **tulips** or **orchids** would be classic choices for your arrangement, consider surprising your visitors with **lilies of the valley**. These beautiful, peaceful little blooms only grow in white, which is often seen as the color of renewal and innocence, and they wear it well! Their adorable little bell-like flowers will be sure to put a smile on your face.

We hope you will consider these gorgeous flowers for your space this year. A small purchase at your local small businesses can make a big difference, just like how a few flowers can make a big difference in your home!



TAKE A BREAK



WILL EUROPE BE ABLE TO PAY ITS \$3.2T PANDEMIC DEBT?

Millions of families in Europe have relied heavily on government aid for survival, but that's becoming a concern for the younger generation. European debt hasn't been so high since World War II, and it's even outpacing national economies. In France alone, the national debt has risen to 2.7 trillion euros (\$3.2 trillion) and will soon exceed 120% of the national economy.

While the International Monetary Fund expects growth to bounce back this year to 5.1% in the United States, Europe will likely lag with a rebound of 4.2%.

Yet, as debts skyrocket, economists wonder if it's possible for Europe to get a "free lunch."

In the current zero-interest era, strange things are happening. Although the amount of debt companies have taken has grown, the amount that governments pay hasn't. Countries can now roll over their debt at low interest rates, which is akin to refinancing a mortgage. Banks are also buying government debt, effectively lending around 1.3 trillion euros during the first six months of the pandemic.

This makes the debt affordable — for now. Government debt may never have to be fully paid back if central banks keep buying it up. According to the Institut Montaigne, an independent think tank in Paris, public debt could rise to 4 trillion by the end of 2023.

Some economists are worried about the risks. What if inflation and interest rates help revive growth too rapidly, forcing central banks to put a complete stop to their easy-money policies? Weaker countries may fall into a debt trap and struggle to pay. Simon Tilford, director of a strategic planning firm in London, told The New York Times, "If inflation starts to return but there's no growth, then the situation gets a lot trickier."



When the next recession rolls around, it may be tough to stimulate their economy with this amount of debt on their hands. This worries the younger generation of Europeans, but at least for now, those troubles seem far away in the eyes of those steering European economies through the pandemic.



THAI MINCED PORK SALAD

Inspired by EatingThaiFood.com

Ingredients

- 5 tbsp uncooked Thai sticky rice
- 1 lb ground pork
- 1/2 tsp chili flakes
- 1/8 tsp sugar
- 1/2 tbsp fish sauce
- Juice of 1–2 limes, to taste
- 4 small shallots, thinly sliced
- 4 green onions, thinly sliced
- Cilantro leaves, to taste
- Mint leaves, to taste

Directions

1. First, make toasted rice powder: In a frying pan over low heat, dry-roast the rice, stirring continuously until it turns golden brown and smells fragrant, about 15 minutes.
2. Let toasted rice cool, then grind into a coarse powder using a mortar and pestle, blender, or food processor. Set aside.
3. In a medium frying pan over medium-high heat, fry pork, breaking it into small pieces as you go, until fully cooked.
4. Remove from heat and add 1 heaping tbsp of toasted rice powder along with all other ingredients. Stir to combine.
5. Taste and adjust, adding more lime juice and herbs to suit your palate. Serve with rice.

The 3 Strangest Celebrity Lawsuits

Stories about celebrities can be enjoyable or awkward, but no matter what happens, they usually create great material for Buzzfeed or Reddit users. This also includes celebrity stories involving the law, which bring on a lot of head-scratching and legal action — like these three strange cases.

Simon Cowell pays for a chef's disappearing shoes.

Known for his unrelenting critiques and setting the stage for some of the world's biggest names in show business, Simon Cowell has amassed enough wealth to afford a private chef. When one such chef came by his house for a job interview, she was asked to remove her shoes, but according to court

documents, she never received her shoes back. The chef claims to have tried multiple times to retrieve the shoes — which were outfitted with \$500 orthopedic insoles — but never succeeded. She sued Cowell for the shoes and gas money, and the "America's Got Talent" star shelled out.

Internet conspiracy theory results in a court case against Beyoncé.

The internet is a wild place, and conspiracy theories are often born on its digital channels. One such theory was that Beyoncé and her husband, Jay-Z, hired a surrogate to give birth to their daughter, Blue Ivy, in 2012. Internet trolls who saw her pregnant belly roll as she sat down for an interview fanned the flames of this theory, and soon, a lawsuit emerged. A woman claimed she was the true biological mother of Blue Ivy, and she asked for compensation and DNA testing to prove it. Previously, the same woman claimed to be the birth mother of North West, the daughter of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West, but the court threw out the case.

Mila Kunis ruffles some feathers.

Actress Mila Kunis was sued for \$5,000 by her childhood friend, Kristina Karo, in 2015 because Kunis allegedly stole a chicken from Karo when they were still children in Ukraine. Karo, an aspiring singer, claimed the theft resulted in extreme emotional distress and prevented her from pursuing the American dream. According to Kunis, the theft occurred when she was 7 years old and Karo was just 1 month old. Kunis and her husband, actor Ashton Kutcher, speculated that the case was all a publicity stunt to promote Karo's upcoming music video, and the case was eventually dropped.