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### The Tiger King Remains Behind Bars

#### Judges Deny Joe Exotic's Appeal

Even more than a year after the release of "Tiger King: Murder, Mayhem and Madness," Joseph Maldonado-Passage, more popularly known as Joe Exotic, continues to make headlines.

Following the fame that came with having his story at the center of a wildly popular Netflix series, Maldonado-Passage saw fit to appeal his 22-year prison sentence for plotting to murder big cat rescue activist Carole Baskin on a few different grounds. However, in July, the 10th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals rejected his appeal.

The primary reason for Maldonado-Passage's appeal, as reported by his legal team, was that Baskin was allowed to attend the entirety of Maldonado-Passage's trial, despite her role as a witness in the case. As a general rule, witnesses are not permitted to attend proceedings in their entirety, as other witness testimonies might affect the objectivity of their own testimony.

However, Baskin was also in attendance at the trial as a victim, since she was the target of Maldonado-Passage's murder-for-hire

scheme. Victims are allowed to attend court proceedings so long as the judge decides their testimony (if they are also a witness) will not be affected by their attendance.

Maldonado-Passage's legal team asserted that Baskin was not a victim of any sort, since the murder-for-hire plot did not result in her murder. However, U.S. Circuit Court judges ruled that she still suffered emotional and financial harm because of the incident.

In addition to this, since Maldonado-Passage conspired to have Baskin murdered two different times, the judge at his trial in 2019 had incorrectly considered them as two separate plots, rather than two attempts at the same murder. The U.S. Circuit Court judges ordered the trial judge to resentencing him.

So, even for all that trouble, Maldonado-Passage remains behind bars. However, so long as the Tiger King's popularity continues, it won't be surprising if Joe Exotic and his legal team keep searching for ways to get him out of prison.

## Why Curiosity Led Me to Law

### Meet Anna Burge, an Associate Attorney!

Hello, everyone! I'm Anna Burge, an associate attorney here at Steffens Law, and I'm honored to share a little bit about myself and my story, especially since this month is my two-year work anniversary.

There are a few reasons I became an attorney, but I can say the idea of being a lawyer wasn't the first thing that drew me to the field. Sooner or later, everyone learns the world isn't a perfect place. When I began to hear about injustices in our legal system and how the system can take advantage of people, my heart broke for those who don't have a voice in the courtroom.

I always knew I wanted to use my skills to help give people the voice they deserved — but there was also a person who propelled me toward the field of law.

My grandfather was a university professor who always knew how to ask the right questions. Although he passed away this summer, I'm often reminded of him and his presence because he constantly encouraged me to learn. He'd always tell me to "learn something new every day."



I took that pretty seriously, and it helped spark a love for curiosity in my life. And, as I later discovered, the legal field is perfect for someone with a very active curiosity. There's always something new to learn!

My curiosity feels like it's in good company at Steffens Law, too — not only does everyone genuinely care about our clients, but we also have a great work culture for personal growth. After I finished law school and completed the bar exam, I started looking for a job and luckily found my first job as an attorney here. Working in both bankruptcy and personal injury, I get to work in a wide diversity of cases. Bill Steffens always encourages us to keep reading, learning, and growing as well — not just as an attorney but also as a leader. I've picked up a lot of new insights on leadership and handling firm processes since starting here that have been amazingly helpful.

Out of everything I've learned on my journey so far, I think what surprised me the most is just how effective your action can be. A lot of people can be intimidated by the law, even when they've been injured unfairly, and avoid taking legal action. This decision often has permanent negative effects on either their health, finances, or even family and social lives. But when you have a client who's stuck in a particular situation and you start showing them the next steps, it's amazing to watch that person finally move past the huge obstacle in their path thanks to your help. That satisfaction is everything I dreamed of having.

Beyond the legal field, I often crave adventure and knowledge, and so does my husband! We set reading goals together (because we enjoy it, but also to ensure we make time to enjoy it), and we try to travel as much as we can. Of course, during the pandemic, that was curbed — but discovering new places and exploring off the beaten path gives us a lot of joy, whether it's a hiking trail or a hidden bookstore down a small street.

Without curiosity, I don't think I'd be able to live my best life, so no matter what you're doing this fall, I hope you get to learn something new! Thanks so much for reading and don't be shy to say hi if you see me around.

- Anna Burge

# Man Sues Woman for Texting During a Movie Date

We've probably all found ourselves annoyed with someone who uses their phone during a movie at the theater, but have you ever been so annoyed that you sued them?

That's what Texas resident Brandon Vezmar decided to do back in 2017, following a "first date from hell" (as Vezmar put it) with Crystal Cruz. According to Vezmar, about 15 minutes into "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2," Cruz was texting on her phone. When Vezmar asked her to stop texting, she refused. Then, Vezmar suggested that she step outside of the theater to text. Cruz took his suggestion and never returned.



Most people would chalk the experience up to a bad date and move on, but Vezmar was so indignant that he reached out to Cruz the next day and requested that she compensate him \$4 for the pizza and \$17

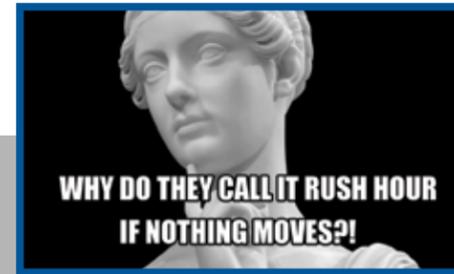
for the movie ticket he'd paid for. If she didn't pay, he threatened to go after the money in small claims court. When Cruz initially refused, Vezmar made good on his threat and filed a petition in Austin, Texas.

Vezmar made the case that Cruz had violated the cinema's no cellphone policy and had negatively impacted his and other moviegoers' experiences of watching a raccoon and a talking tree (among other beings) save the day. He claimed that while he sought modest damages, it was the principle of the thing that really mattered to him. He called Cruz's behavior "a threat to civilized society."

As entertaining as it might have been to see that case fully make its way through the legal system, the lawsuit was eventually dropped after the TV show "Inside Edition" reunited Cruz and Vezmar and filmed her paying him back for the date. As the camera rolled, he counted his cash and considered them square.

Unlike "Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2," there were no good guys in this story — but that doesn't make it any less entertaining to read about after the fact!

# TAKE A *BREAK*



# THE DEADLIEST SURGERY IN HISTORY PERFORMED BY THE 'FASTEST KNIFE IN THE WEST END'

If you had to get surgery in the early 1800s, it could be a death sentence. Before the invention of anesthesia, patients needing amputations and other operations were awake and lucid the entire time. Plus, surgery looked more like something from a horror movie than a lifesaving procedure. And it was during this era that Dr. Robert Liston, who was ironically considered one of the best surgeons of his day, performed the deadliest surgery of all time.

Before getting into the particulars of what transpired during the surgery itself, you should know a little bit about Dr. Liston. Sure, he was a professional surgeon, but he was also a product of his time. He likely worked with dirty saws and knives while wearing a bloody apron in an unsanitary operating room.

He was also named the "fastest knife in the West End" by medical historian Dr. Richard Gordon. He was known for performing surgeries very quickly, which, in the days before anesthesia, was as much as patients could hope for on the operating table. Only 1 in 10 of his patients died on the operating table, which sounds bad until you learn that a nearby hospital reported 1 in 4 people dying from similar procedures.

Also, in those days, much like crowds used to gather to watch a hanging, people found amputations to be morbidly entertaining — and who wouldn't want to watch the fastest knife in the West End at work?

So, on the fateful day of that deadly surgery, Dr. Liston, ever the showman, cut through his patient's broken, infected leg with incredible speed — so incredible that he didn't realize he had cut off two of his assistant's fingers in the process. Both later died of gangrene (remember the unsanitary tools?).

But theirs were not the only deaths that day. When Dr. Liston went for one of his knives, he whipped it about a little too closely to one spectator, slicing through his coat. While he didn't actually break the man's skin with his knife, the spectator thought he'd been stabbed and died of shock right there in the operating room.

So, instead of saving one life, Dr. Liston killed three people. It's the only known surgery to have resulted in a 300% mortality rate.



# Corn Mazes Date Back to Ancient Greece? Historical Look at This Wacky Fall Tradition

Exploring a corn maze is a great way to get outside and enjoy the fall season with friends and family — but who came up with the idea of wandering around a corn field for fun? As it turns out, outdoor mazes are an ancient tradition, and the American corn maze of the '90s sprouted from the mazes of 17th-century European gardens. Don't believe it? Here's a quick tour of corn maze history.

## The Minotaur and the Maze

Have you heard of Theseus and the Minotaur? This ancient Greek legend tells the story of the hero Theseus, who ventured into an elaborate maze to kill the half-man, half-bull imprisoned there. The monstrous Minotaur was known to eat heroes, and the labyrinth was known to trap them, but Theseus managed to slay the Minotaur and find his way home with the help of a string that he unspooled as he walked.

This story isn't the first recorded example of a maze or labyrinth — according to the World History encyclopedia, "[L]abyrinths and labyrinthine symbols have been dated to the Neolithic Age in regions as diverse as modern-day Turkey, Ireland, Greece, and India, among others" — but it's perhaps the most famous ancient tale. If you've ever navigated a Halloween corn maze staffed by ghouls and ghosts, you can see the parallels!

## Garden Art to Get Lost In

Mazes formed from bushes began popping up in European gardens in the 17th century. They were a popular artistic feature of upper-class gardens in England, more for looking at than solving. One famous



example is the half-mile-long Hampton Maze, which was planted in 1690 and still stands today.

## The Corn Maze: An American Invention

Garden mazes eventually hopped the pond to America but didn't become interactive puzzles until Don Frantz, Creative Director of the American Maze Company, came on the scene. In 1993, Frantz created the "first ever cornfield maze for private and public entertainment" to attract college kids in Pennsylvania. Today, every small-town corn maze is a descendant of his "Amazing Maize Maze." To learn more about that wacky history, visit AmericanMaze.com.



## HALLOWEEN COOKIE PIZZA

Inspired by Pillsbury.com

Image sourced from Pillsbury.com/recipes/halloween-cookie-pizza/67172821-ddfb-49ce-b658-ddc4ef4b5cf3

*This one's for the candy corn lovers! This "pizza" is far from traditional, but once you try it, you might find yourself making it every October!*

## Ingredients

- 1 roll Pillsbury Sugar Cookie Dough
- 1/2 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup candy corn
- 1/2 cup chocolate chips
- 1/4 cup vanilla frosting (store-bought or homemade)

## Directions

1. Preheat oven to 350 F.
2. Grease a round, 12-inch pan and line with cookie dough, ensuring the dough covers all but the outer 1/2 inch.
3. Bake for 16–20 minutes until golden brown. Cool completely.
4. Spread the peanut butter over the cooled cookie dough, then sprinkle on the candy corn and chocolate chips.
5. In a small bowl, microwave the frosting for 15 seconds or until liquified.
6. Drizzle the frosting over the "pizza," slice, and serve!