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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 resentence 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.



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PROTECTING THE INJURED

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PM Perspectives

## WORKERS' COMPENSATION REFORMS RECOMMENDED BY NEW JERSEY CANDIDATE FOR GOVERNOR, JACK CIATTARELLI

When Jack Ciattarelli was a member of the New Jersey Assembly, I met with him to discuss the proposed closure of the Workers' Compensation Court serving residents of Central New Jersey. At that meeting, I introduced Jack to a client of mine who suffered due to delays in medical treatment caused by a workers' compensation insurance carrier. Jack was touched by her experience and agreed to speak with me and a colleague about recommended improvements to the workers' compensation system. Thereafter, he wrote a letter to the then Acting Commissioner of the Department of Labor, outlining his concerns and seeking the Commission's input on proposals to reform the system. The following is a summary of Jack's proposed reforms.

Mr. Ciattarelli starts from the premise that medical treatment must be dictated by physicians, not insurance bureaucrats. He recognizes the need of insurance carriers to hold down medical costs by directing injured workers to "in network" physicians. However, Jack understands that it is inherently unfair to permit the micromanagement of medical care by an insurance claims adjuster, who cares more about quickly closing a file than alleviating a patient's pain. Jack's first recommendation for amending the Workers' Compensation Act is thus to clarify that once a physician is assigned to treat a patient, the insurance carrier shall authorize all medical treatment recommended by that physician related to the work accident, including injuries which aggravate a preexisting medical condition. Insurance carriers would no longer be able to schedule sham "independent" medical examinations, for the purpose of terminating medical treatment prematurely. At the same time, a patient must have the right to receive a second opinion from a competent treating physician if he or she does not trust the advice of the workers' compensation physician.

Just imagine if you were forced to undergo risky surgery with a physician you didn't trust or would be denied the surgery. Workers' compensation patients face that decision every day. It is patently unfair for a patient's medical choices to be so restricted. **Medical freedom should not end at an employer's doorstep.**

Those who are injured while working to support their families are currently treated as "second class patients," whose doctors are more concerned with keeping insurance adjusters happy than obtaining optimal results for their patients. This mindset among workers' compensation physicians will only change if patients are given more power over their own treatment plans, including the ability to fire an ineffective or unresponsive doctor.

Insurance carriers generally only chose "panel physicians" whom they can control. It is common for a doctor to verbally recommend one course of treatment to a workers' compensation patient but change his tune following a discussion with an insurance adjuster. Currently, patients do not have access to communications between the insurance carrier and workers' compensation physicians.

Sunshine is the best disinfectant to stop such sleazy tactics. Jack's proposed reforms will level the playing field by shining a light on underhanded adjusters who seek to pressure doctors into releasing a patient back to work or terminating medical care. He would support a bill mandating that physicians and insurance carriers disclose their communications to the patient and the patient's attorney, upon request.

Mr. Ciattarelli also wants to put an end to the insurance industry's practice of funneling injured employees who are not physically capable of working to the state unemployment program. All too often, insurance carriers get away with prematurely terminating workers' compensation benefits for people who cannot return to work on a full duty basis. Small businesses are either forced to take back unproductive employees, further diminishing their profit-margin, or terminate their employment. Given the exorbitant insurance rates paid by New Jersey businesses, their employees should be paid the workers' compensation benefits to which they are entitled. Instead, injured workers often end up collecting government benefits, putting additional strain on our already overburdened social safety nets. The insurance industry should not be permitted to shift its responsibilities to the taxpayers in this manner.

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# 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!

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We should be encouraging able-bodied people to work, since productivity is good for the soul and our economy. The government should certainly not pay folks who are perfectly capable of working to stay home. It is time to reform the N.J. Workers' Compensation Act to require insurance carriers to retrain injured workers who are no longer able to pursue their longtime careers. Telling a 50-year-old, injured construction worker who can no longer perform heavy labor that he should "learn to code" is unrealistic. However, there are numerous industries which would welcome new employees who had the proper education. The Workers' Compensation Act should be amended to provide for job retraining, so that injured workers may return to being productive members of society.

I support Jack Ciattarelli for governor because I know that he understands the need to balance these competing interests, as well as others. The time is now to fix New Jersey and its broken workers' compensation system

-Lisa Pezzano Mickey

## 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 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!