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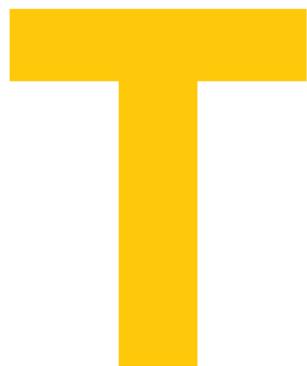


УКРАЇНА

ULIANA BAZAR AND FRANK PICHEL

ON THE SPIRIT OF UKRAINE

EVERY CELL IN HER BODY REMEMBERED, AND AS THE MEMORIES PERSISTED SHE COULD FEEL HERSELF BEING DRAWN BACK. SOMETHING ALMOST MAGNETIC WAS AT PLAY HERE. IT WAS AS IF THE SEDIMENTS OF HER HOMELAND, LIBERALLY SPRINKLED AMONG THE THREADS OF HER DNA, DEMANDED A REUNION, A RETURN TO THE RICH SOILS, THE ANCIENT EARTH, TILLED SINCE TIME BEGAN BY HER OWN ANCESTORS. GREAT TIDES OF YELLOW FLOWED ACROSS THIS FERTILE LAND CRADLED BY THE CARPATHIAN MOUNTAINS.



THROUGH THE succession of the seasons, three distinct crops, each one yellow as a noonday sun, would erupt from the fecund earth, first with mustard, then with sunflowers, and finally with wheat—a harvest that could feed an entire continent, and fill the larders of half a world with oil for cooking and flour for baking. And above it all, a deep azure sky. Combined with the yellow fields below they created a permanent flag to her motherland.

So three years ago, Uliana Bazar, along with her spouse, Matthew Propert, left their home in the United States and flew to Ukraine, the land of her birth, and they settled into their new home. And then, a few short years later, just five hours before the army of a sociopathic war criminal invaded her beloved country, Uliana and Matthew fled to England, just outside of London, and since that moment, Uliana has watched the malevolent dictator attempt to crush the indomitable spirit of Ukraine, slaughtering her women, men and children in an act of genocide the entire world has witnessed. But Ukraine will not be toppled, will not relent. Of this, Uliana is certain. And it is something woven into the very fabric of their humanity—their love of freedom—that will ultimately defeat the mass murderer called Putin, this Sauron, this evil incarnate.

Three weeks after Russia declared war on Ukraine in an attempt to subjugate and perhaps even annihilate a peace-loving people, I had the honor of interviewing Uliana, via Zoom. She instructed me about her native land and its people, whose very existence is now being threatened by a megalomaniac of Hitlerian proportions.

Born in 1986, just a few years before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Uliana had experienced what it was like to live in a totalitarian state. “When I was about five I remember pictures of Lenin in all my school books,” she says. “Russian propaganda would force people to learn Russian and to read books with Lenin in them. My parents, for example, couldn’t get married in the church because they could be arrested during Soviet days. People couldn’t even practice their religion.” As soon as the rusted Iron Curtain crumbled away, things changed dramatically. “I was able to throw all those books away,” she says. “The ones with Lenin in them.”

For a number of years, Uliana lived in the United States. She did graduate work in photojournalism at the Corcoran School of Arts and Design and called DC home for about four years, then moved out to Santa Cruz, California with the man she would ultimately

marry. The pair both worked, and still do, as photographers and photo editors for National Geographic Books.

“I was excited about America and the American lifestyle,” Uliana tells me.

But that all changed abruptly in 2018. “I realized I could not stay here for another minute,” says Uliana. “I had to go back. I felt I needed to reconnect with my roots. We got married in Ukraine and bought an apartment in Lviv.”

When she considers what drove her to make the decision to return to Ukraine, Uliana pauses for a long moment. “How would I describe it?” she asks. “I felt that I did not have the power of my ancestors because I removed myself from that power.”

That was all confirmed during a visit to her native land. “I went to the Carpathian Mountains, a beautiful area in the western Ukraine,” she says. “And I stood in the river with a beautiful forest and mountains all around me, and birds flying overhead, and it started to rain a little bit and I just felt the whole forest was singing songs to me. I felt it in my DNA, I remembered something, memories I had forgotten, and after that I realized I needed to nourish those roots. That was my power. I had a full vision that I had to go back to Ukraine.”

It was fortunate that she did move back when she did, for during these past three years both her grandmother and father passed away. “I was able to be with them,” she says. “But a lot of other things happened when I was there. I learned a lot about Ukraine, and I really connected with the spirit of Ukraine. Ukraine is a very powerful land with powerful people. They were always free, they always would get their power back, always get their freedom back. So I got in touch with that. If I had to describe it, I would say it’s in the genes.”

Uliana connected readily with the

by **CHARLES MCGUIGAN**



Left: Uliana in her grandma's village. Matthew Propert photo

ancient deities of Ukraine. “In our mythology we have many female goddesses,” she says. “We have Mokosh (a goddess of fertility, harvest and mercy). “And then there is Slava. She is the goddess of victory, and she is always portrayed with a sword. She gives courage and will and power to the warriors who protect our land. She

gives people strength to not be slaves, to not have a broken spirit, but to rise up and fight. And that's what the world can see right now. Ukrainians have that spirit; they will not give up. They have the courage and power to stand up and fight. That's in the genes. It is part of you from your mother's womb. It gives all Ukrainians the energy and

the power. They will not be defeated.”

When Moscow was just a one-horse town, Kyiv was already a veritable metropolis. Ukraine possessed a distinctive culture and language of her own. For well over three centuries now, Russia has committed intolerable acts of genocide against Ukrainians, in one form or other. Cultural genocide began in the early 1700s under Peter 1 who decreed a ban on any printing in the Ukrainian language, and the seizure and burning of sacred texts used in the Ukrainian Catholic Church. It escalated with his successors, and then, in 1764, Catherine II ordered the Russification of Ukraine. It's an ancient ploy used repeatedly throughout history to destroy indigenous cultures. The Romans did it, the English did it, and God knows Americans did it to all the indigenous tribes across the land that became known as the United States. The objective of course is always displacement. But more than that, it is the eradication of a culture—it is cultural genocide.

Of course there have also been repeated attempts by Russia to literally kill all Ukrainians. In 1932, Stalin was responsible for the mass starvation of between four and seven million Ukrainians. They were dropping like flies. It was called Holodomor, which means Death by Hunger. Many other Ukrainians were slain under Stalin as his purges ensued for the next ten

years. And now Putin seems bound and determined to eradicate the Ukrainian people.

Like many others around the world, Uliana initially thought little about Putin's words. “I wasn't worried about it,” she says. “I underestimated how sick and psychotic that person is. I don't think many people anticipated a full-scale invasion and the murder of thousands of people. You think it could happen, but you could not visualize that it would happen on your doorstep.”

She remembers when she and her husband fled Ukraine. “Matthew convinced me to leave, and I wanted to stay,” says Uliana. “We left on Wednesday night and arrived in London at one in the morning. When we woke up the next morning, we heard the news.”

And as she watched what was happening in Ukraine, something woke in Uliana. “It was very acute,” she says. “It was not just pain from what was happening, it was this deep rage, a scream on the inside, about what they've been doing and what they continue to do. Not just Putin. It's not just him. He's just a new figure who's trying to pretty much destroy Ukraine and take its culture. It's Russian imperialism. It's so deep, so horrific, it's hard to describe. What they're trying to do is kill enough Ukrainians so they can make our land available for their people. Just what they did in Crimea with the Tatars who they have already displaced from their land twice. I don't have the words to describe my feelings. You cannot be relaxed or feel safe when you have a neighbor whose goal is to destroy you.”

In her heart, Uliana knows Ukrainians will not give up the fight. Their spirit is embodied in their leader—the heroic President Volodymyr Oleksandrovych Zelenskyy. And she sees it in her friends and family who remain in Ukraine to fight the good fight. “They are true warriors,” she says.

She mentions a friend of hers who is both arborist and environmentalist. He is working day and night, turning massive iron train rails into Czech hedgehogs, anti-tank obstacle defenses first used in World War II against the Nazis.

“I have cousins who organized to make healthy snacks for the Army,” she says. “I send a lot of money. Everybody's involved, everybody's doing something.”

When she talked with a friend of hers from Lviv not long ago, Uliana asked, “How are you? What are you doing?” Her friend, a thirty-year old woman, responded, “I'm making molotov cocktails.” She remembers the grand-



Picking medicinal plants in the Carpathian Mountains. Matthew Propert photo



Uliana in the Carpathian Mountains. Matthew Probert photo.

mother who brought down a Soviet drone with a jar of pickled tomatoes.

“That’s what you have to do,” says Uliana. “Ukrainians have so much will they literally will stand in front of tanks and stop their cars in front of tanks to sacrifice everything because they have a cause. If you don’t do anything, you die. So all of my family and friends are put in situations where they either defend themselves or they die. It’s a horrible position to be in. You know, I do not want to kill, but if somebody comes in my home with a gun and tries to kill me, I have to kill them. Ukrainians do not have a choice. And now they are bringing in warriors from Chechnya and Syria who are just coming to kill. Just kill. It’s so sickening.”

Putin of course is the leader, but he has tremendous support in Russia. “It’s not just Putin,” according to Uliana. “People should know that. It’s a lot of people. It’s his regime and the people who support him. You have this regime that decides to slaughter and destroy Ukraine. Putin’s language is fear and power, and that appeals to some Russians.”

And then she mentions 2014, when Russia trampled Crimea and the world simply watched. “When you tell a psychopath, ‘I’m scared of you,’” Uliana says. “The psychopath says ‘I can get away with anything.’”

There is a longing at such times for the leadership of a woman like Madeline Albright. She who as a child witnessed

what Nazis had done to her native Czechoslovakia, she who had lost three of her own grandparents in Hitler’s concentration camps. She would have understood why it is so important for democracies to act now and decisively against Putin. In fact, the day after Putin invaded Ukraine Albright encouraged the West to unify and to flatten the Stalin wannabe. As secretary of state, back in 1999, Albright convinced

Clinton to intervene militarily against Slobodan Milosevic, the Serbian psychopathic leader, who was intent on murdering all of Kosovo’s ethnic-Albanians. At her urging, NATO bombed Serb-led Yugoslavia for 78 days, and effectively crushed Milosevic.

The same day Madeline Albright died last month, I spoke with Frank Pichel, who remembers Kosovo as if it were

only yesterday. At the time he was teaching art out in Colorado. “I was fascinated by the fact that there was a war in Europe and I hadn’t seen any amazing imagery from that war,” he remembers. “I was listening to the radio and hearing about it. But I wasn’t seeing it. So I went over there basically for spring break.”

Armed with a medium format camera, he flew to Macedonia, rented a car, and then crossed the border into Kosovo. This was just a week after the war ended and no one seemed yet to be in control of the country. He encountered a number of refugees along the way and he was forever altered.

“That changed my life,” says Frank. “It really changed my outlook on life and what I thought about people. I met these beautiful people in this horrific situation that they needed to get out of, so I started helping them. What happened to me was profound. I was punk rock, and I hated the world and thought people are awful. Then I get over there, and it’s just unbelievable, the beauty of the human spirit. You would say these insane things to people that were strangers. Things like, ‘You’re my brother and I’ll die for you.’ So it was very inspirational.”

A number of the folks he met over there remain friends to this day. One’s a cop out in Iowa. Another is a makeup artist in TV in New York City. “They’re just happy beautiful Americans now,” Frank says.

He tells me how much Americans were loved by those who were freed from their oppressors. “The US really



Frank transporting his first group of Ukrainian passengers. Frank Pichel photo



Celebrating Ivana Kupala night, an ancient Ukrainian holiday marking the summer solstice. Matthew Propert photo

saved them,” says Frank. “We bombed the s**t out of the Serbs, and people there were so into America, which I wasn’t expecting at all because I see the

faults in my country. But they were on the street chanting USA, USA, and a few were patting me on the back, saying, ‘Tell Madeline Albright when you

get home that we love her.’”

So it’s no surprise that when Frank started seeing the photos and film footage of what the Russians were do-

ing to Ukraine he decided to make a trip again. “This is the next war in Europe and I just felt compelled to go,” he says. He booked a trip to Poland and rented a car. At first he thought he’d be buying food for the refugees streaming across the border. “But that was totally covered by aid organizations there,” he says.

Ukrainian buses were constantly pulling up to the Polish border, dropping off their passengers and then turning around to get more. Sometimes Polish buses would pick up some of those passengers and take them to train stations or other locations. “But a lot of the people were in flux and didn’t have anywhere to go or they knew where they wanted to go but no one could pick them up,” Frank says. “So I would give them rides and that’s what I did for the seven days. I was there to just transport people from the border to another location.”

He traveled between four different Polish towns along the Ukrainian border, picking up weary folks in desperate need of a ride. “Ukraine is a huge country and some people make this four-day journey from the east to Lviv and then they get a bus,” says Frank.

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million people have ended up in Poland, staying with strangers. Imagine that. It's incredible. It's like going to the Mexican border and getting immigrants and saying, 'Come live with me.' That wouldn't happen. It's a different mindset."

He mentions the outright lies Putin continuously tells about why Russia invaded Ukraine. Putin has often made the erroneous claim that he is fighting neo-Nazis. Nothing could be further from the truth. There might be a handful of nutjobs, many of them planted by Putin himself, but they do not in any way reflect the Ukrainian spirit. "There's neo-Nazis right here in America," Frank says. He's right. Just think of the skinhead-pinhead 2017 Nazi invasion of Charlottesville. Think of the Proud Boys and other lunatic fringe right-wing groups.

Any justification for this unprovoked declaration of war is utterly specious. "The analogy I make is this," says Frank. "If we decided Russia was having too much influence in Mexico, would America then invade Mexico and kill as many Mexicans as we could. None of Putin's excuses make any sense at all."

Of course, the Ukrainians have made

it loud and clear that they're not gonna take it. "They don't want peace in Ukraine," Frank says. "They want victory. It's not about let's go back to the way things were. It's more like, let's ruin Russia. They are very strong. The women and children I transported were all gung-ho. The women were saying, 'We're gonna get this done.'"

Weapons and defense systems certainly help defeat the enemy. Of the \$10,000 raised for Frank's effort, roughly half of it still remains. "I'm trying to be a good steward of it," he says. "And I offered to give it back to people, and they were like, 'No, no you just put it where you think it's necessary.'"

To truly help the Ukrainians in their fight for freedom, Frank wants to put it where it will be best used. "I want to give it directly to the Ukrainian Army as a US citizen," he says.

The West, it seems, is frequently in denial of tyranny, even though it's always there, and a constant threat to liberty. It took the sneak attack on Pearl Harbor to finally get the US involved in the last global war, took two long years before we committed to this epic fight against tyranny. "The West couldn't wrap its mind around the violence

Putin was willing to do," Frank Pichel says. "That can't happen; he won't do that. But of course it did happen and he would do it.

This saying, wrongly attributed to Mark Twain, has frequented my mind lately: "History doesn't repeat itself, but it often rhymes."

What is happening today is a nearly perfect poetic expression of what has happened throughout all of human history, and particularly over the course of modern European history. When Russia began chipping away at the eastern regions of Ukraine—Luhansk and Donetsk—it was impossible, unless you were historically challenged, not to think of Hitler's goose step waltz into Sudetenland, which was the beginning of the end. And the lame and naive response from Great Britain's Prime Minister Arthur Neville Chamberlain, a coward who actually praised the German annexation of the Sudetenland as a way to ensure "peace for our time." His spineless response to that invasion contributed in no small way to the massacre of close to 85 million human beings across the globe. You don't make nice with a rabid pitbull.

Thank God there was a Winston

Churchill to take over the helm from PM Milquetoast. And that's who Uliana Bazar referred to just before our conversation ended.

"You know there's this quote from Winston Churchill that resonates," she said. "He said, 'You were given the choice between war and dishonor. You chose dishonor and you will have war.' It's very relevant today. Right now, if Putin's stopped right now, it can be less losses for everyone. If Putin feels the world is his oyster and he can do what he pleases, he's not going to be scared of sanctions. His ambition is to build a great Russian empire. And the Middle East and China and all those countries that hate the West, they will join him."

And then Uliana Bazar mentioned her homeland. "Ukraine is like a shield," she said. "We are fighting for you. People should realize that all those Ukrainians who right now are fighting and getting killed are fighting for democracy and fighting for freedom and fighting for common values that Europeans and Americans stand for. We are fighting for everybody. I would just hope, out of common sense, that western countries will do more to stop Putin's madness." 



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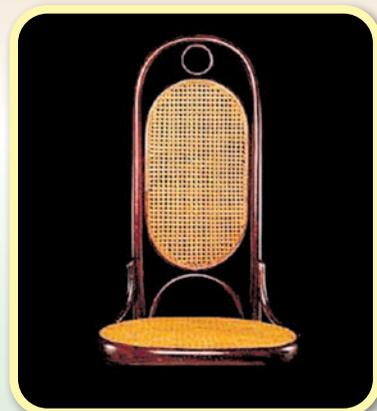
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"Truth and facts, no alternatives."

Ed Drask

has been called the godfather of Richmond muralists. He is an artist through and through, whether beating out percussion on drum skin, or stroking brush across canvas, plywood or mortared brick. It's a compulsion and a habit of being that began when he was a boy of nine. Ed transformed art in Richmond, beginning with a rejection of the local "academy", and a punk rock penchant for illegally tating decrepit buildings in the city he calls home. His work appears on buildings throughout the world, and his canvases hang in scores of private and public collections. One of them even graces the VMFA's permanent collection. At a critical moment some years back, Ed separated his ego from his art. "I knew it had to be less about me," the artist says. And everything changed.

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ED TRASK GREW UP IN LOUDON COUNTY, VIRGINIA

just outside Purcellville, on the edge of a suburban tide from the east that would eventually swallow a good portion of the county, but in those days, it was still largely rural, spread across hills that gently rolled into the Blue Ridge. As a boy he learned self-sufficiency; how to cook his breakfast and launder his clothes. His parents worked, and his brother and sister, both older than Ed, were seldom around after school. So Ed had the run of the house and the fifteen acres that surrounded it. He would wander the woods, soaking up nature, and on still, cool, cloudless nights he would see the nearness of the stars overhead, and could feel the thickness of the profound silence like a blanket, which he would become one with, and his soul would soar.

We're sitting at a table in Ed's studio over top a retail business down in the Bottom. It is a working space with a modicum of clutter, a number of surfboards, two drum sets, several large canvases—commissioned works; two landscapes, one of an interior—soon to be installed. Ed is framed by one of the four windows looking out on the city skyline. Just over his shoulder I can read the legend, *La Bodega* in a white cursive script on a red background that is set against a field of turquoise.

Two things have been creative constants in his life since boyhood: visual art and music. As a child, Ed would draw logos of his favorite bands or skateboard brands, and would play the drums almost incessantly. When he was just nine, Ed began taking drum lessons, which he continued to do through high school. "I was getting really serious about concert percussion and drums," says Ed. "So my dad would drive me to Winchester twice a week to get lessons under the percussive group at the Shenandoah Conservatory of Music."

In a high school art class, Linda Ackerman, a perceptive teacher, noticed an innate talent in Ed, a shine he possessed like no other. Linda had laid out small packs of oil paints and brushes and 11-by-14 canvas boards. She'd also placed a stack of National Geographic magazines on a desktop.

"Now," Linda said, "Pick an image out of a magazine and paint it. I'll be back in forty-five minutes," and she left the room.

Three-quarters of an hour later, she returned and moved among the students like a fish among its spawn. Lin-

da looked at the work of her students, one by one, and nodded and smiled, but when she came to Ed's work, her mouth opened and her eyes grew wide. He had perfectly replicated the image from the magazine.

"Whoa!" she said. "You've done this before."

Ed shook his head. "I've never ever painted before," he said.

For the remainder of the semester, Linda continued to challenge her charge. "She kept throwing painting projects in front of me," Ed remembers. "And I just kept doing it, and it always felt right."

Linda eventually set up a meeting with Ed's parents, and she told them this: "The reason why your son is not getting straight As is because he doesn't think the same way other people do. He's an artist."

Ed's father, Newell, didn't miss a beat. "All right," he said. "We'll just push him that way."

Like his son, Newell had an extraordinary and inventive sort of brain. But where Ed's thrived on artistic expression, his father's roamed the corridors of scientific inquiry. Newell's scholastic pedigree was as pure as it gets—MIT, Harvard, Caltech. He was an astrogeologist with NASA for years, working on the Mercury and the Apollo missions. Newell helped the first man land on the moon. He was actually being interviewed by Walter Cronkite just as Neil Armstrong was making

"one giant leap for mankind." Newell, who passed away five years ago, also worked for the U.S. Geological Survey. "My mother was that way, too," says Ed. "They saw that I didn't really process things on the same side of the brain as they did."

As high school graduation neared, Ed had a tough choice to make. He could either go to VCU and study painting, or attend Shenandoah Conservatory of Music to major in percussion. But there was a third choice—George Mason University. "I thought maybe I could do the academic route," Ed says.

That was not to be. "After the first semester at George Mason I was like, this sucks," says Ed. "Get me out of here."

So he headed a hundred miles south to Richmond, and everything opened up for him. "I came to VCU, and I think within the first week of being here I was like, 'This is where I belong,'" Ed says. "These are my people."

He hit the ground running, majored in painting and printmaking, immersed himself in the punk culture and art scene, explored the city, and made it his own. Ed also did a fair amount of drinking.

In his junior year, three of his art professors conducted something of an intervention in a studio classroom in the old Pollack Building.

"This is ridiculous," one of them said.

"You're showing up half drunk sometimes," said another. "We see a lot of talent, but you're not doing it."

And the third one said, "You're just wasting your parents' money."

Ed was outraged. "F*** you, I quit," he yelled and then walked away, slamming the door behind him. He did not look back.

"That pissed me off so much that all I wanted to do was prove them wrong," Ed says.

Almost immediately he found a run-down place in the 300 block of West Broad Street, the space that is now occupied by Black Iris Gallery. He negotiated with the realtors who were managing the property, and got it for song with a lease that ran for two short months. But Ed and other local artists had a vision for the place. They transformed it into a sort of anti-gallery gallery.

"It was me and five other underground VCU artists," Ed recalls. "We knew we didn't belong at 1708 or in that whole realm of academia. For us it was like a big middle finger to the establishment."

When the two-month lease expired, the gallery was thriving, so Ed renegotiated and ended up renting the space for the next year and half. "The artists made money and we made our rent and power, so it became viable," says Ed.

It was during this time that Ed did his first illegal mural, and he did it out of something that was akin to necessity. "I couldn't get into the commercial galleries and I just don't honestly think

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN
PHOTOS BY REBECCA D'ANGELO



Ed Trask applies the first brush stroke last spring for a mural at Bellevue and Brook.

I was all that good of an artist," he says. "I didn't know where I belonged or what I was doing, but I knew I had to put a brush to a surface."

Ed had just finished reading the collected stories of Isaac Bashevis Singer, a thick tome of biblical proportions. "So I started putting stuff on sheets of

plywood on the sides of buildings that I thought were ugly," he says. "At first, it was the thrill of doing something illegal. But then I started realizing that it was a beacon call to a lot of these buildings. Some of these buildings were tax write offs, sitting there rotting."

Armed with a can of black paint and a few brushes, Ed attacked a large plywood panel surrounding the renovation and expansion of a building near 14th Street. Working from a photo of Isaac Singer of the dust jacket of the book, an image not much larger than a postage stamp, Ed began painting. He'd finished his work within two hours—an eight-by-eight foot portrait of one of the greatest storytellers of all time. It was rough, it was fast, and the immediacy of it all appealed to Ed.

After he finished, Ed packed up his gear and walked up the hill toward Bank Street, and from that height looked down on his handiwork. He watched as a business suit slowed his pace, which seemed partly impaired by a two-martini lunch, and inched up to the mural on plywood which was still tacky to the touch. Several seconds later, the suit shook his head and walked away.

Ed could hardly contain his thrill. "Oh my God," he thought, nearly out loud. "I won, I did it. I just stopped him in his tracks, made him contemplate his position. I just made art that was for him, that was for everybody, not just for the bourgeois gallery crowd. I made something that everybody can either hate or love."

He had a studio on 14th Street in the old American Die Company building that was later raised when the city built the Flood Wall. "I would spend every waking moment at that studio," Ed says. "I would sleep, wake up, make art on wood on paper, and sometimes just attach it to buildings. I was putting it everywhere."

More often than not they were quick portraits of authors he had read, or people in the news, or artists he admired. "Anything from J.D. Salinger to Vonnegut and Mother Theresa, to Rauschenberg," says Ed.

During this entire period and for years thereafter, Ed also played drums for a number of punk rock bands, starting with Backlash and others along the way. He also decided to return to school and finish his college degree. "I added a ton of art history classes and loved it and thrived and saw it in a whole different light," Ed says.

As drummer for bands like Avail and Kepone, he was often on the road both stateside and abroad. And he would bring along his art kit and paint murals in Amsterdam, in Germany, or wherever else he landed. On a couple occasions he had run-ins with cops, but nothing much came of it. Not overseas at any rate.

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an iconic image that gives identity to a neighborhood?"

As his name spread, he began picking up jobs in other states. He did a mural in Florida and shortly after that was asked by Partners in the Americas to help create a mural in a city just to the south of Sao Paulo, Brazil. It was an experience that would change Ed Trask for good and all, would awaken him to a new truth about himself and his art.

He traveled down to Florianopolis, Brazil, and for the next three weeks he would help create a sixty-foot long mural along a fifteen-foot high wall

in the center of the town. His objective was to tell the story of the town. To that end he worked closely with an older man who supplied him with scores of photographs, and narrated, through a translator, the entire story of the city.

"And I worked with kids from the town and some of these kids came from pretty humble environments," says Ed. "It was a very profound time for me because that's when I started to divorce my ego from what I was doing. I started seeing how impactful public art could be. Working with these kids

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and seeing just how powerful it was to have this kind of creative outlet. I knew it had to be less about me and what I was putting up on the wall, and more about using my creativity to inspire another generation of younger artists and to inspire creative conversations that could really bring about positive change. That is what became my goal.”

Not long after that, Ed got a call from Hands On Greater Richmond. They wanted Ed to head up a giant volunteer piece about a hundred feet long. “I decided I was going to try this almost paint-by-number approach where I would draw everything out, and even-

Bill’s Barbecue on Arthur Ashe Boulevard near The Diamond, a unique part of Richmond’s culture that was unceremoniously reduced to rubble to make way for corporate boxes.

The VMFA, on a Sunday, was going to host a reception for Ed’s family and friends as the museum welcomed his painting into their permanent collection. The day before, a cloudless Saturday, Ed was at The Diamond overseeing the latest incarnation of the Street Art Festival. He watched in utter joy as his daughter and her friends painted a mural. His eyes shifted to his son who was playing softball out in center field.

that features the Lost Trail on Belle Isle. “Canvas is turning into the biggest thing now,” says Ed. “Visually, I’m going to interesting places on canvas, and I’m seeing light and a rhythm within nature a lot differently than I used to. I feel like I’m in a different place with canvas painting now, and I love it. And I was lucky to have Jennifer Glave and BJ Kocen who really have faith in me. Every time I would have a show she would push it, and the shows would sell out.”

Which is not to suggest that Ed no longer paints murals. As a matter of

breakfast bagel and an iced coffee, and then he saw her.

“This is true,” he says. “It was like she was walking in slow motion. It literally was that love at first sight thing.”

“What the f***?” he said in a whisper. “Who is that?” His friend Michael Bishop shared her name with Ed.

“I’m totally in love with that woman,” he would tell other friends in the days to come.

But he could never quite find the nerve to ask her out. That is until very early one morning at the Hole in the Wall, when Ed had consumed a lot in the way of liquid courage.

“So I walked right up to her and said, ‘Hey I’d like to take you out to lunch tomorrow,’” Ed tells me.

“It just bloomed from there,” he says. “She’s such a stunning woman in every way, and she’s so grounded, and she is wicked smart. She believes in the best of all people. She has always had faith in me, and has pushed me when I needed it.”

In fairly short order, the pair married and now, more than two decades later, have two children, a son and a daughter.

This fall, their daughter will begin the journey of her life. She heads up to New York on scholarship at Parsons School of Design in the heart of Greenwich Village. “She is so talented and we are so proud of her,” says Ed. “We’ve always been open with our daughter and our son.”



The Mechanism Of Love, Light & Protection.

rybody paints it in,” he says. “And I saw the impact it had on a lot of these volunteers and realized, I’m gonna be doing this for a while.”

About twelve years ago, Ed Trask and Jon Baliles had the foresight to realize we were entering a sort of Renaissance in Richmond where murals were concerned. Jon had just returned from Europe and was excited about a mural festival he had seen there.

“It turned out he had a lot of the same interests I had,” Ed says. “So we had a great conversation at that point. We kind of said: ‘Let’s come together and create a festival of street art and murals. So more than ten years ago now we had the very first Street Art Festival, and we brought in some of the biggest hitters of street art from all over the country.’”

Over the next several years there would be other Street Art Festivals here, and they were all successful. In 2017 there was a sort of alignment in Ed’s long career as an artist. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts had just purchased Ed’s painting of the iconic

The boy’s face seemed to say, “Can it get any better than this?” No, thought Ed, this is it.

And then he felt the vibration of his phone. He hesitated answering for a second so as not to shatter the memory of this singular moment.

“I pick it up,” Ed remembers. “It’s my mother. She says, ‘Your father just had a stroke and he’s in the hospital.’”

He planned on leaving immediately, but his family told him to attend the event at VMFA, that their father would have wanted him to. They believed their dad would be fine. “Do not come here,” one of his siblings said. “Sunday is the biggest moment you’ve had in your life. Dad’s not dying. Come Sunday night.” Which is what Ed ended up doing. By the time he arrived in Loudon Country, Newell Trask had passed.

“It’s such a balance between beauty and loss and forgiveness,” Ed says. “It took about a year for me to get back in the right mind frame.”

As he looks around the studio, his eyes fall on one of his recent paintings, one

fact he’s about to begin one along the wall of the former Dry Cleaners at the corner of Bellevue Avenue and Brook Road. The objective will be to tell the story of Northside, an extremely complex and intricate web.

“It’s gonna be almost a collage of different imagery that I think represents Northside in a very broad way,” says Ed. “There are so many historical story lines that have happened to shape Northside. I think I would have to use a whole city of walls to portray all of it. So I’ve picked certain ones that I’m attracted to and that reflect a broader range.”

Among other people, places and things, the mural will feature Arthur Ashe and Gabriel Prosser, the entry to Bryan Park and the old trolley line that ran through the Northside.

Ed met the love of his wife more than 25 years ago in one of Richmond’s earliest coffee shops—World Cup Coffee over on Robinson in the upper Fan. He had just come off tour with Kepone and he was hungover. He ordered a

His brow furrows a bit as he considers his daughter’s move to the north, but then the muscles relax as he recalls a discussion he had with Kelly not long ago.

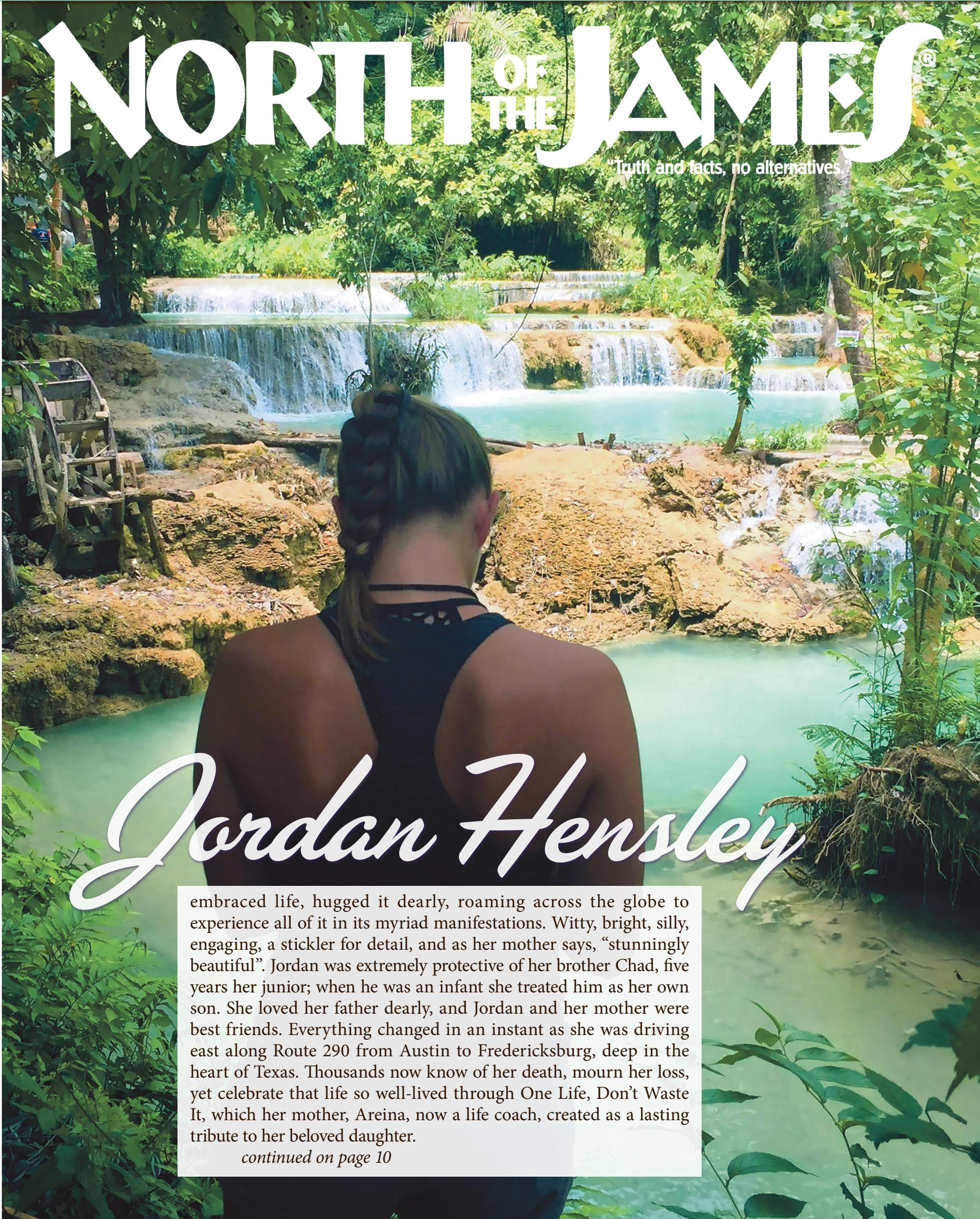
“We were remembering what it was like when we went to college,” he says. “You were kind of scared, but you knew you were supposed to take that step. You were supposed to get out of your comfort zone, and you had to go, but you were petrified.” That memory brought instant joy to husband and wife.

“We felt great remembering that,” Ed Trask says. “We were nostalgic about it, but at the same time we realized it put us in the place where we are today, and that made us feel good about where we were then, and where we are now.” **NS**

Editor’s Note: To watch a brief interview with Ed about the Bellevue mural, visit our website.

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Jordan Hensley

embraced life, hugged it dearly, roaming across the globe to experience all of it in its myriad manifestations. Witty, bright, silly, engaging, a stickler for detail, and as her mother says, "stunningly beautiful". Jordan was extremely protective of her brother Chad, five years her junior; when he was an infant she treated him as her own son. She loved her father dearly, and Jordan and her mother were best friends. Everything changed in an instant as she was driving east along Route 290 from Austin to Fredericksburg, deep in the heart of Texas. Thousands now know of her death, mourn her loss, yet celebrate that life so well-lived through One Life, Don't Waste It, which her mother, Areina, now a life coach, created as a lasting tribute to her beloved daughter.

continued on page 10

JORDAN HENSLEY

LIVING LIFE TO ITS FULLEST

That night, Jordan was scheduled to board a plane at Austin International, right about the time her mom, Areina, caught a flight out of Atlanta, and both of them were headed to Richmond, the city they had called home most of their lives. The next day they were planning to visit Chad, Jordan's younger brother and only sibling. He had made a very bad mistake and ended up incarcerated, and was about to age out of juvenile detention to serve the remainder of his time in an adult correctional facility. There would be a court hearing the following Monday.

But this was Friday, and Jordan had just texted her mother. She smiled as she sent it across cyberspace. Jordan had spent the morning with her friend Erin Alexander in Austin. Erin's father owned a vineyard where both young women worked. It was just seventy miles to the west in a place called Fredericksburg. Wine and travel were two of Jordan's greatest passions, and she had just learned that Claude Alexander, the man who owned the vineyard, was grooming her for international travel and wine. It was a life dream about to be realized.

Early that afternoon, the skies over Austin opened up. Rain cascaded like a waterfall, storm sewers backed up, flooding the streets, and Claude told the young women to stay put, that the vineyard was closing in a few hours. No need for them to come. But Jordan, who had a deep work ethic, decided to make the trip along Route 290 anyway. They got in the car, fastened their seat belts, and Jordan flipped on the headlights and windshield wipers. The rain was letting up, but the roads were still slick, so Jordan kept the speed down to fifty. They had just passed through the one-horse town of Hye and were nearing Stonewall, just a few miles from the vineyard. And that's when the end began.

A tractor-trailer, fully laden, drifted across the yellow lines, side-swiped a car to Jordan's left, and then jack-knifed. Jordan's car smashed into the semi-trailer with such force that both young women died instantly.

Areina was finishing out her week. She'd seen the message her daughter had sent earlier. It read, "May the Fourth be with you." On this fourth day of May, she would soon be reunited with her daughter in Richmond. She'd already packed her bags, and then her cell phone chimed.

The number was unfamiliar, and the feminine voice on the other end quavered. "Jordan has been in an accident," the voice said. And as Areina turned to look at her boyfriend, planning to tell him they needed to change plans and fly out to Austin, she could hear that phantom voice sobbing, and in Areina's skull her own voice erupted and yelled and pleaded, "Don't you f***ing say it. DON'T YOU F***ING SAY IT!"

That's when the woman on the other end said clearly, "Jordan didn't survive."

Areina tossed the cellphone across the room, and then passed out.

"I was out," Areina tells me. "I don't know how many minutes, but I was out." Her thin cheeks are streaked with tears as she remembers the moment this monstrosity entered her life, changed everything forever.

On Sunday, as planned, Areina, along with other family members, went to visit Chad in juvie.

"I had to sit in front of my son for two hours and pretend that nothing had happened because I needed his head in the right place when



Jordan picking berries.

he went to court the next day," says Areina. "My world

will never be the same. Things like that happen to other people; it's the call we never can imagine. I can tell you the only thing that I can think of that's worse is a missing child or watching your child suffer from something."

Areina sips from a glass of ice water, and she is crying. "I had her when I was twenty-two," she says. "Everything I did, and everything her daddy did, was for Jordan. We kind of grew up together. My friends would tell you that we had a very unique relationship. She was my best friend on top of it, literally. We were very silly, and I will never have that again with anyone else."

Their minds connected in a way that was almost telepathic. If a call came from Jordan, Areina would answer even before it rang. And if Jordan received a call from her

mother, she would pick it up before it ever chimed. Years ago, as they were driving to Melbourne, Florida on a sunny, blue sky morning, Jordan, who was looking out the window, said, "Ooh they shouldn't have done that."

Immediately, without even looking at what her daughter saw, Areina said "That was an ugly color for a door." And Jordan nodded and smiled.

"We could hear what the other one was thinking" says Areina. "And that would happen quite often."

Jordan was named after one of Areina's favorite anthropology professors at Longwood College (now Longwood University). "His name was Dr. Tucker Jordan and he was a consultant on bones," Areina says. "I was an anthropology major with a minor in western civilization."

Even as a little girl, Jordan exhibited

BY CHARLES MCGUIGAN



Jordan in Thailand.

behaviors consistent with obsessive compulsive disorder. When she was just in kindergarten she made an odd request of Santa. “She kept saying, ‘I want those drawers daddy has at work,’” Areina remembers. “And we were like, ‘What the heck is she talking about?’” Turns out she wanted a filing cabinet, and on that Christmas morning so many years ago, Jordan found, much to her delight, a two-drawer filing cabinet under the Christmas tree. She labeled the top drawer A-N and bottom one O-Z. “She had it all the way through college, and she organized everything,” says Areina.

At about the time Areina got her filing cabinet, the family moved to a large home in a still rural section of Chesterfield County just off Beach Road near Pocahontas State Park. Within the year the Hensleys welcomed the newest member of their family—Chad. From the moment he was born, Jordan developed a strong bond with her little brother. “He was a big part of her life, and she was a big part of his life,” Areina says. “They were extremely close. She was his protector and then some. They spoke every day at 10 am, even when she was traveling. He knew that call was coming so he’d take a shower, and right after the shower his sister would call. They were incredibly close, she was the person he went to with everything.”

After graduating from high school, Jordan went off to James Madison University where she majored in journalism, but then decided to

change her major to hospitality and stayed on an extra semester to earn her certification as a wine specialist.

It was during this time that life dealt a series of blows to Areina, and things began spiraling out of control. She and her husband, Jeff, divorced. After selling the family house, Areina rented a rancher so she and Chad could remain near Beach Road, and he could finish out his high school career at Manchester. Then her father, Edwin Harlan Bruce, Jr. otherwise known as “Pookie”, passed away. To top it off, Areina lost her job of 20 years. And then there was the horror of the terrible mistake Chad made going into his senior year that would land him in juvenile detention. Everything was falling apart.

Jordan never returned home. Instead, after graduation, she took off for California. “She never came home after college and part of that was the divorce,” says Areina. “The home she knew and loved was no longer there, there’s nothing to come home to in her mind. So she packed up her stuff with her boyfriend and they moved out to Napa Valley. She has an incredible palate and she was an incredible salesperson. Eventually, she wanted to be an event planner.” So, in the very heart of Wine Country, along the Silverado Trail, Jordan went to work at Chimney Rock Winery. “As always, she took the bull by the horns,” her mother says.

After working at Chimney Rock for a time, she took a job at a far less

pretentious winery, a place called Tank Garage Winery in Calistoga, that operated out of a renovated 1930’s style gas station.

At about that time, Jordan was thinking about getting engaged, but she had doubts, and then her wanderlust kicked in. Jordan sold all of her earthly possessions and decided to see the world. With the money she scraped together in her pocket, and a backpack over her shoulder, Jordan headed overseas.

She began “woofing” through World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms. “You go places, and you you work sometimes, you might be painting a fence or doing other labor and you stay for free,” Areina explains. “So that’s what she starts to do. She goes to Australia and then down to New Zealand.” There’s a photo Areina has of her daughter either weeding or picking berries. Jordan sports a dark blue T-shirt emblazoned with this message: One Life, Don’t Waste It. “That became her mantra,” says Areina. “The irony is she didn’t live much longer after that picture was taken.”

But she would pack a lifetime of living into what remained of her life. She continued to travel widely.

She left woofing and began to stay in hostels. After New Zealand she took off to Bali, and then Vietnam

and Thailand. “One of the greatest gifts that I have been given was to go stay with her in Thailand,” says Areina. “We both got certified for scuba, but I didn’t last twelve hours in the hostel. We ended up staying in the penthouse on top of the Hilton in Bangkok.”

From there Jordan went to England and began her travels through Europe. She spent a fair amount of time with a family just outside of Rome, Italy, working as a sort of au pair. “They fell in love with Jordan,” Areina says. “She became part of their family and they took her to the beaches, and they took her to the mountains. They took her everywhere.”

A short while later Jordan returned to the States. She no longer considered Richmond her home. “She thought, ‘Where do I go? I’m gonna do wine. I’m young. I don’t want to come back to Virginia because there’s no home so to speak any more,’” says Ariena. So she decided to move to Austin, Texas where her father’s sister lived. And that’s when she got the job with Alexander Vineyards in Fredericksburg.

Which brings us back to the beginning of this story, and Areina remembers what it was like. “I went into shock,” she says. “I was beating my body and my head on the cement. I don’t know how much time



Jordan and Chad as young children.



Jordan with an elephant.

went by.”

But she ultimately kept it together and on the following Monday, along with other family members, appeared in court. They had told Chad the day before, during visitation, that Jordan’s plane had been delayed. They all said that Chad had done incredibly well in juvie, but the judge ordered Chad

to spend another four years in an adult correctional facility.

The day before, Areina had spoken to a pastor out in California, who gave her the following advice about how to break the news to Chad. “You cannot sugarcoat it,” he told her.

After the hearing, Chad met his family members in an anteroom

adjacent to the courtroom. “So when Chad came in the door he saw us all crying,” Areina recalls. “And he thinks we’re crying because of the time he got.”

To which Chad said, “Mom, don’t cry, I’ll be alright.”

Areina looked Chad directly in the eyes. “Jordan is dead,” she said.

And Chad broke down in wails and tears and dropped to the floor.

“And then I have to leave my son there,” she tells me. “And then we just go from there.”

Though Jordan was taken by the careless move of a seasoned trucker, Areina never bore him ill will. “I never blamed that driver once because that individual was not drunk and he was not on drugs,” says Ariena. “He did something that we probably all have done at some point; the timing just sucked. He took full responsibility from the very beginning. I have sat down many times to write a letter to let him know that number one, we’re Christians; number two, that Jor-

dan would have completely forgiven him; and number three, that my own son had been forgiven and got opportunities because people loved him and knew something went wrong. Who was I to throw a stone at someone?”

But the pain she experienced by this loss is almost incomprehensible. “It’s a grief you never get over,” Areina says. “You learn to manage it better over time. But it is definitely a different kind of grief than any other. You won’t know, until it happens, and hopefully it will not happen to you.”

Not long after Jordan died, “One Life, Don’t Waste It” was born on Facebook. “It’s a place for people to remember Jordan,” Areina says. “She had a bigger impact on people than she realized. That page has more than fifteen hundred followers now.”

And from that page grew an annual fall event of the same name. It’s an evening of live music, good food, a silent auction, and more. Proceeds from past events went to FeedMore

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Jordan and James Madison.

and Boston Children's Hospital. This year the event will be bigger and better than ever. Slated for October 14, it will be held at The Historic Hippodrome Theater in Jackson Ward. Tickets are \$50 per person. The beneficiary this year is Safe Harbor. "It's basically for victims of domestic violence and human trafficking," Areina says. "It's for women and children, and it's more than just a place to stay. "

Areina would have loved this. Before her death she wanted to start a sort of bed and breakfast where women with troubled pasts could come to live while learning a trade or a skill. Even as she was globetrotting, Jordan sought out grants for the project. "I want to give back," she told her mom. "And I want to help people."

Along with her many other attributes, Jordan was generous to a fault, and empathetic and kind. She would share whatever she had.

Not long ago, Areina, in a further tribute to her daughter, decided to become a life coach.

"There's a strength in me that I got from my upbringing," says Areina Hensley. "There's a strength I have called my support system. There's a strength I have called my faith; it was shaken, but it's there. There are all these things I have that were given to me by others. And a lot of people don't have that. So me being a life coach and to help others is my gift to Jordan." **NJ**

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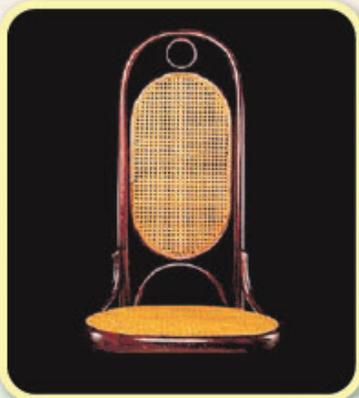
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