

A PATH FORWARD Steven P. Dinkin

AS POLITICAL DIVIDES DEEPEN, SO DO FAMILY FISSURES

Remember James and Jennifer Crumbley?

They are the Michigan couple who bought a handgun for their son, Ethan, as a Christmas gift last year. He allegedly used the gun to kill four of his high school classmates.

The Crumbleys have been charged with four counts of involuntary manslaughter in the case. They appeared in court for a preliminary hearing last month. The prosecutor believes that the couple failed to take steps to prevent the shooting, despite knowing that Ethan posed a danger to others.

On the morning of the shooting, the Crumbleys were urgently called to the school after one of Ethan's teachers found an alarming note Ethan had drawn. Along with graphic images, it had the words "Blood everywhere" and "The thoughts won't stop. Help me."

The Crumbleys decided Ethan should stay in school that day.

Just the day before, the teenager was caught by a teacher

looking at ammunition on his phone. When his mother was told, she texted Ethan, cautioning him not to get caught.

I must admit: Despite my decades of work as a mediator, I couldn't find two sides to this story. The Crumbleys deserve to be held accountable for their part in this unspeakable tragedy.

Turns out, the couple have some company in the pantheon of bad parents.

Meet Guy and Nicole Reffitt.

Guy Reffitt took part in the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the U.S. Capitol. A member of the Texas Three Percenters militia, Reffitt traveled to Washington, D.C., with weapons in tow. He attended the "Stop the Steal" rally in front of the White House before marching with the crowd to the Capitol building. There, Reffitt charged at police officers with force; they used projectiles and pepper spray to hold him back.

Reffitt celebrated the violence of the day with his family, including son Jackson, who accused him of having broken the law. The

father and son disagreed on matters of politics — and in particular, the outcome of the 2020 presidential election.

Just a few days later — realizing that the FBI might in fact be on to him — the elder Reffitt threatened his son and daughter, Peyton. He told his kids they would be treated as traitors if they turned him in, "and traitors get shot."

But Jackson Reffitt had contacted the FBI prior to Jan. 6, concerned about the schemes his father was hatching to try to overturn the election. He finally met with the FBI on the day his life was threatened. Guy Reffitt was arrested within a week.

Father and son faced each other in federal district court earlier this month. Jackson's emotional testimony led to swift deliberations: After only three hours, the jury found Guy Reffitt guilty of all five charges related to the Capitol attack.

Outside the courthouse, Jackson's mother, Nicole Reffitt, denounced the verdict, saying

that it was "against all American people." She urged other Jan. 6 defendants not to take plea deals, claiming that her husband was being used to intimidate them.

At least she told Jackson "I love you" in the courtroom.

But the Reffitts' story goes beyond bad parenting, which has been around for a long time. The trial has also shown how fissures dividing ordinary Americans have cracked wide open, even pitting family members against one another. Our new level of discord makes the dinner-table disagreements we all remember seem rather quaint.

A willingness to resort to violence — and even turn against your own children — is symptomatic of a new extremism in America. In her new book, "How Civil Wars Start and How to Stop Them," UC San Diego professor Barbara F. Walter says that extremists today subscribe to an apocalyptic belief: that modern society is irredeemable, and its end must be hastened so that a

new order can begin.

Adherents believe that they are not making enough progress through regular means, so they must turn to violence to precipitate change, Walter writes. Any excuse to incite conflict will do, from COVID lockdowns to protests for racial justice. The hope is that it will set off a chain reaction of violence that stirs moderate citizens to become disillusioned and join their cause.

It's a terrifying prospect for the future of our democracy. But it's not inevitable, Walters believes: Our shared history and ideals can inspire and guide us, reviving our national pride in a system that is truly of the people, by the people and for the people. If we believe this is worthwhile, the place to start is in our families.

Dinkin is president of the National Conflict Resolution Center, a San Diego-based group working to create solutions to challenging issues, including intolerance and incivility. To learn about NCRC's programming, visit ncrcnline.com.

STRAND • Audio recordings of veterans' stories are also made

FROM B1 the work they're going to leave behind when they're gone. I hope people can look at these portraits and say, 'that was a body of work.' After I die, that's something I'd like to know."

Finding the moment

Strand's most recent veteran photo session was on March 10 with Joe Albert Gonzalez, 95, of Clairemont, who served in the Army's 381st Company, 96th Infantry Division. He earned a Bronze Star for his bravery in the Battle of Okinawa, when he jumped out of a foxhole to rescue one end of a fallen stretcher bearing a wounded soldier, after one of the medics carrying the pallet was shot to death. Gonzalez helped carry the wounded man to safety through a hail of bullets.

For about 20 minutes, Strand sat with Gonzalez and asked him questions about his service for the audio recording. Gonzalez's memories have faded with the years but Strand was patient and cheerful. He has learned to ask the same questions three or four different ways and eventually the veterans' minds become more limber and the stories trickle out.

Gonzalez was born in San Diego and raised in Logan Heights. He was fighting as an amateur boxer with a mean left hook when the war began. He quickly signed up to serve with three of his brothers.

"I didn't want to be on the outside. Everybody else was going," he told Strand during the interview.

For the next 30 minutes, Strand took dozens of shots of Gonzalez, with his eyeglasses on, then off, smiling and laughing, then serious. Sitting back, then forward. With his jacket buttoned up and unbuttoned. Strand worked quickly, squeezing off more than 100 digital frames with a hand-held shutter trigger connected to a stationary camera, and sometimes moving up close for angled shots with a hand-held camera.

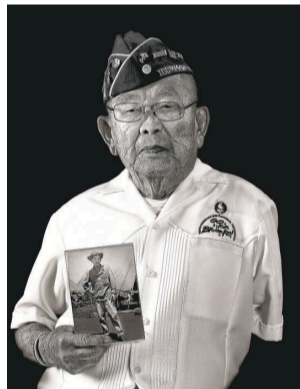
Strand likes to use a flash because it accentuates the "laugh lines" in the veterans' faces and he shoots in color but converts the images to black and white for portraits.

"Black and white offers the opportunity to really see the person and not get lost in the color of what their clothing or the color of the surroundings are doing. It helps focus on the moments they



MICKEY STRAND PHOTOS

Married couple and World War II veterans Annie and Chuck Muler both died several months after they were photographed by Spring Valley photographer Mickey Strand in 2018.



Noboru "Don" Seki lost an arm fighting in WWII.

shared with me," he said.

The "magical" image during this shoot came at the end of the session, when Gonzalez was mentally engaged, but his body was relaxed. His expression was natural and his eyes were lit up with merriment. When Strand held the camera's viewfinder up for Gonzalez to see the final photo, he laughed with approval and then asked for lunch.

His son and fellow Army veteran, Arnold Gonzalez, said his dad had been excited about the photo shoot, which will likely be his last. On April 22, Joe Gonzalez will turn 96. He has told his family he won't see 97. Because he lived through the war with only minor injuries in the 96th In-

fantry Division, Gonzalez believes 96 is his lucky number. He doesn't want to tempt fate by surviving it.



Strand's favorite portrait is this image of WWII Navy photographer Joe Renteria of San Diego.

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Getting out of the way

Strand fell in love with photography as a boy, developing images with his dad in the basement darkroom of their home in Racine, Wis. He took pictures for his high school newspaper and yearbook and then joined the Navy, where he served as a photographer on the USS Ranger and USS Long Beach ships and at Miramar Air Station. Later he taught photography at the Defense Information School in Maryland.

Two years after retiring from the Navy, Strand had a

brush with death. After an appendectomy, he developed a deadly sepsis infection and spent six months fighting to recover. The experience led him to appreciate the importance of celebrating life and capturing its essence in photographs.

Unfortunately, Strand's mentor told him that "life" was the one thing missing from his early attempts at portrait photography about six years ago.

"He told me my work was stagnant and not human enough," Strand said. "He told me you've got to get out of the way to let the person be the person and find the moment."

As his homework, Strand began looking for subjects



WWII combat medic Dr. John West.

that interested him to do a number of portrait series. The first series was "Behind the Cut," which captures both the hard and soft sides of motorcycle club members. The "cut" is what bikers call their club vest. Strand is a motorcycle club member himself and he hopes his more than 100 portraits help improve the image of biker clubs, which he calls a "maligned and misunderstood culture."

His second major series was the Veterans Project. It began on July 25, 2017, with a daylong shoot of 16 WWII vets at Mt. Miguel Covenant Village, an assisted living center in Spring Valley. The portraits were displayed at the center a few months later

on Veterans Day. In the years since, he has done similar shoots and shows at veterans homes in Chula Vista, Ventura and Los Angeles. His largest exhibition was for Veterans Day in 2019, when he hung 86 portraits in the Museum at the Photo Centre in Palm Beach, Fla.

For the bigger projects, Strand brings his wife along to help conduct the interviews. When dementia has dulled the expression in veterans' faces, Strand will often ask a family member or caregiver to stand behind the camera so he can capture the moment when the subject's eyes light up with recognition. Sometimes, he'll hand the subjects a meaningful object, like a bible or camera, to stir memories of something they love. Some subjects show up for the shoot in their old uniforms, while others arrive in T-shirts. Many arrive with 75-year-old wartime photos of themselves.

Ten of the World War II veterans he has photographed were women. One couple he photographed together were veterans Chuck and Annie Muler, who died within months of each other, not long after their dual portrait was taken in 2018. Strand has also photographed several men of color who served in segregated units during the war, including the late Noboru "Don" Seki, who lost his left arm fighting with the heavily-decorated Japanese American 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and Herbert Barnum, a Black army sergeant who served as a mechanic in a mobile unit in Germany, Belgium and France.

His favorite veteran photo subject was Joe Renteria of Point Loma, who passed away in October at age 104. A Cherokee Indian who grew up in a Catholic orphanage, Renteria served as a top-secret Navy photographer during World War II, shooting photos of enemy bases from the air and capturing images of the secret U.S. nuclear bomb tests on Bikini Atoll in 1946. He posed for Strand holding the oversize camera that shot those images.

"That was my number-one favorite shoot," Strand said. "I loved how much of his character we captured in the photo."

To see more of Strand's photographs, visit veterans-photos.com and mick-eystrand.com.

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SMOLENS

FROM B1 Later, businesses in the market had to report who was running the companies and then disclose their compensation. All that helped investors determine the level of risk in a given company. Gensler views the emerging climate disclosures as another step in that process.

This is more than just investors wanting to know which companies can adapt and continue to earn profits. There's the remarkable growth of so-called ESG investing, which evaluates a company's environmental, social and governance approaches beyond maximizing profits.

The National Association of Plan Advisors said sustainable fund investments last year were four times what they were three years earlier. Bloomberg reported that ESG assets

are expected to grow to \$50 trillion by 2025 from about \$35 trillion, but noted the definitions of ESG investing can vary, meaning it could range from putting money into a wind-energy company to a Silicon Valley tech giant.

"ESG is upending the worlds of finance and investing as it moves from the periphery to the mainstream," according to Bloomberg.

Business organizations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, have criticized the evolving emissions disclosures, contending the data is uncertain and that companies could be held liable for it.

Other skeptics are concerned about the timing of the new regulations amid high oil prices and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Some congressional Republicans have warned that using regulatory infrastructure for banking and markets to accomplish climate policy goals could

produce unintended consequences, according to NBC. Among their concerns is that the rules could limit access to capital markets for companies involved in fossil fuels. Meanwhile, there are questions about just how soon the country can transition to a clean-energy economy.

Supporters say climate change must be addressed or the market will face steady deterioration. Swiss Re, the global insurance company, has estimated the world economy risks losing more than 18 percent of current GDP by 2048 if no action on climate change is taken, according to MarketWatch.

Eight of the largest U.S. banks and 10 of the largest U.S. asset management companies combined to finance businesses that emitted nearly 2 billion tons of carbon dioxide based on year-end disclosures from 2020, according to a study titled "Wall Street's Carbon

Bubble" released in December by The Sierra Club and Center for American Progress.

"To put this figure in perspective, if the companies in this study were a country, they would have the fifth largest emissions in the world, falling in between Russia and Indonesia," the report says. "This is based only on the limited publicly available data for a select number of institutions, so this is almost certainly an underestimate."

Where the SEC is headed should become clearer on Monday. What appears to be in dispute is not whether disclosures will be required, but what they should include.

According to The Washington Post, some business interests have pushed the SEC to exclude "scope 3" emissions, which are generated by suppliers and customers, such as drivers filling up their cars with gasoline. Climate activists

argue that the rules will lack teeth if they omit scope 3 emissions.

Given investor demands and the likelihood of new regulations, numerous corporations such as Amazon, General Motors, IBM and Walmart already have committed to achieving carbon neutrality at some future date. Definitions vary, but carbon neutrality is zero net carbon dioxide emissions, which can include offsetting emissions by removing or eliminating others.

But without uniform reporting requirements, it may be difficult to detect "greenwashing" — companies making false claims that they are environmentally friendly.

Caroline Crenshaw, an SEC commissioner nominated by former President Donald Trump, said the commitments are a good trend, but it's hard to tell how companies will reach their goals or whether they

will provide adequate information on their progress.

"Investors have noted the importance of understanding how the pledges are being implemented this year, five years from now and 10 years from now, rather than simply waiting to see if, in 30 years from now, the goal of net zero emissions comes to fruition," she said, according to MarketWatch.

"That will simply be too late."

It seems the climate on Wall Street is about to change.

Tweet of the Week

Goes to Hillary Clinton (@HillaryClinton), after she was sanctioned by Russia along with other high-profile Americans.

"I want to thank the Russian Academy for this Lifetime Achievement Award."

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