

Matt's Story

My name is Geri Perna. Matthew is my nephew. I use the word IS because Matt's spirit is very much alive and always will be. We are a large Italian family from Western Pennsylvania, and we are remarkably close. Prior to the January 6th incident, none of our family members had ever been arrested for anything.

Matthew Lawrence Perna came into this world on June 27, 1984, When Matt was 2, he had this strange fascination with the American flag. He would look for flags when riding in his car seat, yelling out every time he spotted one. If a book or a magazine had a picture with a flag in it, he would find it and excitedly bring it to our attention. This fascination obviously did not end when he was young, it continued into adulthood when his Patriotism would end up being his downfall.

Matt graduated from Sharpsville High school in Pennsylvania and went on to graduate at the top of his class from Penn State University. He was brilliant in many ways, and an avid reader with an extensive library of books. He read constantly and was so very well educated on matters of world history and government. He never made anyone feel inferior or stupid for asking questions, and if he did not know the answer (which was rare), he researched and found the answer. He was a very articulate speaker and writer who loved having conversations with random strangers, especially the elderly. He was so very respectful especially when the conversations revealed differing opinions, he never berated anyone for disagreeing. He would just smile and agree to disagree, even though he knew he was right (lol).

Matt was adventurous! After graduating college, he worked a 9-5 job for a few years, and eventually signed on to teach English to school children in Thailand.

He LOVED IT! He formed many friendships during his time there, and when that contract ended, he decided to move to South Korea and teach there. He learned the language wherever he traveled to and formed many lasting relationships that he maintained the rest of his life. After living in South Korea for a couple of years, his mom, Roni was given the devastating news that she had Leukemia. Matt flew home immediately to help take care of her. He immersed himself completely in learning about holistic remedies, and although Roni was not always a willing participant, Matt did not give up. She was the recipient of a bone marrow transplant and after almost a year since being diagnosed, she was looking forward to resuming her life. We were all very hopeful and excited that she was out of the woods.

On March 2, 2015, Roni had a regular doctor's appointment where they did blood tests, and it was determined that she needed blood to regulate her white blood cell count. This was not unusual in the slightest, but what was normally a routine visit, turned into a tragic day. The blood she was given had a bacterium present, and Roni was placed on a ventilator and her organs began to shut down. She died the following evening, March 3, 2015, with her husband Larry and her two sons by her side. It was a tragedy like no other, and our family was never the same.

Larry was in unimaginable pain from the loss of his wife, and Matt decided to stay close to home rather than returning to his travels. He had no desire to work a 9-5 job anymore and began marketing Alkaline water filtration machines (something he purchased for his mom when she was ill), essential oils, and eventually Hempworx CBD products. He built up a following on social media of over 7,000 people and was networking in his small town and making quite a name for himself. He did not just sell these items. He BELIEVED in them. He would never promote anything that he didn't use himself. When he was selling

the Kagan Water filtration systems, many people were skeptical. It was an expensive item, but the benefits were well worth the cost. Matt studied the effect of Alkaline water on cancer patients and was astounded with the positive outcomes of so many patients. When Matt met people who could not afford the system, but could benefit from the water, he bought dozens of plastic containers and delivered water to people several times a week, at NO CHARGE WHATSOEVER. That is the type of person Matt was. He did the same with CBD oil, often just giving it away to people who could benefit from it but could not afford to pay for it. He had a generous heart, and anyone who met him could notice this instantly. However, he did not announce his charitable deeds at all. Only those who witnessed him firsthand knew what a giving soul he possessed, humble beyond imagination.

Matt had a passion for running. He had a great group of friends that ran together and participated in many races. He had a wood map made of the United States and each state had a hook on it. His goal was to run a race in every state. He had many medals on this map, but still had many states left in which to run. He was physically fit and ate healthy. Often he would make some of his "recipes" and share them with his family. He stuck to a very strict diet and exercise routine and I honestly don't remember him ever having so much as a cold. He did not trust the pharmaceutical industry, and wanted no part of supporting it in any way.

Matt traveled the world; it was his passion. He made friends in more places than we will ever know and stayed in contact with them regularly. He sent postcards, no matter if he was traveling or in his home. He took the time to send hundreds, if not thousands of them and was quite personal with his messages. He wrote beautifully and each postcard was cherished by the recipient. After Matt's death, many people shared their postcards with me.

They saved them for several years because they made such an impression on them. He sent them because he liked how he felt when he received one and wanted to share that joy with others.

Matt had a talent for photography as well and played the piano (a gift that he learned from his dad). His photos were sometimes of random people in his travels, or just an object that the average person would have walked by without noticing it. Matt noticed EVERYTHING, and his photography will live on forever.

He loved animals, especially dogs. But one day a kitten wandered onto Matt's porch, and she was in poor health. Matt, having never owned a cat, began to take care of her. He named her Hinoki, and he brought her back to excellent health using Alkaline water and CBD products. She was his roommate and she loved him, and he absolutely adored her.

When the 2016 election was approaching, Matt had been a Bernie Sanders supporter for a few years. However, he changed his course and supported Donald Trump. He attended several rallies and although he got into some very heated discussions on social media, Matt always kept it civil and respectful. He had this ability to maintain a level of calmness even when he disagreed profusely with someone. When the 2020 election results were announced, Matt was in complete disbelief. He knew the election was stolen and had this tremendous amount of hope that the results were going to be overturned, after the truth was revealed. He decided to attend the Stop the Steal Rally on January 6, 2021 with the anticipation of being a part of a historical day in Washington DC, where the people would have their voices heard and the election would not be certified. He was expecting it to be a day of celebration that would go down in history, and Matt wanted to witness it firsthand.

Instead, January 6 was a disaster of epic proportions. Matt was in the crowd of thousands of attendees shoulder to shoulder. As he made his way to the Capitol building, he watched in bewilderment as he got closer and saw the crowd waving flags, shouting USA, and making their voices heard, just as his President instructed. We later learned that Congress had been adjourned at 2:20 P.M. and the building was evacuated. Matt entered the capitol at approximately 2:58. This point was later presented but had no bearing on the charges that he was faced with. He had no intention whatsoever of entering the building, but the enormous force of the crowds behind him pushed into a previously opened door, he went in. There were plenty of instigators in the crowd as well, and these people certainly succeeded in getting the crowd excited. Had it not been for this and the density of the crowd, he would have never gone inside. He was armed with a flag and a cell phone, no weapons of any kind. Once inside, the police stepped to the side and allowed the crowds in. While inside, he stayed within the velvet ropes in the rotunda, recording and chanting USA, USA! He touched NOTHING, stole NOTHING, broke NOTHING. He was inside the building for 15 minutes or less, and then exited outside the rear of the building.

Matt and his friends returned to their hotel and recorded a 7-minute video talking about their day and what they had witnessed. This video is on this website for you to view. This same video would later be used against him by the Department of Justice. The video was removed from Facebook, but not before his friend downloaded it and because of this, we are able to view it now. Matt returned home, and on January 14, 2021, he was informed by a friend that his picture was on the FBI website, and they were looking for him. Matt immediately reached out to a friend who was a retired police officer. He advised him to contact the local FBI office and turn himself in. That morning at 9:00

Matt did exactly that. The FBI sent 2 agents to Matt's Dad's house, where they questioned him about January 6.

In hindsight, I wish Matt had retained an attorney BEFORE speaking to the FBI. But, because of the police allowing the people inside the Capitol, Matt did not feel he had done anything wrong. I am 57 years old, and I have been taught my entire life to trust the police. If I had been in his shoes, I would have walked in also and certainly would not have thought that I was breaking any laws when the police said it was okay to go in. Matt told the agents everything and he thought if he just truthfully explained what happened, it would all be viewed as a huge misunderstanding and that would be the end of it. Even at that point, he did not feel he had broken any laws. Matt had NEVER had any arrests prior to this incident, in fact, he had never had a parking ticket in his life. Matt told the agents exactly what happened that day and everything he had witnessed. He included that he saw several ANTIFA people posing as Trump supporters. They were wearing tactical gear underneath their MAGA attire and quite easy to identify. After the FBI finished their questioning, they informed Matt that if they thought of anything else, they would be in touch. The agents appeared friendly and kind. Matt treated them respectfully, politely answering every question in detail with his father and uncle present.

I was at my home in Florida during this, and I did not have a good feeling about any of it. I flew up to Pennsylvania that week and we retained an attorney that came recommended by a friend of a friend. On January 18, 2021, the FBI called Matt and said they had additional questions and were on their way to see him. They obviously phoned from the driveway because seconds later 6 agents were at his door. Matt voluntarily let them inside the house where they proceeded to arrest Matt in front of me and his dad. He was initially charged with two misdemeanors:

Knowingly Entering or Remaining in any Restrictive Building or Grounds
Without Lawful Authority

Disorderly Conduct on Capitol Grounds

He was taken to the local FBI office in New Castle, PA and processed. They searched his home, taking the Trump sweatshirt he had worn that day, along with his cell phones and laptop. This was the beginning of a nightmare for Matt and our entire family who loved and supported him completely. The local newspaper wasted no time reporting the story with the FBI pictures included. The articles were inaccurate from the start, and although we were called for comments and interviews, we declined everyone at the advice of the attorney. The newspaper was notorious for printing false stories, and we knew that our comments would be edited or completely omitted. The articles upset Matt greatly. Having to explain what happened to his grandfather of 93 years old was very difficult.

Facebook and Instagram immediately disabled Matt's accounts, and because of this he wrote a statement and asked me to post it on my pages, which I did. He apologized if his actions offended anyone and admitted to walking into the Capitol with the police ushering him in. After posting this, the backlash began. Friends who had known me since I was 5 were furious with me and Matt. We were called white supremacists and racists. My classmates publicly shamed me in our group page which I was the admin of. We had a reunion every 5 years, and the page had most of my classmates as members. The comments were awful, and the text messages that I received were even worse. One classmate, who I was very close with suggested that it would be best if I removed myself from the group. Matt felt absolutely terrible about this. As I sat crying on the couch as I read these messages, he cried with me. The local newspaper posted

the stories about Matt's arrest on their Facebook page as well. The comments were mean, vindictive, and hateful. Many were from friends and relatives, and it was at that moment we realized that very few people were actually our friends. The page is still visible to this day, Facebook has left it visible for all to see.

Matt was released later that day, without bail. We met with his attorney, and based on the charges he felt that Matt, who had no prior convictions or any altercations with the law for that matter would more than likely face a fine and maybe some community service as his punishment. Coupled with the fact that Matt had willingly turned himself in immediately upon hearing that the FBI had posted his picture on their website as a person they were looking for, the attorney assured us not to worry, he had this. Unfortunately, that feeling of relief was short lived. On January 22, 2021 Matt, along with 240 other attendees was charged with the felony of Obstruction of Congress.

Matt was assigned a parole officer that he was required to report to, and the first of many hearings was scheduled. On February 25, 2021 the Grand Jury indicted Matt on 4 counts:

Obstruction of an Official Proceeding and Aiding and Abetting

Entering and Remaining in a Restricted Building or Grounds

Disorderly and Disruptive Conduct in a Restricted Building or Grounds

Disorderly Conduct in a Capitol Building

He was arraigned before Judge John D. Bates on March 9, 2021, where Matt plead not guilty and was released. He was more worried than ever, however his attorney continued to say his famous words, "don't worry, I've got this!". But,

worry, is all Matt and our family did. Matt's mental condition had begun to rapidly decline, and his father's health was greatly affected by the added stress.

Matt had a girlfriend at the time of several years. Their relationship was now strained because of their differing political views and uncertainty of Matt's future. Shortly after his arrest, she broke ties with him and this added to his depression greatly. He began talking about suicide, and as each week passed the news of the mounting arrests of other J6ers concerned all of us even more. It became quite clear that our Department of Justice would stop at nothing to make an example of anyone who was a Trump supporter, especially if they chose to exercise their right to Freedom of Speech.

He watched as senior citizens were arrested for attending the rally, and when they began incarcerating people who had not even been convicted of a crime, Matt began to feel guilty that he was free to leave his home, while others were kept in solitary confinement. Watching the effects that his ordeal had on his Dad, added to the enormous mountain of guilt that he was carrying, and we were all very concerned for Matt's safety. I informed his attorney of our concerns, and I feel that he thought I was exaggerating the situation.

Over the next several months there were hearings scheduled. Some were status hearings presented discovery by the DOJ. Almost every single hearing was cancelled and delayed. Matt would have himself mentally prepared to attend the hearing, only to be informed at the last minute that it was cancelled and postponed. The discovery was constantly an issue. As the DOJ continued their search for evidence against Matt, it became quite clear that there simply wasn't anything that he had not already told them. But it didn't matter, as they were out for blood and were not going to stop until they were satisfied.

These delays were devastating to Matt. He simply wanted to put this unfortunate incident in the past and move on with his life. His income had come to a complete halt. He had a huge following on social media where he marketed CBD products as well as alkaline water filtration systems. Without the ability to present podcasts to his audience, his time was spent thinking and worrying about his case. He couldn't seem to focus on anything else. He gave his television away, he couldn't watch the news as it only added to his stress.

Matt was suicidal shortly after the felony charge had been added. His emotions were all over the place, and our family was extremely concerned. I expressed this concern to his attorney, but was told that if the prosecution learned of his mental state, he would be immediately arrested and put into a facility indefinitely. He no longer ran, or cared about what foods he was eating. He dove into his Bible, constantly reading and searching for comfort. He saw several counselors and pastors, but none of them could tell him what was going to happen with his case and it was this uncertainty that consumed him.

His hearings never seemed to offer anything new. The prosecution still had not found any additional evidence to substantiate the charges, but the looming threat of additional charges weighed on Matt. He began spending his nights sleeping at his Aunt's house, because she insisted he not be alone at night. He suffered from terrible nightmares, and his physical health began to deteriorate.

As the months passed, we watched in horror as more and more people were arrested for attending the rally in DC. There seemed to be no one who was immune from arrest, except the instigators and obvious Antifa members who were present throughout the crowd. Grandmothers, elderly, veterans, off duty police officers...all arrested for exercising their freedom of speech. At this writing, over 900 people have been arrested so far. This added to Matt's worry.

It was more than clear that the DOJ was going to continue their witch hunt and stop at nothing to make examples out of these people who truly didn't believe they had done anything wrong. There were definitely people there who were out of line. They assaulted police officers and broke things, and they should be dealt with...but who were these people really? Were they actual Trump supporters? Or were they instigators playing a part?

Matt was hopeful at times that the truth would be revealed, and charges would be dropped. But every time more people were arrested, or stories about the men and women rotting in the DC Gulag came out, his hope was diminished. I prayed for Matt constantly throughout my day. Please Lord, make this go away, please reveal the truth and allow these people to be set free! But our prayers were not answered.

The felony charge of Obstruction of an Official Proceeding was the greatest threat in Matt's case. After several Plea hearings, it became quite clear that the DOJ had no intention of dropping the felony charge. So, his attorney advised him to plead guilty, in order for this ordeal to end quickly. He told him that there was a chance that the severity of the charges could be lessened if it was proven that Matt was needed to take care of his Dad. He would possibly have to be on house arrest with an ankle monitor, but at least he would be there for his father. Matt was asked to provide letters about his character and his life to submit to his judge in an effort to ask for leniency. These letters were to be read first by a person in the parole department. She had the authority to drop points off of Matt's charges based on the letters. Matt's Dad, Larry wrote a powerful letter telling how Matt was his caregiver, and how one icy evening that winter, his Dad had taken his Golden Retriever outside in the dark for one last evening bathroom time. It was 6 degrees outside, there were several inches of snow, with a layer of ice on top. He had on a light sweater, and had left his phone

inside. Larry fell down and was unable to stand. The nearest neighbor lives a hundred yards away, and it was pitch dark. Larry thought he was going to freeze to death. He began crawling on the ice, using his bare knuckles. It took him almost an hour to get to the edge of his yard. It was at that point, Matt arrived. He had been calling Larry, but didn't get an answer, so he drove there in an ice storm and helped him into the house. Also included with the letter was a letter from Larry's Doctor, which confirmed the need for assistance, and the severity of Larry's deteriorating health. The woman in the parole department received the letters and the physician's reports and told Matt's attorney that she didn't believe that Matt was his dad's caregiver or that his dad was in need of one. She declined to take any of the points off, and his attorney told him that because of this, Matt would definitely have to serve time in jail.

Initially, Matt was told that he would most likely receive 6-12 months in a federal prison camp in West Virginia. So, on December 17, 2021 Matt entered his plea of guilty. The local newspaper once again plastered his picture on the front page, with inaccurate information as usual. Once again, Matt was the center of attention. Christmas was coming, and with permission, Matt traveled to Florida to spend it with his friend. Christmas night, he made his way to our house to spend a few days with us. I couldn't believe how terrible he looked. His eyes no longer sparkled. His smile no longer lit up the room. He was defeated. He was a shell of his former self, and my heart broke for him. He cried many tears while here, and as much as we tried to offer him hope and encouragement, he just wasn't capable of accepting it.

After his plea was entered, he now had to wait over 2 months for his sentencing hearing. Why? I feel this was just another part of the mental torture the DOJ was inflicting on these people from January 6. Matt began studying about federal prison camps. He watched videos and read articles hoping to have his

fears lessened. He learned that he could spend his time productively in the camp teaching inmates and helping them obtain their GED. He could continue his education while there, and began to feel like he was strong enough to survive this. I told him constantly that the time will pass quickly, and he will come away from this stronger and more successful than he ever thought.

On January 9, 2021 my dad, Matt's grandfather passed away. I flew home for the funeral and we decided that the service would be completely private with immediate family only. The reason for this was Matt was so ashamed of himself, and didn't want to come to the funeral for his grandfather that he loved so much having to face relatives or family friends. Matt attended the funeral, and barely said a word. It saddened me so much to see him like this. Matt was this shining light in our family. When he entered a room, everyone smiled. He had such a kind, positive spirit and it was contagious. Now, he just seemed deflated, and it was truly heartbreaking.

After the funeral we took a family photo which included everyone. We have a large family with several nieces, nephews, and grandchildren. This was the last photo we would take while Matt was alive. In hindsight, I wish that I had done more during that visit home. But, it was quite evident that Matt was in a very dark place, and I didn't know the words that would help, as hard as I tried.

The month that followed the funeral was particularly rough for Matt. His anxiety as he waited for his March 3 sentencing hearing was increasing by the day. He watched countless videos on federal prison camps, and continued spending his nights at his aunt's house. He began to studder when he spoke, it just came out of nowhere. We later learned that he was vomiting blood, and couldn't keep food down. The physical as well as mental affect this was having

on his body was sickening. Why? Because he walked through an opened door at The People's House? His entire life was destroyed because of this?

During Matt's 13 month ordeal we made phone call after phone call to our Congressmen and women. We sent dozens of emails to representatives on both sides of the aisle. Not even one phone call was returned or email answered.

Later, our local congressman would deny that any phone calls were logged during that entire time. I know that I personally called at least 8 different times. The silence from our representatives hurt Matt so much. He knew that none of them cared about him, and this added greatly to his depression... and mine.

On Monday, February 21, 2022 Matt phoned his attorney to tell him that he had a really bad feeling about his hearing the following week on March 3. You see, March 3 was the 7 year anniversary of his Mom's death. I do not believe in coincidences where January 6 is concerned. That date was specifically chosen to add to the mental anguish that Matt was experiencing. Matt's attorney told him that he had bad news. His sentencing hearing was postponed to....April Fool's Day, and the DOJ was going to add a "sentencing enhancement" of Terrorism. If the Judge agreed, this was going to take Matt's predicted sentence of 6-12 months to 41-72 months in a Federal Prison! (Matt did not tell me or anyone else these details that day, we learned of them later.) Matt called me sobbing hysterically on the phone, he kept saying I must be guilty, over and over again. He was stuttering so bad, I could barely understand him. I kept telling him over and over that God is in control. Don't worry, this is not going to end up as bad as he thought....but again, I did not know about the enhancement at that time.

The sentencing enhancement is something that is so unconstitutional, it just blows my mind. Essentially, you are pleading guilty to specific charges, but at

the hearing where you have already pled guilty, the prosecution adds additional infractions just before the sentenced is announced, all in an effort to influence the judge into giving a harsher sentence. It was this threat that broke Matt completely.

Friday, February 25, 2022 at 6:00 p.m. my phone rang. It was one of my brothers calling to tell me that I needed to book a flight, Matt had just hung himself in his garage! I went into complete hysterics. I cannot even describe my feelings. My disbelief and anger collided with a sadness so great that my body was in shock. Matt's father Larry, oh my gosh how would he handle this tragedy? Everything was racing through my mind, and then I called Matt's attorney. I was so angry, and I told him that months and months of saying "don't worry, I've got this"...he didn't have ANYTHING! Matt had hung himself and was dead. His attorney did not believe me!!! Did he honestly think I would make this up???? He finally yelled at me and said that I cannot pin the blame on him for this. He told me that I was irrational and hung up on me. He was heartless and as arrogant as ever. I was in a state of hysterics, my neighbor gave me a sedative.

That was the worst night of my entire life. Our family had experienced tragedy before, when Matt's mother Roni died unexpectedly in 2015, but this was a devastation like nothing I had ever experienced. Matt and I were extremely close, even prior to the incident on January 6. We shared the same beliefs, discussed a multitude of topics about health, life, politics and shared many laughs. He was my "go to" person when I didn't understand something. If he didn't know the answer, he found it for me and always without the slightest irritation. Matt loved teaching people and sharing his knowledge. Who was I going to call now?

I booked a flight to Pennsylvania for the next morning, and as I boarded the plane, I was already sobbing. I tried so hard to hide my tears because I was afraid that if the flight attendants thought I was in distress, they wouldn't let me fly that day. As the plane took off, I breathed a sigh of relief, but the tears wouldn't stop. The people next to me kept staring, and although it was nearing the end of the Covid fears, I saw them pulling away from me for whatever reason. I brought a journal with me and began writing Matt's obituary. I knew that my brother would not be in the state of mind to write it himself, and having written both of the obituaries for my parents, I decided that I would also write Matt's. You may read it here:

<https://memorials.flynnfuneralhome.com/matthew-perna/4893452/>

I arrived at my brother's home, and just fell into his arms sobbing. The grief that we were all feeling was indescribable. Our hearts were broken and after the 13 month nightmare of watching Matt decline to the point of being afraid to leave his house, I felt that our nightmare wasn't ending...just changing course. How were we ever going to accept this? It is incomprehensible to understand that the Department of Justice broke Matt's spirit and crushed him to the point that he felt life was no longer worth living!!! I won't accept this, and I never will.

I read the obituary to my family, and although I expected some resistance, everyone thought that it was perfect. The same newspaper (The Sharon Herald) that had printed lie after lie about Matt and the others from January 6, was finally going to print a TRUTHFUL article written by me. The obituary was quite lengthy, and cost over \$600 to submit, and even that couldn't proceed without pushback. The funeral director received a call from the newspaper's editor telling him that the obituary had to be edited before printing. There were 2 lines that they simply refused to print because the editor claimed we had no

proof of them being factual. Since when was this rag that claimed to be a newspaper start caring about TRUTH? The first line was "He entered the Capitol through a previously opened door (he did not break in as was reported) where he was ushered in by police." And the second line was: " many people are responsible for the pain he endured." Why these 2 lines were not acceptable is beyond me. We had proof of both, but that newspaper and the many other news sources like them, were never interested in the truth.

We began the task of planning the funeral, as family and friends from out of town began their travel to Pennsylvania. We sorted through hundreds of photographs, and chose the music that Matt had requested be played. The song on this website is one that was played:

<https://youtu.be/sQhl7R7Ding>

I cannot listen to it without crying. The song is so very fitting for our free spirit Matt, and I completely understand why he loved it so much. Flynn's Funeral Home had taken care of the arrangements for our parents as well as Roni, and we couldn't have asked for a more supportive and caring staff. They were wonderful to us, and continue to be so even now. A day before the viewing, an Honor Guard contacted the funeral director and asked permission to attend the viewing and funeral, to stand guard at the casket. We were a little confused by this, as Matt had never served in the military, but we agreed nonetheless.

The evening of the viewing arrived, as did the 2 Honor Guard officers. The local police were there as well, in fear of protests. A candlelight vigil was held across the street by people we had never met. The funeral home was filled with flowers, plants, wreaths and windchimes. As I walked around reading the cards, I recognized very few of the names. Some were sent anonymously, while many were from people who had never met Matt, but just wanted to send their

condolences. Over 100 arrangements filled the rooms. The online guestbook became overwhelming for the staff. The messages were coming in from all over the world. Finland, Denmark, Ireland, India, Antarctic...just to name a few.

There were hateful ones in addition to the beautiful messages, so the site had to be monitored at one point and messages were deleted. How on earth anyone could send hate filled messages to a sympathy page is just beyond me.

The number of people who came through the receiving line was overwhelming at times. People traveled in from all over the country to pay their respects, and most had never met Matt. Members from his church came telling stories about how he uplifted them many times when they were going through difficult circumstances. A former heroin addict really had an amazing story about how he too was suicidal at one point 3 years earlier. He met Matt and he helped him and remained in his life. He attributed his soberness to Matt. The stories about Matt were astounding. He paid for people's meals who couldn't afford them, he gave away CBD products as well. Matt had a heart for his fellow man, and a generous spirit that we will probably never know the full extent of. Thankfully, the protesters stayed away and it was a peaceful evening, despite our grief.

The funeral the following day was equally as attended. But between the 2 days, in an effort to help you understand how our community, friends and family turned against us...out of my graduating class, only one classmate attended. Three of our cousins attended, out of dozens. Lifelong friends were absent as well. However Matt's graduating class was there, and if they were unable to attend, their parent's attended in their place. Matt's kindergarten teacher came, as well as hundreds of complete strangers who were touched by his story.

As the funeral was coming to a close, the Honor Guard did a flag folding ceremony and presented it to Matt's father. Afterward, he asked them why they chose to do all of this for someone that had never served in the military. Their response was this: "We have done many funerals for many veterans, and most of them weren't half the Patriot as Matt was".

I stayed in Pennsylvania for another week, just trying to help my family cope with all of this. Hate mail arrived at my brother's house, and dozens of messages were sent to me anonymously on social media that were pretty gruesome. Personally, I found out how many actual friends I had and learned that hate and evil are rampant. But at the same time, Matt had so many wonderful friends who had now become my adopted "nieces and nephews". Their support has been so very much appreciated, and I don't think I could have gotten through this year without them.

The time had come for me to return to my home. It was hard for me to leave my family in Pennsylvania, we are a very close family and we support each other through everything. I also knew that I had my work cut out for me. I was angry about everything Matt had endured, and I was not about to forget. Upon returning home, I began speaking out on social media about Matt. I was contacted by Fox news because Matt's obituary was tweeted several hundred times, and the story had caught the attention of Tucker Carlson. I was invited on his show, and that was my first public appearance, but I knew it was not going to be my last. Shortly thereafter, Congressman Louie Gohmert of Texas reached out and invited me to Washington DC to speak at a press conference. (Both the Tucker appearance as well as the press conference are available to watch on this site.)

The press conference was in the pouring rain outside of the Capitol building. The same building which Matt walked through. I hate that building. I hated standing close to it, and could almost feel an evil presence outside. I spoke for 6 minutes as Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene held an umbrella to shield me from the rain. Afterward I made her promise that she will do anything she can to see that Matt's story is not forgotten and that no other family would ever have to through this nightmare that we are. I've had many appearances since then, all viewable on this site.

I was invited to speak at President Trump's rally in Wilkes Barre. I was truly amazed at the number of people who approached me afterward who not only were not aware of Matt, but also did not know about the hundreds of other people who were arrested and being held in jails across the country who had not yet been found guilty of anything. The mainstream media will not report on these people and it is my opinion that the reason for this is because it would garner sympathy for the J6ers, and that is the LAST thing our DOJ wants! If the outlets had reported the truth about these people who were arrested, maybe Matt wouldn't have felt so persecuted and ostracized by his country and his community.

I finally got to meet President Trump at his rally in Youngstown, Ohio a few weeks later. I was in line to meet him backstage when the Secret Service instructed everyone about the rules. No cell pictures, no autographs, no handing him anything at all, and do not shake his hand unless he offers his first. He had been briefed about Matt several weeks before, and he also knew who I was from speaking at the other rally. So, when it was my turn, my name was announced, and as I approached him, he extended his hand for me to shake. It was at that very second that I decided to hold onto it until I was finished speaking. He listened intently, never losing eye contact with me. At one point it

occurred to me that the Secret Service agents might step in and move me along, but they didn't. He didn't rush me, and he offered his condolences to me and my family. I started to cry, and he put his arm around me as I made him promise that he would help the J6ers, which he did. How badly I wish all of this attention could have been shown toward Matt! His attorney discouraged all of us from speaking to the press during that 13 months, but in hindsight I should have never listened to him.

To Be Continued....