ARIZONA
HIGH SCHOOL
MOCK
TRIAL



2026-2027 CASE MATERIALS

2027 Arizona High School Mock Trial Competition
Hayden Brooks v. The Copper Sky Gazette

On behalf of the Arizona Bar Foundation, we welcome your participation in the 2027 competition. In this year's case, the Copper Sky Gazette, a small-town newspaper, published an article stating that County Supervisor Hayden Brooks took a bribe in exchange for a favorable vote. Brooks alleges that they lost several lucrative speaking engagements and other business opportunities as a result of the article. Brooks denies the allegations and is suing the newspaper for defamation. Did the Copper Sky Gazette ruin Brooks' reputation by engaging in shoddy reporting, or is Brooks really a crooked politician?

The Arizona Bar Foundation would like to acknowledge:

- The Bar Foundation of Metropolitan St. Louis;
- The Minnesota State Bar Association;
- The Arkansas Bar Association;
- The State Bar of Arizona's Young Lawyers Division;
- The Arizona Supreme Court; and
- The teachers, judges, and attorneys who volunteer their time to prepare students for competition.

This case is a work of fiction. The names, characters, businesses, organizations, places, events, and incidents herein are the product of the authors' imaginations. This case is meant to provide an opportunity for students to explore legal issues and is not meant to provide commentary on any of the issues raised in the case.

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA
IN AND FOR THE COUNTY OF GILA

HAYDEN BROOKS **PLAINTIFF**

v. **CASE NO. AZMT2027**

COPPER SKY GAZETTE **DEFENDANT**

COMPLAINT

Plaintiff Hayden Brooks, as and for their complaint against Defendant Copper Sky Gazette, states and alleges as follows:

Parties, Jurisdiction, and Venue

1. Plaintiff Hayden Brooks ("Brooks") is an adult resident of the City of Ironwood Springs, Gila County, State of Arizona.

2. Defendant Copper Sky Gazette is an Arizona newspaper headquartered and published in the City of Ironwood Springs, Gila County, State of Arizona.

3. Venue is proper in this county pursuant to A.R.S. § 12-401, because Copper Sky Gazette resides in this county and this cause of action, or some part thereof, arose in this county.

4. This Court has jurisdiction over this action pursuant to Ariz. Const. art. 6, § 14 and A.R.S. § 12-123, as the conduct at issue occurred in this county and the Plaintiff's claims arise under Arizona law.

Factual Allegations

5. Paragraphs 1 through 4 above are incorporated herein by reference.

6. Brooks is a former Gila County Supervisor and well-respected member of the City of Ironwood Springs and the County of Gila.

7. The Copper Sky Gazette is the daily newspaper in general circulation in the City of Ironwood Springs, Arizona and in Gila County.

8. On September 22, 2025, the Copper Sky Gazette, published an article entitled “A Dishonest Thief: Retired County Supervisor Accused of Taking Bribe to Change Pipeline Location” (the “Article”). A copy of the Article is attached as Exhibit 1.

9. The Article claimed that Brooks, while serving as a Gila County Supervisor, accepted a bribe of five hundred thousand dollars ($500,000.00) from an individual named Morgan Ramsey (“Ramsey”) in exchange for agreeing to vote for a proposal changing the future placement of a pipeline that Ramsey needed for issues related to a real estate problem. (See Ex. 1).

10. The statements made in the Article and described above were false.

11. The Article was read by the public. In addition to the Copper Sky Gazette’s original publication on September 22, 2025, the Arizona Republic and the Arizona Daily Star subsequently published the Article on September 23, 2025.

Count I
Defamation

12. Paragraphs 1 through 11 above are incorporated herein by reference.

13. The statements made by the Copper Sky Gazette in the Article about Plaintiff were false and defamatory.

14. In publishing the Article and making the defamatory statements, the Copper Sky Gazette acted with knowledge that the statements were false or with reckless disregard for whether the statements were true or false at a time when the defendant had serious doubts about whether the statements were true.

15. The statements made by the Copper Sky Gazette were read by the public. The statements tended to deprive Plaintiff of public confidence and damaged Plaintiff’s reputation.

16. As a direct and proximate result of the Article, Plaintiff suffered damages in excess of $50,000, in an amount ultimately to be proved at trial, as a result of the loss of reputation, public confidence and standing in the community, loss of paid speaking engagements, loss of a contract to publish a book on public official responsibility, and loss of a development deal with TruTV.

WHEREFORE Plaintiff Hayden Brooks respectfully requests that the Court order the entry of judgment in their favor and against Defendant Copper Sky Gazette as follows:

1. Awarding to Plaintiff and against Defendant compensatory damages in excess of $50,000, in an amount ultimately to be proved at trial;

2. Awarding to Plaintiff and against Defendant all of Plaintiff's fees, costs, and expenses incurred in this action; and

3. Granting such further relief as the Court deems just and appropriate.

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IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF ARIZONA
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HAYDEN BROOKS **PLAINTIFF**

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COPPER SKY GAZETTE **DEFENDANT**

ANSWER

Defendant Copper Sky Gazette, as and for its answer and affirmative defenses to Plaintiff's Complaint, states and alleges as follows:

1. Defendant denies each and every allegation in the Complaint unless otherwise expressly admitted or admitted as modified herein.

2. Defendant admits the allegations in paragraphs 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Plaintiff's Complaint.

3. Defendant re-alleges paragraphs 1 and 2 above in answer to paragraph 5 of Plaintiff's Complaint.

4. Regarding paragraph 6 of Plaintiff's Complaint, Defendant admits that Brooks was a former Gila County Supervisor but denies the remaining allegations in that paragraph, including the allegation that Brooks was or is a well-respected member of the City of Ironwood Springs or the County of Gila.

5. Defendant admits the allegations in paragraphs 7, 8, and 9 of Plaintiff's Complaint and admits that Exhibit 1 to Plaintiff's Complaint is a copy of the Article published by Defendant on September 22, 2025.

6. Defendant denies the allegations in paragraph 10 of Plaintiff's Complaint.

7. Defendant admits the allegations in paragraph 11 of Plaintiff's Complaint.

8. Defendant re-alleges paragraphs 1 through 7 above in answer to paragraph 12 of Plaintiff's Complaint.

9. Defendant denies the allegations in paragraphs 13, 14, 15, and 16 of Plaintiff's Complaint, except admits, as to the allegations in paragraph 15, that the public read the Article.

Affirmative Defenses

Defendant Copper Sky Gazette asserts the following affirmative defenses to Plaintiff's Complaint:

1. The Complaint fails to state a claim on which relief can be granted.

2. The statements made in the Article were true.

3. Defendant did not act with reckless disregard, nor did it know that the statements were false or entertain serious doubts as to their truth.

4. Defendant did not act with actual malice, and Plaintiff, as a public figure, therefore cannot recover.

5. Plaintiff did not suffer any damage and, to the extent they did suffer damage, such damage was caused, in whole or in part, by Plaintiff or by others over whom Defendant had no control.

WHEREFORE Defendant Copper Sky Gazette respectfully requests that the Court order the entry of judgment in its favor and against Plaintiff as follows:

1. Dismissing Plaintiff's Complaint in its entirety and with prejudice;

2. Awarding to Defendant and against Plaintiff all of Defendant's fees, costs, and expenses incurred in this action; and

3. Granting such further relief as the Court deems just and appropriate.

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PRETRIAL HEARING ORDER

1. Trial Setting: All pretrial issues have been resolved, and this case is ready for trial. This case is hereby set for trial on Saturday, March 6, 2027. If further proceedings are necessary, those proceedings will be held on Saturday, March 27, 2027. The case is to be tried on the issue of liability only. If the defendant is found to have defamed the plaintiff, the appropriate award of damages will be determined at a separate hearing.

2. Pretrial Motions: At a hearing held on October 5, 2026, the Court heard arguments on two issues presented by the parties. The Court grants both motions:

A: Defendant's Motion for Partial Summary Judgment Regarding Plaintiff's Status as a Public Figure

The question presented by Defendant Copper Sky Gazette's motion for partial summary judgment is whether, as a matter of law, Plaintiff Hayden Brooks qualifies as a public figure for purposes of this trial. For the reasons set forth in this order, the Court finds that Plaintiff is a public figure as a matter of law.

Under Arizona law, the elements of a defamation claim are: (1) the defendant made a defamatory statement of fact about the plaintiff; (2) the statement was false; (3) the defendant communicated the statement to a third person; (4) the defendant was negligent

in failing to determine the truth of the statement; and (5) the statement caused the plaintiff to be damaged. *See Peagler v. Phoenix Newspapers, Inc.*, 114 Ariz. 309 (1977); RAJI (Civil) Defamation 1B.

But when the plaintiff is a "public figure," the plaintiff must do more than establish the elements listed above. For a public figure, the burden is also on the plaintiff to prove by clear and convincing evidence that the defendant published the defamatory statement knowing it was false or with reckless disregard of whether it was false. *Dombey v. Phoenix Newspapers, Inc.*, 150 Ariz. 476, 487 (1986); RAJI (Civil) Defamation 1A.

The facts presented by the parties demonstrate beyond dispute that Brooks qualifies as a general public figure. Brooks occupied a position of prominence during Brooks' 10 years as a County Supervisor. Brooks thrust themselves into the public eye when Brooks initially ran for supervisor and during the many campaigns in which Brooks sought reelection. Not only was the Supervisor's position influential, but Brooks is also well-known throughout Ironwood Springs for their previous employment as the Ironwood Springs City Attorney. In that position, Brooks provided legal advice to the city and was prominent in crucial policy and political discussions in the city. Given these circumstances, the Court concludes as a matter of law that Brooks is a general public figure.

Because the Court is granting Defendant's motion for partial summary judgment, Brooks may not argue at trial that they are a private figure or any type of public figure other than a general public figure. This order represents the final decision on this issue, and the jury will be instructed at trial that Brooks is a general public figure. Accordingly, in addition to the elements of defamation set forth above, Brooks must also prove that

Defendant acted with actual malice. Put another way, Brooks must demonstrate that the Copper Sky Gazette published the Article with knowledge that statements contained therein were false or with reckless disregard as to whether they were false.

B. Joint Motion to Admit Certain Out-of-Court Statements

Several witnesses in this trial will testify to conversations they had with others during the course of law enforcement and/or reporting work. Namely, Agent Shay Christoff, reporter Ellis Strobel, and editor Andy Diggins all had conversations with multiple people in investigating this case. Defendant and Plaintiff both argue that these statements are not hearsay, and this Court agrees.

Hearsay is defined by Arizona Rule of Evidence 801(c) as a statement that "(1) the declarant does not make while testifying at the current trial or hearing; and (2) a party offers in evidence to prove the truth of the matter asserted in the statement." Put another way, a statement is hearsay if the statement is being used to show that the statement is true. If the statement is being used for some other reason, it is not hearsay.

The statements made by people to whom these witnesses spoke during the course of conducting their affairs are relevant even if the statements are not true. The fact that a witness talks to someone may vindicate their conduct or otherwise show that a witness acted properly.

For example, Copper Sky Gazette staff need to be able to explain what they were told by others as they investigated a possible story to show whether they acted with reckless disregard for the truth. A reporter who gets information that appears credible might not act with reckless disregard for the truth, even if the information the reporter obtains turns out to be false. Of course, reckless disregard is ultimately a question for the

jury to decide.

Meanwhile, Agent Christoff of the Arizona Department of Public Safety has been offered by Brooks to prove, in part, that there were avenues of investigation the Copper Sky Gazette could have looked into but did not. Christoff would testify to multiple interviews of witnesses and reviewing documents that the Copper Sky Gazette may have neglected to investigate before publishing its story. This, Brooks argues, serves as evidence of reckless disregard for the truth by Defendant, even if the claims made to Christoff in these interviews are not true.

These statements are admissible, but only for a limited purpose. If a witness testifies that a third party made a statement to that witness, that statement is only evidence that it was made, not that it was true. Attorneys making closing arguments in this trial should be particularly aware of this limitation. It is improper to argue that the statements made to Christoff, Strobel, and Diggins were true unless the statements are admissible under an exception to the hearsay rule or the substance of the statements is proven with other admissible evidence.

3. Stipulations: The parties stipulate to the following. No witness may contradict knowledge of the facts contained in the stipulations.

a. No jurisdiction or venue issues exist in this case.

b. All exhibits and signatures are authentic and accurate. No party may challenge the authenticity of an exhibit or signature. This does not, however, constitute a waiver of any other objections as to the admissibility of an exhibit.

c. A severe flash flood occurred in Gila County on December 19, 2024. As a result of the flood, the meeting of the Gila County Board of Supervisors scheduled for

December 19, 2024, was cancelled. The next meeting of the Gila County Board of Supervisors was held on January 9, 2025.

d. Exhibit 2 is a record that complies with the requirements of Arizona Rule of Evidence 803(6), the hearsay exception for records of regularly conducted activity. No additional foundation is required to establish that Exhibit 2 is admissible under RuleAriz. R. Evid. 803(6).

e. On October 30, 2024, KSTP News, a local television news station, recorded a speech given by Plaintiff Hayden Brooks at a conference in the town of Pinedale Crossing, Arizona. The speech started at 6:00 p.m. and ended at 7:30 p.m. On November 2, 2024, KSTP News made the video of the speech available on its website with the title, “Brooks, AZ Icon, Turns State Conference into Rousing Memorial to Public Service.”

f. Hayden Brooks reported gambling earnings from a foreign country, in the amount of $523,046.85, to the Arizona Ethics Commission on October 17, 2024.

g. The actions of Ellis Strobel and Andy Diggins related to their reporting, writing, and publishing of Exhibit 1 were within the scope of their employment.

4. Witnesses: The designated witnesses, and only these witnesses, may be called at trial. They may only be called by the party designated below, but they may be called in any order:

Witnesses for the Plaintiff	Witnesses for the Defendant
Hayden Brooks	Morgan Ramsey
Shay Christoff	Ellis Strobel
Blake Baker	Andy Diggins

5. Exhibits: Both parties have collectively identified the following exhibits, which have been pre-marked and may be offered into evidence by either party. Except as provided in this pretrial order, no party has waived an objection to the admissibility of any exhibit.

a. Exhibit 1: Copper Sky Gazette Article

b. Exhibit 2: Ramada Inn Receipt

c. Exhibit 3: Ethics Commission Letter

d. Exhibit 4: Code of Ethics

e. Exhibit 5: Copper Sky Gazette -- Brooks Retirement Article

f. Exhibit 6: Curriculum Vitae -- Dr. Blake Baker

g. Exhibit 7: Letter of Recommendation for Shay Christoff

IT IS SO ORDERED, this 29th day of October, 2026.

/s/ Honorable Judge

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JURY INSTRUCTIONS

The faithful performance of your duties as jurors is essential to the administration of justice. It is my duty as judge to inform you of the law applicable to this case by instructions, and it is your duty to accept and follow them as a whole, not singling out one instruction to the exclusion of others. You should not consider any rule of law with which you may be familiar unless it is included in my instructions. It is your duty to determine the facts from the evidence produced in this trial. You are to apply the law as contained in these instructions to the facts and render your verdict upon the evidence and law.

You should not permit sympathy, prejudice, or like or dislike of any party to this action or of any attorney to influence your findings in this case. In deciding the issues, you should consider the testimony of the witnesses and the exhibits received in evidence. The introduction of evidence in court is governed by law. You should accept without question my rulings as to the admissibility or rejection of evidence, drawing no inference that by these rulings I have in any manner indicated my views on the merits of the case.

Opening statements, remarks during the trial, and closing arguments of the attorneys are not evidence but are made only to help you in understanding the evidence and applicable law. Any argument, statements, or remarks of attorneys having no basis in the evidence should be disregarded by you. I have not intended by anything I have said or done, or by any questions that I may have asked, to intimate or suggest what you should find to be the facts, or that I believe or disbelieve any witness who testified. If I have done or said anything that has seemed to so indicate, you will disregard it.

The production of evidence in court is governed by rule of law. At times during the trial, I sustained an objection to a question without permitting the witness to answer it, or to an offered exhibit without receiving it into evidence. My rulings are legal matters and are solely my responsibility. You must not speculate as to the reason for any objection, which was made, or my ruling thereon, and in reaching your decision you may not

consider such a question or exhibit or speculate as to what the answer or exhibit would have shown. Remember, a question is not evidence and should be considered only as it gives meaning to the answer.

There may have been occasions where an objection was made after an answer was given or the remark was made, and in my ruling on the objection I instructed that the answer or remark be stricken or directed that you disregard the answer or remark and dismiss it from your minds. In your deliberations, you must not consider such answer or remark, but must treat it as though you had never heard it.

The goal of jury deliberations is to talk among yourselves in order to reach an agreement about the verdict. This agreement must be consistent with your own judgment. Each of you must decide the case for yourself, but do so only after you have fully considered the views of your fellow jurors. Re-examine your own view and do not be afraid to change your mind if you decide your original view was mistaken. But do not change your mind just because other jurors disagree or simply because of pressure to return a verdict. When you agree on a verdict, notify the jury attendant. You will return to the courtroom where your verdict will be received and read out loud in your presence.

A fact in dispute may be proved by circumstantial evidence as well as by direct evidence. A fact is established by direct evidence when, for example, it is proved by witnesses who testify to what they saw, heard, or experienced. A fact is established by circumstantial evidence when its existence can reasonably be inferred from other facts proved in the case. You should consider both kinds of evidence. The law makes no distinction between the weight given to either direct or circumstantial evidence. It is up to you to decide how much weight to give any kind of evidence. In considering the evidence in this case you are not required to set aside your common knowledge, but you have a right to consider all the evidence in the light of your own observations and experiences in the affairs of life.

You are the sole judges of the weight of the evidence and the credibility of the witnesses. In determining the credibility of any witness and the weight to be given the witness's testimony, you may take into consideration the witness's demeanor while on the witness stand, any prejudice for or against a party, the witness's means of acquiring knowledge concerning any matter to which they testified, any interest the witness may have in the outcome of the case, and the consistency or inconsistency of the witness's testimony, as well as its reasonableness or unreasonableness.

An expert witness is a person who has special knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education on the subject to which their testimony relates. An expert witness may give an opinion on questions in controversy. You may consider the expert's opinion in the light of their qualifications and credibility, the reasons given for the opinion, and the facts and other matters upon which the opinion is based. You are not bound to accept an expert opinion as conclusive, but should give it whatever weight you think it should have. You may disregard any opinion testimony if you find it to be unreasonable.

Burden of proof means burden of persuasion. On any claim, the party who has the burden of proof must persuade you, by the evidence, that the claim is more probably true than not true. This means that the evidence that favors that party outweighs the opposing evidence. This is also called proof by a preponderance of the evidence.

Hayden Brooks claims that Copper Sky Gazette defamed Hayden Brooks. In order for you to find Hayden Brooks on this claim, you must find by a preponderance of the evidence each of the following:

First, Copper Sky Gazette made, said, or wrote a defamatory statement of fact about Hayden Brooks;

Second, the statement was false;

Third, Copper Sky Gazette made, said, or wrote the statement to a third person; and

Fourth, the statement caused Hayden Brooks to be damaged.

In addition, in order for you to find for Hayden Brooks on this claim, you must find by clear and convincing evidence that:

Fifth, at the time the statement was made, said, or written, Copper Sky Gazette knew that the statement was false or acted in reckless disregard of whether the statement was true or false. A person acts with reckless disregard of the truth or falsity of a statement when he or she has serious doubts as to whether the statement is true or false, or when he or she consciously disregards whether it is true or false.

Some of the claims in this case require proof by clear and convincing evidence. A party who has the burden of proof by clear and convincing evidence must persuade you by the evidence that the claim is highly probable. This standard is more exacting than the standard of more probably true than not true, but it is less exacting than the standard of

proof beyond a reasonable doubt. In determining whether a party has met any burden of proof, you will consider all the evidence, whether presented by Hayden Brooks or Copper Sky Gazette.

If you find from the evidence in this case that each of these propositions has been proved, then your verdict should be for Hayden Brooks; but if, on the other hand, you find from the evidence that any of these propositions has not been proved, then your verdict should be for Copper Sky Gazette.

A statement is defamatory if it tends to bring Hayden Brooks into disrepute, contempt, or ridicule, or to impeach Hayden Brooks' honesty, integrity, virtue, or reputation. The defamatory nature of the statement is determined by the natural and probable effect a reading of the entire publication in context would have on the mind of the average reader.

Truth is a complete defense to a defamation claim. Slight inaccuracies do not make a statement false if the statement is substantially true. A statement is substantially true if the statement differs from the truth only in insignificant details.

When I use the terms "published" or "publication," I am referring to the act of intentionally communicating the statement to someone other than Hayden Brooks or under circumstances in which it is foreseeable that the statement will be received by someone other than Hayden Brooks. This statement may be written, spoken, or conveyed by means of gestures, pictures, or objects.

An employer is liable for the acts of its employees if the employees are acting within the scope of their employment. You are instructed that the actions of Ellis Strobel and Andy Diggins related to their reporting, writing, and publishing of Exhibit 1 were within the scope of their employment. As a result, if Strobel and/or Diggins, acting in combination or individually, defamed Plaintiff Hayden Brooks, then Defendant Copper Sky Gazette is liable for defamation.

Statement of Hayden Brooks

My name is Hayden Brooks. I am 66 years old and I reside in Ironwood Springs, Arizona in Gila County. I am a retired County Supervisor. I received a Master's Degree in Public Policy from the Lillehaug University and went on to law school at Trebek University where I finished near the top of my class. My community service career started when I was 28 years old, taking a job with the Office of the Ironwood Springs City Attorney. I worked in the City Attorney's Office for 25 years, and during that time I became familiar with all of the local attorneys, police officers, city council members, and county supervisors. After working as an Assistant City Attorney for 10 years, the Ironwood Springs City Council appointed me the Ironwood Springs City Attorney. When I was 53, after serving as the City Attorney for 15 years, I was elected to the position of County Supervisor of Gila County. Of course, after being elected to the county board, I resigned my position as Ironwood Springs City Attorney. I served the people of Gila County as a County Supervisor for the last 10 years of my career. For the last five years, I was the Chairperson (or President) of the Board. I also serve on a number of boards of directors, including the board of my church and the local chamber of commerce. I have been very active in the Ironwood Springs Charitable Foundation and have helped organize the Red Cross blood drive each of the last 16 years. In 2020, I received the Carl Bartowski Award for Service to the Community given out by the Society of the Sons and Daughters of Gila County. I stepped down from the County Board at the end of 2024 because I decided it was time to enjoy my golden years with my spouse.

I spent years serving my community and my state, and I never imagined that someone as sinister and evil as Ellis Strobel and that criminal Mac Ramsey would come along and ruin everything that I worked for. I have given my entire life to the people of Gila County, only to have that donation repaid by being dragged through the mud. I never engaged in any illegal activity, and I certainly did not accept a bribe of any kind from Mac Ramsey.

In the spirit of full disclosure, I have known Ramsey for a number of years. In fact, anybody who is anybody around Gila County knows Ramsey. For many years Ramsey was the richest person in Gila County and was invited to all the parties thrown by community leaders. I played in a few poker games with Ramsey as well, but that was always just for fun. There was never any money on the line. We just played so one of us could brag that they were the best poker player in town.

I remember the day that the pipeline issue came before the County Supervisors. Noble Norwegian Oil Syndicate (NNOS) applied to the Board to build an oil pipeline that would run through the Frazher Corridor in Ironwood Springs.

Higher levels of government had already approved the pipeline being built and going through Gila County. The only say Gila County had in the construction of the pipeline was where it would be built – the Frazher Corridor or somewhere else.

Ramsey was vehemently against NNOS's proposal to build the pipeline in the Frazher Corridor and testified before the County Board on several occasions. It may be that Ramsey saw the pipeline as decreasing the value of some of their many properties, or maybe, as the rumors go, Ramsey was planning on putting up some high-priced private homes. Maybe Ramsey was concerned that the pipeline jobs would pay more than Ramsey pays their employees, which could then reveal that Ramsey had stolen their employees' pension money. The story of how Ramsey had stolen all of their employees' money had been in the news for some time; it came as no surprise to anyone that Ramsey was convicted and sent to Safford Federal Prison for the crimes.

It was merely chance that the pipeline issue came before the County Board of Supervisors in March 2024. It was also simply a coincidence that Ramsey hired a former County Board Accounting Specialist, my next-door neighbor, Johannes Weaving, to serve as Ramsey's accountant. I have known Johannes well for a number of years and he has appeared before the County Board – as employee and as outside accounting advisor – for a number of years.

Even though I knew Ramsey, I decided not to recuse myself from voting on the pipeline issue. Somebody had to make sure that the best interests of the residents of Gila County and the State of Arizona were looked after. I saw the case as a great career opportunity for me – being the senior County Supervisor leading the County Board on an issue of county, state, and even national and international importance. It would be like the building of America's railroad system all over again. I was sure the issue would get plenty of press, and afterwards I thought maybe I could go on a speaking tour about the issue and the building of the pipeline, maybe even write a book about it – who knows, but the opportunities were endless.

I had been considering retirement for a long time, and I made up my mind to not run again for County Supervisor after the pipeline issue was first put before the County Board. I knew this one, last, high-profile issue would be long, involve reading a lot of technical reports and listening to a lot of political and emotional testimony. I also knew it would create a lot of tension in the community. I knew the matter would take a lot out of me and that I wouldn't want to work anymore. However, I decided not to announce my retirement right away. Instead, I announced my retirement near the end of the year in order to ensure the focus of the County Supervisors was on the pipeline issue and not on me. I was also somewhat concerned that the vote on the pipeline would be delayed

until after my retirement if I announced my retirement too early. As I recall, I issued a press release announcing my retirement on November 2, 2024, while I was attending the state's County Supervisors' conference.

I know Ramsey claims that Weaving had a secret meeting in the middle of the night where I allegedly agreed to vote against placing the pipeline through the Frazher Corridor. That couldn't be further from the truth. Ramsey apparently said that this secret meeting happened the night before Halloween, but that just couldn't be possible – that whole week I was at the County Supervisors' conference in Pinedale Crossing. In fact, on October 30, 2024, I gave the keynote dinner speech on the ethical responsibilities of county supervisors at 6:00 p.m. You can check out my speech on my website! The speech lasted about ninety minutes, and afterward I had drinks with colleagues. I think I may have had a few too many that night because for the life of me I cannot remember exactly who I was with. There are so many supervisors at that event it is hard to keep track of all of them. All I know is that I ended up back at my room at the Ramada that evening – to assert that I drove all the way from Pinedale Crossing to Saguaro Heights just to meet Weaving is ridiculous – it's a four-and-a-half-hour drive!

I relished the fact that the last issue that would come before a vote of "my" County Board was going to be the pipeline issue. Everyone knew Ramsey did some terrible things to their employees. Voting for the pipeline would be my small way of punishing Ramsey. The final hearing and vote were scheduled for the third week in December. The week before the vote, the County Board heard a final round of testimony from supporters and opponents of the pipeline. This much is true – I did allow more opponents to present arguments against the pipeline and allowed Ramsey to testify more times than any other person. Contrary to what Ramsey claims, my rulings weren't based on any secret agreement. I just wanted to be sure there was no chance that Ramsey would win if Ramsey turned around and sued the County Board of Supervisors.

When a massive flash flood hit Ironwood Springs, the County Supervisors' offices shut down for a week. The last votes of the year were supposed to take place on December 19, but once the County Board's last meeting of the year was delayed, no further County Board meetings were held until the next year. This upset me deeply and profoundly because I had invested a lot of time, energy, and taxpayer funds in learning everything I could about the pipeline and its potential impact on Gila County and the community. I wrote the Arizona Supreme Court and every member of the Gila County Board of Supervisors a letter requesting permission to remain as a Special Supervisor to vote on the pipeline issue even after my retirement. Alas, it was simply not meant to be because County Supervisor was an elected position, the answer was a resounding "no."

After my retirement began everything was terrific. I had booked a number of lucrative speaking engagements around the country, I was also in negotiations with Random House to get my first book on county supervisors' ethical responsibilities published, and I was even in line for a lucrative gig on TruTV. But everything came to a screeching halt in September 2025 when Strobel's article hit the papers. Every word of that article is a lie, but shortly after it was published in the Copper Sky Gazette it was picked up by other major newspapers and became a big story. Everyone thought I was corrupt and all of my speaking engagements were cancelled. My book deal fell through. TruTV called to say they weren't interested anymore. My reputation in the community is ruined – I don't even feel comfortable going out in public anymore. My spouse became terribly depressed because of all the terrible things that were said about me in the press. Everything was a disaster, just dreadful. Now I am stuck paying huge legal fees when this was supposed to be the time when I could finally cash in on everything I had done in my career. Ramsey defrauded their creditors and has (their!) money to burn – this was my chance to finally see the benefit of all my years of public service.

The head prosecutor of Gila County is an old and dear friend of mine, Tim Kaminsky, and he assured everyone that his office would do a thorough investigation before any charges were filed. In fact, he even contacted the Arizona Attorney General's Office to have a Special Agent from the Arizona Department of Public Safety review the matter. Of course, they found that Ramsey's story was simply not true. Yes, I am very close with the local and county law enforcement officers and attorneys who investigated my case and I know the Arizona Attorney General. But I also know that none of them would ever cut me a break simply because I was a County Supervisor or because we've known and/or worked together for years. When the County Attorney, AZDPS, and Attorney General jointly announced that they weren't going to file any charges, I was relieved.

A lot has been made of the large amount of cash, about $500,000, that I disclosed to the Arizona Ethics Commission, which collects and maintains financial information about state, county, and local public officials, and investigates questions of financial irregularities. Now, to describe where that money came from, I have to admit to you that, from time to time, I do like to tickle the felt. Which is to say I enjoy gambling. I only gamble legally, of course: casinos, the track, trips to Las Vegas. Contrary to what anyone else might say, I have never had any connections with organized crime or owed anyone any money related to gambling.

In mid-September 2024, I went on a five-day cruise in the Caribbean and was fortunate enough to spend some time at a casino in the Bahamas. I had a great run and, next thing I know, I am up a half million dollars. Great luck, huh? As soon as I got back to the States I deposited the money in my bank account for safekeeping. I don't have any

receipts or anything. That money didn't come from Mac Ramsey. If Ramsey bribed me with cash to fix Ramsey's case, why on earth would I put that money in my personal bank account and declare it as income for tax purposes?

I did make a number of large cash purchases at the end of 2024 and the beginning of 2025 with the money I made gambling. But the articles in the paper make it sound like I spent money on lavish accommodations. I didn't buy a "mansion"; it's really more of a fishing cabin. And I didn't buy a "yacht"; I would describe it more accurately as a speedboat. I love my Hummer EV, though. It has 35-inch mud-terrain tires and Super Cruise semi-autonomous driving.

Sure, I remember Shay Christoff. Christoff is an agent with the Arizona Department of Public Safety and conducted the investigation. Christoff was a great basketball player when Christoff was at the Lillehaug University, but I don't recall writing a recommendation letter for them. Though I do write a large number of letters.

I have no idea why Morgan Ramsey has made up this story about me. Maybe Ramsey is just angry because Ramsey is in federal prison and Ramsey thinks that I had something to do with it. It seems awfully fishy to me that the only person that can verify this fairy tale is Johannes Weaving, who disappeared as soon as Ramsey went to prison. Maybe he ran off with Ramsey's money.

I affirm under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my belief and knowledge.

/s/ Hayden Brooks

SIGNED AND SWORN to before me at 8:00 a.m. on the day of this round of the 2027 Arizona Mock Trial Competition.

_____/S/_____
Henry McDonald, Notary Public
State of Arizona
My Commission Expires: 05/01/2028

Statement of Agent Shay Christoff

My name is Shay Christoff and I am an Agent with the Arizona Department of Public Safety (AZDPS), and I am stationed in Phoenix. Prior to my employment with AZDPS, I worked as a deputy in the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office in the computer crimes unit. I am currently assigned as a Special Agent in the white-collar crimes unit with AZDPS where I have been for the past nine years. I have been a licensed police officer for twenty-three years.

I grew up in Ironwood Springs and attended Lillehaug University on a basketball scholarship. I was named an all-conference point guard twice and never lost a Lewis Classic against our rival Vandelist College. For the students, fans, and alumni, that game is easily the most important game of our season. There are stories of fights, divorces, and even a murder over that game. Even though I live in Phoenix now, I haven't missed a Lewis Classic since I graduated. Winning the Classic four years in a row certainly made members of my team very popular among the alumni. We were frequently invited to alumni receptions hosted by some of Ironwood Springs's rich and successful people. Since they donated significant money to the school, our coaches expected us to make an appearance. But the parties were stuffy and forced us to miss all the good parties on campus. Most of the time, the team would show up for the free food, shake some hands, and then take off.

I do remember attending a number of dinners at Hayden Brooks' house. Brooks was the Ironwood Springs City Attorney at the time and was a major donor for the university athletic department. When I became a senior, I started seeing Brooks' parties as an opportunity to make some good connections for after graduation. I remember attending the Brooks New Year's Party and having a long talk with Brooks. We talked about my future and Brooks even invited me to play in their big poker game later that night. During the poker game, Brooks invited me to do a joint internship with the City and County Attorneys' Offices that final semester of school. I saw this as a great opportunity to learn more about local government and interact with the police.

I started the internship in January that year but never worked directly with Brooks. I would see Brooks in the halls, but I mainly worked with Tim Kaminsky, the Assistant County Attorney at the time. I learned a lot about prosecution and the investigation process. Tim showed me around and introduced me to many important people, including the Sheriff of Gila County, Shelia Waller. Sheriff Waller said she owed a lot of her success from the breaks and tips that Hayden Brooks provided her. Sheriff Waller introduced me to the Maricopa County Sheriff, Pat McGowan. Sheriff McGowan and I hit it

off and he told me to look him up after I graduated. I certainly used that opportunity to help me get into the law enforcement field. Anything you can do to get your foot in the door, you know? I applied for an entry level position with the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office twenty-three years ago. My grades were average, and I had the internship on my resume, but I wasn't confident I would get an interview. So, I asked Hayden Brooks for a recommendation. While it was the first time I talked to Brooks the entire semester, Brooks said they would send a letter. Sure enough, the letter did the job and I was accepted into the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office.

I graduated from the Police Academy ranked second in my class of eighty-seven new officers. I started my work with the sheriff's office doing patrol and a lot of paperwork, but soon I was promoted to the computer crimes unit. My work with Maricopa County helped me get into AZDPS. I do think I am lucky to have met Hayden Brooks at the time. I doubt Brooks realized the impact they had in my career.

For the past six years, I have been focusing on corporate and political corruption. Phoenix's neighboring town, Saguaro Heights, made the national news about four years ago when three city council members took bribes from a company, EightyFour, Inc., which wanted to set up red light cameras in town. The council members called the bribes "campaign contributions" and awarded the company the contract without any competing bids. I was appointed special investigator to avoid any conflicts and to look into the entire situation. My investigation exposed the conspiracy and the council members resigned. The investigation also led to the federal prosecution of EightyFour, Inc. and its CEO, B. Roth Erbig. Since that company had similar deals throughout the country, I was suddenly on national news and became a consultant for other investigations. I hadn't felt that important since my basketball days. So, I enjoyed my time in the spotlight appearing on CNN, TruTV, and even a special appearance on the Swindled podcast. Since that case, I have started writing a book on corruption investigations and municipal politics. I have also taught numerous seminars and academy classes on that subject. I don't consider myself an expert in the area, but I do feel I have some unique experiences to draw upon during similar investigations.

I would be done with the book by now, but other police departments have been calling and asking me to do investigations on individuals within their respective city or county governments. Naturally, a local police agency cannot handle the investigation because there is a conflict of interest. It is clearly improper to investigate the people who determine your department's budget. So, to avoid even the appearance of impropriety, those departments will call me in to lead the investigation as a special investigator. I have developed a reputation as the Eliot Ness of Arizona. Doesn't that sound like a good title for my book?

On August 17, 2025, I received a call from the Chief of the Ironwood Springs Police Department. He told me that a local CEO named Morgan Ramsey was making accusations that the former County Supervisor, Hayden Brooks, had taken a bribe before leaving their position on the County Board. Since I hadn't seen or spoken with the Supervisor in over twenty-three years, I didn't see this investigation as a conflict of interest. I enter all investigations unbiased and look for the hard evidence. I approached this investigation exactly the same way.

In corruption cases, we get phone calls all the time concerning people who claim that someone was bribed. I first like to look at who is making the call. In this situation, Ramsey was a convicted felon in prison and was well known around the area for living a pretty lavish lifestyle. Ramsey certainly hasn't been the best corporate citizen in our state.

On August 20, 2025, I visited Ramsey at Safford Federal Prison. During my interview, Ramsey told me that they had already pled guilty to bankruptcy fraud and didn't care what happened to them. Ramsey was very angry with their attorney relating to the conviction for fraud. During the discussion, Ramsey explained a plan they had with Supervisor Hayden Brooks who would allegedly receive a payoff of half a million dollars and in return would steer the location of the planned route for the pipeline away from Ramsey's real estate development. The final vote was set for the December 19, 2024 County Board meeting. Ramsey stated that they gave their accountant, Johannes Weaving, a briefcase containing $500,000 on October 30, 2024. Weaving was then going to meet the Supervisor that night at 11:45 p.m. at some motel in Saguaro Heights. Weaving was supposed to give the money to the Supervisor to complete the bribe. According to Ramsey, it all went according to plan. However, due to that flash flood in late December, the County Board meeting was canceled and the Supervisor wasn't able to vote. The vote was carried over to the first meeting in January and by then Supervisor Brooks had retired. This all sounded like a bogus excuse to me, but I still did a thorough investigation.

I also stopped by Johannes Weaving's office on my way back to town on August 20, 2025. He denied that there were any bribes between Ramsey, himself, and/or the Supervisor. One of the most important pieces of evidence was a lead Weaving provided. During my talk with him, Weaving became frustrated with the direction of the conversation and told me to just look up the conference Brooks was supposed to be attending on October 30, 2024. I did some digging on the internet and discovered that several television news stations had covered the October 30, 2024, speech. KSTP News, a local station, actually recorded the video of Brooks' speech and posted the whole 90-minute video on its website three days later, on November 2, 2024, with the timestamps for a start-time of 6:00 p.m. and a transcript to boot. I was also able to check Brooks'

website, which had posted a link to the KSTP recording, although I do not know when Brooks' website made that link available.

My next step in the investigation was to see if Supervisor Brooks had any unusual expenditures and/or income increases since October 30. I pulled Brooks' disclosure reports from the Arizona Ethics Commission. The document indicated that Brooks declared over $500,000 in gambling winnings from a cruise Brooks took with their spouse in September 2024 in the Bahamas. I called the cruise line and they confirmed Brooks was on the cruise during that time. Their policy was to not comment or confirm any gambling winnings. I did track down a casino employee who confirmed that Supervisor Brooks did play roulette on the cruise and hit some big numbers.

Supervisor Brooks has a reputation around Ironwood Springs as a bit of gambler. So, it looks like Brooks had a pretty good trip to the Bahamas. I know Brooks has a weekly poker game, and I know Brooks hits the casinos around the state. I have heard stories that Brooks is a high stakes player and that the Las Vegas casinos offer them free rooms to play the high limit tables. I'm not sure if I believe all of that, but it looks like Brooks won a half a million on a cruise. So, anything is possible with Supervisor Brooks.

After Brooks returned from the cruise, it appeared Brooks spent some of those gambling winnings on themselves. My investigation uncovered that Brooks purchased a new Hummer EV, a boat, and a new house on Rainbow Lake. The Supervisor certainly didn't hide any of these purchases. Brooks claimed the property purchase on their 2024 disclosure form. The car and boat were both titled in the State of Arizona. Brooks paid sales taxes. I didn't feel the need to actually see the items since they were public knowledge. Brooks has always lived a pretty nice lifestyle dating back to those parties Brooks threw when I was in college. Frankly, Brooks had a long and respected career, so Brooks deserves to live the high life during their retirement.

I didn't feel the need to bother Supervisor Brooks with this investigation. The last thing this esteemed member of the community needed was some cop sniffing around their house and interrogating them. To me, the results were clear. You had a complainant who was a convicted felon and was angry. On top of it, a pipeline was going to be put through Ramsey's property which resulted in Ramsey losing considerable value to their family business. Ramsey makes an outlandish charge against a well-respected Supervisor in the community and expects the charge to stick. The Supervisor's whereabouts on the night of October 30 were accounted for. Supervisor Brooks' purchases were not hidden, and Brooks claimed every penny of the gambling winnings. Considering that the $500,000 was disclosed on the Supervisor's ethics report, it would be pretty easy for Ramsey to come up with that number.

I prepared a report and submitted it on August 30, 2025, to the Attorney General's Office. I never received any requests from that office to conduct any further investigation. I was never told of any criminal charges being filed – not that I expected there to be criminal charges. The file was closed and I went on to my next case. It was a bar fight in northwest Arizona between officers from the city police department and deputies from the county sheriff's office. Of course, it was all over an alleged dirty slide during the softball game played earlier that night. That's a story for another time, though.

My policy has always been to not comment on any investigation to the press. I was a bit shocked when I read that story in the Copper Sky Gazette by some writer named Strobel. It sounded like that reporter was trying to make a mountain out of molehill.

I affirm under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my belief and knowledge.

/s/ Shay Christoff

SIGNED AND SWORN to before me at 8:00 a.m. on the day of this round of the 2027 Arizona Mock Trial Competition.

_____/S/_____
Henry McDonald, Notary Public
State of Arizona
My Commission Expires: 05/01/2028

Statement of Dr. Blake Baker

My name is Blake Baker, and I am currently the Edward R. Murrow Emeritus Professor at The Media School at Indiana University. My specialty is ethics in the media. In addition to teaching, I also work closely with the Society of Professional Journalists to continually develop and update ethical standards in journalism. The goal of these standards is to ensure that the public can trust journalists and believe the stories that they report.

Journalism has always been a passion for me. It started with my high school yearbook and has never let up. I attended the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, a top-notch journalism school. I excelled and graduated summa cum laude. I was Assistant Editor-in-Chief for the Daily Northwestern my senior year. That year I also received the Abraham Lincoln Award for Excellence in Ethical Reporting for an article that I wrote on Northwestern's honor code.

Even though my honor code article was award winning, it never received the recognition it deserved because of an article written by Andy Diggins, who was a classmate of mine and a junior at the time. Admittedly, Andy was an exceptional writer with a particular gift for sniffing out big stories. But I had some serious questions about how Andy landed such big scoops. As Assistant Editor, I felt like it was my duty to raise these ethical concerns, but the Daily staff was too blinded by how talented and popular Andy was. Andy's article that year, exposing an agreement between local police and the school to minimize the amount of campus crime actually reported, was a big hit. Andy won several awards and helped the Daily Northwestern win Outstanding College Newspaper of the Year. To this day, I still think Andy just got lucky with that story.

After college, I was hired by the Phoenix New Times as an assistant news reporter and moved out west. I spent the next two years reporting on all sorts of crimes—homicides, drug busts, major car crashes, and the ebb and flow of crime in the city. It was exciting, but reporting in the real world was pretty different from working for a college newspaper. Finding the time to investigate stories and then write quality articles under a deadline was a lot of pressure. It kind of got to me, but I was determined to stay with it.

Two years later, I joined the Arizona Republic. The paper hired me as a news reporter, but my "beat" was the metropolitan area transit departments. Obviously, this could be considered a step down from the sort of work that I was doing at the New Times, but I thought it might mean less pressure. I covered anything having to do with transportation in the greater Phoenix area – gridlocked traffic on I-10 and I-17, debates about the light rail system, accidents on the tracks, you name it. I also attended countless hearings and

meetings. I reported what happened, but most of the time my stories ended up being killed to make room for advertisements. It was pretty demoralizing.

I even tried joining a bunch of organizations to try to get more insider knowledge about the companies who received transit department contracts. These folks had trade organizations, industry meetings, things like that. I started joining mailing lists and showing up at meetings. I never tried to hide who I was or what I did. And wouldn't you know it, it worked. The organizations started calling me, paying for me to attend trade shows sending me tickets to games, asking whether their name was going to be in the paper. They would call when they'd won a big contract or had a new product. I put all this new "insider" information into my stories, but it didn't help. In retrospect, maybe it wasn't the best idea to get so cozy with those guys, but I just wanted to get some ink. But no matter what I tried, the transit department just wasn't exciting and my stories were still getting cut.

Around this time, I realized that my strengths did not lie in traditional newspaper reporting. During my time at the New Times and Arizona Republic I was really intrigued by how top-flight reporters managed to find stories, investigate them, confirm the facts, and then produce a quality article, all under a deadline. Even more interesting, I wondered how new reporters ever managed to survive without established sources and insider relationships. I became incredibly interested in learning how reporters across the country managed to consistently produce stories in an ethical way. Or, to put it another way, whether journalists across the country actually were reporting stories in an ethical way.

Following my instincts, I returned to school. I received a Master's degree in journalism from The Ohio State University, and in 1995, I was awarded the Aristotle Award for Outstanding Publication. I stayed at Ohio State to earn my Ph.D. and won the Benjamin Bradlee Award for Outstanding Doctoral Thesis. I was thrilled when I was offered a job as an associate professor at the E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University. I taught a media ethics course as well as introductory journalism courses.

Five years later, I was offered a full professorship at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland. Then, in 2005, I was offered a position at the Ernie Pyle School of Journalism at Indiana University. I am originally from Indiana, so I jumped at the chance. It was the best move I ever made. The school allowed me to teach courses focused on media ethics and, more importantly, I was able to take two sabbaticals to write my books, which was how I really made a name for myself.

My first book was published in 2016. It was entitled "The Truth is Behind Bars: Why America's Reporters Should Spend More Time Talking to Inmates and Less Time

Listening to the Establishment." The book focused on the importance of convicted criminals as sources. Now, I will be the first to admit that relying on convicted felons is a risky proposition. But the simple fact is that convicted criminals – as opposed to those who have not yet been sentenced – have little to gain by talking. They're already convicted, and reporters can't commute sentences or offer immunity. So, when a convicted felon comes forward and wants to talk, chances are they're telling the truth. But if a reporter uses an inmate as their main source, that journalist and their editor must go above and beyond the normal ethical standards. That is the only way to ensure the honesty of both the source and the reporting. Naturally, I was thrilled when my book was a New York Times Bestseller. It was also named a Top Ten Book of the Year by the New York Times, Washington Post, Boston Globe, and USA Today.

I loved writing my first book so much that I followed it up a few years later with "The Necessity of the Anonymous Source: Journalism in the Age of the Whistleblower." This book received the Cokie Roberts Award for Outstanding Media Commentary and was also named a New York Times Notable Book for 2019. Although the sales weren't quite as good as my first book, I was still content with the moderate acclaim that it received. I have also written a textbook on ethics that is widely used at the country's best journalism schools.

I suspect my books were what caught the attention of County Supervisor Hayden Brooks. Brooks contacted me shortly after Ellis Strobel's article appeared in the Copper Sky Gazette. I asked the Supervisor to send me a copy of the article so that I could look it over. Imagine my surprise when I saw Andy Diggins' name as Editor-In-Chief of the Gazette. I mean, last I heard of Andy, they were riding the wave of a Pulitzer Prize nomination after totally disgracing themselves at the Boston Globe. Do you know, the day I heard about what happened at the Globe, I had to resist calling everyone from the Daily Northwestern and saying, "I told you so!" But I thought that would be childish after all of these years. As for the reporter, I had never heard of Ellis Strobel. I told Supervisor Brooks that I needed to look into how Ellis' article was investigated and sourced before I could advise Brooks on whether there was a case against the paper. But I'm not going to lie, the fact that Andy was involved already had me thinking that some ethical corners had probably been cut in order to break a big, juicy story about a well-known and respected County Supervisor.

Supervisor Brooks' lawyer ended up retaining me to investigate Ellis Strobel's reporting. I had never worked on a court case before and had no idea what to charge. I called some other folks in the field and contracted with Supervisor Brooks' legal team for $300/hour for my investigation and research time and $500/hour for testimony. My understanding is that these are pretty standard rates. In fact, I suspect I may not be

charging enough because I've been overwhelmed with calls to help in other cases. I'm lined up for five upcoming trials, sometimes working for the paper, sometimes working for the article's target. I'm thinking that this may be a whole new direction for my career.

I don't even know where to begin about all of the problems with how this article was handled. My analysis was done using the Society of Professional Journalists' Code of Ethics, which I helped to write, and the witness statements of Ellis Strobel, Morgan Ramsey, Andy Diggins, County Supervisor Hayden Brooks, and Shay Christoff. I guess I will start with Strobel's mistakes.

First, a journalist should test the accuracy of their information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is totally impermissible. Here, Strobel utterly failed to test the accuracy of the information given to Strobel by Ramsey. Now, I am the last person to be critical just because Strobel's primary source is a convicted criminal. But, like I said, the ethical standards are even higher when that's the case, and Strobel had no one to corroborate even the smallest portion of what Ramsey said. Strobel never confirmed Supervisor Brooks' whereabouts the night of the alleged bribe and, more importantly, never found or talked to Johannes Weaving. Plus, I could not find any evidence that Strobel tried to corroborate whether Supervisor Brooks had, in fact, won a substantial sum of money gambling. Moreover, Strobel did not follow up on their anonymous tip from the Ironwood Springs Police that an investigation of the bribery charges against County Supervisor Brooks was happening in Phoenix. There is simply no dispute that confirming the existence of such an investigation and learning the outcome of the police inquiries was vital to presenting this story in an honest, even-handed way. Finally, Strobel's "confirmation" that Supervisor Brooks was disciplined for their involvement in gambling was nothing more than the inference Strobel chose to draw from the Arizona Ethics Commission's comments. These failures are unacceptable.

Second, because Strobel failed to follow up with some of the individuals and entities listed above, Strobel was forced to rely on anonymous or simply unnamed sources. This violates the journalistic standard that reporters should identify sources whenever feasible because the public should be allowed to judge a source's reliability. For example, Strobel used an unnamed police source as justification for reporting that the bribery charges against Supervisor Brooks were being investigated. Because Strobel failed to contact the AZDPS, the public was denied not only the details of any such investigation, but also the ability to decide how serious the investigation was, whether it was properly conducted, and what the outcome of the inquiry was. Such information would have been far more helpful than one anonymous source giving a tip.

Third, Strobel did not avoid conflicts of interest. This problem is not readily apparent from the article itself but became obvious when I read Strobel's statement. Strobel is clearly angry with County Supervisor Brooks for Brooks' alleged anti-environmental supporter sentiments and, it seems, holds the Supervisor responsible for Misha Stupinski's incarceration. Given this history, Strobel never should have written this article. Strobel is, very simply, not objective where the Supervisor is concerned.

Now we move on to problems not only with Strobel's reporting, but Andy's editing. So, the fourth issue with the article is that both Strobel and Andy failed to distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. The fact that this article appeared on page one of the news section does not change the fact that it is rife with opinion, innuendo, and inference. Conclusions are drawn without evidence linking the dots. The most obvious example of this problem is the pictures of Supervisor Brooks' recent purchases. The fact that someone bought a boat, house and car with cash is not evidence that Brooks took a bribe. And it was irresponsible to report and print an article that directly draws that inference when the reporter never even investigated known alternative sources of income for Supervisor Brooks. Andy never should have allowed that inference to appear and never should have allowed those pictures to run based on such a minimal foundation. The entire tone of the article is accusatory, not objective.

Fifth and finally, both Strobel and Andy failed to remember that newsgathering may cause harm or discomfort and that pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance. Strobel and Andy seemed to forget this standard in their quest to break a big story. Andy in particular allowed an article to appear that, in no uncertain terms, accuses a well-respected supervisor with a spotless record of taking a bribe from a notorious criminal, reneging on their promise, and living the high life on their dishonesty. It would be one thing if that were the obvious outcome based on a thoroughly investigated, properly sourced, objectively written article. But that is not what happened here. Instead, a cursory investigation, shoddily sourced, obviously biased article went to press. And Supervisor Brooks' reputation will be forever tainted with it. Just the implication of it.

In the end, the only conclusion to be drawn is that both Ellis Strobel and Andy Diggins violated at least five of journalism's cardinal rules. I think that it could safely be said that the Copper Sky Gazette, through its reporter and editor, showed a reckless disregard for the truth when it printed the story about Supervisor Brooks.

I affirm under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my belief and knowledge.

/s/ Blake Baker

SIGNED AND SWORN to before me at 8:00 a.m. on the day of this round of the 2027 Arizona Mock Trial Competition.

_____/S/_____
Henry McDonald, Notary Public
State of Arizona
My Commission Expires: 05/01/2028

Statement of Morgan “Mac” Ramsey

My name is Morgan Ramsey. In a previous life as a successful businessperson, I went by “Mac” in my circle of friends. Currently I reside at 1529 Arizona State Route 366, which is the Federal Correctional Institution in Safford. The Federal Bureau of Prisons classifies Safford as a “low security” federal correctional institution; it’s often difficult to see the humor in that.

Before I was imprisoned as part of my plea deal, I lived in Ironwood Springs, Arizona. I also used to run my own business, popularly referenced under my umbrella company Ramsey Real Estate, L.L.C., though I don’t miss much about that part of my life anymore. What I miss are my children, who I haven’t seen in a year.

I didn’t grow up with much. My father worked for the railroad and my mother raised me and my three sisters. But I caught a big break after graduating college. I’d been working to pay my way through school by building houses. My boss convinced me to stay on and work with him as a partner instead of going to business school for an MBA, so that’s what I did. We worked side by side for nearly five years, and then he became sick with a terrible illness I don’t like talking about. What made it worse is that his adult children sued me when I took over and dissolved the company while he was still in the hospital. The family made allegations of fraud against me, and I settled that case to make it go away. The deal I worked out was that instead of admitting fraud, I admitted that I exercised undue influence over my business partner while he was sick and mentally impaired in the hospital, and I agreed to pay back a portion of the money his family demanded. I understand how it may seem problematic to ask someone what they want to do with a multi-million-dollar partnership in that state, but I didn’t have a choice. He never wrote a will and was weeks from passing away, so I did ask him to sign over his share of the partnership to me in that moment of crisis, and I paid dearly for that mistake.

Fortunately, I still had most of the money left over from winding down the construction company. My spouse thought I was crazy, but I decided to use my money to acquire two other home construction companies. Seems like back then everyone I knew who had a little extra money wanted to own a big house. People who didn’t want to live in Phoenix would drive an hour down the interstates to get to their jobs, so we just kept building neighborhoods further out. By 1997, we were doing so well that I bought into a home mortgage-financing company—my first of several. Not only was I in the home-building business, but now I had a company loaning people the money to buy homes.

By the mid-2000s things were at their peak. My businesses looked small individually, but I had so many that if you added them up, I would have been in the top five

for home real estate in Arizona. We even started spreading into California with an affiliate, Basting Construction Co. Thousands of people, from all the dedicated staff, contractors, and subcontractors worked for me in one way or another. Buying up whole farms and replacing fields with neighborhoods full of houses went from something to celebrate to just another page in a stack to rubber-stamp. And frankly, I was doing a good job transitioning away from building and focusing more on the mortgage financing angle, which was almost as lucrative as my third venture, mortgage securities trading. Things were so good we bought the naming rights to the stadium for the minor league baseball team in Ironwood Springs – the Copperheads.

Not only were things great for my businesses, but they were great for me as well. My spouse Cory and I had three lovely children and owned the biggest home in Ironwood Springs. It had two pools, a basketball court, and my own private driving range. We owned vacation homes in San Francisco, Texas, and Miami. We had three butlers and a personal chef who traveled with us everywhere. I started collecting vintage airplanes that I stored in a hangar I purchased at the local airport. It was an expensive lifestyle, but money was rolling in hand over first.

In 2007, of course, things took a turn. By Fall 2008, the game was up, and the whole real estate market plunged. Like many people in this business, I was not prepared for what I should have seen coming years ago. All my eggs were in the real estate basket. Revenue dried up overnight, and debts came due. Oh, and lawsuits. I lost count of the lawsuits. People who signed up for loans on their own free will accuse me of giving them deals I knew they could not afford. While there is obviously truth to that, as there is with much of the blame throughout the subprime mortgage crisis, I hired some good lawyers. Savvy bankruptcy strategies allowed me to avoid liability to many of my clients and creditors.

Besides bankruptcies, I made it out of the recession by buying up land while the price was cheap during the downturn. A lot of real estate investors decided to get out of the game after 2008. I went the other direction and doubled down. I knew it was risky, but I also knew it was just a matter of time until the market improved and fields of grass or crops became vibrant neighborhoods. In hindsight, this was not a good idea. I purchased too many tracts of land. Barren parcels might have a high payoff year down the road, but until they get developed, they earn nothing.

I just kept buying more land anyway. By 2015, I felt like not just a survivor, but a mastermind for making it out of the recession in one piece. That made me cocky. I would overbid on land just to lock down a community away from my competitors. Keep in mind, most new neighborhoods you see now since the recession happened were not yet built

in 2015. The land prices were going up because we all knew the home builders and buyers would come eventually, but I still hadn't earned much of anything I'd purchased.

I spent a jaw-dropping $8 million dollars on the Frazher Corridor plots of land. More to the point, I did not buy those plots with my own money, but loans – loans with an interest rate my credit deserved, which was not great. I would be unable to pay back the loan for a while. In fact, the size of the loan actually increased over the years I owned the land. At the time it was a solid purchase. The Frazher Corridor is a beautiful stretch of land close to Highway 60, much of it on a noticeable slope with a great view of the Salt River. A fantastic place for building houses, and honestly the last spot in the world I expected an oil pipeline to go.

You've probably heard of the concept of eminent domain before. Shockingly, it's constitutionally acceptable for the government to come in and force you to give them your land. All they have to do under the Takings Clause of the Constitution is pay you "current fair market value" for the land they are taking by force – emphasis on "current." You can probably see where this is going. When higher-ups announced their intent to ask the county for passage through the Frazher Corridor in 2024, the fair market value of my plots of land was not its true value. A few houses had popped up by then, but not as many as there would have been – not by a long shot. The assessor believed my land was worth just 8 million dollars, the same amount I'd signed onto it for in 2015, before my loan had gained all of its interest.

Just like in 2008, the problems started as a trickle and then became a cascade. I filed suit to get a better price on the Frazher Corridor, but it was clear I wasn't going to win that suit. My lawyers advised me, correctly, that I had overpaid for the land in 2015. And I had other land purchases nearby, too. Remember, this all happened in 2023 and 2024, just a few years after the controversies at the Standing Rock protests in North Dakota. Headlines about pipeline spills and ground and water contamination were still fresh in people's minds. No one was interested in taking the Frazher Corridor off my hands for more than the government's proposed price, and now my other purchases in the area were tanking in value because home buyers weren't going to want to live within miles of a dangerous oil pipeline if they could avoid it.

My chief accountant, Johannes, advised me that we had only one option – get "political." Gila County did not have much choice in the fact that the oil pipeline would run through the county, as that had already been determined by federal and state politicians. But they did have veto power over certain locations within the county as to where the pipeline would go. I knew it would be a split vote because of history. Four supervisors had already publicly backed one side or the other, leaving three in play, and

I aimed to become friendly with one of them in particular. Jeb Farris was a well-known environmentalist. He'd worked on park board crap for decades before getting relegated to county supervisor status. I knew he would vote to move the pipeline away from the Frazher Corridor. For crying out loud, you can't put a pipeline on a hill sloping down toward a river! But then there was Kristina Olson. She was a former homeless outreach worker for a nonprofit in Phoenix, and she wasn't a big fan of mine. She had once accused me in a newspaper op-ed of being a mortgage fraudster, so I knew she would deliberately vote against whatever I asked her. That left Brooks, one swing vote out of the seven that we could "persuade."

I still had some liquid cash available for a rainy day. It wasn't enough to get me out of my (by then numerous) holes, but it was enough to buy a miracle. I withdrew $500,000 from a shell company account I'd saved since before the recession, and I gave it to Johannes for his side of the plan.

I arranged for Johannes to meet Brooks at some sleazy motel in Saguaro Heights at about 11:45 p.m. on October 30, 2024. I remember the date of the meeting because it was the night before Halloween. I hear that Brooks claims that the bribe could not have happened that night because Brooks was at a conference in Pinedale Crossing. There's supposedly a YouTube video of Brooks giving a speech at that conference. But I would point out that you can fabricate anything these days, and there's no proof that I've seen that the video footage posted on Brooks's website was footage captured from October 30, 2024. It could have been from any time before that. Finally, I specifically remember Johannes complaining because he had to drive to some hotel out of town to give Brooks the money. Why would he do that if he didn't actually drive there? Right after the bribe occurred, Brooks announced that they would retire at the end of 2024, as soon as the contentious vote was over.

Everything was going perfectly. Until the flash flood hit and delayed the vote into 2025, rendering my payment irrelevant.

Johannes informed me that this was a problem because by New Year's Day Brooks would be gone for the term and we would soon get a new guy in Brooks' place, a disruptor anti-environmentalist who was unlikely to be sympathetic to anything we had to say. Johannes and I called Brooks from Johannes' office on Christmas Eve to demand that Brooks do something about this. Brooks told us that they would see what they could do. Brooks called us back that Friday and told me that I was out of luck. Brooks wrote a letter to the county requesting that Brooks be allowed to remain in the seat to cast a vote, but the other supervisors could find no legal loophole to allow that to

happen. I demanded Brooks to return my money and Brooks refused, telling me they had already put it in the bank.

Eventually the County Board returned to hear matters for 2025, with Supervisor Dehn in Brooks' place. Johannes told me we had no chance of winning with Dehn, who was generally pro-business but particularly harsh on environmentalists. Since I was aligned with the hippies on wanting to move an oil pipeline, Dehn was an eager stick in the mud to my agenda. The vote was 4-3 to deny our request to choose a different location for the pipeline, and just like that my business empire took another dive, this time for good.

When I declared a series of bankruptcies all over again in March 2025, the investigators were already circling like vultures. They had a lot of questions for me – questions about what they considered to be spurious behavior in 2024, but also questions about 2008, which had not been asked to my face before. Questions like why I had conveniently invested and donated so many millions of dollars during the market crash that I did not report in my bankruptcy filings and how I conveniently came back into that money in 2013-2015. Questions like how I could possibly afford overpriced land deals when my credit had been in the toilet and I was supposed to be out of money to buy just about anything.

I accepted a plea in July 2025 and was sentenced to ten years in prison for bankruptcy fraud. Not that this will be a surprise to anyone, but prison is terrible. I was so upset about everything that happened that I called the police within a month of settling in prison. I told them everything that happened with Brooks. I told them about the oil pipeline problems, the bribe and the threats. That investigator, Christoff or something, came by one time. But Christoff didn't talk for very long and I never heard from them again. Later I found out Christoff got their job because of Brooks.

When the police angle went nowhere, I tried the press instead. It is difficult making calls from prison. You need money to pay for each call, and the calls are expensive. You also don't have an internet phone directory. You have to use the old-fashioned Yellow Pages. It took a day, but I found who I needed. Next thing I know on September 8, 2025, someone from the Copper Sky Gazette named Ellis Strobel is meeting me at the prison. Ellis asked me what happened, and I was more than happy to tell Ellis. I wanted Brooks to get what was coming to them.

Apparently, the story was printed in the paper because fairly soon everybody wanted to talk to me. Several reporters tried to contact me about the story, but the warden wouldn't let them all in. The story got picked up by the Arizona Republic and Arizona Daily Star and made big news all over the state. Everyone was saying Brooks would be put on trial.

The only people who knew about the plan for the vote were Supervisor Brooks, Johannes, and me. Unfortunately, a week or so after I pleaded guilty and was sentenced, Johannes disappeared. He apparently cleaned out his office and his apartment and left town, and I haven't heard a peep from him in months. A cell mate shared a rumor that he's back in Sweden where he has family ties. Maybe he got scared, maybe he wanted to start a new life, I just don't know. I wish he were here, though, to verify my story.

Well, that's all there is to tell. To be honest, I don't know much about Ellis Strobel and the story in the paper. I only met Strobel that one time in jail and never read the newspaper article – I am too busy trying to take care of myself in here. I sure hope Brooks doesn't win this case, though – that slime ball is guilty as sin, and I know Brooks has plenty of money because they got it from me.

I affirm under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my belief and knowledge.

/s/ Morgan Ramsey

SIGNED AND SWORN to before me at 8:00 a.m. on the day of this round of the 2027 Arizona Mock Trial Competition.

_____/S/_____
Henry McDonald, Notary Public
State of Arizona
My Commission Expires: 05/01/2028

Statement of Ellis Strobel

My name is Ellis Strobel. I am thirty-eight years old. My parents were forced to flee to the United States before I was born because they were involved in the resistance movement against an oppressive government. They had been publishing an underground newspaper, but they were eventually discovered by the secret police. To protect themselves, they escaped to the United States. To keep them safe, the American authorities helped my parents settle in the small town of Ironwood Springs, Arizona. As a result, I was born in Ironwood Springs, not the old country.

My best friend was another kid from an immigrant family, Misha Stupinski. Misha and I did everything together growing up, especially anything we could do outside. Misha and I would spend hours hiking in the woods, sitting on a dock with our fishing poles in the water, or just climbing trees. As we got older, Misha and I biked, four-wheeled, and hiked all over. Of course, that was before Green Diamond Trucking built that huge garage and loading facility. I know it was good for local business, but man I hated to see all that beautiful open space that Misha and I used to explore fenced off. I don't think I ever swam in Half-Mile Creek after Green Diamond started operation.

I had my heart set on journalism as a career fairly early on. Part of it was personal – I wrote well, and the school newspaper was a place where I always felt accepted and welcomed. Part of it, too, was a homage to my parents' struggles. They were forced to leave the old country because they wrote the truth about what was happening. I worked hard and was accepted with a full ride to Northwestern University's journalism school. Northwestern is consistently one of the country's highest ranked journalism programs. It was an honor to be admitted. The program was challenging, to say the least. I had never written so much nor been held to such high standards. In every case but one, I rose to the challenge. That one failure is the biggest mistake of my life.

I was in a class that required us to file daily stories from around campus, a requirement that was perfect preparation for the demands of the newsroom in real life. Toward the end of the semester, I was having a particularly difficult week. I had two papers due, I had fifteen hours of work to do to keep my work study job, and I was on the phone late with Misha, who was trying to get out of a bad relationship. By Friday, I was frazzled, and I had to file a story that I just hadn't done any work on. In my desperation to get the assignment done, I made a terrible mistake. I made up a story and turned it in.

I screwed up, I know. I lied when I made up the story. The next morning, I called my professor and confessed. The deal we worked out was that I would fail the class but not get thrown out of the program since I had confessed. I eventually retook the class and

got an A, but the F stayed on my transcript. That error in judgment made it difficult for me to get a job coming out of college, even with a journalism degree from a highly rated school. No one wanted to take a risk on someone who had made such a bad decision. Eventually, I landed a job with my hometown newspaper, the Copper Sky Gazette. I had known the then-editor, Anna Tobin, from an internship I did in high school.

Things went pretty well for me starting out. Tobin ran a traditional newsroom, which meant you had to pay your dues in order to move up the ladder. I eventually got my break in 2018 with a series of stories about some pollution on the outskirts of town. There was a big agribusiness – Frederick and Sons – that was running some farms near town and was dumping animal waste and feed products directly into the river. I spearheaded an investigation that caught them in the act when they were dumping out at the old Buckhold farm. The resulting investigation by the state shut down the company, and the farm has been abandoned ever since.

I'd say that my biggest accomplishment as a reporter came during the Morgan Phillips trial. I won the Orry, which is the local equivalent of a Pulitzer Prize, for my coverage of the case. I thought it was pretty clear that the jury did the right thing by finding him not guilty, but there are always folks who want to string someone up just on their reputation. I get calls all the time asking me to join a bigger paper, but Ironwood Springs is still home, and I can't see leaving for anything.

Around that same time, I learned that the County was considering letting some company build a pipeline through Ironwood Springs. Can you believe it? They want to change more open green space and turn it into a pipeline? You don't need to be a journalist to know that those things are bad news. Even if the pipeline doesn't break, it can still leak. They also take up a lot of space; it isn't just the 48-inch pipeline itself. The land around the pipeline has to be fenced off for at least 50 feet on either side. Can you imagine? A 100-foot-wide corridor running along the edge of town? No more hiking or four-wheeling across trails. No more walking to school if you live on the "wrong" side of the pipeline. Not only would a proposed pipeline ruin the outdoors that I love so much about Ironwood Springs, but it would be terrible for the community as a whole.

After graduation when I moved back to Ironwood Springs, Misha ran into trouble. He and some friends from work stayed out too late one night. Misha swears he only had one beer, but he got pulled over leaving his favorite local bar. When the police pulled him over, Misha blew a .04. That's half the legal limit, except that Misha had a commercial driver's license and was driving his work truck home from the bar. Because his truck was a "commercial motor vehicle," I guess that means there is a lower limit. Anyway, he got charged with driving under the influence. It was a first offense, and Misha had a totally

clean record before that. But then-City Attorney Hayden Brooks, who had a reputation for being tough on young, blue-collar workers, decided not to offer any kind of plea deal. Misha ended up losing his commercial driver's license for a while and getting the maximum criminal penalty. Losing his commercial driver's license cost Misha his job at Green Diamond, which really sent him down a bad road. He has not been the same since.

Needless to say, I was pretty incensed about this whole affair. So, I did what I do best. I started poking around, asking questions, and doing research. I didn't turn up anything while Brooks was City Attorney, but I kept looking every once and a while. It wasn't every day or anything like that, I just kept my ears open for anything about Brooks. Eventually, after Brooks got elected County Supervisor, I learned that Brooks was a big proponent of the pipeline. Brooks only saw the potential tax revenues. Of course, the idea of a big installation near the pipeline and the prospect of even more industrial jobs coming to the County – as if we need that kind of work here – appealed to Brooks too. There was also a rumor that Brooks' aunt or uncle was a soil engineer who worked for the pipeline company, but I never found any proof of that.

I wrote up what I found and ran it by my editor. Andy Diggins was new to the paper, having just come into town from Detroit or somewhere. I had never really had much of a problem with Andy, but Andy hadn't really been around all that long, either. Andy shot down my story, saying that they didn't want to rock the boat this early into their tenure in town. I think Andy also said something about being concerned about my reference to Brooks' relative who allegedly worked for the pipeline company, but I don't think that Andy understood the County dynamics just yet. That pipeline was just such a bad idea. Also, it's not like I said that Brooks was receiving a kickback from their relative. I just mentioned that there was a rumor that Brooks' relative worked for the pipeline company. I can't say that I was particularly pleased about having the story killed, but it happens to every good journalist. Maybe it shouldn't, but it does.

I first got involved with the article at the center of this whole mess in September 2025, when I got a voicemail from Mac Ramsey, the infamous head of Ramsey Real Estate who pleaded guilty to bankruptcy fraud. Ramsey's voicemail was pretty short. Ramsey just said that they bribed a member of the County Board of Supervisors to vote on having the pipeline run through a certain route, but the County Board still voted to have it follow a different route, which cost Ramsey a fortune. I wish I still had the voicemail, but I dropped my phone trying to take a call just after a City Council meeting a few days later and stepped on it in the dark. I couldn't recover any messages.

Anyway, if what Ramsey said was true, it would be quite a story. So, in early September, I drove to the federal prison in Safford to visit Ramsey. Like any good

journalist, I took notes on our conversation. Ramsey was initially a little hesitant to talk about the situation, but eventually said, “Screw it. I’m already in jail. If I do more time because of this, at least I can take that rat Brooks down with me.”

I jumped when Ramsey said that Brooks was the County Supervisor involved. I made sure that Ramsey meant Supervisor Hayden Brooks, who had just recently retired. Ramsey confirmed that Brooks was exactly who Ramsey was talking about.

Ramsey told me the following story: When Ramsey found out that Brooks was going to be on the committee that was going to initially consider the route the pipeline was taking, Ramsey’s accountant said that maybe there was a way to get the matter settled before the other interested parties had a chance to talk to the County Board. Ramsey’s accountant, a person by the name of Johannes Weaving, worked for Brooks several years back, and knew that Brooks was up to their ears in gambling debts. Weaving said that if Ramsey happened to provide Supervisor Brooks with the way out of their debts – say, half a million dollars – Brooks would express their gratitude by persuading the pipeline committee to require the pipeline to follow the route that Ramsey wanted, before the official committee meeting and before the other landowners had a chance to talk about the route with the County Board.

Ramsey told me that they jumped at the chance. Ramsey gave Weaving the money and Weaving reported back that everything had gone to plan. I asked Ramsey what had gone wrong. Ramsey laughed bitterly and said that Brooks resigned from the County Board before the first committee meeting about the pipeline. Ramsey said that the new chair of the pipeline committee was their former business partner, so Ramsey knew they could not approach that Supervisor about the pipeline or it would leave too much of a trail. I asked Ramsey if they had anything that could help verify the story. Ramsey said that they filed a complaint with the police a couple weeks prior in August, but that Ramsey hadn’t heard anything further.

I started working on verifying Ramsey’s story the next day. My first call was to Johannes Weaving. Weaving was not in, and his secretary Sara Pepper said that he was out of the office for a little while. I followed up with another call a couple days later and found that the number had been disconnected. I don’t know where Weaving is, and I have made no further attempts to contact him. At the same time, this made me fairly suspicious. I mean, fleeing town clearly means that he has something to hide, right? I also wanted to ask Weaving if Ramsey got a deal for coming forward about the bribery, but again, I wasn’t able to find him. I also looked at Ramsey’s court records on the court’s website, but there wasn’t anything specific about Ramsey’s guilty pleas, so I couldn’t tell if the sentence was reduced for saying anything about Brooks.

My next call was to the Ironwood Springs Police Department. They didn't have any answers for me immediately and told me that they'd call back. About ninety minutes later the desk sergeant called me back and said that the Police Department's official statement was a "no comment." He also said that he had been authorized to tell me that there was an investigation, but it was being done by a cop over in Phoenix. That information was strictly off the record, though.

I checked with a couple of my usual sources within the department. Only one of them knew anything about it, and he said that he had maybe overheard someone saying that they had done just a quickie investigation but hadn't really looked too hard for anything incriminating. I never contacted anyone at AZDPS, nor did anyone from AZDPS contact me.

I also put in a call to County Attorney Tim Kaminsky's office at the end of the day. He said that he didn't know of any official investigations or actions currently active against Supervisor Brooks. Then, almost as an afterthought, Kaminsky added that if he was going to investigate something like this, he might put a call in to the Arizona Ethics Commission.

The next morning when I got into the office, there was an envelope addressed to me without any sort of stamps or return addresses or anything. I opened it and inside was a letter from the Arizona Ethics Commission addressed to Supervisor Brooks. The letter said that Brooks was being censured for their involvement in high stakes gambling and sports betting. The letter stated that since Brooks had come forward to disclose this involvement voluntarily and had sworn to have no further involvement with the activity, the official Letter of Reprimand would be kept private. However, the letter warned, if Brooks engaged in any further gambling activity, the Ethics Commission would go public with its censure and maybe seek further action.

The letter was clearly identified as a draft letter and was also unsigned and undated. I didn't even know if it had been sent at all. Heck, I didn't even know who had given me a copy. However, Kaminsky's hint about the Ethics Commission kept coming back to me as I thought about the draft letter. I figured that Kaminsky was showing a little immigrant family solidarity and had slipped me a copy of the letter that he had gotten from somewhere. I called Kaminsky up and asked him about it, but he said that he had never heard of such a thing before. Of course, what else would you expect him to say?

Just to cover my tail, I gave the Ethics Commission a call to get confirmation that such a letter had been officially sent to Brooks. Its reply was that there was no such letter in the Supervisor Brooks' public file, and that it refused to comment on any past or

present investigations, whether those investigations existed or not. This is exactly what the letter predicted that the Commission would say, so I took it as a confirmation of the letter's authenticity.

By this time, word had gotten out in the newsroom that I was running down a story on Supervisor Brooks. Someone mentioned that Brooks had been making some extravagant purchases within the last year. I got Vickie Olson, an ace freelance photographer who sometimes worked for the paper, to go check out how Supervisor Brooks was living these days. Vickie came back with pictures of a lakeshore mansion, a massive speedboat, and a shiny new Hummer. I got on the phone and started making some calls and confirmed that Supervisor Brooks had purchased each of these within the last year. More important, I thought, was the fact that the Supervisor had paid for each of these purchases in cash.

At this point I had everything I needed to write the piece. Just to go through all the motions, I knew I had to give Supervisor Brooks a call to give Brooks a chance to refute the accusations and the associated evidence. I got through to the Supervisor, but our conversation was extremely short. I identified myself and Brooks barked into the phone that they knew who I was, and had nothing to say to me at this time or any time in the future. It wasn't the first time I've had a phone slammed down by someone I've been trying to interview and I'd be stunned if it was the last.

Having done all the work I needed to, I wrote up the article and ran it by Andy Diggins. Whatever concerns Andy had about stepping on Brooks' feet earlier had evidently evaporated. Andy appeared very excited about the article, saying that it was another story for the paper for sure.

The story ran on the front page of the Gazette on September 22, 2025, and was picked up by the Arizona Republic and the Arizona Daily Star the next day. There was a media furor over the story, and it turned into something of a media spectacle here. Things quieted down until Brooks decided to sue the paper over the article.

I affirm under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my belief and knowledge.

/s/ Ellis Strobel

SIGNED AND SWORN to before me at 8:00 a.m. on the day of this round of the 2027 Arizona Mock Trial Competition.

_____/S/_____

Henry McDonald, Notary Public
State of Arizona
My Commission Expires: 05/01/2028

Statement of Andy Diggins

My name is Andy Diggins and I am currently the Editor-in-Chief of the Copper Sky Gazette. I can't believe that I'm here today. The article that we published on County Supervisor Hayden Brooks was a great piece of reporting. I know the Supervisor is influential, but using a defamation suit to try and clear their name is nonsense. If the Supervisor had a problem with Ellis' story, then Brooks should have commented when Ellis called. Now they are trying to drag down a very talented young reporter with this baseless case. This entire lawsuit makes me steaming mad.

My career as a journalist began in college. I attended the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University, one of the top journalism schools in the country. My big break with the school newspaper – The Daily Northwestern – came in my junior year when I wrote an article about how campus crime statistics were being manipulated by local police and the administration. My article won the award for Outstanding College Newspaper Article from the Pew Center for Civic Journalism, and they also named me College Reporter of the Year and The Daily Northwestern was also named Top College Newspaper by the Society of Professional Journalists, based in no small part on the popularity of my article. It was quite a ride. So, it came as no real surprise when my fellow staffers selected me as Editor-in-Chief my senior year.

What is amazing is that my story almost didn't happen because of Blake Baker, a classmate who was the Daily assistant editor the year my story ran. We used to have weekly staff meetings to talk about upcoming stories. I told the staff about my crime story and everyone was very excited. I had two sources – one in the administration and one in the police department – who were willing to talk about the conspiracy. The sources would only agree to be anonymous though. No matter how hard I tried they would not go on the record. For me, and everyone else on the staff I might add, two anonymous sources with obvious insider knowledge was good enough, but Blake didn't think so. Blake thought that we needed someone named and on the record before we could run with the story. Personally, I think Blake was miffed about being upstaged by a junior.

I understand that Blake was hired by Supervisor Brooks to testify about whether Ellis and I violated the journalistic code of ethics. I'm not surprised. Blake's had it out for me since college. And this is a good time to point something out. There are newspaper reporters and then there are people who write about newspaper reporters. They are not the same thing. Real reporters are in the field, getting stories, following leads, making judgment calls. The people who write about them are normally safely enshrined at some college, talking about "ethics" and "standards" and "public integrity." Those ideas are all well and good, but if reporters and the editors who manage them were not

occasionally willing to go out on a limb, then enormously important stories would never be reported. Let me put it this way: where would this country be if Woodward and Bernstein had looked at one another and said, “Well, Deep Throat won’t go on the record, so I guess we should ditch this whole Watergate story?” If you look at any reporter’s history – even the ones who eventually join the ranks of academia – you will find some sort of close call. Not everyone crosses the line, but I bet even Blake Baker has put their toes in the chalk.

Anyway, after Medill I went to work at the Chicago Tribune. I was an assistant news reporter assigned to cover City Hall. Early on, I realized that I had a knack for building good relationships with people. I developed a great network of insiders – aides to the mayor, staffers, clerks, secretaries, even maintenance people – who were my eyes and ears. With the tips I heard, I was able to scoop some big stories. I moved up quickly and pretty soon I was the reporter in charge of the City Hall beat. I stayed at the Tribune for about eight years, before taking a job reporting for The Boston Globe. I stuck with the news division, though, because that is where all the action is. At the Globe, I focused more on state politics and worked my way up to being the reporter in charge of all state political reporting. I had sources in the legislature, with the lobbyists, the lawyers, and the staffers. Nothing happened that I didn’t know about.

But I had best fess up to one mistake that I made when I worked for the Globe. I heard through the rumor mill that the Speaker of the State House of Representatives had used public funds to buy junk bonds in her own name. I began to pursue the story, and contacted my main source in the Speaker’s office, her secretary. The secretary confirmed the rumors and told me that he would get me copies of answering machine messages left for the Speaker by her stockbroker. And the secretary did produce the tapes, which seemed genuine. But none of my usual sources would corroborate his story. In fact, they denied it. Still, I convinced myself that people were staying silent because the Speaker was, after all, a very successful person. I decided to write the story anyway. Somehow, I convinced my editor to publish with just one source. The story ran. One week later, The Boston Herald ran a story, corroborated by multiple sources, that the secretary had been passed over for a promotion and had doctored the messages for revenge. After five years with the Globe, I was fired. There is just no other way to say it.

After the Globe I had trouble finding a job and ultimately had to take a step down in the ranks. In 2007, I went to work for the Detroit Free Press as a news reporter. No special beat, no exceptional assignments. I spent the next five years covering a little of everything. Crimes, car accidents, politics, scandals, trials, I did it all. Finally, I guess I’d paid my debt because they promoted me. Once again, I focused mainly on politics and was redeemed when, in 2017, I was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize for an exposé I did on

pollution being dumped into local lakes by the automobile manufacturers. I didn't win, but suddenly colleagues who refused to take my calls were willing to associate with me again. I had a lot of other job offers but stayed in Detroit. I felt like I owed the paper something for taking a risk on me after I was fired.

In 2018, I learned that my mother had cancer. My father died a while ago and I am an only child. Because my mom lived alone, my only real option was to move home to Ironwood Springs to take care of her. So that's what I did. There is no major market newspaper nearby, and even if there had been, I could not have put in the hours needed and still take care of my mom. So, I resigned from the Free Press and moved home. I went to work for the Copper Sky Gazette and, as luck would have it, the former editor was looking to retire. I was named Editor-in-Chief of the paper in 2021.

Ellis already worked for the paper when I arrived. It was clear almost instantly that Ellis was the best reporter at the Copper Sky Gazette. I spent a little while going through back issues of the paper and the stories that Ellis wrote about the dumping by the Frederick and Sons Company and the Phillips trial were top-notch. Plus, I have to admit it; I am at a point in my career where I am looking to mentor a young reporter, to pass on my wisdom if you will. Ellis seemed like an excellent candidate because Ellis was talented and ambitious. I'll admit, I really want to see Ellis succeed as a reporter. I've encouraged Ellis many times to leave Ironwood Springs in favor of a bigger market. I mean, why win Page Ones when you could win Pulitzers? But Ellis is a lifer.

So, it was tough for me to shoot down Ellis' idea for an article on Supervisor Brooks and Brooks' alleged bias against the environmental community. It really seemed liked Ellis was on to something. The information on disciplinary actions against employees Ellis dug up was pretty compelling. But I learned my lesson the hard way in Boston and I simply was not willing to take on one of the most successful people in the community so early in my tenure. It was just too risky.

The Copper Sky Gazette, after all, was a long-time supporter of Supervisor Brooks. Even before my time, the paper always endorsed the Supervisor in elections. It has written dozens of editorials in support of tough decisions that Supervisor Brooks has made and also commending Brooks for the charitable work that they do in Ironwood Springs. That is why this lawsuit really gets me steamed. After so many years of great press, what makes the Supervisor think we made up stuff to get them now? It's nuts.

Regardless, Ellis didn't bring up the Supervisor for about six years. In late 2025, I can't quite remember the date, Ellis mentioned to me in passing that they had a lead on possible bribery about the location of the pipeline that is planned to run right through the

county. Ellis said that they heard that Mac Ramsey bribed a county supervisor to have the pipeline run one way and County Board voted to have it run a different way. It sounded juicy to me and I told Ellis to keep me posted. Big stories are tough to come by in a town the size of Ironwood Springs, so I was excited that Ellis could be on to something. Ellis spoke to Mac Ramsey and when Ellis got back to the office they were nearly giddy with joy.

In mid-September, Ellis and I sat down to talk about the Supervisor Brooks story. Ellis filled me in on their interview with Mac Ramsey and Ramsey's allegations that they had paid Supervisor Brooks $500,000 to rig the County Board's vote. The deal was for Brooks to rig the voting so that the pipeline ran the way Mac Ramsey wanted it to run. Ellis identified Johannes Weaving, Ramsey's accountant, as the middleman who transferred the cash from Ramsey to the Supervisor. Immediately, I asked Ellis whether they had contacted Weaving. That was when I heard the bad news: Weaving had skipped town. I didn't ask whether Ellis had exhausted every possible avenue for locating Weaving. I presumed that Ellis did everything they could to find the accountant. After all, the accountant was the only possible person who could confirm Ramsey's story. Weaving's disappearance left us with one source, which is always dangerous territory.

But Ellis remembered my hesitancy about the first Supervisor Brooks story, so Ellis had done more investigating. Ellis heard Ramsey had made a complaint to the police about the bribe. At first, I was skeptical of Ellis' claim that Ramsey had complained to the police. But Ellis informed me that a desk sergeant with the Ironwood Springs Police Department had confirmed, albeit off the record, that an investigation into Ramsey's bribery charges was indeed being conducted through an AZDPS agent in Phoenix and Ellis had confirmed the existence of this investigation through an independent anonymous source from the Ironwood Springs Police. Additionally, Ellis told me that they had a letter from the Ethics Commission reprimanding Supervisor Brooks for Brooks' involvement in high stakes gambling and sports betting. This news didn't surprise me at all. It's one of Ironwood Springs's worst kept secrets that Supervisor Brooks has a serious gambling problem. Not only does Brooks like to gamble, but Brooks always seems to lose. That is just the sort of thing that is common knowledge in a small town like Ironwood Springs

But back to the letter. I never asked to see it. Ellis is too good a reporter to tell their editor that they've got a letter if they don't. I didn't need to see it. I knew Ellis would call the Ethics Commission to confirm and, in fact, Ellis told me that's precisely what they did. And the photos. Wow. A few days after our meeting, Ellis came back with photos of some recent purchases that Supervisor Brooks made in cash. Unbelievable. A huge new speedboat, a swanky lakefront mansion at Rainbow Lake, and a new Hummer EV. I hear that the Supervisor is claiming they won that money on some offshore cruise.

But anyone who has ever gambled with the Supervisor knows that the likelihood of them winning that much at gambling is as likely as a blizzard in the middle of an Arizona summer. Finally, I made sure to ask whether Ellis called Supervisor Brooks to ask for a comment. Ellis had. And that was all that I needed to hear.

I mean, add it up. We had Ramsey, a convicted felon with nothing to lose, giving us the details of the bribery scheme. We had the middleman Weaving leaving town under mysterious circumstances. We had two sources confirming that the Ironwood Springs powers-that-be were concerned enough about Ramsey's accusations to launch an independent investigation. We had the Ethics Commission confirming the Supervisor's involvement with gambling. And we had the Supervisor making lavish purchases in cash mere months after they supposedly took a bribe. Let's face it, sometimes when there's smoke, there's fire. We had a thoroughly investigated, well-written piece of reporting that exposed county supervisor corruption at the highest local levels. Also, let's not forget that Supervisor Brooks had a chance to comment and didn't. You bet I ran the story.

The Copper Sky Gazette adheres to the Society of Professional Journalists' ethical standards and those standards were followed here. I resent the implication that either Ellis or I failed to perform in accordance with the highest standards of journalism. Not every article can be written in a perfect world where facts are easily confirmed, sources are always available, and everyone is willing to speak on the record. Excellent investigative journalism is risky and, more often than not, the people who are exposed are angry, resentful, and embarrassed. But that doesn't make them innocent. And suing the Gazette won't keep us from reporting on corruption in the future. I don't care how many Supervisor Brookses sue us.

I affirm under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my belief and knowledge.

/s/ Andy Diggins

SIGNED AND SWORN to before me at 8:00 a.m. on the day of this round of the 2027 Arizona Mock Trial Competition.

_____/S/_____
Henry McDonald, Notary Public
State of Arizona
My Commission Expires: 05/01/2028

A DISHONEST THIEF: Retired County Supervisor Accused of Taking Bribe to Change Pipeline Location

By Ellis Strobel

Ironwood Springs – Former Ironwood Springs City Attorney and retired Gila County Supervisor Hayden Brooks has been accused of taking bribes in connection with the pipeline placement involving the property of Morgan Ramsey, the former President and CEO of Ramsey Real Estate, LLC. Ramsey, who is currently serving a ten-year sentence at the Federal Correctional Institution in Safford, claims that Ramsey paid Supervisor Brooks $500,000 in exchange for Brooks' vote to change the pipeline route.



Supervisor Brooks enjoying their new boat on Rainbow Lake.

Supervisor Brooks has refused to comment on this accusation.

Ramsey alleges that Johannes Weaving, their accountant and a former County Planning Manager and next-door neighbor of Supervisor Brooks, arranged the transaction on October 30. "It was supposed to be simple," Ramsey said. "I would pay Brooks half a million dollars, and Brooks would change the pipeline route."

According to Ramsey, Brooks received the payoff but failed to follow through with their part of the transaction. "Brooks retired before ever voting on the pipeline route. It's bad enough that Brooks was taking bribes, but Brooks wasn't even honest enough to hold up their end of the bargain," stated Ramsey. "There's nothing worse than a dishonest thief."

Since their retirement, Supervisor Brooks has made a number of luxury item purchases, including a new Hummer EV, a lake house, and a small yacht. Subsequent investigation has revealed that Supervisor Brooks paid for each of these purchases with cash.

Supervisor Brooks is also well known as a habitual gambler. Due to Brooks' involvement with this activity, Brooks has been admonished by the Arizona Ethics Commission.

Weaving, would not speak to the Copper Sky Gazette regarding these accusations, and has left the country indefinitely.

The Ironwood Springs Police Department refused to officially comment on this issue. However, Ramsey claims that after making a plea bargain to unrelated federal charges of bankruptcy fraud, Ramsey notified the Ironwood Springs police of the Supervisor's involvement with bribery. The department conducted cursory investigation of the incident, but a source within the department, speaking on the condition of anonymity, stated that they decided not to pursue the matter.



A Hummer was just one of Supervisor Brooks' luxury purchases.

Ramada Inn
4421 West Arizona State Route 88
Pinedale Crossing, AZ 85545
928-555-1234

CUSTOMER COPY

BROOKS, HAYDEN
123 Taconite Mining Drive
Ironwood Springs, AZ 85501

DATE	DESCRIPTION	CHARGE/PAYMENT	BALANCE
11/03/24	VISA CARD PAYMENT	($502.74)	($502.74)
11/03/24	SALES TAX	$8.79	($493.95)
11/03/24	ROOM CHARGE	$75.00	($418.95)
11/02/24	SALES TAX	$8.79	($410.16)
11/02/24	ROOM CHARGE	$75.00	($335.16)
11/01/24	SALES TAX	$8.79	($326.37)
11/01/24	ROOM CHARGE	$75.00	($251.37)
10/31/24	SALES TAX	$8.79	($242.58)
10/31/24	ROOM CHARGE	$75.00	($167.58)
10/30/24	SALES TAX	$8.79	($158.79)
10/30/24	ROOM CHARGE	$75.00	($83.79)
10/29/24	SALES TAX	$8.79	($75.00)
10/29/24	ROOM CHARGE	$75.00	($0.00)
	CREDIT DUE:		($0.00)



_____ ___, 20___

DRAFT LETTER

Hayden Brooks
123 Taconite Mining Drive
Ironwood Springs, AZ 85501

Dear Hayden Brooks:

It has come to the attention of the Arizona Ethics Commission that you have been rumored to be involved in certain gambling and sports-betting activities, some of which may have involved relatively large amounts of money. If true, this would constitute a gross violation of your ethical duties as a supervisor and could be considered grounds for severe censure. As it stands, even the mere suggestion of such activities threatens to stain your reputation for fairness and even handedness.

Due to the fact that no official investigation has taken place, and as a professional courtesy, please regard this as an unofficial Letter of Reprimand. Its contents will not be made public or be placed in the public archives. However, should your actions continue, this Office will decline to extend you the same courtesy in the future.

Please consider yourself warned.

Sincerely,

Josephine Hamms, J.D.,
Executive Director

CODE OF ETHICS

Preamble

Members of the Society of Professional Journalists believe that public enlightenment is the forerunner of justice and the foundation of democracy. The duty of the journalist is to further those ends by seeking truth and providing a fair and comprehensive account of events and issues. Conscientious journalists from all media and specialties strive to serve the public with thoroughness and honesty. Professional integrity is the cornerstone of a journalist's credibility. Members of the Society share a dedication to ethical behavior and adopt this code to declare the Society's principles and standards of practice.

Seek Truth and Report It

Journalists should be honest, fair and courageous in gathering, reporting and interpreting information.

Journalists should:

- Test the accuracy of information from all sources and exercise care to avoid inadvertent error. Deliberate distortion is never permissible.
- Diligently seek out subjects of news stories to give them the opportunity to respond to allegations of wrongdoing.
- Identify sources whenever feasible. The public is entitled to as much information as possible on sources' reliability.
- Always question sources' motives before promising anonymity. Clarify conditions attached to any promise made in exchange for information. Keep promises.
- Make certain that headlines, news teases and promotional material, photos, video, audio, graphics, sound bites and quotations do not misrepresent. They should not oversimplify or highlight incidents out of context.
- Never distort the content of news photos or video. Image enhancement for technical clarity is always permissible. Label montages and photo illustrations.
- Avoid misleading re-enactments or staged news events. If re-enactment is necessary to tell a story, label it.
- Avoid undercover or other surreptitious methods of gathering information except when traditional open methods will not yield information vital to the public. Use of such methods should be explained as part of the story.
- Never plagiarize.
- Tell the story of the diversity and magnitude of the human experience boldly, even when it is unpopular to do so.
- Examine their own cultural values and avoid imposing those values on others.
- Avoid stereotyping by race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, geography, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance or social status.
- Support the open exchange of views, even views they find repugnant.
- Give voice to the voiceless; official and unofficial sources of information can be equally valid.
- Distinguish between advocacy and news reporting. Analysis and commentary should be labeled and not misrepresent fact or context.
- Distinguish news from advertising and shun hybrids that blur the lines between the two.
- Recognize a special obligation to ensure that the public's business is conducted in the open and that government records are open to inspection.

Minimize Harm

Ethical journalists treat sources, subjects and colleagues as human beings deserving of respect.

Journalists should:

- Show compassion for those who may be affected adversely by news coverage. Use special sensitivity when dealing with children and inexperienced sources or subjects.
- Be sensitive when seeking or using interviews or photographs of those affected by tragedy or grief.
- Recognize that gathering and reporting information may cause harm or discomfort. Pursuit of the news is not a license for arrogance.
- Recognize that private people have a greater right to control information about themselves than do public officials and others who seek power, influence or attention. Only an overriding public need can justify intrusion into anyone's privacy.
- Show good taste. Avoid pandering to lurid curiosity.
- Be cautious about identifying juvenile suspects or victims of sex crimes.
- Be judicious about naming criminal suspects before the formal filing of charges.
- Balance a criminal suspect's fair trial rights with the public's right to be informed.

Act Independently

Journalists should be free of obligation to any interest other than the public's right to know.

Journalists should:

- Avoid conflicts of interest, real or perceived.
- Remain free of associations and activities that may compromise integrity or damage credibility.
- Refuse gifts, favors, fees, free travel and special treatment, and shun secondary employment, political involvement, public office and service in community organizations if they compromise journalistic integrity.
- Disclose unavoidable conflicts.
- Be vigilant and courageous about holding those with power accountable.
- Deny favored treatment to advertisers and special interests and resist their pressure to influence news coverage.
- Be wary of sources offering information for favors or money; avoid bidding for news.

Be Accountable

Journalists are accountable to their readers, listeners, viewers and each other.

Journalists should:

- Clarify and explain news coverage and invite dialogue with the public over journalistic conduct.
- Encourage the public to voice grievances against the news media.
- Admit mistakes and correct them promptly.
- Expose unethical practices of journalists and the news media.
- Abide by the same high standards to which they hold others

From the Copper Sky Gazette – November 2, 2024

Supervisor Hayden Brooks Announces Retirement

In a press release dated today and issued from Brooks' office, Supervisor Hayden Brooks announced their retirement after 10 years of service.

Supervisor Brooks has served Ironwood Springs as a City Attorney and Supervisor for the past 35 years and is well known around town for their charitable endeavors, including service for the Red Cross and the Rotary Club. Supervisor Brooks is also very involved at their alma mater, Lillehaug University.

Curriculum Vitae for DR. BLAKE BAKER

Current Employment

Edward R. Murrow Emeritus Professor (2010-present)
Ernie Pyle School of Journalism at Indiana University
Currently teaching "Ethics in the Age of New Media" (fall semester 2026) and "The Pentagon Papers: Did the Courts Get It Right?" (senior seminar spring semester 2027)

Previous Employment

William O'Reilly Professor of Media Ethics (2005-2010) Dean of Ernie Pyle School of Journalism (2005-2010) Ernie Pyle School of Journalism at Indiana University
Courses: "Media Ethics"
"Newspaper Presentation"
"Reporting in the 21st Century"
"Ethics in the Newsroom"
"Feature Writing for Newspapers"

Professor of Journalism (2003-2005)
Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland
Courses: "Media Law and Ethics"
"Advanced Newspaper Reporting"
"Editing 300"

Associate Professor of Journalism (1998-2003)
E.W. Scripps School of Journalism at Ohio University
Courses: "Media Ethics in the 20th Century"
"Beginning Reporting"
"Beginning Editing"

Arizona Republic (1992-1994)
Reporter, News Department (City Transit Department)
Responsibilities included reporting on new transportation developments such as the location of new light rail system, traffic gridlock, crime on the transit system, and changes or improvements to the citywide transit system.

Phoenix New Times (1990-1992)
Reporter, News Division
Responsibilities included reporting on crimes occurring in Phoenix, including homicides, robberies, assaults, and trials when applicable.

Education

Ph.D., The Ohio State University (1996-1998)

M.S.J., The Ohio State University (1994-1996)
GPA: 3.7 (*magna cum laude*)

B.S.J., Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University (1986-1990)
GPA: 3.8 (*summa cum laude*)
Assistant Editor-in-Chief, *The Daily Northwestern*

Publications

(Note: Below is an excerpt of most recent publications. A complete list of publications will be provided upon request).

"Bloggers Are the Enemy: How New Media Outlets Are Undermining Journalistic Standards." American Journalism Review, Vol. 207, October 2020.

"Lessons From the Front: What Reporters Can Learn From Jayson Blair & Stephen Glass." Columbia Journalism Review, Vol. 45, September 2020.

"He Said What? Ensuring the Accuracy of Quotations and Attributions." The Ohio State Journalism Review, Vol. 66, February 2020.

"The Necessity of the Anonymous Source: Journalism in the Age of the Whistleblower." Simon & Schuster, 2019.

"The Truth is Behind Bars: Why America's Reporters Should Spend More Time Talking to Inmates and Less Time Listening to the Establishment." Simon & Schuster, 2016.

"Journalistic Standards 2015." (Author: Chapters 1, 3, & 12) Simon & Schuster, 2015.

"Ethics in Journalism." (Textbook) Simon & Schuster, 2010.

Awards & Honors

Pew Center for Civic Journalism Ethics Award (2021)

Columbia Journalism Review Best Article Award for "Lessons From the Front: What Reporters Can Learn From Jayson Blair & Stephen Glass." (2020)

"The Necessity of the Anonymous Source: Journalism in the Age of the Whistleblower" recognized as a *New York Times* Notable Book. (2019)

Cokie Roberts Award for Outstanding Media Commentary for "The Necessity of the Anonymous Source: Journalism in the Age of the Whistleblower." (2019)

"The Truth is Behind Bars: Why America's Reporters Should Spend More Time Talking to Inmates and Less Time Listening to the Establishment" recognized as Top Ten Book of the Year by the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Boston Globe*, and *USA Today*. (2016)

Ernie Pyle School of Journalism Professor of the Year Award. (2008, 2012, & 2020).

Benjamin Bradlee Award for Outstanding Doctoral Thesis "Journalistic Ethics in the Me Decade: How Today's Wall Street Tycoons Are Buying Good Press" (The Ohio State University). (1998)

Aristotle Award for Outstanding Publication: "Why the Public Cannot Trust the Government: The Nixon Effect" (University of Chicago). (1995)

Abraham Lincoln Award for Excellence in Ethical Reporting (Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University). (1990)

Professional Associations

Chairman, Society of Professional Journalists' Committee on Ethics (2021-2022).

Member, Society of Professional Journalists' Committee on Ethics (2007-2011 & 2015-2021).

Member, National Association of Newspaper Columnists (1990-present).

Committee Chairman, Association for Excellence in Journalism (2003-2006).

May 2, 2004

Captain Ron D. Ryan
Maricopa County Sheriff's Office
550 W. Jackson St.
Phoenix, AZ 85003

Dear Captain Ryan:

I hope this letter finds you in good health and spirits. It was a pleasure seeing you again at the Ironwood Springs Rotary Charity Auction last month. I trust you will be able to attend the charity poker event next month with the Lillehaug Athletics Booster Club.

I am writing on behalf of Lillehaug University basketball player Shay Christoff, who worked as an intern in my office for the past semester. As you know, our co-internship program with the Gila County Attorney's Office provides students a well-rounded, "hands on" experience that is second to none. Shay Christoff has been a valuable addition to my support staff. Shay Christoff has also excelled under the direction of Gila County Assistant County Attorney Tim Kaminsky. It is my understanding that Shay's intelligence and common sense have impressed many in our offices.

A two-time MVP of the Lewis Classic, Shay is now interested in pursuing a career in law enforcement. I am pleased to recommend Shay's admission into the Police Academy. As you are well aware, your program can never have too many Lillehaug University graduates.

Sincerely,

H. B.

Hayden Brooks
Ironwood Springs City Attorney