



We visited a school in Pokrovsk, which is in the Donbas region in Eastern Ukraine. The school had been hit by a Russian missile a few weeks before. The fact that a school was targeted by Russian missiles was shocking within itself, but unfortunately the targeting of civilian sites by Russia has become commonplace in Ukraine. In the schoolyard, there

were the remnants of a playground—much of which had been destroyed. There was a young boy who was playing there. He saw us, stopped playing, and came up to us. In Ukrainian, he said to us, “Let me show you what they did here.” He then led us inside the bombed-out school and showed us his classroom. Everything was destroyed.

Memories of Ukraine

Patrick Zinck and his father, John Zinck, traveled to Ukraine from March 18 to 26, 2023 to help a group of volunteers deliver three ambulances, 2,000 coats, and other supplies to Internally Displaced Persons living there. We asked them to tell us about themselves, and share their stories and personal insights from the trip.

PATRICK ZINCK

I work as an attorney at a law firm called Hogan Lovells. I focus on government relations work and competition regulation law. My passion is geopolitics, and my educational background is focused on international affairs. I am in the process of moving into the public sector and intend to do foreign policy work.

I co-host a podcast with my friend, Nathan Kiker, who is a political consultant in D.C. We started the podcast at the beginning of 2022 with the name “Game On: The Race to 2022.” The podcast was initially focused on the 2022 midterm elections, but post-midterms, we have transitioned it to focus on both domestic and geopolitical issues and now call it “Game On: The Politics Podcast.” We try not to express any political views, but rather our goal is to engage in substantive political discussions with various guests who span the political spectrum. For each episode, we interview a different guest.

I met Brock Bierman last year through my podcast. We wanted to set up an interview with him to discuss his work with Ukraine. In the email exchange, I half-jokingly asked if he would like us to come with him to

Ukraine and record a podcast episode there. To my surprise, his reply was “Sure! That would be great.” I invited my dad on the trip.

My dad and I flew from the U.S. to Warsaw. From Warsaw, we traveled to Košice, Slovakia which is where our group was staged prior to crossing into Ukraine. We crossed the border into Ukraine by car at the Slovakia border. On the way back, we took a train back to Warsaw and crossed the border into Poland near the western Ukrainian town of Lviv.

I was amazed by how every person I met was united in terms of supporting their fellow Ukrainians and being resolute in their determination to keep their country. Regardless of political differences, every person I met was united in their determination to keep their government—even if they did not vote for the current government. One young man openly told me that prior to the war, he was an active member of the European Solidarity party (the opposition party to the current government). But he said to me “Now, we are all just Ukrainian. We all have the same goal—to keep our country.”

I have been a strong advocate for supporting Ukraine since the start of the war. Being in Ukraine put into perspective why it is so important that we in the U.S. stay united and resolute in our determination to support Ukraine. Ukraine shares many of our fundamental values—values that they are fighting to defend against one of our greatest adversaries. Ukraine isn’t just fighting for their own country; they are fighting for all of us.

In February, I interviewed the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor of Bucha, Ukraine on my podcast during their visit to D.C. Bucha was the site of the Bucha Massacre in March 2022—one of the most horrific massacres of civilians that has taken place during the war. The bodies of at least 458 men, women, and even children were discovered in the town after Russian forces



LEFT: My message says, "John Zinck, Barrington, IL, USA stands with Ukraine." I wrote it because I believe in Ukraine fighting for their freedom and sovereignty against the tyranny of an unprovoked Russian invasion. MIDDLE: I signed my name and wrote the city that I live in: "Patrick Zinck, Washington D.C." I also wrote at the top "Washington D.C. stands with Ukraine." I wrote it on the driver-side door so that every time the driver gets in or out of the ambulance, they would be reminded that they have support from all over the world.

RIGHT: This photo was taken at an IDP (Internally Displaced Persons) center in Chernivtsi. We had 2,000 new coats that were donated and that we distributed to several IDP centers and other places that needed them. The girl in the photo was playing outside when we arrived. Her coat was clearly worn out and she needed a new one. In the photo, she is trying on the new coat to make sure it fits. Ukraine Focus (NGO) CEO Brock Bierman, who is helping the girl with her new coat, was the Assistant Administrator of USAID for Europe and Eurasia from 2018-2021. USAID is the United States Agency for International Development (the agency in the government that is responsible for providing foreign aid and development assistance). Previously, he was a state representative from Rhode Island.

left the town. Most of them had their hands tied behind their backs and were shot execution style in the head by Russian military forces. Some of the victims had been burnt and mutilated, and young girls had been raped. The Russian forces also looted every corner of the town before retreating.

I mention this podcast episode because the Mayor and the Deputy Mayor both exemplify how united and determined Ukrainians are. This episode is the "special episode with the mayor and deputy" on Apple podcasts.

JOHN ZINCK

I work as an Electrical Engineer in technical sales. Prior to that, I spent eight years in the United States Navy as A6 Bombardier Navigator with VA75 based in Virginia Beach and was deployed on the USS John F Kennedy (CV67). I flew 28 combat missions over Iraq and Kuwait during Desert Storm.

My wife, Lisa, and I have been married for 30 years and we moved to Deer Park in August 2003. We have four children who all graduated from BHS. Mitchell in 2011. He completed EMT training and furthered his career by becoming a licensed Paramedic. Patrick in 2014. He graduated from Vanderbilt University in 2018 and Columbia Law School in 2021 and is practicing law in Washington, D.C. Jackson graduated from BHS in 2020. He is working for the Washington State Conservation Department improving habitat for wildlife, fish, birds, and public access. Kelly graduated in 2022. She is attending at St. Louis University in Madrid, Spain.

My Dad (Norbert Zinck) made 23 humanitarian trips over a period of 19 years. He passed in early December 2022 and our trip to Ukraine was a befitting memorial and testament to his altruistic life. He was associated with ACDI/VOCA and traveled to Mexico, South America, Europe, Asia, and Africa to educate people on implementation of improved agriculture practices. Most of the areas he traveled to had rudimentary ways of doing things in farming. His example of selfless giving to people completely unknown in countries far away with no expectation or desire for anything in return impacted my life, forever igniting a desire to do the same.



The orphanage is called "City of Goodness," and is in Chernivtsi. It was funded by a private donor who also donated one of the ambulances that we were delivering. There, we learned that many of the infants and children at the orphanage were orphaned as their parents were killed amid the war. One of the most striking aspects of the orphanage was the bomb shelter—they had built a bomb shelter that was a large underground playroom. There were swings, slides, coloring tables, and toys. All things designed to help keep the children calm during the frequent missile and drone attacks. The mere fact that an orphanage would even need a bomb shelter was stunning to us. But it underscores what Russia has made clear since the start of the war—there are no limits to what they will target.

The thing that stood out to me was the attitude of Ukrainian people. Even though they are living under constant threat of impending doom, they are happy and insist on continuing with life as close to normal as possible. Their fortitude, resolve, and perseverance were truly inspiring. Even though they have every right, they were NOT wallowing in a "woe is me" attitude. The most impressive thing was their unity. They will NOT give up. Their unity was a breath of fresh air compared to the polarized discord we see in politics, media, "news," social media, and general U.S. society. I feel I owe them a debt of gratitude for putting things in perspective. U