

Making Our Way



A McMAHON / CHEYNE PODCAST

Season 2 - Episode 8

10/30/24

"A Republic..." (part 1)

Our Hosts

Janet Cheyne McMahon is a lover of family, dogs, nature, travel, books, and music. Born south of the Mason-Dixon line, she left after 9 months for parts north, landing eventually in Michigan, which will always be “where I’m from.”

Love of learning led Jan to a Bachelor of Arts (History, Political Science) at the University of Michigan-Dearborn (Go Blue), and a Master of Arts (Library and Information Science) at the University of South Florida. Amid all that, studied for a time with Rob at Colorado State University, a pivotal time in their lives.

Worked at the U of M-Dearborn Library, and then The Salvation Army Florida Divisional Headquarters, with the greatest reward being in serving as the Divisional Librarian. A librarian is who Jan is “in my soul.”

Jan and Rob have made our home in Florida since 1983, and live now in retirement with their dog, Skye, who makes it all the best adventure. They travel as much as possible, spending time in nature and in diverse places on this amazing planet. It has all been, and continues to be a fascinating journey, with hope of making a difference, in small ways, by being brave enough to speak and act on behalf of others.

Rob McMahon is a native Michigander, born in Saginaw and raised in the suburbs of Detroit. Rob attended Michigan State University, graduating in 1978 with a Bachelor of Science degree. He did graduate studies at the University of Michigan and the University of South Florida. Rob is retired, having spent 36 years in public education teaching both high school chemistry and biology and middle school science. He worked as a total quality management trainer for the Pinellas County School District and served four years as the president of the Pinellas Classroom Teachers Association. Rob cofounded a non-profit total quality management training center, The Learning Co-op, for Teacher Unions interested in applying the W. Edwards Deming continuous improvement principles to their day-to-day operations. He worked with teacher unions in Colorado, Maryland, New Mexico, North Dakota, Texas and Michigan. He also worked in a similar capacity with Jim Shipley & Associates. In retirement Rob has written a series of science related children’s books, and enjoys traveling with his wife, Jan, and their black Labrador Retriever, Skye.

Deanna Cheyne, born in St. John’s, Newfoundland, earned a Bachelor’s Degree in Vocal Performance from the University of Toronto (1996), studying with such luminaries as Elmer Eisler, Doreen Rao, Greta Kraus, Lois Marshall, and Rosemarie Landry.

Dee taught music at Mississauga Christian Academy, served as music director for Meadowvale Bible Baptist Church (Mississauga, Ontario), served as Assistant Divisional Music Director for The Salvation Army in Florida, is a former member of Tampa’s Master Chorale, and, for the past 18 years, has been a public school teacher.

Dee has visit 36 of the 50 U.S. states, and 12 countries. Her favorite destinations include France, Prague, New Orleans, National Parks, & Hawaii.

Dee & Jim live in Florida with Brigus (Golden Retriever) and Pip (Teacup Yorkie).

James Cheyne, born in Galesburg, Illinois, earned a Bachelor of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from Michigan State University (1978); and a Master of Music degree (Theory and Composition) from the University of Illinois - Urbana/Champaign (1981), studying with David Liptak, Salvatore Martirano, and Ben Johnston.

Jim has served as music director for The Salvation Army in Central Illinois & Eastern Iowa, Orlando Area Command, and the Florida Division, served as a pastor with The Salvation Army, and was a public school teacher for 17 years.

In travel so far, Jim has visited 50 states and 27 countries. His favorite travel destinations include National Parks, New Orleans, Newfoundland, Argentina, Prague, & France.

Jim continues to write music and support Dee’s musical endeavors, and cooks whenever absolutely necessary. Jim & Dee live in Florida with their dogs Brigus & Pip.



L-R: Brigus, Jim, Deanna, Skye, Jan, Rob.
Inset: Pip

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"A Republic..." (part 1)

Season 2; Episode 8

10/30/2024

Hosts: Jan, Rob, Dee, & Jim

What's on your ballot? Political dichotomies (blue/red, left/right, Democrat/Republican, liberal/conservative. Obama's pandemic plan. Trump scuttles it. Trump's tariffs & economy. Biden's economy.

[Music]

JIM: So, yeah, my voice is a little low today, so I'm gonna do this all like a Barry White slow jam. [laughter] We're talking about elections. We're making a selection.

[Music ends]

JIM: So I have something I got in the mail from someone named Brian Corley. Brian E. Corley is the supervisor of elections of...

DEE: Our county.

JIM: ...Pasco County. He tells me that beginning Monday, October 21st, 2024 through Saturday, November 2nd, voters may cast their ballot early at either of the locations listed below.

ROB: He says either?

JIM: Yeah, see, this is the problem, because there are several locations, which is what we're gonna do.

DEE: It should be "any of..."

JIM: And then inside, I have a sample ballot, which tells me everything that I will be voting on, and it gives me a chance to kind of look it over. Now, here are things called president and vice president, and I can vote for Jill Stein, Peter Sonsky, Randall Terry, Claudia de la Cruz, Chase Oliver, Kamala D. Harris, and Donald J. Trump. Or I can write in my own choices for them. Then it has senators. I understand. It has representatives. I understand. I've seen these people's signs. State representatives, superintendent of schools, county commissioners. Now I'm getting into murky territory, and I'm just thinking, these are all blurry names to me. County Commissioner, Justice of the Supreme Court - "Shall so-and-so be retained in office?" And I'm thinking, "Well, how would I know?" So in this blizzard of information, how am I supposed to be making informed decisions? If I vote for someone just on a toss of a coin, I'm actually voting against someone else on the same toss of a coin, so maybe I should just abstain. When you've seen things you don't understand, you haven't researched, or you don't - do you just pick one? Do you pick a party? Do you pick a...

ROB: No, we research it.

JIM: Well, suppose you're in there - not that this has ever happened to me - but suppose you're in the booth and you see something and said, "I didn't even know this was on here." What do you do? Do you abstain?

JAN: Yes.

JIM: Do you?

JAN: If that actually happened to me, I would abstain.

JIM: You'd abstain?

JIM: 'cause I would have - yes. You don't know what you...

ROB: I look at a couple of things. If they have a party affiliation, if it's one of those, I will generally pick one over the other. I will generally pick a woman over a man, if I don't know what's happening, because they're smarter.

DEE: Yay.

ROB: And I fear, especially if they're a white male. And who appointed them, if it's a judge. That's important.

JAN: We have an excellent supervisor of elections in Pinellas County, and we get great information, which I'm assuming you do, too. We get emails, we get the ballot ahead of time, and the website for our county is excellent in pointing us to good information. It is nonpartisan, so anything that's going to require a decision that I want a little more information on, I have to go to other sources. But, one thing, Jim, you mentioned dates of early voting, and I think they're actually - they go through November 3rd. Double-check that.

JIM: Okay. Well, this information that I have that says through Saturday, November 2nd.

JAN: Okay. Ours goes through the 3rd. I don't know why.

JIM: Well, elections are county affairs, right?

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: I was reading something from the University of Michigan, and it had to do with the order of names on a ballot. When I look at mine, all of the names are done by party, but Republicans are always put first.

DEE: Yeah.

JIM: So I wondered about that, and it turns out that's a choice that you have. For instance, in California, they randomize so that one county, the names would be in a certain order, not alphabetical, not by party, but just random, and then the next county, they'd be different. Next county. Texas does that, too. Why does a locksmith call himself "AAA Locksmith Company," which is an old Yellow Pages thing, right?

ROB: Yeah, right.

JIMI: You need a locksmith, you go to the Yellow Pages, you look under locksmiths, and there's AAA Locksmith, and he does better than...

ROB: First, yeah.

JIM: ...Thomas Williams Locksmith, because he's first on the thing. And there really is an effect like that. It's most prominent in elections that are less prominent. It doesn't make a big impact on presidential elections, but when you get down into all this murky in-the-weeds, and you really don't know what it is, that there is a preference for choosing the first candidate.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: And statistically, it's higher than the margin of victory. So I thought research would be good. So where do you go to find out what all these amendments are?

ROB: The internet. League of Women Voters.

JAN: Yep. That's vote411.org. We go to...

ROB: Newspapers.

JAN: Yeah.

ROB: Sorry.

JAN: It's okay. Ballotpedia. Pew Research. And if I want to know if something's true or not, I go to PolitiFact.

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: There's an interesting ad right now for Amendment 4...

ROB: Four.

JAN: ...that talks about parents no longer having any say in abortion. And that's not true.

ROB: It's right in the - it's right in...

JAN: If you read the amendment...

ROB: ...the amendment.

JAN: ...it's right there. So when there's an ad that is presenting a side, I like to go and fact check that ad. There are many credible websites to look up the accuracy of information, and I was going to suggest that we list them on your website, Jim.

JIM: I would be happy. On the transcript?

JAN: Yeah.

JIM: On the transcript. Okay, so let's do a plug for the transcripts. You may be reading this in what you think is a transcript. Maybe it's on YouTube. Maybe it's through Apple Podcast. That is a transcript that's generated through AI as the thing plays. But if you want an accurate transcript, I put the transcript on our website, which is cheynemusic.com/podcast. You can download. They are PDF. Since it's a PDF, there are hyperlinks that you can click on in it that will take you to these sites.

JAN: Can I...

JIM: I like the Vote 411...

JAN: It's really good.

JIM: ...dot org is a very good one.

JAN: I'm going to give one plug for libraries here. One of the great compliments I ever got working at The Salvation Army's library was, people would come and ask me for voter information. And some of the people that asked me would know my bias, but they trusted me to give them unbiased information, which was my goal. Or if there is bias, to let people know what that bias is before I would give them the information. Libraries are a great source for that. You can go and get ballot information or candidate information, and they will point you to any of the sources that I would say right now in our script.

JIM: Dee & I live in what would be called a red area. Those colors, red and blue, have a curious history since...

JAN: 2000.

JIM: The 2000 election.

JAN: Yeah.

JIM: Do you know why it happened? How it happened?

JAN: I know how - well, I know that it came up during the Bush-Gore conflict, even post-election, when it became established. I was interested in the fact that it used to be the other way around sometimes, that Democrats were red and Republicans were blue in a more conservative way. But it was NBC that established it as it is now. Tom Brokaw, as I understand it, was the main broadcaster who kind of solidified. And everybody followed NBC at that point after the 2000 election. And I think it became solidified also because there was so much discussion about that election, so it was in our faces all the time that way. And now that's just the way that it is.

ROB: Was it Tim Russert?

DEE: That's what I was thinking.

JIM: I've heard Tim Russert's name involved in it, too.

ROB: Because he was Florida, Florida, Florida. But I didn't know if he had anything to do with the red-blue.

JIM: See, you kids out there may not realize this, but some of us around the table used to watch TV in black and white. And so the colors were rather meaningless. And then when color came along, suddenly every network could do its own thing. There's no mandate about this. There's nothing legislated about colors meaning different things. They just did it that way. If a state were ever to go for an independent candidate, that state would have been colored yellow. But different - CBS, ABC, NBC, they each had their own way of doing it. And then suddenly what we have now was standardized at the 2000 election.

I remember there were bumper stickers that said "Gore Lieberman." Because Joe Lieberman was the vice presidential candidate. And then I remember after that, a certain part of the political spectrum was making fun of that because it was a contested election. So they changed it into "Sore Loserman." And people just thought that was the most

hilarious thing they had ever seen. "Sore Loserman." And then I remember how Gore decided, "Okay, the contest is over." And Gore presided over the certification of the election for George Bush. In a very gentlemanly, I would say, patriotic way. So I don't know who would be taking on the moniker of "Sore Loserman" now. But I know that that was the election that gave us red and blue.

But I have these either/or words. Left/right, blue/red, conservative/liberal, Democrat/Republican. That these things tend to shift. And I'm thinking, what are the words that you use? Because if blue and red is just so arbitrary, as we've seen...

The left/right came from the French Revolution. And someone in a room just stood up - because they're all in this room just talking, talking - and they said, "All right, I want everyone who's supporting the monarchy to go over here to the right side of the room. Everyone who's supporting the revolution, go over here to the left side of the room. Get with your people. Talk this out. And then we'll have a discussion." And that's where it all started. And then they started sitting on those sides of the room. So the right side is kind of like, keep things as they are, not a lot of change, slow it down, not too much. And the left is kind of like, let's get going, let's move, let's progress into something else.

What about a Democrat and Republican? Where did those things come from?

ROB: They've gone through a big shift since Lincoln.

JIM: So...

ROB: Lincoln's Republicans would be the Democrats of today. And the Democrats of today would have been, well, that's what I just said, would have been the Lincoln.

JAN: Well, that was the Civil War.

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: So who's thought of as the first Republican president? It's Lincoln, right?

ROB: Yeah.

JIM: That's when the party kind of was invented.

ROB: Right.

JIM: And Stephen Douglas was the - not Frederick Douglass - Stephen Douglas was the Democrat. But his party comes out of where? I know that Jackson did a lot of forming it, but it -doesn't it go back to Jefferson, right?

Yes. Oh, yeah. Right. He was a Democrat. Yeah.

JIM: And he forms his party in distinction to the Federalists party. Then you're getting through slavery. The Republicans are saying, "No, we really ought to abolish this and keep the Union together." And the Democrats are saying, "Don't tell us what to do down here with our economy." But that shifted. Was it during our lifetime? Did it start during our lifetime? Because there was a time I remember when Johnson lost the Dixiecrats - the Democrats in the South - because of his stance on civil rights. And so they went over into the Republican party.

ROB: I think it might have started just a little before we were born. That shift started to happen slowly. And then with Kennedy and Johnson, it really moved quickly.

JAN: Well, when you think of Teddy Roosevelt as a Republican and an environmentalist, and really very much different in his mindset than our current understanding of the Republican Party.

ROB: Yeah.

JAN: So, that's pre-Kennedy and Johnson. Johnson really, I think, with his Great Society formed that sort of – I'm going to use the word progressive – that you can actually make society better through legislation. He did that in the civil rights legislation. All the acts that happened during the Great Society were part of that, what I would use the word progressive, saying that government can be part of the solution to problems.

ROB: Yeah. I mean, FDR, there was...

JAN: Well, that's true.

ROB: ...you know, and that's before us. Yeah, his view of America was pretty progressive for the time.

JIM: And so then we have these words, conservative and liberal. And how do we use those?

JAN: Well, liberal typically is the ability to change. The fact that you can move in a direction for, say, social justice, or that regulation is a positive thing in our lives, not a negative, versus conservative, which is sort of keep things as they are. Because as they are, is a known, we know what to work with that. Those are the ways I would define them. Some other thought here, I think, too, on the words laissez-faire, less government, let the business run, let capitalism run, whereas in liberal, you're going to see government as more engaged, more of possible solutions, and not in a negative way.

JIM: Okay.

ROB: Does anybody see a difference in the reaction of people to the terms liberal and progressive?

JAN: Well, here's – I want to throw something at you here, because here's what happened to me. I defined myself as progressive. And all of a sudden, I was AOC.

DEE: Oh.

JAN: I was thinking of it more as a relationship to government.

DEE: Mm-Hmm.

JAN: Now, I have no problems with AOC, just to put that on the table. But it was reacted to quite negatively...

DEE: Mm-Hmm.

JAN: ...when I called myself progressive before I was able to define what I meant by it.

DEE: Mm-Hmm.

JAN: So that's, I think, today, I do see a difference in reaction to liberal as a – I see it as a

broader term...

DEE: Yeah.

JAN: ...and progressive as more action-oriented.

ROB: I think people see Democrat as liberal.

DEE: Mm-Hmm.

ROB: ...but within the Democratic Party, you've got the Progressive Caucus.

DEE: That's right, yeah.

ROB: And it's a big theme to people outside, "Whoa, they're way over there on the left."

JIM: Yeah. I'm trying to remember the election where it happened that the Democrats were using the term progressive quite a lot - this is before AOC was there - and then they were accused of using the word progressive because they didn't like the word liberal.

JAN & ROB: Yeah.

JIM: That liberal had become a dirty word, so, "Now they're just trying to say they're progressive and it's supposed to sound so positive and everything, but we know what they really are." That's what the accusation was. Words just kind of gather feelings. "I know what this word means. I'm going to tag you with it. I'm going to hold you accountable for everything I believe that word means once I've tagged you that way. Oh, they're just a - they're like that person," you know, that kind of rhetoric, which is...

JAN: Not helpful.

JIM: No, it's quite harmful. When I look at my social media feed, I see people always doing comparisons about how much they had to pay for something in 2000...

ROB: Oh, geez.

JIM: ...compared to how they're having to pay for things today. It's hard to see through their rhetorical nuances, but I think they're trying to blame Joe Biden for how much they're paying for eggs. So I get the feeling - which will trump your facts every day - I get the feeling the economy is in the toilet. And so when I hear Trump say something about tariffs, I get this gut feeling of, "Yeah, that'll do it. America first and let's stick it to these foreign companies." And so...

JAN: Well, these two policies that he's big on right now are tariffs, which are going to add 20 percent to the cost of everything that we buy that comes into this country. And getting rid of all immigrants, and he's broadened that beyond just, you know, illegal as he - as we have traditionally defined it. And I'm just going to wonder who's going to do that work as they leave. Who's going to pick our crops? Who is going to do all the work right now that's done by immigrants? Is going to raise also the cost. And I'm going to feed this now to Deanna and her thoughts on the economy.

DEE: You mentioned tariffs. During his four years, he imposed tariffs on goods from China, which helped to contribute to inflation. When people want to talk about things costing more, Trump was punishing China and therefore also punishing the American people by

raising prices on things, so...

My father was a history teacher and I grew up in a home where the news was on nightly for three hours. This is before 24-hour cable news. And I've always had an appreciation for history and the importance of history. That leads me to talk about 2009 in April. That's when the H1N1 virus, also known as the swine flu pandemic, broke out. That was followed by, in 2013 on December 26th - a date I'm sure that Jan appreciates her birthday...

JAN: Thank you so much.

DEE: ...that was the epidemic of the Ebola virus in West Africa.

So why am I talking about these two crises? When we're talking about the 2024 election, what is the relevance?

Recently, I saw a Trump supporter wearing a shirt and it started with an expletive followed by the words, "...your feelings."

JAN: Lovely.

DEE: And then it said, "Trump 2024." Trump's lack of importance on science and his rejection of all things Obama led to the economy being where it is today as a result of the pandemic. First of all, as a result of the epidemic and the pandemic in 2009 and 2013, the Obama administration's response was to lead a global health security challenge. So they came up with a pandemic playbook called "For early response to high consequences emerging infectious diseases, threats and biological incidents." The document is a 69-page National Security Council guidebook developed in 2016 with the goal of assisting leaders in coordinating a complex U.S. government response to a high consequence emerging threat anywhere in the world.

Obama warned in 2014 about a potential pandemic. He pushed for billions in emergency funding that ended up being blocked by GOP in Congress. After this, Trump disbanded Obama's - the official title was "The Directorate of Global Health Security and Biodefense." So by the end of December, 2019, as the COVID-19 epidemic began breaking out in China, Trump was largely without coherent scientific input into his policymaking. The administration was anti-science and not prepared.

Why did he do this? Articles have claimed expense and that it was too large.

JAN: It's because it was Obama's idea.

JIM: Yeah.

DEE: Yeah.

JIM: Obama hurt his feelings at the White House Correspondents Dinner by making fun of him. And so he decided then "I'm going to run for president. I'm going to win. And I'm going to dismantle everything that he did."

DEE: The Trump administration received first formal notification of the outbreak on the coronavirus in China on January 3rd. It took 70 days from this initial warning for Trump to treat the virus as a lethal force poised to kill tens of thousands of citizens. This more than two-month stretch now stands as critical time that was squandered. The most consequential

failure involved a breakdown in efforts to develop a diagnostic test that could be mass produced and distributed across the U.S., enabling agencies to map early outbreaks of the disease and impose quarantine measures to contain them. This led Trump to claims that sunlight will kill the virus. It was resistant to antibiotics, so the virus could not cause a pandemic. This is what he said. Then he touted hydroxychloroquine and noxious household detergents as interventions to either prevent or treat infection. And some people actually took his advice and there were deaths as a result of that.

The Guardian goes on to say the U.S. could have averted 40 percent of COVID deaths. And this was in the Lancet Commission and it says, examining Trump's policies, they came to the conclusion that it could have averted 40 percent of deaths. The country began the pandemic with degraded public health infrastructure leading to more deaths than other high income countries. Trump's response was not to take the pandemic seriously enough and soon enough. He spread conspiracies, discouraged masks, and undermined scientists. And he, as we may recall, hosted a - was it a Rose Garden event? - with everyone unmasked who were in attendance to this announcement, I think, of the female Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney - Coney Barrett. And it became a mass spread of the disease. And I believe - I'm not sure, I didn't look this up - but I believe that's where Trump himself contracted COVID-19. And we remember he was seriously, or we could even say maybe deathly ill that's been kept...

JIM: It hit him hard.

ROB: Yup.

DEE: It did hit him hard. And there have been some things that people were seriously worried who were in the White House as to what might happen. How does this affect the economy?

JIM: Before we do that...

DEE: Yeah.

JIM: ...let's just do kind of like a summary sort of idea. What's going on in Trump's brain that this thing is happening? And it has to do with, first of all, if there's anything that's not looking bright and shiny for the country, he's afraid it's a reflection on him personally. So he has to deny the reality of it because it might make him look bad. And so he has to - I remember him being on the thing saying, "Oh, there are only, like, 15 cases in the country and it's going to go away, through maybe by April, and stuff. And that's what everyone's saying." No one was saying that. But that's what he was saying, because he has to minimize that there's anything wrong during his presidency. And then later he's got to say, "Well, let's find boogymen for it." So he's going to start using the word China all the time.

ROB: China.

JIM: And so he's going to start to rename the virus as a China virus, because that deflects it away from him.

The problem with this man is he's never learned how to lose.

DEE: No.

JIM: He's never learned how to lose. In chess, one of the things we know: you only get better by losing. You only get better by losing and you embrace your losses as a chance to get

better. He has to deny them at every step, that he's never lost anything. If it looks like he has, it's either fake information or it's because of someone else's incompetency, not because of him. He's always won. And because he never can admit to a loss, he can never learn. He can never grow as a person. Somehow he equates losing with weakness. And so he can't be weak, so he cannot have lost.

And so when this thing's coming up, first, he doesn't like Obama because Obama hurt his feelings. So he guts all of the preparations that Obama administration had made for an event such as this. And then he's not prepared to accept that it's a real thing because somehow that makes him look bad, which is not what you want in a leader. But it somehow makes him look bad, so he's got to deny the reality of it. And then it has mortality consequences. And it also has economic consequences that are still rippling through to today, which you've looked into, right?

DEE: Yeah. Well, and some people might be saying, "Oh, well, no, the Obama administration didn't leave a plan for the Trump administration," which is what Mitch McConnell claimed. A number of Obama officials came out and said, "No, we grilled this incoming administration," and you can go to obamaadministration.gov, and that's where they have all of the documents with the dates of when this happened or these things were passed.

JIM: She's probably going to say the same thing I was...

JAN: Well, what I want to say is, it's not just that it's the Obama administration's White House.

JIM: That's it.

JAN: It's that they have the second part of what you said. They have the documents available because we all know people will flip that and say, "Well, of course, Obama." No, no, no, no. There's actually the documents available for examination to show the case.

DEE: If you're curious, or if you have doubts about anything I'm saying, go research it. Go look up the resources that we'll post on the website because I know - and I'm guilty of this - Sometimes we like to get information that validates our own biases, but we have to be open to hearing other - not views, but - other facts that maybe we haven't - that haven't been put in front of us.

JIM: What about Operation Warp Speed? Is Trump to be given any credit for that?

DEE: He can be given some credit, but he acted too late. On January 3rd, why didn't they go, "Where's that playbook we had? We are now experiencing what we were warned about. It's happening." And they should have been rushing to put everything back together and follow that playbook. And they didn't.

ROB: Well, and he mortally wounded it with his wishy-washiness about taking the virus [vaccine] and the effectiveness of the virus - of the vaccine.

[Music]

JIM (voice-over): We'll pause here for a moment to let you know about some upcoming episodes. In September, it was our privilege to meet with two remarkable people. One, Mark Welsh, works with Honor Flight, an organization that provides veterans with the opportunity to travel to Washington, D.C., to visit various memorials dedicated to their service. Honor Flight serves all veterans, of course, with priority given to those from World

War II, to those from the Korean conflict, and to those whose health conditions would make them a priority. Joining Mark Welsh at our table was Master Sergeant O'Neill Ducharme, a retired Marine and veteran of World War II, specifically the Battle of Okinawa. These discussions are so important to our collective national memory that we have devoted more than one episode to them, and these will be published in connection with Veterans Day.

Also, we recorded our current discussion about the upcoming election on Sunday, October 27th, and the material deserves more than just this one episode, but since we publish on Wednesdays, the next episode would air after the election is over, though I'm guessing long before the outcome is known. So, since some of us are Medicare eligible, we will publish next Wednesday's episode as an early bird special on Sunday, November 3rd. And now, back to our discussion.

[Music ends]

DEE: So, the pandemic leads us to discuss the economy. Biden inherited the mess. He inherited with this the consequences that came from the pandemic. Biden took action to lessen the spread of COVID. He got people vaccinated and back to work. The repercussions of the pandemic came in waves. Because of the worldwide production of goods at a standstill, grocery shelves were bare. No, it was not because of Biden, because I remember at the time hearing, "Oh my gosh, there's a grocery shortage what we have no food," and Biden was getting blamed for that. And I'm like, "We, we're going through a pandemic. Do you not realize people are not working and, oh yeah, not everything is produced in the US," because then people wanted to complain about quarantining and not being able to get food, or getting their toilet paper, or whatever it was. A lot of our goods come from the international community, and guess what, they're quarantining to production is down, and then things have to get shipped. Imported goods took longer to arrive as a result that led to inflation.

You'll recall that like chip companies started putting more air into their bags and fewer chips, but still keeping it at the same price. And there were...

JIM: I'm sorry. That's potato chips.

JAN: Yeah.

DEE: Yeah, potato chips.

JIM: I was in Silicon Valley.

DEE: Oh, sorry. Okay.

JAN: No *[unintelligible]*

DEE: Okay. So, you know, here you have this stuff going on. And so costs increase due to demand and lack of products.

JIM: What I'm hearing you say is that the pandemic response of Trump was insufficient to the moment.

DEE: Yes.

JIM: And it had to do with Obama set this stuff up for us but because it was Obama, throw

that away. And now, uh-oh, we've got a pandemic and we're...

DEE: Yeah.

JIM: ...ill-prepared for it. And so then we have this economic crisis.

DEE: So now the next wave hits us, which is inflation. The WorldBank.org says the economic impacts of the COVID-19 crisis sent shockwaves through the world - the world, not the United States, but the world, that's what we forget - the world economy and triggered the largest global economic crisis in more than a century. And the economic impacts were income losses caused by pandemic households and firms were ill prepared to withstand an income shock of the scale and duration caused by the pandemic. More than 50% of households in emerging and advanced economies were not able to sustain basic consumption for more than three months. Businesses could cover fewer than 55 days of expenses and cash reserves.

So this is what Biden is having to deal with and he's having to make hard decisions to manage this economy. His team have to do a balance of when to raise interest rates, at what time to do it. And so they have to balance this and monitor all these things. And this is all because of what the pandemic created - the environment that we're in.

JIM: Dee, what you've just outlined shows why gas prices were so very low in say November 2020 when we went out to the Canyon. You remember all those stickers that were at gas pumps all the time where the gas prices high, then there's a little sticker of Joe Biden pointing at it saying, "I did that." Well, the gas prices were so low under Trump, not because of Trump economic policies. It was because no one was traveling and gas prices tanked. The gas price tanks and someone wants to say, "Yay, Trump." And then when it rebounds, suddenly, uh-oh, everyone's buying gas again, here go the prices - because of supply and demand - here go the prices way up. And it spikes and then you take a photograph there. So you've got a photograph of 2020, you've got a photograph of 2023, whatever it is. And then you say, "See? Trump good, Biden bad." And so anyone can take a snapshot from one person, compare it to a snapshot from the other, and then say they've made an argument, but they haven't made an educated argument.

DEE: I want to address the myth that the economy under Trump was strong because of Trump's economic policies. Just because Trump was president, when you saw stock markets going up and you saw unemployment going down, was not because of Trump. It's because Trump inherited an economy that Obama created.

ROB: Part of the problem, too, happened with Trump, happened before the pandemic. His tariffs...

DEE: Yeah.

ROB: ...started to raise prices in this country before the pandemic ever hit.

DEE: Yes.

ROB: A lot of economists have said that it was on a downward trend before the pandemic even got there. And that's part of the reason he had to say Obama had to step in for the car companies because, you know, Trump's tariffs are horrible.

DEE: Oh, you mean Biden had to step in.

ROB: Biden.

DEE: Yeah, you said Obama.

ROB: Yeah, yeah, Biden had to step in.

DEE: Yeah, I was getting confused there.

ROB: Because his tariffs were horrible for the car companies, you know.

JAN: Just throw out right now?

DEE: Yeah.

JAN: We're at the end of the Biden administration.

DEE: Mm-Hmm.

JAN: And my portfolio...

DEE: Mm-Hmm.

JAN: ...has done nothing but grow.

DEE: I know.

JAN: There have been a little bit of bumps along the way. And when you look at the global economic situation right now, the U.S. has recovered. We are leading.

DEE: I was about to get into that.

JAN: We are leading the world in the economy.

DEE: On October 14th, there were two different articles that came out on the same date. One from The Economist, which we know is not a liberal-leaning publication. But the headline said, "The American Economy, The Envy of the World." It's a multi-part series. And then it goes on to say, "The American economy has left other rich countries in the dust." Wall Street Journal, on October 14th, their headline read, "Economists say inflation deficits will be higher under Trump than Harris." In continuing in The Wall Street Journal, it says, "Most economists think inflation interest rates and deficits would be higher under the policies of foreign policy of former President Trump that he would pursue in a second administration than under those proposed by Vice President Kamala Harris." "65% of economists see Trump's proposed policies putting more upward pressure on the federal deficit than Kamala Harris's policies." And the Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget estimates Trump's plans would widen federal budget deficits by more than twice the expected increase under Harris. Politico headline. "Harris is riding a dream economy into the election." New York Times, on October 4th. "The job market in the United States is chugging along, completing a solid economy picture."

[Music]

DEE: "The job market is as healthy as it has ever been and best job market in the history of the U.S."

JIM (voice-over): So this concludes episode 35 of "Making Our Way," which is Part One of our election special. Fairly harmless, wouldn't you agree? And you probably thought we

were going to talk about the border crisis, or the electoral college, or abortion, or George Soros, or hot topics like that.

Just a reminder, part two of this discussion, episode 36, won't be at our usual scheduled time next Wednesday, but will be an Early Bird Special available Sunday, November 3rd, where we just might talk about the border crisis, the electoral college, abortion, or George Soros.

[Music ends]

Sources used and/or cited herein:

FACT CHECKING SOURCES

Here are some of the most reliable sources for fact-checking misinformation, particularly around current events and political statements:

1. **FactCheck.org** – A project of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, this nonpartisan site debunks false claims from politicians, interest groups, and media. It's known for rigorous research and transparency in sources. <<https://www.factcheck.org>>

2. **PolitiFact** – Run by the Poynter Institute, PolitiFact checks claims made by politicians and public figures. Its "Truth-O-Meter" ratings range from "True" to "Pants on Fire" and are widely respected for helping readers assess truthfulness. <<https://www.politifact.com>>

3. **Snopes** – Initially known for debunking urban legends, Snopes has expanded to address viral misinformation and political claims. It is a widely used, independent resource for both social media rumors and high-profile claims. <<https://www.snopes.com>>

4. **Reuters Fact Check** – As part of Reuters News Agency, this fact-checking section verifies viral stories and misinformation, especially on social media. They provide clear explanations and citations for each claim checked. <<https://www.reuters.com/fact-check/>>

5. **Associated Press (AP) Fact Check** – The AP has a dedicated team that verifies claims and rumors, offering context and corrections for misinformation spreading online. Their fact-checks are known for being brief and accurate, focusing on verifiable data. <<https://apnews.com/ap-fact-check>>

6. **Media Bias/Fact Check** – While it doesn't fact-check directly, it rates the bias and factual reliability of various news sources. This helps readers gauge the likely slant and reliability of the sources they encounter. <<https://mediabiasfactcheck.com>>

7. **The Washington Post Fact Checker** – Known for its "Pinocchio" rating system, the Washington Post evaluates political statements and viral rumors, adding depth by explaining why statements are misleading or false. <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/fact-checker/>>

These sources are highly regarded for transparency, established editorial standards, and their commitment

to truth-based reporting.

For nonpartisan voter information in the U.S., these trusted resources provide objective insights:

1. **Ballotpedia** – A comprehensive source covering candidates, measures, and elections at all levels. It offers neutral profiles and background information on candidates and ballot initiatives. <https://ballotpedia.org/Main_Page>
2. **Vote411.org (League of Women Voters)** – This platform offers unbiased candidate comparisons, voting guides, and polling locations tailored to your address. <<https://www.vote411.org>>
3. **FactCheck.org** – Focuses on fact-checking claims and statements by candidates and public figures, with additional context on political issues. <<https://www.factcheck.org>>
4. **PolitiFact** – Rates the accuracy of candidate statements and provides context on major policy issues, helping voters understand key topics without bias. <<https://www.politifact.com>>
5. **Pew Research Center** – Offers data-driven reports and analyses on major political and social issues that affect elections, without endorsing candidates or positions. <<https://www.pewresearch.org>>

The Civics Center Org – voter registration information <<https://www.thecivicscenter.org/our-purpose>>

Vote.org – 501c3 remove barriers to voting. <<https://www.vote.org>>

Florida Judicial Elections:

The votes in your court: prep'd by the Florida Bar and the Constitutional Judiciary Committee
<https://thevotesinyourcourt.com/wpcontent/uploads/2024/09/Voters-Guide-FINAL_Digital-V3.pdf>

TampaBay: Judicial retention information <<https://www.tampabay.com/news/florida-politics/elections/2024/10/14/supreme-court-meredith-sasso-renatha-francis-retention-vote-ballot/>>

Florida Supreme Court Opinion search:

[https://supremecourt.flcourts.gov/Opinions/Opinion-Search-For-All-Appellate-Courts?sort=opinion/disposition_date%20desc,%20opinion/case_number%20asc&view=embed_custom&searchtype=opinions&show_scopes=1&limit=50&scopes\[\]=supreme_court&startdate=&enddate=&date\[year\]=&date\[month\]=&date\[day\]=&query=&offset=0](https://supremecourt.flcourts.gov/Opinions/Opinion-Search-For-All-Appellate-Courts?sort=opinion/disposition_date%20desc,%20opinion/case_number%20asc&view=embed_custom&searchtype=opinions&show_scopes=1&limit=50&scopes[]=supreme_court&startdate=&enddate=&date[year]=&date[month]=&date[day]=&query=&offset=0)

Further sources of information provided in this podcast:

“The economic rationale for strong action now against Covid-19” (STAT News) <<https://www.statnews.com/2020/03/18/economic-rationale-strong-action-now-against-coronavirus/>>

“Economic impacts of the COVID virus” (World Bank Group) <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2022/brief/chapter-1-introduction-the-economic-impacts-of-the-COVID-19-crisis>>

“The U.S. was beset by denial and dysfunction as the coronavirus raged” (Washington Post,

April 4,2020) <<https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2020/04/04/coronavirus-government-dysfunction/>>

“US could have averted 40% of Covid deaths, says panel examining Trump's policies” (The Guardian) <<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/feb/10/us-coronavirus-response-donald-trump-health-policy>>

“A pandemic plan was in place. Trump abandoned it — and science — in the face of Covid-19” (STAT News) <<https://www.statnews.com/2020/05/17/the-art-of-the-pandemic-how-donald-trump-walked-the-u-s-into-the-COVID-19-era/>>

“How Trump Gutted Obama’s Pandemic-Preparedness Systems” (Vanity Fair) <<https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2020/05/trump-obama-coronavirus-pandemic-response>>

“Obama warned of pandemic threat in 2014, but Republicans blocked funding” (The Atlanta Journal-Constitution) <<https://www.ajc.com/news/obama-warned-pandemic-threat-2014-but-republicans-blocked-funding/dh2H9HxiuBY05T5uPqtqpl/>>

“Evidence Shows Obama Team Left A Pandemic ‘Game Plan’ For Trump Administration” (KFF Health News - KHN & Politifact Healthcheck) <<https://kffhealthnews.org/news/evidence-shows-obama-team-left-a-pandemic-game-plan-for-trump-administration/>>

“FACT SHEET: Obama Administration Takes Actions to Combat Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria” <<https://kffhealthnews.org/news/evidence-shows-obama-team-left-a-pandemic-game-plan-for-trump-administration/>>