

**MORE REGULATIONS  
MARK OBAMACARE**

**AGING WATER SYSTEMS  
MAY LEAVE US DRY**

**EVOLUTION AS  
DIVINE INSPIRATION**

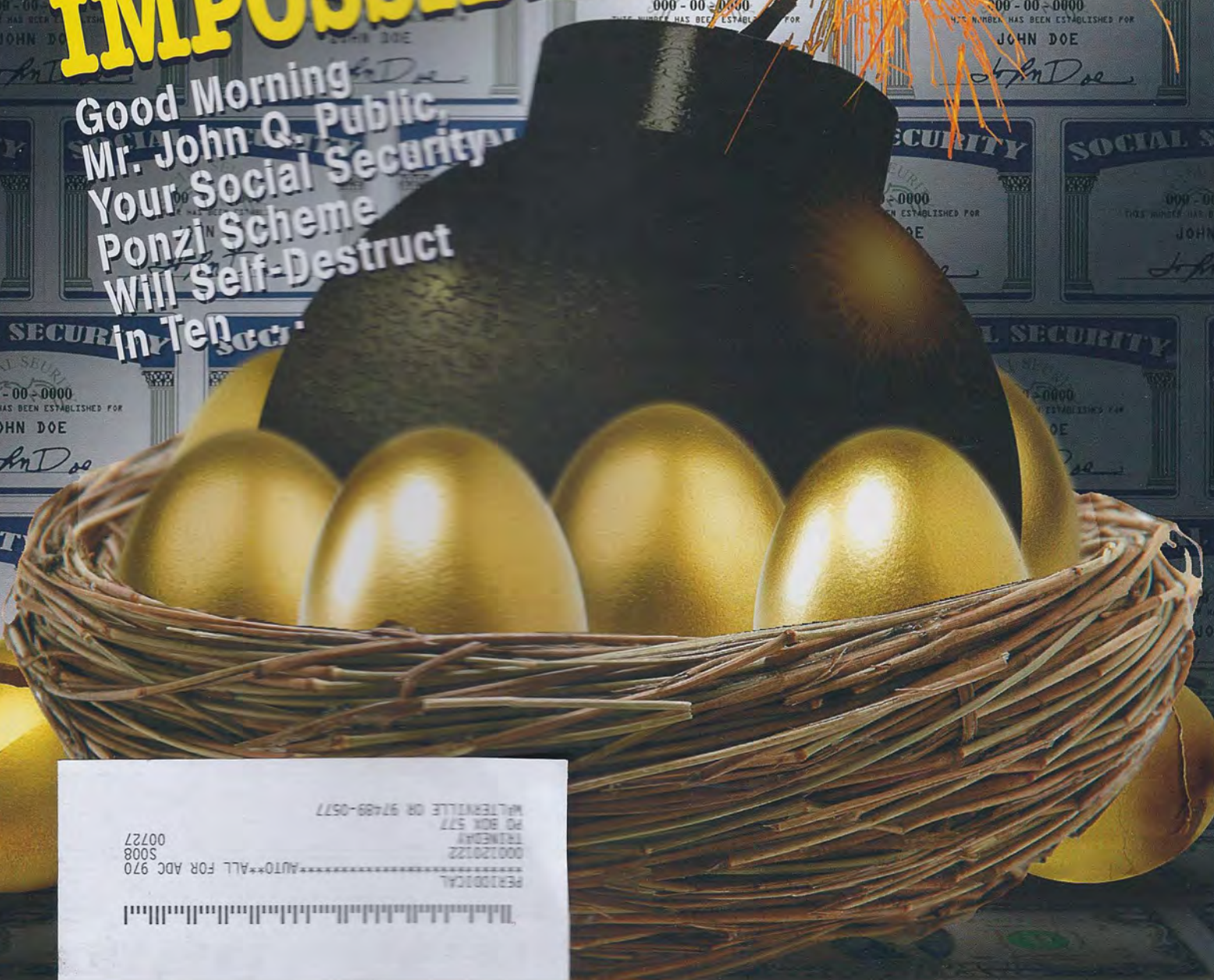
# USA TODAY

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AMERICAN SCENE

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## PENSIONS IMPOSSIBLE

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Mr. John Q. Public,  
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# CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE'S SECOND SHAME

BY NICK BRYANT

*"The reality is that many perpetrators are not shady men in dirty, threadbare trench coats living in seedy hotels, but are, in fact, pillars of our community."*



**T**HE RECENT scandals at Penn State and Syracuse universities, Brooklyn's Poly Prep Country Day School, Fenway Park, and now the Amateur Athletic Union, along with the intimations of possible cover-ups of child sexual abuse, have citizens shocked and outraged. However, these recent allegations only are the latest variations on a theme of abuse by churches and respected organizations like the Boy Scouts.

Pedophilia seems to exist in a distant parallel universe that is antithetical to the universe of Little League, Disneyland, and the other hallmarks of wholesome, youthful Americana, but the current allegations of pedophilia and the possibility of its cover-up just may be waking up Americans to the reality that this universe may not be as distant as they once thought.

I have shared the outrage at the reports of sexual abuse but, unlike most people, I have not been shocked, because of my research over the last decade. Prior to 2002, I had written extensively on children's issues, and then I stumbled across a 1987 U.S. Customs report on a "child abuse investigation" that the agency was conducting, and it described child abuse of the most horrific nature.

Two men connected to the investigation had been arrested and charged with multiple counts of child abuse, and six children, whose ages ranged from two to six years old, had been placed in Florida's child protective services. The investigation ultimately was quashed by

Federal authorities (who should not have had jurisdiction in this situation), and the two men were released from jail and the charges dropped. I was stunned by the report, and it triggered my prolonged odyssey into the depths of child trafficking in America.

Although witch-hunt hysteria is to be avoided when these accusations come to light, it is important to consider that the cover-up of child abuse may be rife in our society. Sexual-abuse victims often are very reluctant to come forward because they frequently are branded as liars, opportunists, and gold diggers. Such denunciations already have been leveled against the alleged victims of Penn State's Jerry Sandusky and Syracuse University's Bernie Fine.

Many specialists in the field of child sexual abuse have concluded that it is rare for individuals to fabricate accusations of these crimes. In 2002, *The New York Times* interviewed Patrick Schiltz, former associate dean of the University of St. Thomas law school in Minnesota and now a Federal judge, who had defended Catholic dioceses against sexual-abuse lawsuits in more than 500 cases. Judge Schiltz expressed the belief that "fewer than 10" of those cases were based on false accusations.

Likewise, I have spoken with scores of men and women who claim to have been sexually abused. I also have concluded that the overwhelming majority are telling the truth and, of all the victims I have interviewed, I am not aware of a single abuser who has been indicted for his or her alleged abuse.

After determining the authenticity of that Customs report, I started to investigate a second pedophile network that reportedly had been sheltered by entities within Federal law enforcement. It was then that I truly entered a parallel universe that encompasses the refined destruction of children along with its cover-up by the very state and Federal authorities who have pledged to protect them from the depravity of evil men—a universe where lies masquerade as truth, shadows reflect light, and innocence is condemned.

I spent the next seven years researching and writing a book documenting a nationwide pedophile ring that pandered children to a cabal of men with power and prestige. The ring's pimps were a pair of political powerbrokers who used a distinguished orphanage as a pedophilic reservoir. With access to thousands of documents that were sealed by two grand juries, as well as the sealed testimony of one, I demonstrated that state and Federal grand jury processes in Ne-

braska played an integral role in the cover-up.

Instead of indicting the alleged perpetrators, these grand juries indicted the victims who would not recant their accounts of abuse on charges of perjury. In one case, a 21-year-old who had been abused since adolescence was indicted on eight counts of perjury by both state and Federal grand juries. Facing more than 300 years in prison, she still refused to recant. Her travesty of a trial resulted in a prison sentence of nine to 15 years. She spent nearly two years in solitary confinement.

This individual was released from prison in 2000, and she has become a model citizen: she is happily married and gainfully employed. Conversely, one of the ring's pedophilic pimps, who was not charged with a single count of child abuse, moved halfway across the country. By 2009, he had enmeshed himself among a new brood of economically disadvantaged children.

Before the book came into print, I attempted to publish an article on the subject matter. After I felt I had collected clear proof of the child abuse and its cover-up, I distilled the information into an article and submitted it to numerous mainstream magazines, but none would go with it. The magazine editors rejected it without even looking at the thousands of pages of corroborating law enforcement and social services documentation I had collected. Although I was put off by the editors' apparent callousness or perhaps fear for their careers, I thought the main problem may have been that I shoehorned such a sprawling story into an article.

Undeterred, I wrote a rather lengthy book proposal and gave it to the major literary agency representing me. Within weeks, I was dumped as a client. Still determined, I found a second agent who tried to sell the book proposal, but he found no takers. I did meet with one publisher, however; his primary concern was any potential libel action, not the destruction of numerous children. Finally, I found a small publisher on the West Coast who had the fortitude to publish my book, which, in addition to more than 500 pages of narrative, provides 100 pages of documentation, but no one in the mainstream media would review or even mention it. I managed to get copies to the producers for television personalities who are child-welfare advocates, and they would not touch the story, either.

Possibly, most media were scared off by the fact that two grand juries declared that the perpetrators had not abused a single child and a jury had found the young woman guilty of fabricat-

ing her story and convicted her of perjury. Juries, after all, are the finders of fact in our system, but it also is true that her charges and those of the other victims implicated some very powerful figures. I also believe that many editors looking at the summary concluded that my tale could not possibly be true, and there was no reason to even look at the book.

These circumstances, though, are quite different from what we know of the situation at Penn State. If the Sandusky allegations are true, I would guess that his leverage there was the potential besmirching of the reputations of Penn State and his coaching associates. Penn State has prestige, and rightly so. It has done a lot of good. Institutions, however well-intentioned, are made up of individuals. Pedophilic predators are attracted to environments full of prey: schools, churches, youth groups, etc. The mandate of these institutions must be to protect the children in their charge, and to put that imperative ahead of the protection of their own reputations.

Indeed, Penn State has refused to release records from its 1998 inquiry involving Sandusky, and the state's Office of Open Records recently upheld its decision. The school's refusal to release these records certainly suggests it still is putting its reputation ahead of the alleged victims when common decency demands transparency at this point.

Another factor that dooms many investigations, and abets corrupt ones, is that victims frequently are from disadvantaged backgrounds, and the adult luring the child frequently introduces the underage individual to drugs or alcohol, further eroding that victim's credibility. Moreover, the abuser often has powerful allies in law enforcement, government, and the media, who decide that the sordid details are too hot to handle. Add into the mix the public's understandable squeamishness toward the entire subject of pedophilia, and we arrive at the perfect recipe for cover-up.

The reality is that many perpetrators are not shady men in dirty, threadbare trench coats living in seedy hotels, but are, in fact, pillars of our community. Until our society addresses these facts and its institutions are willing to face embarrassment, instead of heaping more abuse upon victims, our national shame of rampant child abuse and its cover-up are unlikely to end. ★

*Nick Bryant is coauthor of America's Children: Triumph of Tragedy and The Franklin Scandal: A Story of Powerbrokers, Child Abuse, and Betrayal.*