
THE EPA TIMES

A New Beginning • Winter 2026



EDITOR'S NOTE

At EPA, many of us live between places, languages, and expectations.

Many arrive believing they are here to study—new subjects, new systems, new routines. But over time, we realize that learning is only part of the journey.

This issue is about becoming. Becoming more independent as we learn to navigate unfamiliar worlds. Becoming more rooted as we rediscover where we come from. Becoming more thoughtful as we read, question, and reflect. And becoming more responsible as we begin to understand our place within a larger world.

The voices in this issue do not tell a single story.

Some speak quietly, through friendship, memory, and everyday growth. Others confront experiences that are difficult, unsettling, and impossible to ignore. Together, they remind us that growth is not always comfortable, nor is it always loud. Sometimes it happens gradually, through small choices. Sometimes it begins the moment we refuse to look away.

This newspaper is not a conclusion. It is a record of where we are—thinking, questioning, changing.

This is who we are becoming—at EPA.



AN ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT



Who We Are

Hello, EPA students! We are the Student Government—the voice of the student body and a bridge between the student body and the school community. Along with the work of all members, we work together to create a welcoming, engaging, and inclusive school environment where every student feels seen, heard, and valued.

What We Do

Student Government meets every Wednesday, along with frequent online meetings, to brainstorm new ideas and discuss ways to strengthen school spirit and bring students together. One of our key responsibilities is organizing events for the EPA community. In the past, we have hosted a festive Halloween celebration, spread holiday cheer through Christmas gift cards, and organized school parties that allow students to relax, connect, and celebrate together. Behind every event is a team of dedicated members who work together to plan and carefully design events.

Our Goals

Our goal is simple: we want everyone to have fun and enjoy their time at school. We hope to make EPA feel more like a second home, comfortable, exciting, and full of opportunities to connect with others.

Looking Ahead

In the future, our Student Government plans to host even more events, not only limited to holiday's, but more diverse activities which will include all cultures, because at EPA, we believe everyone should be able to share, and be proud of who they are. We also encourage students to make their voices heard by using our Anonymous Suggestion Box, participating in events, and engaging with the school community. Student Government will be providing opportunities to service-hours for those who are interested in assisting to prepare for events and helping engage peers.



*Student Government is always
open to new ideas and new
members.
Together, let's help our
community RISE.*

A REVIEW OF PETER BENCHLEY, JAWS

JESSE ZHANG
DECEMBER 2025

Jaws by Peter Benchley is a well-written and suspenseful fictional novel in which a great white shark terrorizes the people of a coastal New England town during the summer. Growing up, I was very fascinated by the ocean and especially sharks, and I also enjoy reading classic American books. This award winning novel was definitely on the top of my list. The story begins in Amity Island during the summer; after the disappearance of a girl is uncovered as a shark attack, it draws the attention of chief of police Martin Brody. To investigate, he teams up with oceanographer Matt Hooper to find the cause of the attack. For Brody and Hooper, however, it is a double-sided front they are fighting; the great white shark's rampage is just the surface, with the money-pursuing authorities' ignorance causing deeper complications. When they forge an alliance with sharkhunter Quint to neutralize the great white, the final fight begins.

Benchley introduces Police Chief Martin Brody as a man of the law; he has a devotion to public safety on Amity Island, and after confirming a deadly shark attack, he realizes the beaches must be closed. However, Mayor Larry Vaughan, focused on preserving the summer tourism economy, ignores Brody's warnings. Only after two more beachgoers—a young boy and an old man—are killed by the shark does the town decide to close the beaches, which leads to public backlash against Brody. After this, an oceanographer, Matt Hooper, is brought in to help, and Brody, Hooper, and fellow Officer Hendricks decide to kill the shark using a harpoon. When town fisherman, Ben Gardner, mysteriously disappears, they take his boat to patrol the waters. However, behind their backs, the mayor secretly reopens the beaches, leading to yet another near-fatal shark encounter. With public panic arising, Brody seeks help from Quint, a professional sharkhunter, who offers to take him and Hooper on his boat, the Orca, to lure in and kill the shark.

The main character Martin Brody not only conquers his fear of the ocean but proves next-level bravery by killing the shark that threatens his coastal island community. Firstly, being characterized as one really intolerant of the ocean, Brody's dislike spreads to his family and to his relationship with the more ocean-enthusiastic Matt Hooper. The differences in their characters lead to the creation of a tension, since Brody wants a direct and simple solution to the shark problem, while Hooper tends to digress into his oceanic fascination. On the other hand, when the situation forces Brody to accept his role as Police Chief, he does not hesitate to show his bravery for the sake of the town. I really admire Chief Brody's bravery because once during my time at EPA, my friend Evan was fishing in a small river that our hiking club went to, and he got his fishing line tangled on a bush across the river. Since he lost control of the fishing rod and it fell into the water, everyone said it was gone forever. However, as a frequent fisherman myself, I understood his pain and maneuvered my way across the river by crossing a bridge closed to the public. When I was on the other side, I got to the bush and slowly pulled in the fishing rod while holding the line. Then I went back across the river using the same illegal pathway I used to get there. It was a very brave deed, remarked my classmates in the hiking club.

The novel Jaws by Peter Benchley is about much more than just a 'shark attack' that draws in readers—it follows the inner struggle that Martin Brody faces. Besides dealing with the shark, for example, he is very much worried about his marriage and having to venture into the very ocean he fears. Moreover, he faces conflicts with Mayor Larry Vaughan, who is more concerned with the town's finances than with the shark threat, making matters worse for him. The intricate aspects of the story show a deeper narrative composition than the proclaimed man versus shark, but also make it appealing to readers. To conclude, Jaws by Peter Benchley is praised for its tight pacing, various character dynamics, and escalating chaos, which gives the novel its distinct ability to hook readers not just with its thrilling action, but with the depth of the story and the humanity of its characters.

PETER BENCHLEY
JAWS
IT'S NEVER SAFE TO GO BACK IN THE WATER



A Review of Eric Ries, The Lean Startup -How Constant Innovation Creates Radically Successful Business

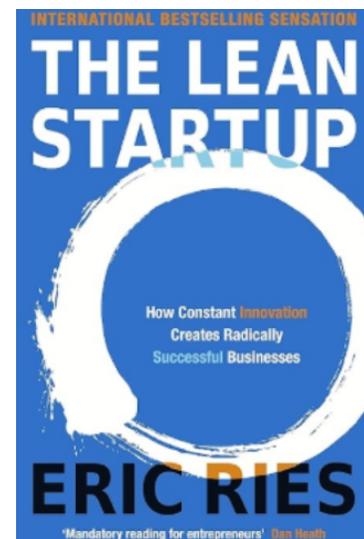
PERE PAYERAS PONS
DECEMBER 2025

Eric Ries's *The Lean Startup* is one of the best books for people who want to create a company from scratch. Although it is not just for entrepreneurs, it is essential for CEO's or company owners. The *Lean Startup* helps to mold a company over time. However, it is not only for business but can also be applied to personal life. The ability to locate where the impact value is enables us to see where it is worth spending our time. Amazing was what I thought the first time I read it, a lot of useful information combined with gorgeous storytelling about companies like IMVU, Grokit, or Toyota. The reason I chose this book is that I want to learn how to build a company while minimizing time and financial losses. This book will have an impact on it.

What is a startup? Ries is defined as "any organization that creates something new under conditions of extreme uncertainty." So, it is not just a tech company or a garage side hustle. Ries's core idea is to do more using less and do it better. This book is named Build-Measure-Learn loop. Instead of spending time and resources on something we do not know will work, this method is more efficient with both time and resources. So, companies must create an MVP (Minimum Viable Product). The MVP is a simple version of our product that includes only the essentials, making it easier to test than a complete product. There are some mentions of an MVP, one of which is Dropbox, which created a video showing the features to the customer without even having the product built. Two types of metrics can be used to see if the business is going well. Vanity metrics, such as the total downloads or visits to the webpage, help to see the popularity but not the progress in the business. However, we found another type of metric is the actionable ones that track real growth, consumer retention, or user behavior. Ries' recommendation is changing the path when data shows that it is not working.

The MVP is my favorite part. During the reading, I had some questions about: How can a simple thing be that important for a company? After reading more, I found the answer. The MVP is used to manage the scarce resources to get useful results as fast and simply as we can make it. It is funny when they say that the MVP of Dropbox was a video, yes, a video who would think of doing that. That's what defines an entrepreneur: crazy people doing crazy stuff. The MVP is not only for business but also for our personal lives. How many times have we tried to do something perfectly, and later it did not work? In my case, so many times, speeches, essays or habits. We try to bring perfection into our lives and fail. The MVP philosophy of Build-Measure-Learn is, in easy words, "just make it work, later make it better". Ries does not treat failure and failure; he treats it like learning.

The Lean Startup is the best book not only for entrepreneurs but also for people who pursue greatness in life. The book provides real-life examples of how startups can work in the most efficient way. The most crucial part of the book is Build-Measure-Learn. This loop can achieve great things when we use it correctly. I would like to finish with two quotes from Eric Ries – "The only way to win is to learn faster than anyone else." And "Success is not delivering a feature; success is learning how to solve the customer's problem."



An Identity In-between

Peter Lee Karabogias



This is an excerpt from a narrative about my visit to Korea this summer.



Growing up, my life has always been a balancing act between being a Korean boy and an American boy living in Ohio. On weekdays, I almost ignored my Korean heritage. I hid it under my personality and tucked it away in the back of my head. My schooldays were filled with schoolwork, and I would attend school as any other student would. I didn't have enough time to think about my birth culture or my Korean identity. Many of my classmates would inquire about my adoption or Korean heritage, since I didn't look remotely similar to my parents, and both adoption and Korean culture were scarce in Cleveland, Ohio. As a young child, I was surrounded by my Korean culture every weekend. My parents ensured that I was engulfed in my culture every weekend. I went to Korean school on Friday night and Saturday mornings. I learned how to read and write Korean and how to cook Korean food. On Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays, I trained in taekwondo and learned the dragon dance. On Sunday afternoons, I went to Mrs. Lee's house, where we made bulgogi and heottok. Learning about my culture has always been a part of my identity, since I grew up around white parents and a primarily white school.

The night markets were loud, crowded, and exciting. Eating hotteok, which is a Korean pancake with either red bean or brown sugar melted in the middle, took me straight back to my childhood, both when we were in Korea when I was eight. We would always go to the same street vendor on the corner outside our residence and get hot hotteok, or when I made it to our family friend's home, Mrs. Lee, who would take care of us and teach us how to make traditional Korean dishes, cultures, games, and take care of us while our parents were going through a divorce. Of course, neither my siblings nor I knew the impact that these actions of love would have on us in the moment, but looking back, it will always be something I remember. In the night market, I bonded with Anna over our memories of eating it during the Korean New Year, but having it in Seoul gave it a different weight. The tteokguk we had at the night market was at a stand run by a female Korean chef who was featured on Netflix. Watching her cook right in front of us and then tasting her food felt surreal. We also tried her famous rolled noodle soup, but it did not compare to the nostalgia of eating tteokguk again. Biting into the tteok reminded me of the Halmonies (respectful term for Korean old ladies/grandmas) at my Korean school who would cook the tteokguk every day and serve it to everyone with their plastic kitchen gloves and white aprons. This was a reminder that food carries stories, and that eating familiar dishes in the place they come from can make them feel entirely new.



Korean barbecue has always been one of my favorite ways to eat because it is more like an experience than a meal. Sitting around the table with a bunch of people you love, watching the meat cook right in front of us, we are entranced by the smell of smoke, sesame oil, and marinade as the grill sizzles. There is something comforting about building each bite, wrapping the meat in lettuce, adding rice, ssamjang, and kimchi. The conversations around the grill adds its own type of flavour, as Korean barbecue is loud and shared, filled with conversation and movement, and it reminds me that food can bring people together in a way that feels effortless and natural.



Kimchi jjigae and sundubu jjigae were very different experiences for me, but they are just as meaningful. They are very hot, and the kind of dishes that sit quietly in front of you and ask you to slow down. The heat from the stone bowl, the slight spice in the broth, and the soft tofu and fermented kimchi make each spoonful feel grounding. My love of Korean barbecue and jjigae feels like another reflection of my identity, and my love for a culture I feel both so close and far away from.

THE BEAUTY OF VIETNAMESE NATURE

Ivy Nguyen

January 2026

I always feel proud to be Vietnamese, a country shaped like the letter S that possesses so many majestic natural beauties. If you've come to Vietnam, you absolutely cannot miss the beauty of the Dong Van Karst Plateau and the treacherous yet stunning Ma Pi Leng Pass in Ha Giang, where the beauty of the sky and clouds blends with the valleys. Or perhaps Sapa, with its terraced rice fields stretching along the mountainsides, especially beautiful in the harvest season when, viewed from above, the entire landscape is a golden hue. The rice stalks sway gently in the breeze, and the faint fragrance of the ripening rice wafts through the cool air. Not stopping there, if you've come to Ha Giang and Sapa, you absolutely must visit Ninh Binh. As its name suggests, this place offers a strangely peaceful beauty. The ancient beauty of Tam Coc, where the Ngo Dong River winds between mountain ranges, or the ancient temples and shrines located inside caves. Speaking of Tam Coc, one cannot help but mention Trang An. You can visit and explore by boat on the emerald green river, passing through mysterious caves. Not only that, but Trang An is also associated with ancient historical sites. These three locations not only offer people a magnificent and poetic natural landscape but also embody the cultural essence of Vietnam, as they are associated with the customs and traditions of the local ethnic villages, reflecting the diverse national culture. And that is the Vietnam I love, the country where I was born and raised. Even in my next life, I still want to be Vietnamese, not just for the scenery, but most of all for my love of my homeland, my national unity, and our cuisine and culture.



TRANG AN, NINH BINH



DONG VAN KARST
PLATEAU, HA GIANG



DONG VAN KARST
PLATEAU, HA GIANG



MA PI LENG PASS, HA
GIANG



MA PI LENG PASS, HA
GIANG



SAPA



SAPA



TAM COC, NINH BINH



TAM COC, NINH BINH



TRANG AN, NINH BINH

The Joy of Being a Sunshine

Sterling Monaghan
January 2026

Being a ray of sunshine at my school means choosing kindness, respect, and encouragement in every situation. In a fast-paced academic environment, students and teachers can face stressful and uncertain moments. Staying positive can make a real difference in how people go about their day and stay connected to the school community.

Being in the sunshine starts with positive awareness. I notice when someone needs support or a friendly boost. An honest greeting, a smile in the hallway, or a few kind words can make others feel seen and appreciated. These small interactions may seem minor, but they can have a lasting effect on someone who is struggling or feeling overlooked.

Another part of being a sunshine is listening. I try to be present when people talk to me and show empathy for their experiences. Everyone faces challenges that may not be visible, and taking time to listen without judgment helps others feel comfortable and understood. By being patient and understanding, I create an environment where people feel free to express themselves.

Another important part of being a sunshine is choosing to be positive in difficult situations. School can be demanding, and stress can affect how people treat each other. When problems arise, I try to respond calmly and politely rather than aggressively. By keeping a positive attitude and focusing on solutions, I encourage others to face challenges with confidence rather than frustration. Respect matters. I strive to treat classmates, teachers, and staff with kindness and appreciation. Whether it's participating in class, cooperating on group projects, or showing effort toward those who support our learning, respect strengthens the relationships that make a community successful.

Being sunny means seeing the value in every person.

Being in the sunshine also means creating an inclusive environment. I try to include others in conversations and activities, especially those who feel isolated. No one should feel invisible or unappreciated at school. I want to help build a school community where people feel free to be themselves. I am grateful to be part of a school that values respect and self-expression.

Being a ray of sunshine is a responsibility I take seriously, and I practice it every day. I plan to continue making a meaningful contribution to my school and classmates.



The Friends Who Made My Journey Brighter

After two years of studying in the US, I've had many memorable experiences: attending two different public schools and a private school, living with a host family, participating in various extracurricular activities, and discovering new things every day.

In my first year, because I had to transfer schools twice and was still unfamiliar with the new environment, I didn't have many opportunities to connect deeply with my friends. By my second year of school, I transferred to a new school in a different state and hoped to make more positive connections. And luckily, that happened. Here, I met three wonderful Vietnamese friends: Tram, Ivy, and Meii.

Meii is my roommate. We participated in activities together with other new students. It was during those activities that I met Ivy. Because we share the same native language, we quickly hit it off, laughing and sharing with each other as if we'd known each other for a long time.

A few days later, I met my last friend - a former student of the school, Tram. All three of you are a year younger than me, so I gradually came to see you as my three little sisters.

The four of us get along really well. Every time we go together, the atmosphere is always filled with laughter and endless stories. We often joke that if all four of us were absent one day, the school would really feel our absence.

I am very grateful to have met them. They made my study abroad journey in the US much more enjoyable, warm, and memorable. Thanks to these friends, I don't feel alone on this journey.



FRIENDSHIP

CONNECTION

GROWTH

GRATITUDE

EXPERIENCE IN AMERICA

HUU NGUYEN (MEI)

JANUARY 2026



Initially, when I came to America, I thought that I would just be there to study. I thought that I would see bigger classrooms, eat different food, and that English would be spoken everywhere. Indeed, I found that to be true. However, America has turned out to be much more than that, it has been an experience of independence and growth.

One of the first observations that I made was about the culture of independence. I realized that in America, the culture promotes students to voice their opinions actively. At first, it was a bit daunting to me. I was nervous that I might end up saying something that would be inappropriate. Eventually, I understood that people value errors as a process of education.

Living outside of home has also taught me the importance of taking responsibility. Simple things in life such as time management, laundry, schoolwork, and social life are now experiences in living with discipline. Times of homesickness occurred, especially when things got too busy or holiday seasons arrived. These experiences have made me appreciate my family more and have strengthened me emotionally.

Of course, life is not perfect here in America. There was a cultural misunderstanding, a language barrier, and moments of loneliness. But each difficulty has helped me grow. I've learned to adapt, to ask for help when needed, and to step outside my comfort zone.

It is from America that, retroactively, I think my experience shaped me into the person I am today. My experience taught me resilience, confidence, and independence. More importantly, it proved to me that growth often begins when we are willing to embrace unfamiliarity. This journey is not about being in a new country, it is about finding a new version of myself.

Refusing to Look Away

By Ethan Wang
January 2026

I stood alone in front of an apartment building in Ukraine that had been torn open by a missile explosion. Beneath my feet were shattered glass and blackened concrete. The wind, passing through empty window frames. It made no sound, no noise, yet it felt louder than any blast. This had once been an ordinary home of a normal Ukrainian family, a kitchen where meals were prepared, a desk where someone worked or studied, a child's bed where dreams were supposed to be safe. Now, only ruins remained. Yet in the silence, the absences felt heavier than the destruction itself.



At the time, March 26, 2025. I was 15, traveling alone, responsible for every decision, routes, timing, and risk—without anyone else to rely on.

Just after arriving at Chopin International Airport, I boarded a coach bound for Lviv. It was there, on that long overnight journey toward Ukraine, that I met someone really unforgettable. His name was Davie, an American volunteer, a retired U.S. Marine Corps medic. This trip marked his fourth journey to Ukraine. His destination was Odesa, the purpose was clear and practical: to donate battlefield first-aid medicine to Ukrainian soldiers, and to provide emergency medical training to newly recruited troops. He was friendly and kind, and introduced me to what I should avoid and be careful. But he spoke without drama. He did not describe himself as brave, nor did he speak of sacrifice as something extraordinary. For him, this was simply what his skills were meant for. "If you know how to stop bleeding, and people are bleeding, you go." What struck me most was not what he said, but how naturally he said it. To Davie, moral clarity did not come from ideology or slogans. It came from proximity, from seeing who was harmed, who was defending their homes, and who had crossed borders with weapons.

He did not claim to be saving the world. He was just simply refusing to look away.

After arriving in Lviv, I walked through the city early one morning. People were already busy. Cafe shops were opening. Trams moved steadily along their routes. Life, somehow, maintained its rhythm. But the rhythm of life itself, is the best way to resist invasion war.

I walked toward a cafe shop to meet members of the overseas Chinese volunteer organization, Odesa Fighting Cat (OFC). Inside the OFC cafe, I noticed three photographs on the wall. They were Taiwanese volunteers who had been killed in action. That day, I donated 1,000 euros in support of their “Heroes Have Lights” project, a program that purchases small generators for the families of fallen Ukrainian hero soldiers. In many eastern regions and small villages, Russian airstrikes and infrastructure attacks have made power outages a part of daily life. “Light”, in this context, is not a luxury, it is dignity. OFC’s work is quiet and practical. They help civilians. They help rebuild. They help families live through the aftermath of loss. What I felt toward them was not admiration for heroism, but respect for consistency, for choosing to stay present, to do what needs to be done, again and again.

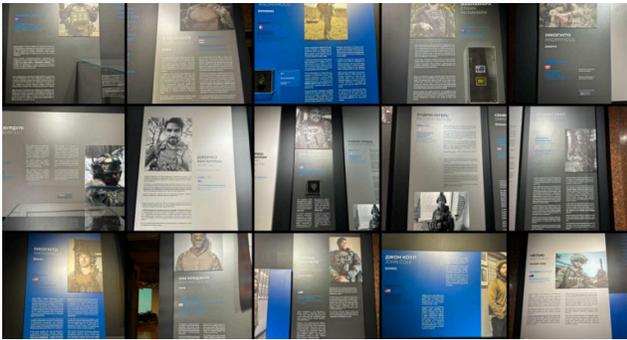


At the Lviv military cemetery, I saw rows upon rows of graves belonging to volunteers in Lviv who had joined the army since Russia’s full-scale invasion in 2022. Many were only 19 to 22 years old, still at an age that should have belonged to classrooms, not headstones. Others were over fifty, men who could have chosen safety but instead chose responsibility. It is important to state clearly: these young people were not conscripts. Ukraine’s minimum conscription age is 25 years old. Those below that age joined entirely by choice.

I placed a flower quietly and lit candles.
There was nothing else to say, only respect.



On March 29, I arrived in Kyiv. Standing on Ukrainian Independence Square, I was confronted by a sight that left me momentarily unable to speak. Ten of thousands of flags stood planted in the ground. They came from everywhere: New Zealand, Australia, Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, the Netherlands, Taiwan, Spain, Ireland, Germany, France, Georgia, Poland, Finland, Estonia... and countless others. Each flag represented a volunteer who had come to Ukraine to stand against aggression. And more than that, each flag marked a life that had ended on this soil. Among the flowers and candles, many of the vases carried handwritten messages in Chinese. Some expressed sorrow, some offered apologies, some spoke only of remembrance. What struck me was the contrast: flags are symbols of nations, yet here they no longer spoke of borders or governments. They spoke of individual decisions. Every piece of fabric fluttering in the wind was evidence that morality can cross borders even when armies can not.



I found myself thinking that history often talks about the wars in terms of strategies. But standing there, it became clear that the wars are ultimately carried by people, by individuals, in moments like this, who decide, at some point, “that neutrality is no longer an option.”

At the Mother Ukraine monument and the Russian–Ukrainian War Memorial, the atmosphere had changed again. Inside the exhibition hall were stories of those international volunteers from around the world. Some were still fighting on the frontlines. Others had already become part of Ukraine’s soil, become part of liberality, become part of justice.

Each profile was accompanied by personal belongings, personal items they had once carried with them.

A combat knife worn smooth by use.

A backpack used during missions.

Helmet with the name of the owner inside.

A pair of combat gloves

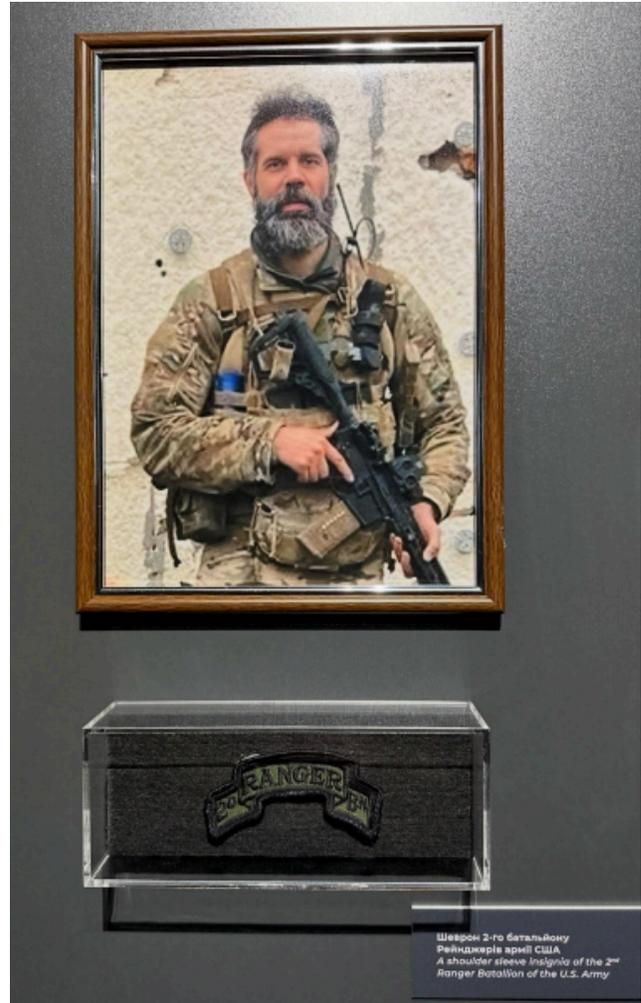
A book.

A lucky coin...

These objects were not symbolic props. They were traces of lives that had been lived fully, right until the moment they ended. It felt as if the owners had only just placed them there and stepped away...

To be continued in the next issue.

One story stood out to me in particular, Bradley Jennison.



An American, born and raised in Washington State. A week before September 11, 2001, he enlisted in the U.S. Army, 75th Ranger Regiment, and served in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2011, he graduated from Columbia University. Later, he built a successful career in finance in New York, eventually becoming a bank vice president. And yet, in 2022, when Russia launched its full-scale invasion, Bradley felt compelled to act. He joined the International Legion of Ukraine’s Defense Intelligence and fought continuously for over two years. He received multiple state awards and was later appointed commander of Rogue Team. Bradley Jennison was killed in action on October 27, 2024.

Looking at his story, it became impossible to reduce this war to slogans or geopolitics. This was a man who had already lived many legendary lives, but still chose to risk everything for someone else’s freedom.