

*From the desk of Brad Lips
Chief Executive Officer, Atlas Network*

Freedom at 36,000 Feet

Intended for perusal by friends of Atlas Network, this document has been compiled during long flights with the goal of entertaining and informing you, whether you're in the air or on the ground. It's an assortment of observations about the freedom movement and world events with firsthand accounts from my most recent travels.

ARE ATLAS NETWORK SUPPORTERS SMARTER THAN CHIMPS?

There was a wonderful TED Talk by Hans Rosling, a Swedish academic known for being a pioneer in data visualization. He challenges his audience to answer questions about global poverty: did it double, fall by half, or stay the same over the past 20 years?

He revealed that only 5 percent of Americans correctly answered that it decreased by almost half.

In the slide on the right, Rosling compares this human ignorance to the results of chimps, who predictably wind up around 33 percent correct when randomly answering among three choices.

In the last 20 years the percentage of people living in extreme poverty has...		
	<u>USA</u>	<u>Chimps</u>
A. Almost doubled	66%	33%
B. Remained about the same	29%	33%
C. Almost halved	5%	33%

Of course, I have great faith that Atlas Network's donors and friends would out-perform the chimps in this test!

While many people succumb to alarmist "the sky is falling" thinking, our community keeps a sober perspective. Yes, the state of freedom in 2023 leaves much to be desired, but certainly more people are free today than when Atlas Network started four decades ago. Fewer people are in poverty. Environmental outcomes and respect for human rights have trended in positive directions through the decades.

Use the QR code below to explore online materials mentioned in this doc.



Progress has paused during recent years, because democracies have tolerated corrupt, rent-seeking political classes.

Our work—to change the climate of ideas—aims to swing the pendulum back in the direction of freedom, dynamism, and equality for everyone. I believe a better future is possible, and I hope your optimism is undimmed too.

BY THE WAY, OUR ADVERSARIES ARE NOT OPTIMISTIC

On September 13, *The New Republic* published a hit piece on Atlas Network that was rather unhinged from reality, connecting dots between energy companies' modest donations to Atlas Network that dried up twenty years ago and harsh treatment of "Last Generation" climate protesters in Germany this past April. While our team has better things to do than correct the article as TNR fact checkers should have, there was one line that I agree with 100 percent: the authors introduce Atlas Network in the article as "little-known but enormously powerful."

Indeed, this network is enormously powerful, and I suspect that's why you donate.

You understand that defenders of individual liberty have the moral high ground, and that it's an authoritarian mindset—not a compassionate or thoughtful one—that demands surrender to the rants of Greta Thunberg. You understand that our network is authentically bottom-up, even if TNR editors assume they're waiting for orders from me and my colleagues. (Ever try giving orders to a bunch of contrarian libertarians and small-government conservatives?)

Indeed, our network involves people with a variety of views about the best way forward with energy and environmental policies, and I see that as a great strength. Iron sharpens iron. The last thing we want to impose on our partners is an orthodoxy that stands in the way of their pursuit of truth.

A FRESH TAKE ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

My colleagues and I are excited about a young organization that addresses environmental topics: the American Conservation Coalition (ACC). It champions a Climate Commitment statement with the tag line: "good for people, good for the planet." The idea that human progress and environmental outcomes aren't necessarily at odds isn't new, of course. For me, that revelation came long ago thanks to the great Montana-based PERC (Property and Environment Research Center) and its book, *Free Market Environmentalism* (1991), which won the book prize that Atlas Network ran for almost twenty years.

But ACC is especially exciting because its college chapters are growing fast. The organization now has more than 100 college chapters with more than 25,000 activist members— and 5000 of these were recruited just this fall.

It's exciting to see a growing pro-environment community that countenances a variety of perspectives on the likelihood of severe outcomes from global warming. ACC puts its focus on practical priorities that progress toward a cleaner future, without punishing the billions of people whose ascent to middle-class living standards requires continued economic growth.

OUR FIRST SMART BETS VIRTUAL PITCH COMPETITION

The work of ACC may be familiar to you already, if you attended the recent Smart Bets Virtual Pitch Competition. We annually prioritize a group of Atlas Network's 550+ independent partners as "Smart Bets"—organizations we think are really punching above their weight—and boost them with financial support, training, mentoring, and extra opportunities for recognition. ACC is part of the new "class of 2024," and it was one of the winners of the Virtual Pitch Competition, as our donors voted that it—along with Liberty Sparks from Tanzania and Ideas Beyond Borders with its project for Kurdistan within Iraq—will appear on stage on Wednesday, November 15, within our Liberty Forum in NYC. On that night, they'll compete to see how we will divide up \$100,000 of prize money at stake within the program!

At the very end of this letter, I'm attaching a document about the history of this program and which groups have been recognized within it over the past three years.

EDUCATION IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Having spent time thinking about how the allure of environmentalist alarmism (and taking to heart how the chimps referenced on page 1 seem better informed than most Americans on the progress being made against global poverty), I can't help but worry about what my own kids may be taught. My wife, Stephanie, and I have kids spread out in elementary school, high school, and college. In addition to staying alert to wokeism and the usual anti-capitalist bromides, we stay attentive to how education may be transformed by the technological changes around us. Many times, I've heard the argument, "Dad, why do I need to learn long division when I can use my calculator?" (And now they can just ask Siri.) It's natural to worry that kids will never want to write poetry of their own when it's so easy to outsource the task to ChatGPT.

Let me share a reason to see this glass as "half full" rather than "half empty." Sal Khan makes a strong point that—since ancient Athens if not earlier—parents have known that personal tutoring by an expert is the ideal way to learn. Artificial intelligence makes it possible for every student in the world to have personalized feedback on their work, so they can *master* material, not just learn how to pass tests. The short demo videos I've watched have impressed me. You see how a "stuck" student benefits from an AI-driven assistant that poses questions that remind students of different directions for approaching a math problem. It's not solving the problem for the student, but ensuring the student masters core concepts.

I had hoped to test all this out with our nine-year-old PD as a guinea pig, but Khanmigo is still at the pilot project stage. (If anyone knows people going through the pilot, I'd love to learn what you're hearing about it.)

MAKING ROOM FOR RADICAL INNOVATION AT UNIVERSIDAD DE LA LIBERTAD

The Khanmigo videos I reference above remind me that innovations will continue to transform our world in unknowable ways—and it's critically important that we keep government from strangling innovations or co-opting them for political advantage. This promises to be difficult.

The early internet was liberating in how decentralized it was ("everyone can have a microphone" was the promise). The AI revolution is much more about "my relationship with Microsoft" or the other huge organizations that have the resources to be first movers in this space. Also, the nature of AI is that it can feed you the information that you "want." We have seen how social media has tended to push people into narcissistic bubbles, protected from contrary views, so avoiding negative outcomes in this sphere should be a top concern for people in the freedom movement.

To that end, I'm grateful to report that we have a great new ally in the just-launched Universidad de la Libertad in Mexico City. At the end of August, we brought together several of our partner think tanks for a Radical Innovation Summit at the University, to workshop new projects and hold a Shark Tank contest to put seed capital into one.

The physical infrastructure of the new university was beyond impressive, and its curriculum borrows lessons from innovators like Universidad Francisco Marroquin in Guatemala and Minerva in San Francisco. During our two-day event, we had deep conversations with those focused on preventing heavy-headed government regulation of decentralized technologies, as well as creating better systems for self-regulation to prevent abuses by bad actors.



Grant McCarty from Bitcoin Policy Center pitches a project during a Shark Tank competition I got to judge alongside Magatte Wade and Ricardo Salinas-Pliego during the opening of Universidad de la Libertad in Mexico City.

Much of this community is enamored with Bitcoin, and—while I know there are diverse opinions out there about the wisdom of holding it as an investment—I bet everyone reading this will marvel at this quote by Friedrich Hayek, all the way back in 1984, that seems to anticipate the invention of Bitcoin.

Hayek said in an interview: “I don’t believe we shall ever have good money again before we take the thing out of the hands of government. But we can’t do that violently, so all we can do is, by some sly or round-about way, introduce something they can’t stop.”

The decentralized nature of Bitcoin meets that definition of “something they can’t stop.” But we also know that these peer-to-peer systems need to find ways to police themselves so bad actors cannot hide within their ecosystems. I’m grateful that partners like Universidad de la Libertad are helping us facilitate important conversations about how this will develop.

WHAT COMES AFTER GREEK TRAGEDY?

Loyal fans of Atlas Network may remember that, in 2015, we held an Emergency Economic Summit for Greece when its economy was in shambles. We brought Nobel Laureate Tom Sargent, along with successful reformers from other parts of Europe, to discuss a way out of fiscal disaster with Greek economists and policy-makers. A few years later, we made big investments in KEFiM (the Center for Liberal Studies), a new think tank that sensed an opportunity to shift the Overton Window away from the failed socialist schemes that had brought the country so close to disaster.

Last month, *The New York Times* took note of the transformation that has occurred:

Laden with debt it couldn’t pay back, Greece nearly broke the eurozone a decade ago. Today, it is one of Europe’s fastest-growing economies. In a significant acknowledgment of the country’s turnaround, credit ratings agencies have been upgrading their appraisal of Greece’s debt and opening the door for large foreign investors.

The economy is growing at twice the eurozone average, and unemployment, while still high at 11 percent, is the lowest in over a decade. Tourists have returned in droves, fueling a construction frenzy and new jobs. Multinational companies, like Microsoft and Pfizer, are investing. And banks that almost collapsed have cleaned up and are lending again, benefiting the broader economy.

Our team is working right now on a piece that will help explain what went right and where there are still dangers within the Greek economy that our partner KEFiM is trying to address. Stay tuned!

IS AMERICAN TRAGEDY IN STORE?

Of course, you would be right to worry that we've got a tragic situation brewing closer to home, with Fitch downgrading its rating on U.S. government debt. Rising interest rates make it that much more irresponsible to continue adding to record debt levels. The resulting inflation and instability puts in question how long the U.S. dollar will enjoy its enviable position as the world's reserve currency, as global demand for dollars has allowed us to avoid many of the consequences that typically come from irresponsible government spending.

Even more depressing is the lack of political will to address the looming problem. I think it's incumbent upon groups throughout the freedom movement to stay vocal on runaway entitlement spending and unsustainable debt levels. When the next financial shock arrives, we want people to remember that we have been sounding alarms on this topic over the decades; we can't let freedom's enemies to compound problems with even bigger government interventions under their cynical mantra: "don't let a crisis go to waste."

We also need to stay active with proposals right now. One that you'll hear more about at Liberty Forum comes from Romina Boccia at Cato Institute. She's calling for process that mirrors the Department of Defense's BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) process to give congressional authorization to a group of decisions that might be individually painful for Congress to approve. George Will wrote about Boccia's "provocative idea" in *The Washington Post* in August.

RICH MEN NORTH OF RICHMOND

One of the great things about working at Atlas Network is that we're continually seeing evidence of how our principles benefit all people, and especially those in low-income communities who feel excluded from chances to improve their economic situation.

It's important to communicate this narrative better. People often mistake the "crony capitalism" we despise for the "entrepreneurial capitalism" that we adore.

I love that our allies in Nepal worked for years for a remedy to outrageous taxes and complex licensing regimes that had made motorbikes inaccessible to a huge number of people who need them for their own mobility and entrepreneurial activities. In Brazil, a government monopoly on sanitation services was bleeding taxpayer money and delivering poor public services. Our partners swooped in to advocate for what became the New Sanitation Framework Bill, which has brought \$14 billion of private investment and cleaner water to over 200 towns and cities representing 20 million people. In the U.S., our friends in the school choice movement buck powerful unions and other entrenched powers to stand up for the future of individual students.

There is no question we're standing on the moral high ground, and—contrary to what *The New Republic* would tell you—it's our political class and their enablers who are out of touch and doing damage to normal people and their modest aspirations.

It's rare to have a #1 song help to make that case. The shocking success of Oliver Anthony (the stage name of songwriter Chris Lunsford) has to be the most significant cultural story of 2023.

I was one of those listeners who had the song on repeat for much of August when the just-recorded song by a never-recorded singer went viral. While there's a lot of populist discontent in our country that feels misdirected at times, I empathize 100 percent with Anthony's resentment about the disdain our political elites have shown to normal Americans. He sings with real raw fire at that chord change: "Livin' in a new world with an old soul/ These rich men north of Richmond/ Lord knows, they all just wanna have total control." Hank Williams couldn't have done this one any better.

Of course, Remy—a libertarian "Weird Al" whose song parodies are promoted by our friends at Reason—couldn't resist crafting a tongue-in-cheek response explaining the plight of Rich Men Bureaucrats: "It's a damn shame what the world's come to/ They want us back in the office on Mondays too." Check out both videos by using the QR code on the front!

SO WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

I earnestly believe that there's a great opportunity to capitalize on how disaffected normal people are with most political leaders today.

But I don't know what political dominos we should root to see fall. (I'll be happy to hear how you see the political landscape heading into 2024 if you want to shoot me an email.)

Memphis Music Sidebar

Since we're talking about music for moment, I'll share this photo of me with think tank leaders Niels Veldhuis (Fraser Institute), Gonzalo Schwartz (Archbridge Institute), Casey Givens (Young Voices), and Cindy Cerquitella (America's Future) from a fun outing we did while in Memphis this July. That's us holding one of the original microphones that was used at Sun Studio when Elvis Presley cut his first records there in 1954. We were in Memphis for a Think Tank CEO Summit that Atlas Network hosts three times annually, and to participate in the annual conference, Freedom Fest.

I put together a playlist of my favorite Memphis music for our assembled think tank CEOs. There's some obvious stuff (Elvis and others that recorded for Sun and Stax) alongside lesser-known gems (Alex Chilton, Wendy Rene, the Grifters). Use the QR code on the front to get the playlist on Spotify—and to access a video recording of the main stage session at FreedomFest that had Tom Palmer, Magatte Wade, and me presenting on the work of Atlas Network.



In the meantime, I'll keep focusing on what I am certain about: **the long-term prospects for liberty improve when we build a stronger freedom movement.** As ever, my days are spent with colleagues who manage the portfolio of grants we invest in our partners and with colleagues who design training programs that upgrade our partners skills.

In August, we hosted our flagship Executive Accelerator training program, and I gave an opening talk about the successes of the first class of this training program 15 years ago (when we called it Think Tank MBA). Several from that inaugural year have gone on to do big things as leaders of think tanks that remain connected to Atlas Network, and another had just been profiled in *The Washington Post*: David Seymour heads the ACT party in New Zealand—this is what viable libertarianism looks like, per the *Post*. We anxiously await returns of NZ's OCT WHAT election as there's a real possibility the ACT party will play a big role in a governing coalition.

Will members of the class of 2023 achieve even bigger things? They certainly showed a lot of enthusiasm about the training experiences they're enjoying, thanks to your support of Atlas Network.

One example comes from the Republic of Georgia: Alexander Zibzivadze of the Franklin Club. He was celebrating the withdrawal from parliament of a (Kremlin-promoted) "foreign agent law" that could be used to criminalize dissent. He told us: "This tactical win was really inspiring, especially to youth, who realized we can win these fights. Lots of Georgians are becoming more active in defending their freedoms." We were pleased to hear from Alexander that all Franklin Club staff are required to go through the online Foundations course of our Atlas Network Academy. "It is a very important part of the onboarding process for us," he said. "We need all employees to understand the work we do and the impact we want to have."

40 YEARS AGO—THE FIRST ATLAS NEWTORK WORKSHOP

It is wonderful to have a network populated with inspiring young leaders like Alexander from more than 100 countries. I'm confident that our founder, Antony Fisher, would be proud of the growth we've achieved and the increases in liberty that are regularly produced by our partners—as you see every month with our Atlas Club Briefing videos! He'd also be proud that Atlas Network has stayed so faithful to its founder's vision.

During the first week of September, I wrote a piece that looks back on the *first* Atlas Network event, which had taken place 40 years prior. Thanks to Antony's wife, Dorian, we have a wonderful collection of notes from that meeting which our organization used for years under the title: "Manual: Some Do's and Don'ts for Public Policy Institutes."

One of the great quotes in Dorian's manual came from Mike Walker,

The critical turning points in human affairs are when there is a sudden change in people's demand for truth. The ultimate strategy of the institutes is to be ready when the demands for truth exceed the supply.

That's a wonderful reminder of what the freedom movement is all about. While a lot of impatient money is spent—some might say wasted—on political campaigns that go nowhere, investors in the freedom movement know that ours is bound to be a long-term endeavor.

This can be frustrating, but there's wisdom in coming to terms with the fact that we seldom get to dictate a timetable for policy change. What we can do is keep strengthening our arguments and improving the credibility of our brand, while awaiting those "turning points" to which Mike Walker alludes.

WHAT I SAW IN SOUTH AFRICA

I was in South Africa in July for our Africa Liberty Forum, and that country might be one where the "demand for truth" is on the rise (to again allude to the Mike Walker quote above).

Growing numbers of people are upset with electricity blackouts and other manifestations of the government's corruption and incompetence. It seems likely that the ruling African National Congress will fail to win a majority in next year's elections. This could open up positive scenarios for a new government committed to limited government principles, but it could also create a pretty horrifying scenario too. If the ANC loses by a small enough margin, it might be able to keep power by forming a coalition with the Economic Freedom Fighters party. (While you might think we'd cheer on a group that wants to fight for economic freedom, the EFF are like firefighters: economic freedom is what they want to extinguish.) The stakes in the South African election will be very high, and I hope more people in our community begin to realize that what happens across Africa is of huge importance.

Demographers point out that 25 percent of humanity will be African by the year 2050. The world economy could be buoyed by rising productivity if rising generations of Africans find productive employment. It's tragic that so many African governments stand in the way. I wrote a piece on this—and the hours spent in detention by one of the speakers we invited to our Africa Liberty Forum—for *Newsweek* in August, which I'll share via the QR code on page 1.

For those of us who arrived safely in South Africa for the Africa Liberty Forum it was a tremendous experience. One of the highlights was seeing tears in the eyes of Linda Kavuka as she accepted our African Liberty Award of 2023 on behalf of African Students for Liberty. Our collaboration with African SFL has been incredibly fruitful over the past decade, creating a robust ecosystem for pro-liberty projects on a continent where there had once been little. In fact, 40 years ago, we had only one African think tank in our directory: the Foundation for Economic Freedom. If you're able to join us at Liberty Forum, you'll meet one of its long-serving employees whom we will recognize with our top individual honor of the year: the Antony Fisher Achievement Award.

This year's award is going to Temba Nolutshungu, whom you would have seen profiled this summer in our most recent *Freedom's Champion* magazine.

Temba is a longtime director of the Free Market Foundation in South Africa, who began his activism against Apartheid as a communist sympathizer. But he came to see that free society principles are the soundest for protecting the rights of each individual. It's on this basis that Temba rejects vindictive policies to expropriate the property of white farmers in South Africa today.

CHARACTER MATTERS

As we hit the 30th anniversary of the end of South Africa's evil Apartheid regime, it's especially appropriate to celebrate the character of Mandela, who gave South Africa a chance for a future that respects the rights of all—and the character of Temba Nolutshungu, who has stayed committed to these principles even as they are now threatened from new directions.

At a time when our political class seems devoid of good role models, I especially value working within a freedom movement that has so many high-character people, sometimes putting their safety at risk to stand up for their beliefs.



Temba Nolutshungu photographed alongside a statue of the late Nelson Mandela

Two more examples are Felix Maradiaga and his wife, Berta Valle. Felix is a veteran of Atlas Network training programs, and in 2021 he left his civil society organization to challenge Daniel Ortega by running for Nicaragua's presidency. He was sent to prison alongside other political revivals of Ortega.

His wife, Berta Valle, emerged as a powerful speaker on behalf of human rights during Felix's long suffering in jail. She gave a speech at our 2022 Latin America Liberty Forum in Mexico City that motivated the media team at TV Azteca in Mexico to take a daring mission inside Nicaragua to tell the stories of those oppressed by the Ortega regime. The result was a series of viral videos, a *60 Minutes* interview with Berta, and ultimately, Felix's release in February of this year, given growing political pressure. However, Felix and over 200 other Nicaraguan dissidents have been stripped of their citizenship, rendering them stateless after being flown to the U.S.

At our Freedom Dinner in New York City this year, we are honored to welcome both Felix Maradiaga and Berta Valle to deliver our annual Linda Whetstone Toast to Freedom.

FINDING ROLE MODELS CLOSER TO HOME

As people like Felix, Berta, and Temba remind us, it's character that matters at the end of the day. While I hope my kids can use Khanmigo to develop important skills and acquire knowledge (as discussed earlier in this newsletter), the most important thing to me is that they develop the virtues that lead to happy and fulfilling lives.

I hope I can hand off good lessons to my kids, as I had every benefit I could have asked for in the model set by my own dad who passed away a few weeks back. I'll share here a picture of him below with his college lacrosse coach, Hall of Famer Ferris Thomsen, who also played a big role in shaping the man my dad became.

While digging through papers as my dad reached the end of the line, I re-read a wonderful article he wrote in his early twenties for the *Princeton Alumni Weekly*, reflecting back on a challenging senior season in lacrosse. It's a wonderful piece with a bit of a surprise ending. I'll attach it to this letter with hopes that it affirms for you what it does for me—that taking on seemingly impossible tasks pays off, sometimes in ways different than you expect.



We can all model what's right, if we stay mindful of trying to make our loved ones proud.

PARTING THOUGHTS

With that, I'll wrap up edition #2 of my personal newsletter. Please check out the QR code on the front to access a web page with links to articles, videos, and music that I've mentioned above.

Of course, if you haven't done so already, I hope you'll immediately make your plans to join us in New York City on November 15–16. Details and registration options are at **AtlasNetwork.org**. It's your best opportunity of the year to meet people from around the world who benefit from your involvement with Atlas Network.

If you have responded affirmatively to our earlier mailing about joining the Fisher Legacy Society by putting Atlas Network in your will, you also will receive an invitation for an exclusive breakfast program. There, I'll introduce you to one of the bravest and smartest people in our network, Mohammad Machine-Chian from Iran.

You'll also hear exciting news about an important gift we received from the estate of Bill Clement, who began donating to Atlas Network when Antony Fisher was alive. We are thrilled to be able to grow how Atlas Network serves its mission, thanks to Mr. Clement's planned gift.

This exclusive breakfast within Liberty Forum will provide me with a chance also to thank all of you who are prioritizing Atlas Network and the health of the freedom movement worldwide as an important part of your own legacy. Please reach out directly to me or my colleague Jenn Porter for more information on the Fisher Legacy Society.

As always, I hope you'll be in touch about what most interests you in this newsletter. Feel free to suggest content for the future as well!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Brad", with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Brad Lips
Chief Executive Officer

'Someone To Believe In'

WHEN I walked off Finney Field last May for the last time, no doubt someone was remarking to a friend, "There goes the Princeton lacrosse captain. With this loss to Cornell, the Tigers ended up two and nine. He must be really disappointed."

At that moment, I must have been the proudest person on the Princeton University campus, with one very likely exception. If I had heard the remark, I would not have hesitated to tell the speaker and his nodding listener why the captain of a team with such a poor record could be so proud. I would have told them that, sure, I wish we could have won more games, that, sure, I would be disappointed with the way our team would be remembered in the record books. And then, in the next breath, I would have said that at a time when the merits and relevancy of athletic competition on America's college campuses were being seriously questioned in the face of student activism and dissent concerning U.S. involvement in Cambodia, the Princeton team which won only two games had learned and demonstrated what courage, dedication, respect, and friendship really are. I would have said that the most valuable education I received at Princeton had been won out there on Finney Field during those defeats. Finally, I would have spoken of Ferris Thomsen, because most of the education had come from him.

It was during the spring of my freshman year at Princeton that I took up lacrosse and began to understand the depth of character that was in Ferris Thomsen. The record books would duly note that Ferris had come to Princeton in 1950, developing lacrosse teams that were to dominate the Ivy League and battle evenly against the nation's powerhouses.

But like that two-and-nine team, the true meaning of Ferris Thomsen is not found in record books. Ferris loved his players and his players loved him. It was an uncommon affection, and as sincere as my pride when I walked off Finney Field that day last May.

I had been elected captain of the varsity team for my last year of competition, an honor of special importance to me since it would also be Ferris Thomsen's final year of competition. He was retiring.

The last season promised to be an exciting one. After two disappointing springs, we had championship material and everyone involved with the team was optimistic of a final successful season for Ferris. However, before the schedule even began, we lost three mainstays from our team—an attackman, a defenseman, and a midfielder. Lacrosse is played with ten men—a goalie and three men at each of the three other positions. Losing an experienced starter from each of these positions would greatly handicap our team. Yet those losses seemed almost small when Ferris's wife, Helen, died.

My wife and I had dinner with Helen and Ferris just a



Pete Lips



Ferris Thomsen

week before a stroke took Helen's life. In those fleeting hours we discovered the major source of Ferris's strength and happiness—that wonderful woman. I remember making Helen some promises that evening about championships to be won in the coming season. Many times in the next months I was to think about those promises. They had gone unfulfilled, and yet I am sure that Helen would have approved of the way things ended.

Undermanned and facing the finest teams in the country, our team lost the first four games. Lacking the cohesion between offense and defense essential for good lacrosse, we seemed disorganized and stumbling. Meanwhile, Ferris was attempting to resolve the greatest personal loss of his life. Most of the players soon resigned themselves to several weeks of drudgery and defeat. They did little more than go through the motions of playing lacrosse. With a record of two wins and five losses, we prepared for Harvard.

Before that game, however, Princeton students, like many others across the country, began to cancel activities in reaction to the president's Cambodian policy. Despite opposition by some members, our team voted to make the Harvard trip. Again playing poorly, we lost our sixth game.

By the Monday following the Harvard game, Princeton students began their "strike against the war." It was apparent that many activities had been concluded for the year. As for athletics, the fate of intercollegiate teams was to be decided at individual squad meetings. As captain of the lacrosse team, I was to preside over our meeting.

Preparing for the meeting, I tried to sort out in my own mind the goals I had once set in coming to Princeton and the role which intercollegiate athletics, and particularly

lacrosse, played in seeking these goals. I decided that I should continue playing lacrosse. I felt the political controversy enveloping the campus was an independent and separate question. I recognized differing views concerning the scope of the student strike but, in choosing to play lacrosse, felt that I was neither taking a personal stand nor declaring my allegiance to any group regarding the Cambodian issue. I recognized that the unique quality of athletic competition is that individuals can come together, despite their individual differences, and work toward a single goal.

These were thoughts which could be easily verbalized; what could not be put into words was my love for Ferris and my determination not to let his career end so abruptly. I decided that I would appeal to those teammates who felt the same way, whether they supported the strike or not.

After our team meeting, over half our players decided to strike, and our varsity was reduced to sixteen men, two of whom had never before played on the varsity level. Any thoughts of winning another game should have ended right there in the meeting room. No team could win with just sixteen players. In a normal lacrosse game, a coach will start ten men but usually play a minimum of twenty-five. During our first practice with the reduced squad, our starting goalie broke his collar bone and was lost for the remainder of the season. We were down to fifteen men.

Ferris accepted the conditions as the last great challenge he would face in athletics. We shuffled personnel and rethought strategy. Practices became high-spirited affairs, for those remaining knew we were essentially doomed to begin with and that people would be watching to see how long our team would play before collapsing. It was a challenge we relished.

The first test would be Yale. Despite inquiries by our athletic director and head trainer as to whether or not it was physically possible for our small team to play the remaining games without doing serious harm, our enthusiasm mounted for the Yale game. By game time both the temperature and humidity pressed the 90's, easily the hottest day of the spring.

Only when we took the field did each of us understand what was happening. Up until then, we had felt that in merely attempting to play the game we were doing something extraordinary. The thought of fighting overwhelming odds gave our practices a circus-like mood. Now, watching a full Yale team pour onto the field, I think each of us felt a little more self-respect, pride, and sense of purpose as we realized that this was the first time we had really committed ourselves to an almost unattainable goal.

—photo by Bill Pierce '57



Even before our squad had been decimated by the strike, Yale had been rated the favorite. With fifteen players on the team, a victory for Princeton was thought impossible. The game began as expected, with Yale taking command at the outset and building a three-goal lead by halftime. Our team lacked cohesiveness, and we were just getting used to long playing times and the new positions some of us were being asked to play.

At the halftime break, there were no moving speeches, no emotional challenges to drive us. We all knew what had to be done. We trotted grimly back onto Finney Field. In the first three minutes, Princeton put three goals on the board and suddenly the score was tied. Our make-shift team was playing the best lacrosse played by a Princeton team in several years.

The lead changed hands several times. Spectators waited for our team to fold as it had so many times before in tight situations. But against Yale we came back again and again. Using only three substitutes the entire way, we played a cautious, conservative game.

With only 24 seconds left in the final quarter, Yale went ahead by one on a shot from the midfield. We now had to gain immediate possession of the ball at the face-off and put one past Yale's able goalie. I forced back thoughts that the game was all but lost. Play began and we scrambled desperately after the ball. With four seconds remaining, Mike Manzo, a defenseman converted to midfield for this game, fired a shot from 60 feet out. It flew past the Yale goalie and into the net. The score was tied. The gun sounded; we were going into overtime.

As I stood at my position for the overtime face-off, I turned to the Yale captain and said, "Somebody up there's helping us today!" In a tone of unmistakable admiration, he replied, "Somebody's doing something. You guys are playing one helluva game."

Again there was an exchange of goals, and the tension that had peaked near the end of the final period was sustained throughout the overtime. By now, Finney Field was encircled by spectators. Their hushed attention to the play suggested an awareness that what was happening on the field was something extraordinary—an improbable display of determination and commitment against great odds.

The score remained tied, and the teams went into a second overtime. Once more, goals were exchanged, but with a minute remaining in the game, Yale took control of the ball. Carefully setting up a play, the Yalies consumed 40 seconds before an attackman slipped a shot past our goalie. On the face-off, we took control of the ball and got off a flurry of shots but with no success. The gun called an end to our frustration. Yale had won, 9-8.

My recollection of what happened during the five minutes after the game is not clear. I remember Ferris Thomsen trudging to the locker room. I remember feeling very proud. I remember wanting to make certain that each player realized exactly what we had done. Finally, I remember, one of my teammates coming up to me at my locker. "Pete," he said, "go down and talk to Ferris. He's really upset. He's crying." I rushed down the corridor of the fieldhouse only to see Ferris coming toward me. Tears were in his eyes, but they were tears of pride. All I could manage to say was simply, "That game was for you, Ferris." But that did not need saying. It had been obvious out on Finney Field.

About Our Smart Bets Program and Its History

Smart Bets is the name of a program that demonstrates Atlas Network's ability to find, and provide value for, organizations that are "punching above their weight" in creating results for liberty.

Over time, we expect that liberty movement philanthropists will be persuaded that there's great ROI to be realized in trusting Atlas Network to power exciting organizations that have smaller budgets—but perhaps more upside for new breakthroughs for our cause—compared to other well-known organizations.

While we did a "U.S. only" pilot version of this project in 2019, the Smart Bets program as we currently know it began when we selected members of the "Class of 2022" in the middle of 2021.

How does it work? Our Institute Relations team creates a list of 30+ recommended candidates from around the world, informed by several important criteria:

- *Stage of development:* Smart Bets candidates are lesser-known but high-achieving organizations with a track record, or up-and-coming "rising stars" with big potential.
- *Grantee performance:* Our experience giving grants to these organizations has bolstered our confidence that new investments will generate high returns.
- *Leadership:* We have had multiple touch points with leadership that have demonstrated high professionalism, transparency, self-reflection, and other virtues that correlate with success in our sector.
- *Engagement:* These organizations' past involvement with Atlas Network trainings and cohort experiences shows enthusiasm for learning together with peers.

After soliciting and reviewing proposals from this group of 30+, our senior management team finalizes a list of 10 to work with us as Smart Bets over the coming year.

Winners of these Smart Bets grants receive:

1. a \$25,000 grant and a \$10,000 matching grant for the following year;
2. eligibility for an additional \$25,000 prize, awarded to one group that achieves the greatest impact over the first full year of the project;
3. a chance to showcase their work at a high-level Zoom event for Atlas Network partners and donors;
4. a chance to compete for an additional \$50,000 grand prize and two runner-up prizes of \$25,000 at the Liberty Forum & Freedom Dinner in New York City;

5. a membership in the global cohort of Smart Bets that meets virtually;
6. a set of consultations with the Atlas Network team to identify ways we can support the progress of a priority initiative of the organization;
7. a profile story at AtlasNetwork.org which will be promoted among our online channels, at our events, and which can be used for local fundraising;
8. a sleek, one-page promotional product designed by Atlas Network outlining the partner's status as and qualifications to be a Smart Bet that the grantee is encouraged to leverage with prospective donors; and
9. priority consideration for engagement opportunities such as high-level Atlas Network trainings.

In the fall of 2023, we introduced a new approach to how we highlight Smart Bets grantees in front of other donors and our broader community. All 10 Smart Bets were invited to deliver a video pitch, and to take audience questions, in a Virtual Smart Bets Pitch Competition.

Three Smart Bets grantees were selected to compete on-stage at the Smart Bets Investors Dinner, which we will hold on the first night of our upcoming Liberty Forum in New York City (Wednesday, November 15, 2023). That night we will award a grand prize of \$50,000 to one winning organization from the new Class of 2024, and \$25,000 runners-up prizes will go to the other two finalists.

As we have done in the past, we will also announce, at Liberty Forum, a \$25,000 Impact Prize for one member of the previous year's cohort.

Cohorts and Prize Winners

Class of 2022 (listed in alphabetical order, announced during Fall 2021)

1. Advocata Institute (Sri Lanka)
2. Better Cities (United States)
3. Centro de Estudios para el Desarrollo (Uruguay)
4. Eléutera (Honduras)
5. Human Rights Foundation (United States)
6. Lebanese Institute for Market Studies (Lebanon)
7. Association Multi, (Bosnia & Herzegovina)
8. Nkafu Policy Institute, (Cameroon)
9. Pelican Institute, (United States)
10. SecondStreet.org, (Canada)

Winner of \$50,000 Smart Bets Pitch Competition: **Lebanese Institute for Market Studies**

Runners Up in Pitch Competition (\$25k each): not applicable for class of 2022

Winner of \$25,000 end-of-term Impact Prize: **Lebanese Institute for Market Studies**

Class of 2023 (listed in alphabetical order, announced during Fall 2022)

1. Bikalpa—an Alternative (Nepal)
2. Centre For Development and Enterprises Great Lakes (Burundi)
3. Foundation for the Advancement of Liberty (Spain)
4. Frontier Institute (United States)
5. Fundacja Liberté! (Poland)
6. John Locke Foundation (United States)
7. Lithuanian Free Market Institute (Lithuania)
8. New Zealand Taxpayers' Union (New Zealand)
9. Students For Liberty Brasil (Brazil)
10. Young Voices (United States)

Winner of \$50,000 Smart Bets Pitch Competition: **Students for Liberty Brasil**

Runners Up in Pitch Competition (\$25k each): **CDE Great Lakes**

Lithuanian Free Market Institute

Winner of \$25,000 end-of-term Impact Prize: tbd in November 2023

Class of 2024 (listed in alphabetical order, announced during Summer 2023)

1. American Conservation Coalition (United States)
2. Badger Institute (United States)
3. Center for Indonesian Policy Studies (Indonesia)
4. Free the People Foundation (United States)
5. Ideas Beyond Borders (Iraq)
6. Institut Ostrom Catalunya (Spain)
7. Instituto OMG (Dominican Republic)
8. Liberty Sparks (Tanzania)
9. Livres (Brazil)
10. Prometheus - Das Freiheitsinstitut (Germany)

Winner of \$50,000 Smart Bets Pitch Competition: tbd in November 2023

Runners Up in Pitch Competition (\$25k each): tbd in November 2023

Winner of \$25,000 end-of-term Impact Prize: tbd in November 2024