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CITY COUNCIL DRAMA
Tompkins Under Fire After User Fee Vote.
Touma Defends Council Vote.
Kennedy Says Nothing Left to Cut.
Voccio Slams Vote But Put Forward No Proposed Cuts / Amendments.

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(Cont. on pg. 2)

OFFICIAL HOME OF **THE CRIME** PAGE 4
 Niagara Falls

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TOMPKINS: Getting the Facts Straight on the Garbage Fee
 By: Kenny Tompkins
NF City Councilman

Being an elected official is great when it's clear to everyone what you're doing is in their best interests. What I hate is when I have to make a decision that I know is unpopular on the surface, but ultimately is what's right for the 48,000 residents I am elected to represent.

(Cont. on pg. 3)

Lost Women of NXIVM, Starring Frank Parlato, Airing Sun. on Discovery ID
 By: Staff Reports

A new documentary, "The Lost Women of NXIVM", follows Niagara Reporter publisher and investigative journalist Frank Parlato as he investigates the suspicious fates of four women associated with the secretive cult NX-IVM, and its leader, Keith Raniere.

(Cont. on pgs. 6-7)

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NIAGARA FALLS

City Council Drama Cont. from Cover

Tony Farina

Niagara Falls Councilman Kenny Tompkins continues to feel the heat for his vote in favor of a garbage user fee last month although in reality, lawmakers had little choice in dealing with a \$4.1 million budget deficit other than passing the fee or laying off dozens of police and fire officers that would have potentially comprised public safety.

"We have a job to do and nobody proposed any deep cuts," said Council Chairman Andrew Touma in explaining why he was one of three lawmakers to support approving the user fee, joining Republican Tompkins and fellow Democrat William Kennedy. "There was really nothing left. It was recommended by our financial restructuring board which didn't recommend 50 cuts in public safety."

"I didn't propose any cuts because no one would have voted for them but me," said Republican Councilman Chris Voccio. "We cut about \$300,000 out of a

\$99 million budget, or about zero percent. We're playing tiddly-winks. Maybe next year it will be different."

Voccio, a strong conservative who believes the city needs to cut spending to reduce deficits, and that means taking on city unions, will be joined in the new council come January by another strong conservative, John Spanbauer, who agrees with Voccio that the city must be run like a business and not spend what it doesn't have.

Unfortunately for Tompkins, he is bearing the brunt of voter unhappiness over the new user fee but, as Touma pointed out, it was a last resort to close the budget deficit or face even greater financial problems going forward that could further undermine the city's credit rating, already trending downward.

Tompkins points out the garbage user fee could eventually be rescinded, but unless Mayor-elect Robert Restaino comes up with a magic money-making formula in his consolidation efforts, it could be a long time before the city

takes that fee out of the budget and makes ends meet, even with the resumption of Seneca money which is still not a certainty.

For Tompkins, a broad-shouldered, hardworking city lawmaker, the choices are not easy, and it would appear he was doomed if he did or didn't vote for the fee because he was the tie-breaker all along.

Tompkins held his powder for as long as he could, but when push came to shove, he sided with Touma and Kennedy in voting for the fee instead of deep cuts to public safety. In his defense, at this point, as Touma argues, there was really little choice.

The argument could be made it never should have gotten to this point, but it did and there is no going back to reshuffling the deck to undo years of bad decision-making.

The city is in a bad place financially, and it will take the council working together with the new mayor to find ways to reduce costs, raise new revenues, and replenish the reserve fund to



This is the second year in a row that Councilman Voccio has not proposed an amendment during the budget process. If you recall, Councilman Voccio stated during last year's budget process that he was not going to participate as well. It is interesting that Councilman Voccio is seeking votes to become Chairman of the Council in 2020, yet has not actively participated in the biggest function of a council person two years in a row; the budget process.

satisfy the Wall Street credit rating agencies.

It is time to work together, and finger-pointing about past mistakes and spilled milk won't get it done. What's done is done, but perhaps 2020 will usher in a new era of smart decision-making and everybody, including the poor taxpayers, will benefit.

NIAGARA



REPORTER

Frank Parlato, Jr.
Publisher & Editor in Chief

Nicholas D. D'Angelo
Managing Editor

P.O. Box 3083, Niagara Falls NY 14304
(716) 870-1175 niagarareporter@gmail.com



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Youngstown: Anchor Spirits & Wines, Bandanas Bar & Grill, Public Library, Rite Aid, Village Diner

HAMILTON: Tompkins, Kennedy are Targets of the Wrath of Dave



Ken Hamilton

Dave Biekska is a gruff, rough and tumble sort of a guy who's worked hard all of his life, wisely invested his money and is now facing his remaining sunset years in his 24th Street home, just off what is known as East Falls Street. But the former athlete, a retired factory worker and a retired automobile mechanic, owns both residential and commercial properties in the city, and only one of the properties are income producing.

"Tompkins lied,"

Biekska bellowed over the telephone; he then began to tell why he thought so. Through the years, Biekska has threatened to leave the city more often than Rosie O'Donnell has threatened to leave the country if this or that president is elected. The rather vocal and sometimes pugilistic Biekska remains in good ol' Niagara Falls, just a stone's throw from the home in which he grew up.

Though automobiles are still one of Biekska's passions, his heart for the hard things in life like politics, public policy and business can be considered as mechanical as a water pump, that heart is still just one of his two hearts.

And, yes, as are many if not most taxpaying citizens of the city are, Biekska is as mad as hell at the three city

councilmen who voted to impose more than an annual \$2000 increase in what he – himself -- has to pay to continue living in both the city and around the people that he loves.

The 3 councilmen with whom Biekska is as mad as hell at are Councilmen Andrew Touma (Chmn) and William Kennedy II, both Democrats, and at recently reelected Republican Councilman Ken Tompkins, whom he calls a liar.

When asked why he was angrier at Tompkins than at the other two, Biekska said that it was, "Because Kenny Tompkins, he went out during this whole period over here, before the election took place, people were asking him if he was going to vote for that fee, he said, 'Absolutely not, absolutely not.'"

"He told everybody that," Biekska continued. "and then what happened, the minute that he got elected, after he got all them votes, because the people were happy about what he was telling them ... what did he do, he turned against the people and he voted for the garbage, ah, fee."

Biekska then related what he saw on the city council internet telecast, saying, "He waited until after the election, then he voted." Continuing, he said, "And then, the people were there that watched him, he was scared; you should have seen the look on his face. But all the firemen were there, the police were there, and everybody else ... he was scared, but he voted, he okayed the tax, the garbage fee. He went against everything he told the people."

Touma and Kennedy said nothing Biekska answered, "Because ... Touma and Kennedy didn't say anything [about the FILOT] ... to anybody about it. They were safe; they have 2 more years of election-free time. Where Kenny Tompkins was being elected this year. If he went out and told people that he was going to vote for that garbage fee, do you think that he would have got

elected?"

So then, why Biekska isn't as mad at Touma and Kennedy because of what they didn't do, as well as what Tompkins needs to do because of it, can be found in the Bible.

"Kenny Tompkins made promises," Biekska said. As such, what Tompkins needs to do is in accordance with the website whatchristianswanttoknow.com and the Bible Book of Proverbs 6:2-3, which says, "... if you are ... caught in the words of your mouth, then do this, my son, and save yourself ... go, hasten, and plead urgently with your neighbor."

Sadly, that is what Tompkins need to do; but does the saying make for good political policy when do-nothing politicians like Legislator Owen Steed and others say and promises nothing, and then they deliver exactly what they promised? I fear that all of them will follow suit!

Biekska went on in explaining his differences in anger by saying that Touma, whom Biekska estimates both Touma's wife's and his annual income, with what he says are one health insurance buyout from the city and another from their dual-income board of education salaries, exceed \$200,000. And of Kennedy, who's likely making far less, he says that he should have been more sensitive to the poor citizens in Kennedy's own neighborhood, neither said anything to anyone about the FILOT. When asked if in two years would he vote for either, Biekska said exactly what Tompkins had previously said about voting for the FILOT, "Absolutely not, absolutely not."

Biekska had also cited the additional costs that the city council poverty and crime-increasing policies have imposed upon taxpayers that drive up residents' insurance costs as well; and though he voted for "his friend" Glenn Choolokian, he's hoping that the new Mayor Robert Restaino would make a difference.

Biekska had little good to say about the city unions that were present in city council chambers on the night of the vote, citing the raises and stipends that they received, and about the absorption of the increases in the prices of health care that they get. He was particularly clear on what he thought of the firefighters that pressured the council, especially Tompkins; in that most of them live out of town and won't be harmed by the FILOT, but more so that they won't be impacted by the tax increases on the taxes that they don't even pay.

The Heart of Dave

But when asked about the firefighters Toy Fund Drive, the soft side of Biekska's heart was exposed. "The toy fund? Well, it's a good thing ... over here. I mean, there's a lot of poor people ... I see, firsthand, kids coming from the Niagara Street School ... you can see ... they're poor, impoverished, their sneakers all worn and everything else. Yeah, you better believe [the toy fund is a good thing]. Spread a little joy."

Biekska is like that; it's the policies that he hates and not the people. That's why he is still here. Again, he's done well in life and he can afford the extra burden of the FILOT. His current tenants' rents now just barely cover rents and repairs, "... but I will bend over backwards for them ..." he says. "They are old and they are good solid people." He went on to say that his heart is for all of the city, especially those who can't afford the increases.

Biekska also cited Facebooker John Campbell and his efforts at both an online petition and one placed in the stores along Pine Avenue to get the city to repeal the FILOT. The online petition can be found at <https://www.change.org/p/the-citizens-of-niagara-falls-remove-garbage-user-fee>.

Please send comments to Kenhamilton930@aol.com

Tompkins Cont. from Cover

The garbage fee is the perfect example of a no-win situation. I know many people are disappointed that I voted yes. I know very well that taxpayers are strapped and adding more of the city's financial problems to their backs was the last thing I wanted to do. This was not a vote where I wanted to say yes, but ultimately, this was the right decision for several reasons I want to stress. Here's what you need to know:

1) Services wouldn't have suffered. They would have been devastated.

If anyone thinks DPW services are limited now, what would have happened if we had to cut 30 DPW employees, 20 members of the NFPD, and 20 members of the NFFD. Streets would go days without plowing. Grass wouldn't have been cut in the spring. Trees that needed trimming or removal would not be touched. The response time to police and fire calls would have slowed. There wouldn't be enough officers to respond to nuisance complaints, like loud parties or fights or cars blocking driveways. We'd struggle to ticket people for parking or traffic violations, which are sources of revenue.

This isn't a scare tactic. It's the

reality we would have faced.

Think, too, about who would have gotten pink slips. It wasn't going to be those with several years in the system. It would be younger employees, those who are already contributing to their health insurance and who are required to live in the city. This would have put a greater burden on an older workforce who are doing physical jobs, meaning more injuries, comp time, and ultimately increases in overtime to cover for already short coverage. The impact of layoffs would have snowballed and cost us more.

This year's budget did include cuts. Sixteen positions were eliminated, seven of which meant layoffs. The council budget itself was cut by 23%.

2) Union contracts can't just be "renegotiated."

Keep in mind, like many city entities, most of our costs comes from personnel and legacy costs which are negotiated and in place for several years. We, as council, can't demand that the union leadership reopen contracts. They have no reason to come to the table. So let's stop pretending that was ever a possibility.

3) Our city's bond rating would have plummeted.

If we did nothing, if we continue to avoid making hard decisions, or following the recommendations of the State's financial restructuring board or the prior city financial restructuring board, it will take our city's bond rating down to junk bonds. This severely hampers our ability to borrow if we need to, and if we can get loans, our interest rates would be out of control.

Both the state and the local restructuring boards have recommended for several years that we impose a garbage fee. If we don't start listening to their advice, we will not be able to get help when we need it. Ideas to increase revenue, like the surcharge on state parks, would go nowhere.

4) We are still looking for ways to increase revenue.

We didn't vote on this garbage fee until after we completed our budget meetings, the last of which was November 14. As a council, we went down every road we could find to make reasonable cuts that would be impactful. We made progress with making sure the commercial rate was dramatically less than 9 percent. We are striving to make it easier for businesses to stay here and more to open up shop. This means equalizing that two-tier tax rate. But remember, part of attracting new business and new homeowners means maintaining even minimal ser-



Niagara Falls City Councilman
Ken Tompkins.

vices.

I know this is disappointing. I do not like having to pass this garbage fee on to you. I had to choose between a \$3.48 a week charge vs. decimated services and even bigger financial devastation. I had to make a hard decision. I hope I've explained the bigger picture behind this vote. I hope you understand that I am looking out for all of our best interests, no matter how unpopular the decision has to be.



THE CRIME

WEEKLY HEADLINES

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the Walmart on Military Road in the evening hours of Monday, November 25th, 2019, after reports of a physical altercation. According to police, a call was received that five individuals were fighting in the garden section of Walmart.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the Star Food Gas Station on the 400 block of Main Street in the late evening hours of Monday, November 25th, 2019, after reports of an armed robbery. According to security camera footage, the suspect broke through a window on the side of the building taking money, cigarettes, cigars, and other small items. However, police also state that the suspect dropped a lot of the items he/she took. Police took the dropped items in hope of finding a fingerprint and are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to 6th and Ferry Avenue in the early morning hours of Tuesday, November 26th, 2019, after reports of an armed robbery. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 400 block of Niagara Street in the evening hours of Wednesday, November 27th, 2019, after reports of shots fired. According to police, one individual sustained a gunshot wound to the leg and was transported to a hospital. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to Walmart in the evening hours of Wednesday, November 27th, 2019, after reports of a shoplifter. According to reports, police engaged in a footchase with the suspect but could not apprehend him.

-Niagara Falls Police, assisted by Lewiston Police, executed a search warrant in the morning hours of Wednesday, November 27th, 2019. According to police, a suspect was taken into custody along with drugs that were found inside of the home.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the intersection of 24th Street and Michigan Avenue in the evening hours of Wednesday, November 27th, 2019, after reports of vehicular manslaughter. According to police, a Kia SUV

that was west bound on Michigan Avenue failed to stop at the stop sign and collided with the second vehicle. Police say the driver of the second vehicle, a Niagara Falls woman in her 60's, was ejected from her vehicle. The woman was taken to Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center where she succumbed to her injuries. The driver of the striking vehicle was Stephen Wruck, 32-years-old, of 72nd Street. Wruck, uninjured in the collision and driving with a suspended license, was arrested after leaving the scene on foot and calling 911 in an attempt to falsely report his vehicle stolen. Wruck was charged with Vehicular Manslaughter 2nd, DWI, leaving the scene of a fatal accident and several other vehicle and traffic offenses. Wruck was later given a bail of \$50,000.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the 2200 block of Delaware Avenue in the early morning hours of Thursday, November 28th, 2019, to assist Town of Niagara Police with a shots fired call. While on patrol, a Town of Niagara police officer reported hearing gunshots and located a large party at Power City 158 on Delaware Aveue. According to reports, a vehicle left that location at a high rate of speed and the officer began in pursuit. Officers caught up to the vehicle when it stopped at St Mary's Hospital. It was at this time police discovered there was a gunshot victim.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to a shots fired call in the late night hours of Thursday, November 28th, 2019. According to police, callers stated that two gunshots were let off, but the suspects fled prior to police arriving. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

-Niagara Falls Police responding to Niagara Falls Memorial Medical Center in the evening hours of Saturday, November, 30th, 2019, after reports that a person snuck in pretending to be an employee and was stealing food from the kitchen.

-Niagara Falls Police responded to the Niagara's Choice Federal Credit Union on Packard Road in the morning hours of Monday, December 2nd, 2019, after reports of an attempted armed robbery. Police are continuing to investigate the incident.

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Preview of Frank Parlato's Lost Women of NXIVM Airing Sunday Night on Discovery ID

(Contd from page 1)

The documentary premieres at 9 p.m. ET, Sunday, Dec. 8, on the Investigation Discovery channel.

In the "The Lost Women of NXIVM", Parlato crisscrosses the nation from the Knox Woods townhouse development in suburban Albany where Raniere lived with numerous women to Alaska and the Florida Keys, as he investigates the 2003 disappearance of Nxivm member Kristin Snyder in Alaska and the 2002 alleged suicide of Gina Hutchinson.

Parlato also looks into the mysterious cancer deaths of Barbara Jeske and Pamela Cafritz, two of Raniere's closest lieutenants.

Parlato was initially hired to do public relations for NXIVM. He ultimately broke with the group and became perhaps its most damaging critic.

It was Parlato who in 2017 reported that a group of women within NXIVM had been branded with Raniere's initials as part of their membership in a secret "master/slave" club within the larger organization.

Parlato's revelations led to reporting in The New York Times, the Albany Times Union, the New York Post and other outlets, that ultimately prompted an investigation by federal prosecutors in Brooklyn.

Raniere, 59, was arrested in Mexico in March 2018, and, in June, 2019, he was found guilty on all counts in a sex trafficking, forced labor and racketeering trial. He faces up to life in federal prison at his sentencing, currently scheduled for Jan. 17.

Five NXIVM insiders, including Seagram's heiress Clare Bronfman, the group's president Nancy Salzman, and actress Allison Mack, pleaded guilty to felonies in the months leading up to Raniere's trial.

The ID documentary airing Sunday raises questions that are even more sinister than the charges Raniere and his conspirators were convicted of: What really happened to four female members who died or disappeared?

The Lost Women



Kristin Snyder

The film begins with Parlato's investigation into the missing persons case of Snyder, who disappeared on February 6, 2003 after being forcibly removed from one of NXIVM's classes due to erratic behavior.

Snyder, an environmental consultant originally from Kentucky, had become heavily involved in NXIVM.

After she was removed from class, she was never seen again. Her abandoned vehicle was found the next day

with an apparent suicide note inside.

The note, scribbled in a spiral notebook, said she had been "brain-washed and my emotional center of the brain was killed/turned off" during her NXIVM training.

Alaska State Police investigators believe Snyder drove her Toyota Tacoma to a campground along Resurrection Bay in Seward, paddled her kayak into the bay and intentionally capsized in the glacier-fed water.

Neither her body nor the kayak were recovered, despite a comprehensive search by authorities and friends. Her death was presumed a suicide.

In Alaska, Parlato interviews Snyder's domestic partner, Heidi Clifford, who tells him that in the days before her disappearance, Snyder "reported to me that she was pregnant with Keith's baby" — something that Snyder, in the midst of what Clifford describes as a "psychotic break," repeatedly shouted during a NXIVM training session before she was hauled out by staff.

Clifford said she never revealed Snyder's possible pregnancy to the Alaskan authorities.

Clifford says in the film: "I never talked about it at all until today, and I'm still scared. I've ran the last 15, 16 years of my life, being scared of these people. I'm still scared."

Another former Nxivm insider, Susan Dones, expressed concern that Raniere may have manipulated and abused Snyder prior to her disappearance.

"My suspicion is that he... had sex with her," Dones says in the film, adding: "Keith did not like women being lesbians. Being gay, period, was an act of defiance, especially if you're a woman. It was an act of defiance and, I think for him, because he treated women as objects, if you're a lesbian, then you're not available to him. So he could possibly try to turn her. It's kind of like a notch on his belt... we know that this is a guy that will do evil things to women."

Matt Malone, an IT security consultant hired by Nxivm alleges that NXIVM leaders knew Snyder was pregnant — "shedding new light" on the mysterious disappearance, Parlato says in the film.

A handwriting expert was given Snyder's farewell note and a Valentine's Day card she gave Clifford. She tells Parlato, "I would not say they're the same," but acknowledges that a larger sample of her handwriting would be needed before she could state conclusively whether or not Snyder wrote the suicide note.

No one has faced charges connected with Snyder's disappearance.

Gina Hutchinson



Another mysterious death Parlato investigates is Gina Hutchinson, 33, who was discovered dead in Woodstock, New York in 2002.

Shortly before she died, Hutchinson had accused Raniere of statutory rape, back when she was 14.

The documentary includes a video — shown during his trial — in which Raniere says some children are "perfectly happy" having sex with adults and that the age of consent in some countries is 12.

Testimony at Raniere's trial alleged he was sexually involved with a Mexican girl when she was 15 years old. She later became part of his secret "master/slave" group.

In that group, known as DOS ("Dominus Obsequious Sororium," Latin for "Lord/Master of the Obedient Female Companions") Raniere forced his "slaves" to live on 500-calorie-a-day diets.

The Albany Times Union reported in 2012 that Hutchinson's sister, Heidi, learned in 1984 that her underage sister Gina was allegedly having sex with Raniere, whom she once saw crawl out of her sister's room.

Heidi says in the film, "It's all very suspicious. She was a very gentle soul. For her to even be that violent, to [use a shotgun to shoot herself in the head]... a method that violent — that concerns me."

In the film, Parlato stages a demonstration in which a woman with a similar height and build tries to pull the trigger of a shotgun similar to the one used in Hutchinson's death and in the same manner. The woman can't reach the trigger with her hands.

Parlato also interviews a ballistics expert and crime scene investigator who raises doubts about how such a self-inflicted death could have been physically possible and discusses lapses and oversights in the original death scene investigation.

Cancer Victims, Jeske and Cafritz



Barbara Jeske

In addition to the apparent suicides, Parlato investigates the deaths of Barbara Jeske, 63, and Pamela Cafritz, 57, two of Raniere's inner circle, who had intimate knowledge of the group's activities. Both were diagnosed with cancer and died. Both women lived with Raniere.

Suspiciously, several more women in his "harem" suffered from cancer.

The documentary sets to find out if it is possible there was a nefarious



Pamela Cafritz

cause of the women's cancer.

Parlato talks to one former inner circle member who lived in the house with the cancer victims and Raniere. She also contracted cancer.

The woman is shown in silhouette, with her voice disguised, because she said she fears retaliation from remaining cult members.

She shows filmmakers the home where Raniere and the women who got cancer lived.

She offers Parlato a sample of her hair from the time just before her cancer. An analysis in the film shows extraordinarily high levels of barium and bismuth — chemicals that could be found in items that include rat poison, according to a forensic scientist interviewed in the film.

Kristin Keffe



One of the highlights of the film is Parlato's interview with Kristin Keffe, a former Nxivm member currently in hiding.

Raniere fathered her son. She escaped NXIVM in 2014. She has never publicly shared her story until now.

Fiercely protective of her son — one of only two known children born to Raniere, who forced literally dozens of abortions on followers he impregnated — Keffe at one point walks off camera and ends the interview.

She explains: "I was involved in NXIVM for 16 years and Keith Raniere for 24 years, and I became the primary whistleblower. I left my house with nothing but my pocketbook, and I took a taxi to the police station — and while I was at the police station, the NXIVM attorneys found out and ... called there and said: 'We know she's there.'"

"And I said: 'That's it. I can never go back.' I knew they would put millions of dollars into finding me, grabbing me, doing whatever they could to take my son. I knew that, when I walked into that police station, in Keith's mind, that was nuclear war. No



Frank Parlato stars in the 2 hour Investigation Discovery special, "The Lost Women of NXIVM"

one had ever done anything like that to him before.

"I knew I was being hunted like an animal."

She adds: 'I decided it was time to leave the moment that I realized that Keith was a psychopath ... he was absolutely deliberately trying to destroy people.'

Parlato says in his narration that Keeffe, like many of the women in Ranieri's inner circle, kept herself so skinny that she wasn't even aware she was pregnant until just weeks before her son was born.

Keeffe said she provided information to the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security — who, she claimed, told her to "back off or you're going to get killed."

Parlato, who the Daily Mail reports, "comes across in the film as a hard-nosed personality with a single-minded agenda," told the British media outlet that he believes that once the Lost Women of Nxivm airs, "the authorities will sit up and take note... that these assumptions [of causes of death] will be revisited."

Executive Producer Pat McGee said that Parlato "has this determination to go to the ends of the earth. We're in

the [Florida] Keys, we're in Alaska, we're all over the country. He wants to go wherever the story takes him ... he really wants to find out what happened. He has a lot of questions that he wants answered, and that may ruffle a lot of feathers. Some people may not like his direct attitude, but he's on a quest to figure out what the truth is....

"It's fair for Frank Parlato to ask tough questions about some of this stuff. I think it's fair for him to go out to talk to victims and survivors and witnesses and to kind of make sure these women did not die in vain."

Parlato said he couldn't have found a 'better partner' than Investigation Discovery as the team followed him across the US and were 'committed to actually doing an investigation.'

Parlato said he's looking into "several other curious cases where women were here and now they're gone. We don't know that something bad happened to them, but there's a possibility that the number may be larger than four."

The Lost Women of NXIVM airs on Sunday, December 8 on Investigation Discovery at 9/8c. It will also air December 21 in the UK on Quest Red.



Reducing Risk for Lower Back Injuries

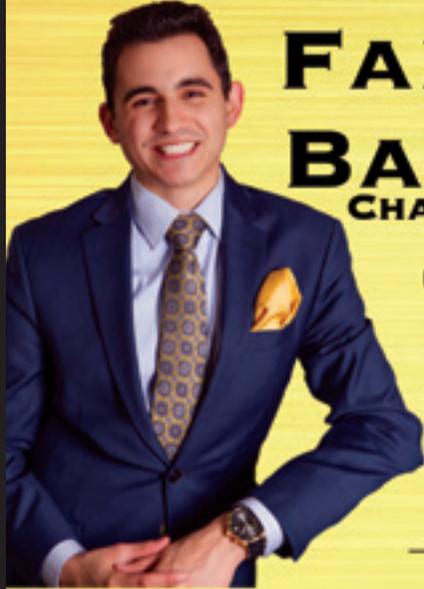
Back injuries, especially those affecting the lower back, are the most common injury in construction. Lower back pain is a leading cause of lost workdays and disability. Many construction workers develop lower back pain as a result of tasks that require excessive force, such as lifting, and prolonged awkward positions or repetitive motions, such as tying rebar. The resulting pain can range from a dull, constant, burning ache to a sudden, sharp sensation that radiates into the legs and feet and can be incapacitating. While it can be debilitating, lower back pain isn't always serious. Rest, ice, compression and elevation (RICE) and over-the-counter medications, including acetaminophen and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen, naproxen and aspirin can often help someone recover in a matter of weeks. Lower back pain often gets better on its own over time with proper rest. But sometimes lower back pain lingers. If it continues past three months, it's considered chronic. In these instances, physical therapy and complementary health approaches, including chiropractic care and massage therapy, can often help people manage. Surgery is usually a last resort as there is no guarantee it will be effective. When it comes to lower back pain, there's no silver bullet. If you experience chronic lower back issues, it's wise to try different solutions and do what works best for you and your recovery.

As many people know from experience, sometimes lower back pain can seem to develop out of nowhere. This is especially true among older workers, those who are overweight and those with sedentary lifestyles. Sitting is especially hard on the lower back because it puts excess pressure on the joints, muscles and discs. Research finds that 80 percent of adults will experience lower back pain at some point in their lifetime. The first episode usually occurs between the ages of 30 and 50 and is often a byproduct of aging. As people grow older, flexibility and muscle tone decrease and discs dry out, making them brittle and more susceptible to injury. The senior years are also when common conditions that can lead to back pain, like sciatica and spinal stenosis, are more likely to develop. All workplace injuries, including lower back injuries, can potentially contribute to the opioid epidemic because workers who are suffering from pain are often prescribed these powerful drugs and some become addicted. When workers are aware of all of the non-addictive options for pain management, they can devise a treatment plan with their health care provider that does not involve being prescribed a highly addictive opioid, which could show up on a drug test and possibly get them taken off a job. Awareness of all the treatment options can reduce their risk for becoming addicted to opioids.



Seward Police Lieutenant Alan Nickel and Frank Parlato investigate the disappearance of Kristin Snyder.

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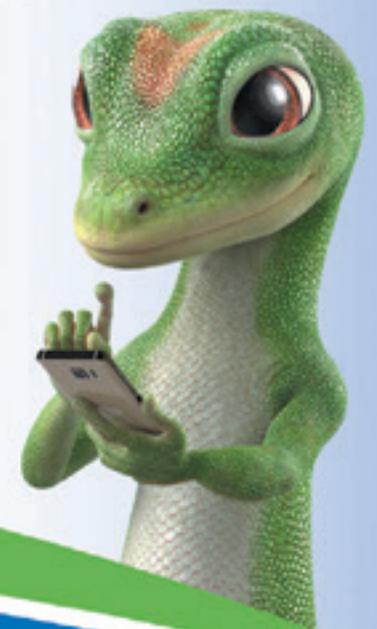
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