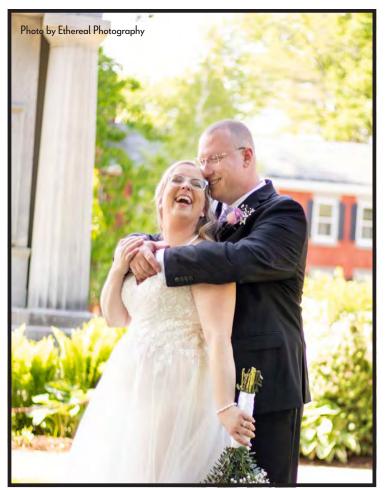


A special section of the Addison Independent Thursday, November 2, 2023







lyzabeth was working at Subway in Vergennes back in 2012 while Ryan was working on the Vergennes Area Rescue Squad. To this day, Ryan axs that Subway sandwiches aren't his favorite.

says that Subway sandwiches aren't his favorite, but he kept coming back just so he could see Elyzabeth.

Their engagement was very much a surprise at least it was to Elyzabeth. They became pregnant with their beautiful daughter Carter in November of 2020 and the mother-to-be scheduled a maternity photoshoot for July 3, 2021. The weather called for nothing but rain, and Elyzabeth tried to reschedule. But Ryan had reached out to the photographer about having a surprise proposal during the photoshoot, and the shoot went as planned (fortunately, the rain held off). The couple had joked about doing a "compare the belly picture," so when our lovely photographer put them back to back for this photo, Elyzabeth didn't think anything of it... until Elyzabeth no longer felt Ryan's back on hers. Taylor, the photographer, said, "Turn around, Elyzabeth," and, when she did, there was Ryan down on one knee proposing!

The Donnellys said that when planning a wedding, the bride and groom naturally feel all different emotions depending on what stage of the process they're in. After being engaged for nine months, they decided that having an intimate ceremony and marrying each other in front of only immediate family was important. Life is too short and they both wanted their loved ones to witness them become husband and wife. Planning this intimate ceremony took two- to three weeks, which they described as exciting, but overwhelming and stressful. Elyzabeth and Ryan were married on the Vergennes city green on May 27, 2022. But then they still wanted a reception to fulfill their lifelong dreams of a big day, so they

had a reception on May 27, 2023 — exactly a year later.

The couple wrote vows to each other, then delivered them during the ceremony with the other not knowing what each would say. They both started their vows by referencing how they'd met over Elyzabeth making Ryan sandwiches.

What advice would they give to couples planning a wedding? "Don't worry about the small details; everything will come together the way it is meant to!"

After cleaning up following the reception, Elyzabeth and Ryan had time to spare before getting home to relieve their babysitter, and knowing City Limits Night Club was soon closing, they decided to go to the bar in tux and wedding dress! They didn't have to pay for a single drink that night; and thanks to the DJ, they got to dance to their wedding song for a second time in one day.

Being able to keep big components of the wedding local was something they'll always be thankful for; after all, they have the city of Vergennes to thank for bringing them together. They both graduated from VUHS, met in Vergennes and established roots in the Little City by buying their first home.

"Having the opportunity to become Mr. and Mrs. in the city park, having our reception a year later at the Opera House and using local establishments throughout the journey of becoming Mr. and Mrs. Donnelly are truly the best details of our marriage and wedding," Elyzabeth said.

For instance, they catering their reception through 3 Squares Restaurant, where Ryan had worked as a cook during catering season for eight years.

"We are truly blessed and thankful to our little city of Vergennes," the Donnellys said.





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elsey Kimball and Hunter Dyer are close friends, so when Hunter's brother Dustin came back from Colorado to visit his family for Thanksgiving a few years back, they all hung out most of the week — and Kelsey and Dustin got

to know each other a little bit.

Time passed, Kelsey and Dustin dated, and in the winter of 2020 they went to the Green Mountain Inn in Stowe as a small getaway for Dustin's birthday — Jan. 26. Kelsey says Dustin LOVES his birthday, a day that's all about him. "So I never thought he would want to share his



special day with me, but boy was I wrong!" Kelsey says. Dustin proposed that day.

Like a lot of couples, the Dyers found that planning for a wedding was overwhelming.

They were supposed to get married on June 11, 2022, but due to health issues, had to postpone. The venue where they planned to wed only had a few dates left for 2023 and one happened to be Sept. 16, which was the birthday of Kelsey's best friend, Jeffrey Manshel, who had passed away. Normally that's a sad day for Kelsey, but she and Dustin figured getting married on that date would create a happy reason to mark Sept. 16.

When the wedding day finally arrived, it was very special. Kelsey's dad brought his old Chevy truck to transport his daughter and her bridesmaids so they could make a big entrance when they arrived — everyone *loved* it. The bride says that when the groom saw her pull up in the truck, get out and start walking down the aisle toward him, his face showed a range of emotions that were priceless.

"He cried more than I could have imagine, and the moment was perfect," Kelsey remembers.

Their wedding day was the same number of hours as any other day, but for the happy couple, time flew by.

"When I got home I felt like I had talked to so many people but so briefly that I felt like I hardly saw anyone," Kelsey recalls.

The Dyers have some advice for other brides and grooms to be. Try not to stress about things. Planning is stressful, but when the day comes, you'll never think about all the little things that went wrong or things you wish you had done. The day is about you and your partner and that's the only thing that matters.







### Lindsay and Dylan



indsay Christian and Dylan Bougor of Middlebury said theirs is a 21st Century Love Story — they met online.

After a while, Dylan proposed to Lindsay in the comfort of their kitchen, on May 4, 2021, after work. Lindsay was cooking dinner when he asked her to look in his lunch box. In it, she found a little black box, so she turned around to ask what it was for and he was already down on one knee!

The couple said that planning for their wedding was fun. One interesting feature they included in their big day was a photo display. In honor of their family, and closest friends they consider family, Lindsay and Dylan created a display of each couple's favorite wedding picture. They said their family and friendships mean the most to them, and being able to honor them and show the love that surrounds Lindsay and Dylan was very important to the couple.

The Vermont Wedding Barn offered enough space for all their friends and family, was the perfect blank canvas to decorate how they wanted. Plus, it included Alpacas!

The wedding day itself went by fast. "Everyone tells you how quick the day goes by, but until you are living the moment, you don't realize just how quick it goes by," Lindsay said.

Still, there was one memory that stands out: Their first look at each other after they'd been apart for 16 hours. They called it the best part of the day.

The Bougors suggest that other couples planning their wedding should have fun with the planning process. They acknowledge that it can be a lot, and sometimes crazy, but making it fun will make it a lot easier to handle.

Enjoy the day! It goes by just as fast as people tell you it does.

yler Hebert and Moriah Sullivan had a beautiful wedding this year — in fact they had two! But the backstory to how the two met is emotional.

Moriah was the girlfriend of Gregory

Moriah was the girlfriend of Gregory Ouellette, who happened to be Tyler's brother. Tragically, Ouellete was killed in a Route 7 car crash during the summer of 2021. Naturally, Moriah and Tyler grieved together and healed together. A couple years later, they started dating. Eventually, the relationship started getting serious for both of them.

Moriah says she definitely knew Tyler was going to propose sometime this past January; nevertheless it was still a surprise. Her best friends did her hair and nails saying it was for practice ("I should have known better," Moriah laments) and she was completely shocked when he pulled out the ring.

Now that they were happily engaged, the couple chose to elope in Aruba. They chose the specific date of their ceremony based on the dates as their birthdays — Tyler's is June 2 and Moriah's is Jan. 26, so they ciphered out the best wedding date as 02-26-2023. Moriah called it "a big numbers game."

Moriah acknowledged they got married in Aruba first because that trip had already been booked. Once Tyler had proposed, the couple thought about it and knew that since they already were committing and knew they wanted to get married, why not honeymoon and get married at the same time.

"Saved us a little bit of money," Moriah notes.

When the wedding day arrived, it turned out to be the most relaxing day for a big event that the couple had ever experienced. Only family and a couple friends knew about their plans and both Tyler and Moriah spent the day relaxing on the beach, swimming in the pool and walking to breakfast.

But they still wanted to get their loved ones involved. So the Heberts also did a "renewing of vows" in June at the Addison County Fairgrounds so they could celebrate with friends and enjoy the full experience.

"Lord willing, we both never have to get married again so we wanted to get the full effect," Moriah noted. One detail she'll always remember about the celebration ceremony at the fair was the food catered by Pratt's — was amazing.

Asked what advice they have for others

Moriah & Tyler



planning a wedding, Moriah and Tyler urged couples not to think too hard.

"People will love the meaning behind it

more than the decorations, more than the food, more than the drinks," Moriah said. "They're there to celebrate you."





M

egan Vaughan and Bow Rinder-Godard have been together for a decade. They met during the summer of 2013 while swimming at the Gorge swimming hole in East Middlebury,

and they've entangled their lives together since then. So when the two decided to get married, they said it wasn't the type of dramatic engagement that some people talk about — and they're OK with that.

"To be honest ... we have five children together and it was time to unite our family," Megan says. "It was more of a mutual decision that the time was right. I wouldn't have changed it for a big surprise engagement at all."

The couple got down to business when it came to planning their nuptials.

They chose Button Bay State Park as the venue for the big event. They appreciated how beautiful a state park can be for a wedding, especially a *Vermont* State Park. Lake Champlain provided a natural backdrop for the drama of the ceremony, and they report that the pavilion at Button Bay is absolutely beautiful.

Everything at Megan and Bow's wedding was hand crafted. They used wooden dyed flowers that the family had hand-dyed themselves. These formed the basis for all of the bouquets and the men's

boutonnieres. Megan created a wedding board on Pinterest, and she proudly recounted she completed everything that she had put there. "We had used a Boho Theme, and everything came out exactly how I wanted it to!" she says.

The Rinder-Godards urge others planning weddings to have fun and stop stressing so much. They know from experience that you will put so much work into the wedding and in the blink of an eye it'll be over, so slow down and enjoy the moments because it goes by very quickly.

There was one important thing she couldn't account for on Pinterest — the heat. They got married on July 8, which was the right time for many reasons, but temperatures that day ended up being quite seasonal. "Man oh man, I wanted a summer wedding but underestimated how hot it was actually going to be in July in a wedding dress," Megan says.

But those high temps and beautiful setting seemed to melt away for Megan when she walked down the aisle with their sons. The moment she saw Bow is etched in her memory. "I could read his lips — 'Wow' — and the look in his eyes. I will never forget that moment," Megan says. "It made me feel like I was the only thing that mattered in the entire world in that moment."









M

ary Beth and Gary have known each other for a long time. Gary was friends with Mary Beth's oldest sister, Katie, when they were in high school. He also attended the same church. In college they were partners

in a Conversational French Class at Lyndon State College. They even shared the same birthday. At one point as young adults they lived in Burlington at the same time, but were dating other individuals whom they married. Mary Beth even cut the cake at Gary's wedding.

Both of those initial marriages ended in divorce, however. Mary Beth remembers, at the time of her divorce, saying, "I know there are good guys out there, look at Gary," but she still thought of him as Katie's friend. Her other sister, Louise, made her set up a Facebook account and Gary friended Mary Beth. For two years they were good friends, dating other people, until one night Mary Beth realized it was Gary who she loved. Gary later acknowledged that he'd liked Mary Beth for years. When they told their families they were dating the responses varied from "It's about time" to "This is much deserved happiness" to "I approve!"

It was not a simple relationship since they lived three hours apart in different states and had children to raise. Gary was worried about screwing things up with his best friend. Eventually a job

opportunity brought Gary to move from Massena, N.Y., to Ticonderoga, N.Y. And 18 months later they found the perfect house for the two of them on Forrest Road in Bridport. Eventually, Mary Beth got a surprise New Year's Day proposal at the top of Snake Mountain.

Fast forward to Aug. 11-13 — Mary Beth and Gary's wedding weekend. The family came together to set up table, chairs, etc. at Vermont Wedding Barn (Champlain Valley Alpaca) in Bridport on Thursday and Friday. Also on that Friday, floral arrangements were created using buckets of flowers purchased from Understory Farm, in Bridport. Mary Beth gushed, "My reasonably priced bouquet exceeded my expectations."

Friday night saw a barbeque at the couple's house (thankful for Pratt's Truckload Meat Sale). It was an opportunity for people to socialize, and for out-of-towners to see their house and to meet their dogs and chickens. The evening ended with a family tradition on Gary's side called a Yucca. The next morning Gary and others hiked up Snake Mountain while Mary Beth prepped for the wedding.

One of the most memorable moments was walking hand in hand down the road together to the ceremony site where 71 of their family and close friends had gathered. The couple said their vows under an arbor facing the Adirondack Mountains, his cousin

(See Mary Beth & Gary, Page 11)



















ebecca Hanley and David Payne described planning their wedding as "Fun, yet stressful." "Stressful" is no surprise when it comes to planning one of the most important and complex events of one's life. When you hear what they did, the word "Fun" sounds like the perfect description.

After getting engaged in June 2022, the couple began the process of putting together their wedding. As reported in our Weddings Section this past March, Rebecca decided early on that for her wedding she would walk down the aisle in the same dress her mother and grandmother wore on their wedding days.

They also decided that the ceremony would take place outdoors, which meant that guests could be laidback when it came to deciding what to wear. Rebecca said they "didn't want people to stress about what to wear, so (we decided) we're just having it be a costume party ... We've told people, 'Please just come in your best hot dog costume that you never got to wear, don't worry about dressing fancy."

The wedding date, Oct. 13 — that's Friday the 13th, a date with slightly spooky-but-fun undertones — also lent itself to the idea that guests could come in non-traditional attire. It worked. More than half of the guests showed up in costume. Towards the end of the reception, the DJ played "The Monster Mash" and the guests that were dressed up paraded in front of the newlyweds and they chose their top three favorite costumes. While Rebecca wore her antique family dress for the ceremony, David was outfitted in a wonderful purple suit. For the reception they changed into costumes portraying Hades and Persephone.

The Paynes had originally planned to have a backyard wedding, but invoices were adding up way over budget, and it was coming completely out of their pockets so they looked at their options and, with Rebecca working at Middlebury College, they asked about using the college's Kirk Alumni Center. "The price was right and I knew the food would be excellent, so it was a no brainer," she said.

A particularly memorable moment from the wedding for Rebecca was walking down the aisle with her father, Tom Hanley. She said he was muttering instructions under his breath as they were doing their walk, making sure his

daughter was in time with the music. "It was not the emotional walk you see with fathers and daughters, but very much on brand for him and L." she said.

A friend, Ben Wells, had originally introduced the two, so Rebecca and David asked Wells to officiate their wedding. During the ceremony, Wells slipped a dirty joke into his speech, and David and Rebecca doubled over laughing. The bride said she couldn't breathe, and the demon that was the stress from the last two months was exorcized from her body in those peals of laughter.

Their advice to others planning their nuptials: Set boundaries — it's your day. Delegate tasks to those around you willing to help. The day before and the day of Rebecca and David's wedding, the maid of honor, David's mother and the bride's older sister completely took charge. "It was hard for me to let the day take its course, but it felt really good to let go," Rebecca remembers. "At some point, whatever happens is going to happen and all you can do is be willing to bend in whatever direction the day is going to go in. At the end of the day, you've married the love of your life and everything else is just part of the story."

Rebecca, for one, was surprised at how quickly the wedding went. She said she spent a year and a half planning it, and the day itself "felt like a fever dream."

They had guests come from all over the country — all over the world, really. Family and friends came from England, Ireland, New Hampshire, Texas, Ohio, Tennessee, North Carolina, Maryland — to name a few — and, of course, Vermont. The couple said it was literally a three-day party, from Thursday through Saturday. "Love, laughter, full cups and full bellies — is there any better way to start a life with someone?" Rebecca asked

The light atmosphere put everyone at ease. The couple saw people who typically don't dance doing the chicken dance and the limbo during the reception.

After the ceremony and reception, while everyone headed to an after-party, David and Rebecca went off on their own and enjoyed a quiet night walk around the Marble Works, just the two of them, husband and wife.

eems like there is an app for everything. Thank goodness for the dating app called "Coffee Meets Bagel," that's how Middlebury native Sarah Snider and Carson Keys met in Atlanta in 2018. They each saw that the other was interested in trying new and international foods. At the time Sarah was working as a zookeeper and Carson was working for a chemical company that involved a lot of travel. After a trip to Turkey, he asked Sarah out to a Turkish restaurant to have some kebab and impress her with his knowledge of Raki, the national drink of Turkey. The date went so well that they met up for another date, and another

Things were going so well that they discussed a fall 2023 wedding and even started planning it before they were officially engaged because venues were booking up. Sarah knew that Carson would propose, but still wanted it to be a surprise. They had moved to Oklahoma, and Carson planned a trip with Sarah to Atlanta, with the excuse of visiting friends. He planned a Dec. 12 sunrise hike at Stone Mountain, where we had gone on our fourth date. Unfortunately, it was so foggy they couldn't see past the other side of the mountain. While Sarah was distracted trying to take a photo of the two of them together (they call it an "us-y" these days), Carson got to one knee and proposed. Sarah was surprised and it was a special moment for both of them

The venue they landed on was the Ponds at Bolton, because it is naturally beautiful, is an excellent spot for fall foliage, is close enough to Burlington for out-of-state visitors to fly in, it has lodging on-site, and it is near a lot

of unique Vermont places to visit. That was important so that the many first-time visitors to Vermont would experience the love for the Green Mountain State that Sarah has. And almost all of the businesses helping out were Vermonters, including photographer Oliver Parini of Weybridge and Waterfalls Day Spa of Middlebury for hair and make-up. They even had Monument Farms chocolate milk and Champlain Orchards cider and freshly picked apples in their hospitality room all weekend

It was important for the couple to have ferns and dahlias as focal points in our floral arrangements, because they have two dogs names "Fern" and "Dalia." Karey Ann at Silver Spring Farm was able to grow all of flowers for their floral arrangements on her Hinesburg farm. She even made little flower arrangements that were attached to Fern and Dahlia's collars for when they walked down the aisle!

Sarah and Carson suggested others getting ready for a wedding hire a wedding planner, if they have the means, or at least a day of coordinator. Their wedding planning team, Amaari Events, worked with them and helped their vision come to life while also making the process fun. In particular, they kept Sarah and Carson on track and made sure they didn't forget any details. Another thing they recommend to other couples is to try to have a welcome gathering the night before the wedding, after the rehearsal dinner. It takes away a lot of the pressure of visiting with everyone during the reception and dance party, they said.

Sarah pointed out that it's easy for the bride and groom to get separated from each other with all the guests wanting to spend time with you, especially during your wedding day and







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O





## Carrie & Sam



arrie Mills and Sam Miller got married at the Congregational Church of Middlebury on Aug. 19. The couple actually resides in Richmond,

Va., but it's always been a dream of Carrie's to get married in Vermont. Her mother, Cynthia Mace Stacey, is an 8th generation Addison County native but her parents moved the family to Florida as children.

Both Carrie and her mother grew up spending summers at the family camp on Lake Champlain. Carrie said she has done extensive genealogy research and she noticed it's really just your birth, marriage and death dates and locations that follow you, so she decided that she would make Vermont the site of her marriage!

Here's where it all started:

Carrie and Sam met on the dating app Hinge. After two nice, long dates at breweries in Richmond, Carrie told Sam she thought they should just be friends. Sam took that seriously and invited Carrie to many group activities and they dated other people. Six months later, a group of friends were going to meet at Sam's community pool, but turns out that it was just Carrie and Sam for the first three hours. One of those randomly wonderful deep conversations sparked the relationship they'd both been seeking for decades (they are both around 40 and never married).

Ata Tom Petty cover band concert in Richmond, Sam leaned over and asked Carrie what kind of ring she'd want. Carrie didn't really know so he suggested they go shopping. They found a lovely, three stone ring at a local Virginia shop that had an antique look to it. Then the waiting started because Carrie insisted she didn't want to wear it home and wanted a traditional proposal.

About three weeks later, on Jan. 30 of this year, as Carrie finally started thinking less about the proposal, she went to Sam's house where he was cooking a six-month anniversary dinner of salmon and Brussels sprouts. Carrie didn't notice he'd set the table and had on a nice shirt and sweater despite working from home. After a conversation about making travel plans for the year, Sam ran upstairs, grabbed the ring, and dropped to one knee in the dining room. After agreeing, Carrie and Sam called their parents, siblings and grandparents to share the exciting news

Still ahead of them was the wedding planning process, which they described as somewhere between fun and overwhelming.

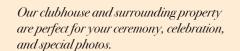
In planning their big day, they knew that maple creemees would be a pretty significant theme because they are one of Carrie's favorite things and so quintessentially Vermont. The bridesmaids wore gold, maple leaf necklaces and the groomsmen wore socks with little creemees on them. On the way to the wedding, Carrie, Sam and the bridesmaids stopped for creemees at Goodie's in West Addison. The cake was a maple with maple buttercream from Otter Creek Bakery. And the guests all received maple syrup sourced by Carrie's cousin, Andrew Davis of The Field Farm.

The couple was surprised that Pastor Andy Nagy-Benson centered his homily around a Robert Frost poem that Carrie and Sam had just been talking about that week. When Rev. Andy started talking about the Mending Wall, the couple both immediately started laughing and looking at each other like, their gazes clearly asking the other, "Did you know he was going to

(See Carrie & Sam, Page 11)

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Autumn

Gold

### Mary Beth & Gary

(Continued from Page 5)

Greg Sikora serving as officiant. It was beautiful short, sweet, but very emotional ceremony — "We'd both waited a long time for this moment," Mary Beth said. "I interrupted the ceremony, asked Gary if he had a handkerchief, because I had to wipe my tears in the midst of it."

Afterwards a group picture was taken and the happy party proceeded to the barn, which was magnificently decorated.

Prior to the ceremony there were various beverages and hors d'oeuvres. Beverages were served in an aluminum canoe, and bottles of Gary's own wine were on each table. Dinner was served buffet style, featuring Pratt's for catering. Instead of the traditional wedding cake, they had a dessert buffet filled with

various pies. Gary and Mary Beth chose to cut into an apple pie, because, the bride said, he had won her over with an apple pie years earlier. The bride's sister Louise and the groom made a majority of the pies, though they also purchased some berry pies from Pratt's because they find them so delicious. A friend made incredible cupcakes with fresh raspberry filling, coconut macaroons and another made Baklava.

The reception was so much fun and the small number of people gave the newlyweds the chance to see everyone. Family friend Jamey McGowan DJ'd the party, which spread through indoor covered spaces and plenty of outdoor space. Guests even got to feed baby alpacas.

The next morning, the Novosels hosted a brunch back at the venue, which they catered themselves. Turned out it was great to have a chance for them to see people before they headed out. And cleanup was a breeze with help from family and friends.

At one point Mary Beth had asked Gary if he wanted to just elope, but his response was that he wanted to get family together for a happy occasion. "I'm so grateful that we did," Mary Beth effused. "It was an amazing weekend. We were so pleased to have supported local in every way that we could; the venue, the food, and the flowers. We accomplished having an extraordinary wedding on a budget."

# Sarah & Carson

(Continued from Page 9)

reception. "We made sure to stick with each other, that way we could take in the experience together," she said. "It is also a good idea to try to carve out some moments throughout the day to have time with just the two of you, to take a breather and enjoy the moment together."

In the case of the Snider-Keys wedding, the couple wanted to do a first look and private vows. Sarah came up with the idea to do both of them on top of the mountain near the chairlift. They were lucky the leaves had mostly changed color on the mountains on their wedding day — Sept. 30 — and it looked beautiful as a backdrop.

"It was great to have that time between us, and the ride down the chairlift with each other is nice to look back on," Sarah recalled.



### Carrie & Sam

(Continued from Page 10) bring this up?" Neither did know, it was an absolute surprise.

Then came the most memorable moment of the day. There was an overwhelming gush of emotion when the newly married couple turned from the alter to see all the friends and family who'd traveled so far to be with them on their most special day.

Carrie and Sam are so grateful to

everyone who made their wedding day possible, starting with their moms, and including photographer Lindsay Raymondjack, Rachael Stuart of the Middlebury Inn, Radio DJ Bruce Zeman, Anne Matthews at Flower Power, and Katherine at Otter Creek Bakery.

For others planning their wedding, Sam urges them to just stay relaxed during the process. Carrie, for her part, urges couples to make a week-of timeline on a shared document so that everyone knows when and where to be so that on the day of, everyone is on the same page and committed to helping the bride and groom enjoy themselves.

"I'll always remember how joyful, peaceful and fun the whole day was," Carrie remembered. "We'd planned every minute. which meant we got to be present for the wedding day and soak it all in as it was happening."

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