

How Husband-Wife Team Built \$12 Billion Fortune With A Startup



It all began with millennial angst at user-unfriendly software.

While teaching design programs part-time in 2008 when she was at university in Perth, Australia, Melanie Perkins grew frustrated with the clunky desktop-based tools she was helping her students understand.

"Facebook was taking off at the time - people could jump in and use that so easily and yet design tools took years of training to learn," Perkins recalled in a Medium post in 2018. "I wanted to make design software simple, online and collaborative."

It was a winning formula. A funding round last week valued their graphic design company, Canva, at \$40 billion. That gave Perkins, 34, and her husband and co-founder Cliff Obrecht, 35, a fortune of \$5.9 billion each, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index.

The latest funding round makes the Sydney-based firm the fifth-largest startup in the world, according to data from

the size of his stake hasn't been disclosed.

A Canva spokesperson, Lachlan Andrews, declined to comment.

Canva is popular with bloggers, students and marketers who can select templates and then customize them to make logos, resumes, flyers or even T-shirt designs. Its tools are used by more than 10 million students and teachers, as well as companies including American Airlines Group Inc., Zoom Video Communications Inc., SkyScanner, Intel Corp., Salesforce.com Inc., PayPal Holdings Inc. and Marriott International Inc., according to Perkins. Canva says that it's on track to surpass \$1 billion in annualized revenue by year-end.

Tech Billionaires

The pair's new fortune makes them the 9th- and 10th-richest people in Australia, according to the Bloomberg index. While the country's fortunes have long been linked to commodities industries, Perkins and Obrecht join a group that's topped by fellow tech founders Mike Cannon-Brookes and Scott Farquhar of Atlassian, a software-development company.

Perkins also becomes Australia's second-richest woman after Gina Rinehart, 67, who has a net worth of \$17.9 billion derived largely from an iron-ore business.

In her latest Medium post, Perkins vowed that she and Obrecht would donate the vast majority of their Canva equity.

US Committee Challenges Pfizer's Covid Booster Authorisation For High-Risk Adults

WASHINGTON: A committee of US health experts on Thursday declined to approve Pfizer booster shots for individuals at high risk of Covid exposure due to their jobs, despite authorization from a different agency just the night before. The decision has contributed to growing confusion about the campaign for booster doses in the United States, which the administration of President Joe Biden announced in mid-August but has since lost momentum. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) committee voted Thursday to recommend a third dose of Pfizer's vaccine for people over age 65 and for those with underlying conditions who are at risk of developing a severe case of Covid. CDC chief Rochelle Walensky has yet to sign off on the recommendations, but is expected to give them the green light. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on Wednesday, however, authorized the third Pfizer doses for a broader swath of the American public, including those at high risk of Covid-19 exposure due to their jobs or other circumstances, such as teachers, grocery store employees, health care workers and prison inmates. But the CDC committee voted nine to six against including that category. The hours-long debate left several experts torn, as the scientific community has failed to come to a consensus about whether a coronavirus vaccine booster shot is necessary at this time.

"It's too soon," said Beth Bell, a physician and a member of the CDC committee.

"In my opinion, there's little marginal benefit to making this booster dose available at this time," said Bell, a clinical professor in the department of global health at the University of Washington. Some have pointed to the risk of myocarditis, an inflammation of the heart muscle, in young men as a cause for concern with a widely available third job. And in addition to worries about the complexities of administering third doses-- as a vocal minority of Americans have still refused to get vaccinated at all -- some experts also have concerns about the lack of data on the efficacy and safety of adding another shot to the Pfizer vaccine regimen.

The original two doses are still proving successful at keeping the vast majority of their recipients out of the hospital with coronavirus, anyway, they say.

Data does suggest, however, that the vaccine's efficacy against infection does significantly decline in older people over time.

About 13 million people age 65 and older in the United States received the Pfizer vaccine more than six months ago and would now be eligible for a booster shot.

The Biden administration had originally planned on a mass campaign to administer third doses to all recipients of both the Pfizer and Modern Covid vaccines, starting September 20.

How Disappearance Of US Blogger Led To "Millions Of Eyes On The Lookout"



WASHINGTON: An avalanche of online coverage and high-profile television broadcasts: The death of young adventurer Gabby Petito sparked immense US and worldwide interest -- and triggered debate over the disproportionate attention accorded missing white women.

The recent discovery of the 22-year-old travel blogger's body in Wyoming, and Tuesday's ruling of her death as a homicide, drew headlines far and wide.

With her boyfriend Brian Laundrie, Petito embarked on a cross-country camper van journey to explore majestic landscapes of the American West.

But Laundrie returned home to Florida alone -- 10 days before Petito's family reported her missing -- and has since disappeared. On Thursday, the FBI issued a warrant for Laundrie's arrest.

Similar tragedies are sadly commonplace in a country where hundreds of thousands of people go missing every year. And yet Petito's fate triggered a staggering amount of interest.

"At first I was interested just because it was a very captivating story. It was 'Why did he come back? Why did she not come back?'" explained 28-year-old Paris Campbell, a comedian and writer in New York. Under her pseudonym "stopiparis," Campbell has posted roughly 30 videos on the subject to her 265,000 followers on TikTok.

"It's definitely a very relatable situation," she told AFP. "Millions of eyes' on lookout."

In images shared by the couple on social media, they are all smiles -- barefoot in a canyon or surveying the ochre rocks of state and national parks.

According to Campbell, the disconnect between how people "romanticize" Petito's roadtripping life and the "tragedy" of what occurred fueled the fascination.

Campbell said she has gained more than 100,000 followers since she began reporting on the case last week. By Thursday the hashtag #GabbyPetito had accumulated more than 915 million views on TikTok.

Campbell devotes several hours each day to producing her videos, adding it was a comment by a Petito cousin, urging her to continue her work, that served as motivation.

"It felt like it was the right thing to do," she said.

In the deluge of the sometimes fanciful postings about the case, some videos have moved the investigation forward. One couple reported on YouTube that they saw Petito's and Laundrie's white van in Grand Teton National Park. Police took the claim seriously, according to US media, and Petito's body was found near the van's reported location. "In this case social

4 Of Trump's "Inner Circle" Summoned In US Capitol Riot Probe

WASHINGTON: Four members of Donald Trump's inner circle on Thursday received subpoenas to appear before a congressional committee to shed light on what exactly the former president said and did on the day rioters entered the US Capitol earlier this year.

Congressional investigators are closing in on the Republican billionaire, whom Democrats accuse of being responsible for the deadly attack on the seat of US democracy in Washington on January 6.

The Democratic-controlled special investigative committee, which Trump has dismissed as biased, is particularly interested in Mark Meadows, Trump's chief of staff at the time. "It appears you were with or in the vicinity of President Trump on January 6, had communications with the president and others on January 6 regarding events at the Capitol and are a witness regarding activities of that day," Representative Bennie Thompson, who chairs the committee, wrote in a letter to Meadows.

Dan Scavino, another of Trump's close advisors

CIA Removes "Hotbed" Station Chief Over Havana Syndrome Handling: Report

WASHINGTON: The CIA removed its Vienna, Austria station chief recently amid criticism the person did not take seriously a surge in mysterious "Havana syndrome" cases, the Washington Post reported Thursday.

Dozens of cases affecting embassy staff and Central Intelligence Agency officers and family members have been reported in Vienna recently, but the unnamed station chief expressed skepticism and showed insensitivity, the Post said, citing intelligence sources.

A CIA spokesperson declined to confirm or deny the report, but said the agency takes seriously scores of possible incidents of the mysterious ailment in US diplomatic missions around the world.

The cause and source remains enigmatic, CIA Deputy Director David Cohen said last week.

"Have we gotten closer? I think the answer is yes -- but not close enough to make the analytic judgment that people are waiting for," he said.

The US government, including the CIA and Pentagon, has ramped up staff to investigate and provide treatment for the cases.

Dubbed "Havana syndrome" because reports of the condition first showed up in the Cuban capital, the ailment is marked by bloody noses, headaches, vision problems and other symptoms that resemble concussions.

Some people experiencing it have reported hearing focused, high-pitched or sharp sounds that left them nauseated. The incidents are little understood and have sparked theories that they were caused by a weapon that used focused microwaves, ultrasound, poison or are even a reaction to crickets.

But for several years, senior government officials dismissed the complaints, judging them to be the symptoms of people under stress or reacting with hysteria to unknown stimuli.

The administration of Joe Biden has geared up the investigation into what have been renamed anomalous health incidents, or AHI.

If the cases are caused by something like a directed energy attack, US officials suspect Russia could be behind it.

The Post called Vienna, where the United States has a large embassy and intelligence collection operation, a "hotbed" of AHI incidents, with dozens of people reporting unexplained symptoms.

The issue has US officials around the world jittery. In August Vice President Kamala Harris delayed by several hours a visit to Vietnam after the US embassy there reported a possible case involving "acoustic incidents."

And during a visit to India by CIA Director William Burns in early September, an official in his retinue reported symptoms and sought medical assistance, according to the Post.



A Food Deal Sparks Row Between Brazil's Bolsonaro and UK's Boris Johnson

BRASILIA: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro said on Thursday that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, whom he met this week in New York, asked him for an "emergency" agreement to supply a food product that is lacking in Britain.

Bolsonaro, speaking on his weekly webcast to supporters, did not name the product, but said he had passed Johnson's request to his agriculture minister, Tereza Cristina.

"He wants an emergency agreement with us to import some kind of food that is lacking in England," he said.

The British Embassy in Brazil disputed Bolsonaro's account, saying that what the Brazilian president said was not its recollection of the facts.

The president's office did not immediately respond to a request for clarification on the product.

A natural gas price surge has forced some British fertilizer plants to shut in recent weeks, leading to a shortage of CO2 used to put the fizz into beer and sodas and stun poultry and pigs before slaughter.

Johnson, speaking on Thursday, said he was in London when he met with Bolsonaro, who is visiting the UK. He said he was not involved in any discussions about a food deal.

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Kim Jong Un's Sister Demands South Korea Drop "Hostile Policies": Report



SEOUL: The influential sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Friday said it was "admirable" of the South to propose a formal end to the Korean War but demanded Seoul first drop its "hostile policies" towards Pyongyang.

Kim Yo Jong's remarks, carried by Pyongyang's official KCNA news agency, were in response to South Korean President Moon Jae-in's recent calls for declaring an official end to the 1950-53 conflict that ended in a truce, not a peace treaty, leaving the two sides technically at war for more than half a century.

In a speech at the UN General Assembly earlier this week, Moon proposed the declaration of an end to the conflict that broke out 71 years ago, stressing such an act would "make irreversible

Did Humans Settle In North America Before Ice Age End? Ancient Footprints Show...

LOS ANGELES: Footprints dating back 23,000 years have been discovered in the United States, suggesting humans settled North America long before the end of the last Ice Age, research published Thursday showed.

The findings push back the date at which the continent was colonized by its first inhabitants by thousands of years.

The footprints were left in mud on the banks of a long-since dried up lake, which is now part of a New Mexico desert.

Sediment filled the indentations and hardened into rock, protecting evidence of our ancient relatives, and giving scientists a detailed insight into their lives.

"Many tracks appear to be those of teenagers and children; large adult footprints are less frequent," write the authors of the study published in the American journal Science.

"One hypothesis for this is the division of labor, in which adults are involved in skilled tasks whereas 'fetching and carrying' are delegated to teenagers."

"Children accompany the teenagers, and collectively they leave a higher number of footprints."

Researchers also found tracks left by mammoths, prehistoric wolves, and even giant sloths, which appear to have been around at the same time as the humans visited the lake.

The Americas were the last continent to be reached by humanity.

For decades, the most commonly accepted theory has been that settlers came to North America from eastern Siberia across a land bridge -- the present-day Bering Strait.

From Alaska, they headed south to kinder climes.

Archaeological evidence, including spearheads used to kill mammoths, has long suggested a 13,500-year-old settlement associated with so-called Clovis culture -- named after a town in New Mexico.

This was considered the continent's first civilization, and the forerunner of groups that became known as Native Americans.

However, the notion of Clovis culture has been challenged over the past 20 years, with new discoveries that have pushed back the age of the first settlements.

Generally, even this pushed-back estimate of the age of the first settlements had not been more than 16,000 years, after the end of the so-called "last glacial maximum" -- the period when ice sheets were at their most widespread.

This episode, which lasted until about 20,000 years ago, is crucial because it is believed that with ice covering much of the northern parts of the continent, human migration from Asia into North America and beyond would have been very difficult.

Ex US Cop Derek Chauvin Convicted Of George Floyd's Murder Files Appeal



WASHINGTON: Former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin has appealed his conviction for the murder of George Floyd, citing 14 complaints about his high-profile trial earlier this year in a case that roiled the United States and laid bare deep racial divisions.

The killing of Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, in May 2020 went viral after being caught on camera and sparked America's biggest demonstrations for racial justice in decades.

Chauvin, who in June was sentenced to more than 22 years in prison for killing Floyd by kneeling on his neck for nearly 10 minutes, appealed the conviction Thursday night with a Minnesota district court, on the last day he was able to do so.

He accuses the state of prejudicial misconduct and lists multiple issues with the jury selected for the trial, among other objections.

The former police officer accuses the court of "abusing its discretion" by denying requests to postpone or move the trial, and refusing to sequester the jury for its duration.

Chauvin, a 45-year-old white man, was filmed kneeling on Floyd's neck, indifferent to the dying man's groans and to the pleas of distraught passers-by.

Floyd repeatedly said "I can't breathe" before he died.

The scene, filmed and uploaded by a young woman, quickly spread around the world.

Hundreds of thousands of people subsequently poured onto streets across the country and overseas to demand an end to racism and police brutality.

The ex-cop and three of his colleagues arrested Floyd on suspicion of having passed a fake \$20 bill in a store in Minneapolis, a northern city of around 400,000 people.

They handcuffed him and pinned him to the ground in the street.

In the filed documents, Chauvin said he has no income and no legal representation in the appeals process. A defense fund that paid for his representation during the trial was terminated after his sentencing.

Relief at risk

The sacked police officer, who was present for the full six weeks of his trial, did not testify, invoking his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination.

His lawyer said he had followed police procedures in force at the time and that

Floyd's death was due to health problems exacerbated by drug use.

But, at the end of the high-profile trial in April, a jury took less than 10 hours to convict Chauvin of Floyd's murder.

He was found guilty on all three charges -- second-degree murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter.

The other three police officers are to face state charges next year for their roles in Floyd's death.

Chauvin's conviction was greeted with relief across the country.

Many had feared an acquittal would lead to worse unrest, while others worried that once again a white police officer would get away with what they saw as murder.

The Floyd family's lawyer called the sentencing a "historic" step towards racial reconciliation in the United States.

Chauvin had a record of using excessive force before the unarmed Floyd died under his knee.