

## Transcript of Interview with Erin Palette By Kit Heintzman

**Interviewee:** Erin Palette

**Interviewer:** Kit Heintzman

**Date:** 11/23/2022

**Location (Interviewee):** Florida

**Location (Interviewer):** Philadelphia

**Transcriber:** Angelica S Ramos

### **Some of the things we spoke about include:**

Being a prepper/emergency preparedness. Prepping skills: foresight and stocking up in advance; the difference between prepping for days and prepping for months; expenses associated with prepping. The relationship between prepping and independence. The French Toast crisis response; the run on toilet paper and hand sanitizer in early COVID. Living with two dogs (Daisy and Precious); doggy go-bags. The zombie apocalypse as a disaster reference point. First hearing about the pandemic when it was more in its “rumor phase”. Being at a conference in early 2020; “con crud”: the norm of getting sick after conventions where hygiene isn’t maintained. Speculation about illness in the early days of the pandemic. The importance of preparedness in geographies that are prone to disasters: Florida getting hit by hurricanes, fires, and lightning strikes regularly. The 1998 drought conditions and massive fires across Florida. The pandemic being easier than extended power outages. Online gaming and the norm of people getting together virtually. Living in a more rural environment; population density’s impact on COVID-19 spread. Safety precautions: hand washing, surface cleaning, masking, hand sanitizer. Living with elderly parents in their 80s; concern for parents; their loss of routine healthcare access. The idea of “medical urgency” during the pandemic: a friend diagnosed with breast cancer was unable to get prompt medical attention. The dynamic between overreacting and minimizing. Criticisms of lockdown policies; being accused of being selfish, narcissistic, and not caring for the elderly. Second amendment rights activism; labels thrown at gun owners: wanna-be-cops/murderers. Regulations and requirements for conceal and carry. Compassion for anti-gun advocates; finding shared understandings and common ground. Living without health insurance. Childhood illness and allergies; the impact on the immune system. Being generally pro-vaccination; choosing not to get vaccinated against COVID; concerns about long-term consequences of the immune system’s resistance to spike proteins. The choice between staying informed and taking care of one’s mental health during a crisis. Media: TV shows coming to a full stop. Writer’s block and the creative process; social relationships impacting writing. Long term health consequences of father’s exposure to Agent Orange; VA healthcare and housing; Parkinson’s, dementia. Father catching COVID recently in a veteran’s nursing home. Periodizing when the pandemic’s end. Growing up on army bases, living in Western Europe during the Fulda Gap. Comparisons on the experiences of living through 9/11 and living through the pandemic. The Trump election in 2016; panic. The threat of civil war in the USA; the potential end of the USA as it has been known The war in the Ukraine; Putin’s character; anticipating WWII. Wanting to have learned more science and mathematics younger. The normalcy of personal private tragedies/disasters.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:00

Would you please state your name, the date, the time and your location?

**Erin Palette** 00:04

My name is Erin Palette. It is November 23, 2022. It is 8:20pm. Eastern time. And I am in Florida. But you aren't.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:23

Correct. I'm in Philadelphia.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:27

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**Erin Palette** 00:37

Yes.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:40

Thank you so much for being here. Would you please just start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening? What would you want them to know about you in the place that you're speaking from?

**Erin Palette** 00:50

Hello, my name is Erin Palette. And I am a trans woman, a prepper, and a second amendment advocate.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:06

Tell me a story about your life during the pandemic.

**Erin Palette** 01:10

Oh when you said this was open ended, you weren't kidding. Oh, dear. So here's the thing, I don't have much of a story to tell I have maybe some anecdotes. Because my experience was well, I don't know if it was different from everyone else's. But, Well, alright, I'm getting ahead of myself. So for people who don't know what a prepper is, I believe very strongly in emergency preparedness. And that involves a lot of foresight, a lot of stocking up a lot of pre gaming. In terms of Alright, well, what could go wrong? What will I need to have, because living in Florida, Well, we are frequently be set by hurricanes. And we do occasionally get tornadoes. And we frequently have fires as well that are set by lightning, Florida is the lightning strike capital of the United States. And so living in this disaster area, and because pre transition, I was an Eagle Scout, I believe very strongly in being prepared. And so the best way to be prepared for any emergency is to anticipate it, train for it, have the gear and the training that you need. You know, if someone is bleeding out in front of you, that is not the time to try to figure out how to do first aid or use a tourniquet, get this sort of training beforehand. And so, when the pandemic happened, most of the preppers I know, I wish I could say all of them, and I think it might be all of them, but I don't know for certain, but most of the preppers I know are basically yawning and going worst Apocalypse ever. Because we were prepared for this sort of thing. We had, well, you know, if we are prepared for losing power for weeks at a time. And there are some people who are prepared for complete collapse of infrastructure and rule of law, then what we had was really very cushy. I have lived without power after a hurricane. It's very uncomfortable. And for this particular disaster. You know, we had electricity, we had Netflix, we had DoorDash where people could deliver food. And so it was very much a non issue for me, for my family, and for most of the preppers that I know, because we were prepared for so much worse. Now that said we still encountered some difficulties and some inconveniences, but for the most part. Well, okay, I don't want to say we were smug about it, because smugness, at least to me indicates a fair amount of shot in Freud. It's that haha you peons weren't prepared for this like we superior beings were. But it was more a case of oh, you laughed at us and you're not laughing now. So, where I lived, I live in a fairly actually it's no longer fairly rural, but there's a lot of wilderness in the county in

Florida. Where I live, and it's a small community. And it's it's certainly not a bustling city. So we didn't have that urban congestion, which led to a lot of spread of the disease. And, where was I going with that? I hate it when I lose a train of thought. Right. Also, I am, pretty much it's it's not an introvert. That's the word, I'm an introvert, I don't need to go out and see people, I am pretty happy staying at home anyway. And so and I work from home. So it really wasn't that big of a deal. For me, I did have some concerns, because I live with my elderly parents who are in their 80s. And while I wasn't afraid for my health, because when I looked at who the disease attacked, and who was at risk, it, it seemed on paper to be the perfect Boomer killer. And everyone who was younger than that, unless they had a pre existing condition would be fine. They had like a 98% survival rate. But my parents are in their 80s. And so the elderly were at risk. And I know my father has high blood pressure and various other things, and he was the most at risk of all of us. And so my concern wasn't for me, it was that I would bring something home and infect them. And so on the rare occasions when I would go out, I would mask up and I carried a bottle of hand sanitizer with me. And so right before I came inside, actually, I don't remember if I did it before or after I took my mask off. But the point being is, before I come in, I would clean my hands and I would clean the all the surfaces on the car that I had touched, just because I didn't want to accidentally infect myself, and then infect my parents. But for the most part, it really wasn't a thing. We were inconvenienced by the toilet paper shortage. But we never really ran out. And we were it was difficult to get some foods. But because we were a small county, we never really ran out. Plus, there's the fact that viruses in general just don't do well in direct sunlight and Hello, Sunshine State. So we did very well, in that regard. I actually don't have the death statistics in front of me. I don't remember. I mean, we didn't escape completely unscathed, especially because we've got a fairly large retirement community where I live. But for the most part, it seemed like we were in line with the non cities of America, we had some deaths, and there was a lot of worry, and a fair degree of panic. But things didn't come crashing down, like a lot of people were afraid they would. And so I spent most of my time at home. You know, helping take care of my parents doing my writing. But because I curate a preparedness blog called Blue Collar Prepping that's [bluecollarprepping.blogspot.com](http://bluecollarprepping.blogspot.com). And we have a Facebook group, and there were a lot of people who were worried about it. And so, I and the other people that were active in the blog and on the group, spent a lot of time talking to people and there would be okay, well how are you doing? How are you holding up? How are you doing psychologically? And I think between being prepared materially and giving people that psychological feeling of community, especially those who were otherwise feeling isolated. I think I helped a lot of people get through that. I'm not calling myself a hero. This was not a great victory. But it was a case of well, this is something that I can do. And so I helped some people when they were worried. And I told them like, Hey, this is what we've prepared for. You will be okay. Just, you know, observe hygiene. Rely on your preps. And don't panic because we've still got power. And that's basically how I got through the pandemic. And this is why I was so shocked when you wanted to talk to me about it, because in my mind, I did very little to nothing. So yeah, I've run out of steam. Ask me something.

**Kit Heintzman** 10:48

I remember when you first heard about COVID-19?

**Erin Palette** 10:54

Yes, it was.

**Erin Palette** 11:03

Yeah, it was in February. And I had gone to a couple of conventions. And when I first heard about it, it was still sort of rumored. And I said, I didn't want to talk about politics, here I am talking about politics. This was in the

time period, when when the Democrats were saying, Oh, no, it'll be fine. Go out and hug your neighbors go out and go to Chinese New Year. And I thought that was greatly at odds with the rumors of it being infectious. And I'm going, it's gonna bite some people in the rear end. And it did. But I bring that up mainly to let you know, both the time period and the psychology of it. And I was in, I was at a writers symposium called *Life, the Universe and Everything* which is held every year in Provo, Utah, right around Valentine's Day weekend. And that was about the last bit of normalcy for me for quite a long time. And I had a friend whose daughter had gotten sick. And we weren't sure if she had COVID or not, I don't think that's what it was, I don't remember. And I remember actually, I don't remember if it was that time, or if it was a little bit after.

**Erin Palette** 12:52

But there were a lot of people in my circle of friends who attended, the SHOT Show in Las Vegas shot stands for shooting, hunting and outdoor trades. And that's what it sounds like, if you are a company that manufactures anything for hunting or for camping, or otherwise, for guns. That's where you go. And it is a really big convention in Las Vegas. And a lot of my friends who attended well, so there's this concept known as con crud. And like you would imagine when you go to a convention, you're surrounded by a whole bunch of people. And sometimes hygiene is a little bit lacks, which is why there's sort of this running joke around a lot of conventions. It's like be sure to shower daily, because there are some people who don't. And so con crud is just considered to be the natural side effect of attending a big popular convention. You go you come back sick and much the same way that when you are a child going to elementary school, you're going to come down with something because it's just a melting pot. And I noticed that a lot of my friends and oh, I know SHOT Show is in January. I don't know when exactly it is you can look it up if it's necessary. But they were saying, yeah, the con crud that I came back with from SHOT Show was really nasty. It really laid me out. And so when we started hearing the rumors about COVID There was some belief that maybe they had actually gotten COVID And it was roughly in line with some sort of celebration that an Asian ethnicity celebrated, and there's a fair amount of them in Las Vegas. And so it was a case of, well, it's plausible. I haven't ever followed up on it. I really haven't thought about it for two years at this point, but I do remember that. And so that that was on our minds. And, oh, my mother was very, very worried for me, because I would be on a plane flying from Florida, to Utah and back. And she was convinced that if it wasn't the convention that would get me, then it would be breathing everyone else's air in the plane. And of course, I'm fine. I never got symptoms. And I've actually never been tested for the antibodies either. I don't know if I just caught it, and I'm non symptomatic. Or if I never caught it, I don't know. You were gonna ask me something.

**Kit Heintzman** 16:16

What were your reactions like? Yea, what were your reactions like early in the beginning?

**Erin Palette** 16:30

Okay. In the beginning, I was concerned, because a lot of people were concerned. And it was made out to be a big, scary, unknown thing. And fear of the unknown is one of the big fears that the human race has. And as a prepper, I've read up on pandemics, and I'm not an expert. But I recognize that this could be bad. And I was completely on board with the two weeks to flatten the curve, because that makes sense. And it wasn't long after that when we started extending things and there was a lot of lockdowns that I've started to think this is an overreaction. I mean, I could be wrong, I would love to be wrong, but I'm afraid that we are overcorrecting. And I was called all sorts of horrible names. I was called selfish. I was called Miss narcissistic. I was called that I wanted to jettison the elderly and the infirm because I wanted to go to concerts and bars. And it was like, you

don't even know me. I don't go to bars. I haven't gone to a concert in 20 years. I'm an introvert, leave me alone. It just, it's okay. What's that line from the First Men in Black, where Agent J says something like, people can be intelligent and patient and wise. But well, individual persons can. But people as a group, are panicky and stupid. And that's what I saw. People were scared. But they couldn't take it out on the virus. And so they took it out on everyone else. And they're there were a lot of wounds inflicted during that time, that have not healed and in fact, are quite festering. And it does seem now that a lot of people here in America, at least, are now beginning to admit that they overreacted. And they are asking to be forgiven. That's the whole amnesty thing, which I'm not going to touch on. I'm just admitting that it exists. And there are a lot of people who are very upset about that. So as an example, and I'm not going to name this person, but I have a good friend whose wife was diagnosed with early breast cancer. And because everything was about COVID all the time, you couldn't get an appointment. Well, you couldn't get an appointment. Really. The only time you could really be seen by a doctor was if you were in. I'm bleeding out right now. You know, just that level of urgency. And my friend was angry And rightly so. And he was saying, look, the longer this drags on, the greater the chance that the cancer spreads. And once it metastasizes, they won't be able to get it out and my wife is going to die, my wife is going to die because she was denied essential treatment, because everyone is freaking out over this virus. And so that's, that's a wound that hasn't healed and I don't know if it's ever going to heal. And if I rambled and got off track, you can please put me back on track.

**Kit Heintzman** 20:47

There's no rambling, it's all perfect. To the extent that you're comfortable sharing, would you say something about your own experiences with health and healthcare infrastructure, pre pandemic?

**Erin Palette** 21:06

Can you give me an example?

**Kit Heintzman** 21:11

Sure. Another way of wording that question might be, do you think of yourself as a healthy person? Or do you have you felt at ease when you need medical assistance in accessing that and whatever means that that like, looks like for you?

**Erin Palette** 21:34

And we're talking about pre COVID?

**Kit Heintzman** 21:38

Yes, pre COVID.

**Erin Palette** 21:43

Okay, so pre COVID, and honestly, post COVID. But I am not afraid to seek medical help. My concern is the expense because I do not have insurance. And I apparently fall into a gap regarding the affordable health care. And so the lowest tier would cost me \$1,000, which would wipe out everything I have in the bank. So I generally try to avoid going to the doctor simply because I can't afford it. But that's not going to keep me away if things are really bad. On the other hand, my parents have very good insurance. And so you know, I would make sure that they would go see the doctor.

**Erin Palette 22:39**

Yes. I wouldn't consider myself extra healthy. Like most Americans, I am overweight, I need to exercise more, I need to cut out sweets. Unfortunately, sugar is my favorite carb. And because of my job and my allergies, I prefer to stay at home. And I do a lot of sitting around and reading or writing so I don't get a lot of exercise. But as a result of my allergies, they were much worse when I was a child, dusts, molds, weeds, grasses, trees, animal dander. So pretty much anything living I was allergic to, I'm really fortunate that I only had one food allergy, and it's to a relatively obscure food. And I'm not going to say what it is so that my enemies from the future can't travel back in time and poison me with it HAHA it's my sense of humor there. But I was very sickly as a child. And I think that really helped with the immune system I have today. I was sick a lot then and so that front loaded things. And so I've got a pretty robust immune system now also in the 1990s. I went to Brazil in order to work with the church team that was helping poor people in in the shanty towns called favela. And so I got a whole bunch of immunizations before traveling to South America. And so I think between those things my immune system is pretty robust in that regard. So I mean, I'm not especially healthy I'm not like sickly I'm two out of five, maybe two and a half. But I wasn't especially worried, like I said about catching COVID Because I If I didn't have the really bad, you know, I don't smoke, I don't drink a whole lot. I've only got a little bit of hypertension. But that's because I'm middle aged and stressed. And I don't have diabetes, I don't have a lot of the really bad pre existing conditions. So I felt, personally, I felt pretty good going into it. And again, if I've missed something that you really want to follow up on, asked me again, because I don't trust my memory to remember everything you've asked me, especially when I start going down tangents.

**Kit Heintzman 25:41**

I will, so don't worry about it. I wanted to go back to what you had said about your friend's wife and breast cancer and also living with your elderly parents who are insured, were they able to get routine health care?

**Erin Palette 26:06**

So my parents, well, no, they weren't able to get routine health care. I mean, you know, everything shut down, for however many months, I think it was at least six months. And they weren't able to do much, although they were able to get immunized. I feel like I've been dancing around the subject. And so I will state for the record, I have not received the COVID injection. I'm part of the control group. As the joke goes, and my objection it's it's not based on what people might consider a conspiracy theory. I'm a big proponent of vaccination. I love vaccines that have been proven to work. I was really reticent to take something which had been rushed into production that had not in my mind been sufficiently tested. And I decided I would wait and see how other people reacted to it. And there has been a an interesting amount of reports regarding vaccine damage, both immediate and afterwards, a lot of younger people are succumbing to myocarditis, and it's believed that this could be in relation to that. But my I don't know if it was my main or it was at least equal to it, is the fact it is the way that it was done with the messenger RNA. Now I'm not one of those people who goes there messing with my DNA. Because I understand the principle behind it. They they basically isolated the spike protein, which was used to, which COVID-19 used to help with its infectivity. And they isolated that. And they the injection was to teach the human body to recognize that spike protein as an intruder, and then fight it off. And I was going, you know, I'm not really sure why I feel this way. But that seemed like a really permanent change. This was before we learned that the you needed all the different boosters. And at this point, I don't even know if the immunity wears off. But I was just looking at it as a case of this is a permanent change to something that I feel like I'm not in danger from if I was in the big city, maybe it'd be different. Because, you know, I'm a science fiction nerd, and I'm looking at that and I'm going, you know, that spike protein might end up being used in other ways. You know, who knows, just to pull an

example out of my rear end that might be used to help cure HIV or cancer and the people who now have the injection are immune to that, and I just went in No, I I think I'm gonna give it a pass. So I, for my own reasons, did not receive the injection and two and a half years later, I'm fine. I don't know if I just got lucky and never caught it or if I caught it and was asymptomatic. My mother got the injection and has never caught it. My father actually he has COVID right now because he's living in a Veterans Administration nursing home. And someone there caught it and gave it to him. But you know through all of 2020 and 2021 and most of 2022, he didn't have it. But other than anything that was related to COVID. No, we didn't get much health care. In fact, because like I said, I don't have the insurance. And because I am, I don't make a lot of money, I would go to the local free clinic, which would involve sitting around and there's a, you know, I have to wait a lot of time. And what with all of the worry about COVID. First, they shut it down. And then there were longer wait times, and I just gave up on it. And I should probably go back. But I've been feeling pretty good. And I've been dealing with all sorts of other things. It's, it's an excuse, I know that I need to make time for it. I'm just saying it slips my mind. That's why I haven't buckled down and gone back. Regarding my friend, the last I heard, his wife was able to get treatment in time. And she was I don't know the extent of the procedure. I don't know if it was a lumpectomy, I don't think it was a radical mastectomy. But they were able to remove the cancerous tumors. And the cancer, as far as they could tell, hasn't spread. And so she is happy and healthy. And we're all very glad about that. However, I do know that there are lots of people for whom they didn't get that happy ending. And a lot of people had a very sad ending. Because I think today not not like literally today, but but in the modern time. Medicine is seeing a spike of a lot of preventable diseases like cancer. And so that's why a lot of people are very upset about that.

**Kit Heintzman** 32:16

Pre pandemic, what was your day to day looking like?

**Erin Palette** 32:22

Honestly, pre, during and post pandemic, we're all pretty much the same. So I am a night owl, I frequently stay up working in writing until like about 2am. And so I sleep for eight hours. And so I would get up around mid morning. And I would you know, have my coffee, and check the internet and help with the dogs. And then it would be lunchtime, and you know, I'd eat with my family and put the dishes away. My father would watch some TV, my mother would go back to her bedroom to take a nap. And I would I would do creative work is what I call it in the afternoon. And I would be writing or I would be editing the blog or I would be preparing for the podcast that I co host assorted Calabrese podcast. Then in the evening, I would walk the dogs have supper. And then depending on what's going on, I would maybe watch some TV with my parents, or I would get online and you know, play online role playing games with my friends. Or I would read I would listen to an audio book while I cleaned. That sort of thing. I kind of live like a retiree in that my weekdays and my weekends look a lot alike. So during the lockdown, very little changed. The one thing I do remember and it's kind of awful, but it's true. On the rare times when I would have to drive traffic was practically non existent and I was going I like this, because I hate traffic and and so I could get so much more done and I didn't have to deal with all the other drivers and while I didn't wish any harm on the other people. I remember thinking if we could just keep traffic like this forever. That would be great.

**Kit Heintzman** 35:01

Tell me about your dogs.

**Erin Palette** 35:06

Um, okay, so I have two dogs. And they are both are getting old. I'm completely drawing a blank on their ages right now. But they are, they are rescues, but they are rescues from, not from the pound. But from people I'll explain in a moment. We have one dog precious, she came to us with that name. And she's some sort of mix, I'm not really sure what she is. But she belonged to a family that my mother was friends with. And this, this family had a boy and a girl. And the girl had a therapy dog, or some sort of assistance. You know, medically prescribed dog. And the little boy Riley wanted a dog of his own. And so they got precious. And when they moved from wherever it was, they were living to the other place, they were living. The the, the new place didn't want pets, and they had to take the therapy dog, but they wouldn't take the other one. And so they had to surrender that dog to the pound. And my mother is very soft hearted and loves animals. And so she decided to adopt the dog. First of all, so the dog would have a home, but also so the little boy would stop worrying about what would happen to his dog. And so that he could come visit whenever he wanted. And they would come over like about once a week and and visit and you know he'd get to play with his dog. And so that was very sweet. They don't come over anymore. I'm actually not sure what's going on. They just stopped coming by one day. Last I heard I think they're all right, but I don't know what was going on. Daisy, our other dog was given to us because her previous owner who went to our church died suddenly. And his son wasn't able to take on Daisy. Because he had one of daisies puppies, and the two of them weren't getting along. Not so much fighting but Daisy is absolutely Mee Mee Mee Me. Me. Give me attention. Give me cuddles Give me food. She is the center of the universe. And doesn't like it's not that she hates dogs. I mean, she gets along fine with precious but well, every time we're petting precious or giving her attention, DAISY comes up and it's like no give it to me. Meanwhile, precious is very laid back and doesn't mind another dog which is fortunate. Because Daisy is well, we're not fully sure of her breed. We think that she is like part Maltese and part. Yorkshire Terrier. But she's small, white, fluffy, very cute. absolutely loves people just hasn't met a human she doesn't like strangers are just friends she hasn't met yet. And that's kind of annoying on the walk. Because she sees the person. She wants to go up and say hi and get pat's And strangely enough. There are some people in the world who don't like dogs. And so it breaks her heart when I have to tell her no, I'm sorry, Daisy. Those people don't want to talk to you. They don't want to pet you very sorry. Meanwhile, precious is a much larger, she's sort of a reddish brown. She's a long hair. And she's she's a mutt and I think she's a mutt of mutts to be perfectly honest, and she's very sweet around us. But it's the complete opposite of Daisy. It's that her family is enough. And she doesn't want to meet new people. And so just you know, leave her alone. And and that'll be fine with her. And so neither of them have turned 10 Yet, I believe. But but they're like eight or nine. I think I'm not certain I'm, I'm terrible with, with remembering dates

**Kit Heintzman 40:11**

I'm curious about how having dogs figures into the preparedness like as a part of the thing that you stockpile food for them and in consideration of the household, what does that look like beyond you preparing for yourself?

**Erin Palette 40:30**

Well, actually, this is kind of funny. I was trying to get my mother interested in preparedness. And she acknowledged the utility of it, but couldn't really find the time to do it. Until I mentioned, the dogs and I said, Well, what if we have to evacuate? What will we do with the dog? Shouldn't we be prepared for the dogs and that was the way to get to her by appealing to her mom instinct. And so she prepared for the dogs before she prepared for herself. And so yes, we have a go bag for them. And so we have their immunization records. And their I don't know what it's called. But on a yearly basis, we have to renew their tag, and we pay the county, and then we get the little tag that we put on that leash, we have those records there to prove that we've paid and that we own them. And we have like about a week's worth of dry food, and some collapsible bowls, collapsible bowls, both for food



and for water. And we've got a package of treats. And we've got some toys, Daisy loves toys, precious doesn't care. We don't have beds for them. Because they generally sleep with my mom and my mom's bed. But we've got like, little blankets for them to lie on. And so that'll they'll smell a little bit more like home. And so we can fit all of their preps into just a standard school size backpack. And and Oh, spare leashes, as well. And so once mom did that, then she started doing other preparedness like stockpiling, like in like for a hurricane or things like that. More food, more treats more, Oh, yeah. They love to bones. And so we've got those as well. And so that's how we prepare with our pets.

**Kit Heintzman** 43:02

What made you want your mother to become more interested in this?

**Erin Palette** 43:09

Well, just because we live in a state where disasters happen on a regular basis. I mean, it was just a couple months ago, that we had a really nasty hurricane Ian hit and chewed Florida a new asshole quite literally. And it was very, very devastating. And as far as I'm concerned, the best way to avoid this the best way to avoid a disaster is not to be there when it happens. And I am a big proponent of evacuating or in prepper parlance, bugging out as opposed to bugging in you know, bunkering down. And in the past, my mother has proven reluctant to want to leave. Because, you know, this is her home and she's comfortable and evacuating with dogs in cars. It's a major pain in the rear end. And I understand that, but I would rather her be inconvenienced and alive than stay at home and the Category Five smashed through. And, you know, it kills her when it wipes away the house. So I wanted her to at least have something it was at least for my peace of mind as much as it was for her comfort in the case of a disaster. But those were both good things. You know, my peace of mind meant that I didn't have to worry. In case we had to leave and I knew that I was looking out for my mom And so it just seemed like the thing to do. I mean, we get hurricanes, we get tornadoes, we get fires, I mean, look in 1998 and believe it was 1998. In the summer, the drought conditions were so bad that like 98% of the state was on fire. I think that the only state that didn't have the only county that didn't have fires, were the keys, you know, the islands out in the Gulf that are only connected to the mainland by large interstates. Yeah, the fires of 98 were really, really bad. Because they were so intense, they were generating their own wind, and that's called a fire storm. And so they were literally blowing hot embers across the intercostal waterway. I mean, when your fire can cross a canal, a canal that's suitable for at least two boats to cross side by side, that's impressive. And so that's that's just one of the things that really colored my thoughts on emergency preparedness. Because sometimes things are gonna go really bad. And we're gonna need to leave.

**Kit Heintzman** 46:23

Is that where your interest started?

**Erin Palette** 46:27

I would say so. To a certain extent, I'm, I'm of the opinion that everyone who lives in Florida is a prepper to some degree or other simply because hurricanes are so regular, and yet so random, they are regular in that, you know, that there's an excellent chance every year that something is going to happen. And so every newspaper, and every TV channel makes a big deal about, okay, we're starting hurricane season, get your hurricane preps, you know, get batteries, get candles get, you know, I'm drawing a blank, but you know, extra food, that sort of thing. And that's just something that I've, well, I didn't, I haven't lived in Florida all my life, we moved here in the 80s. And so ever since then, it's just been a fact of life. So, you know, you've got the regular Miss of it. You know, every year there

is a hurricane season. And there's an excellent chance one could happen. But at the same time, it's random. So you don't know whether you're going to be affected by it, or the other side of the state. And so there's a little bit of, of roulette there. You can't just relax knowing Oh, no, it won't have this because it might. But at the same time, it's not a lot like every single year. Oh my god, it's coming right for us. But yeah, I think every responsible adult in Florida is some degree of prepper just out of acknowledgment of the facts of life. And I just take it one or two steps further, I've got an evacuation plan, I have bags that are already loaded and ready to go, all I need to do is throw them in the car. I have time to myself, and I can evacuate from here in 30 minutes. And while of course, I won't have everything I will definitely have enough to make me better than than any displaced refugee. Because I will have clothes I will have supplies. I will have food if I end up in a shelter somewhere. And of course, I also have supplies for evacuating. So you know I have gas cans in case you know, gas is short or we need for the range. I have things for not just a spare tire but I've got things for fixing of spare tire. I've got a tire inflator. I've just the point being is I don't just have stuff. I have equipment that supports a variety of options. And to me that's it's really what it is. It's it is tools in a toolbox. I don't have to use them. But I like having them so that I I know that I have options.

**Kit Heintzman 50:04**

What are, so you had mentioned the sort of people who don't think of themselves as preppers. In the kind of panic that happened early in COVID, what do you notice about people's panic responses to crises, and then the way people responded to COVID, in contrast to when people responded to other crises?

**Erin Palette 50:31**

Practically identical. I haven't lived all my life in Florida. I lived for a time up in Washington, DC. And when they were when the weather people would project, snow, and there'd be a lot of snow, there would be a run on bread and eggs, white bread and eggs, I don't know, maybe the joke was, maybe they're gonna make a lot of French toast. But that was just milk as well, bread, milk and eggs. That was I guess people consider that a staple that they needed to stock up on. And when there is a hurricane that is on its way, there will be a run on grocery stores. And other stores too, but it's primarily the grocery stores to get cleaned out. And when they will go after bottled water, just clean out all of the bottled water. And in all of these cases, and well, like with COVID, for some reason, there was a run on toilet paper, which never made any sense to me, because I would understand it if COVID gave people diarrhea. But to the best of my knowledge, that wasn't one of the symptoms. I don't know who decided that we needed to stock up, there was a run on on the toilet paper and basically all paper products, the hand sanitizer at least made sense. But in all of those cases preppers are standing back and saying Why are you just getting this now, what took you so long, you should have stocked up on this months ago. And so we, quite fortunately, didn't need to go out into that mess, which also had the added benefit of there was more left for other people to get. But, the attitude was sort of a combination of the people who stay at home watching folks fighting for Black Friday deals going Oh man, that's crazy. I would never do that with a certain amount of grasshopper and the ant as well. It's that whole Why are you? First of all, why are you panicking? Secondly, why are you just now getting these things you deem essential? If they were essential, you should have already stacked up. I mean, especially since what the lockdown happened, like mid March. And I'd known about it for at least a month, if not more, all the signs were there. And so that was the time if not before, to have stocked up but humans for reasons I don't fully understand, like to wait till the last minute to get vital supplies. And so basically all of the preppers I knew were just shaking their heads and going Wow, crazy. Okay, well, good that is not us.

**Kit Heintzman 54:08**

What did lockdown look like where you are?

**Erin Palette** 54:14

That's one of those questions that I can't fully answer because again, I mainly stayed at home. And it wasn't that much of a difference. I did mention that there was hardly anyone on the road and that was nice. It's not so much what lockdown looked like. It's what it felt like. And I was in the Washington DC area when 9/11 happened. And First there was the initial surprise and shock and and grief, all of the expected reactions to a tragedy, then what happened was, there was this feeling of, I wouldn't really call it paranoia. But it was a very heightened sense of waiting for the other shoe to drop. This awful thing had happened, what's the next awful thing that's going to happen? And for a long time, definitely through the rest of 2001, maybe into 2002. I don't remember, it's been over 20 years at this point. But there was just this feeling of, of tension of stress of just sort of figuratively holding the breath waiting for the next thing to happen. Like when you are anticipating being hit, it's just, it's gonna come any minute now I'm, I'm tensing up to absorb the blow. And I, it was a very distinctive feeling. Right after 9/11. And there was I, I just knew that this was, in addition to being an important point in history, this was a point for which there was a before and an after. And everything after this point would be different. I didn't know how it would be different, but I knew that it would be. And so when the COVID, lockdown happened, I felt those things, I felt the stress, I felt the tension. There were people who were just okay, what's the next awful thing that's going to happen? Although in that case, it was a little more understandable. They were worried that they or someone they loved was going to catch this terrible disease and die. But there was also just that this is an important mark in history. And every thing before it is different than everything after it. And I just didn't know how. And we're still seeing that to this day. I honestly thought there would be bigger changes. I thought that as a result of all the virtual schools and the virtual work, I thought that Oh, and of course, the infection rate was worse in the city, what I expected to see was a migration. Like, like a mass migration out of the cities into the suburbs. And far more people working from home, and far more people either going to school virtually, or homeschooling their children. And I. Yeah, I really thought that by this point in time, cities would have suffered a fairly impressive population drain. And that may have happened. I, I shall clarify. There may have been a population drain, I don't know. It certainly hasn't been in any number of senses that has been widely reported upon. I do believe that there is an increased amount of work from home. And homeschooling but not in the numbers. I suspected it would be. That's really the big effects of lockdown. Because as I said, I live in kind of a small community. And so yeah, there was the reminders to put on your mask and, and wash your hands and use the hand sanitizer in the in the six feet. But because I avoided people to begin with. I didn't have to deal with most of that.

**Erin Palette** 59:26

Oh, I know you were about to say something. One thing. Another thing that I noticed is that people were really dying for things to take their mind off of of the the doom and the gloom. And they were just starving for distraction for recreation and for the more extroverted people human contact. And so there was this explosion of online games. And I think that's one of the reasons why fifth edition d&d is doing really Well, because it's a fairly simple entry game, everyone knows the name DND, especially as a result of Stranger Things. And so with that, and with resources that are good for online gaming, voice chat over discord, and their online virtual tabletops, such as roll 20 and Fantasy Grounds and maybe another one, it really made it easier for people to get together. Virtually. And so that was, that was such a big deal that one of the I don't know if it was discord or roll 20 Or maybe both. But but a lot of these companies that provided recreational online services, invested heavily in new servers just to lighten the load. So that was another thing. Because as I said before, it was a very cushy apocalypse. And so when you're stuck at home, and the news is just constantly bombarding you with doom and

gloom, and you know, hospitalizations are up and people are dying, you can only take so much before you need to tune it out. One of the things that I said fairly often was my desire to stay informed, is in direct opposition to my desire to remain calm and not be stressed out. And I could probably launch into a diatribe. But I'm not going to because I think it's often the weeds. But there is something that is very addictive, about panic. When you have no control over a situation, and you're scared, you can't do anything about it. And so if you watch the news, you have this false sense of accomplishment, because you're staying informed, staying informed is an activity. And so you're very clearly then doing something in response to this bad thing that is happening. And you know, it makes you feel less useless. Unfortunately, the constant news cycle, all it does is create that fear and paranoia. And then when you turn the TV off, there's there's the fear of missing out. Well, I've got it turned off. But what if I miss some critical news? And that contributed to a lot of I'm, well, I'm not sure what a what a good clinical term would be. I'm just going to call it bad headspace because people got inside their heads and couldn't get out and became addicted to bad news. I think in modern parlance, I don't think we had that term at the time, but now they're called Doomers. And so there was a whole lot of news addiction leading to a Doomer mentality. I were better. But I don't know if we as a as a culture, as a society as a people will ever be free of that.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:03:36

What was your own media consumption like?

**Erin Palette** 1:03:45

Wow, I'm having trouble remembering. One thing I do remember is that there were a lot of TV shows that ended very suddenly because they needed to stop filming because of COVID. And so shows, which didn't usually have cliffhangers, I would, I don't even know if I'd call it a cliffhanger but it would just okay, they haven't resolved. They haven't resolved the overall story arc, but we're done for the season. But fortunately, unfortunately, specifically for my mom, she likes to watch a lot of cable shows like Animal Planet, National Geographic. And there's just so much material there, that even if they are producing new things, there's there's years and years of material that can still be watched. And so she would watch that and I I would watch some of the things. Amazon Prime was useful to me. And that was another thing that I told people about. It's like, look, you've, you've got internet, make use of it, you know, watch TV shows, read a book, write a book. And so I watched a lot of lot of things on Amazon Prime, I do not remember what they were at this point, I'm sorry. And I gained with two separate sets of friends. I've got a Wednesday night game and a Saturday night game. And that wasn't affected. If anything, they had more time. So you know, I I gamed with my friends and I did online stuff. And really, the big thing that changed for me, and it wasn't so much then. I mean, it was then but things were locked down. But the big change afterwards is the loss of the 24 hour. I can't really call it economy. But there were lots of stores that were open 24 hours, like 7/11, and Walmart and other things. And being an introvert and being a night owl, instead of having to fight with people and traffic, I would very frequently unless I had to make an appointment during daylight hours, I would like to go do things like past nine o'clock, you know, alright, if I need to go to Walmart, well, sure, I'll go at 11 o'clock. And I won't have to deal with a crush of people. And I can be left alone to do my shopping. And that'll be great. And I really enjoyed that. I don't know if, so if we didn't have COVID I don't know if we would have moved to that anyway, it's my understanding that Walmart was not making a profit was probably losing money on the 24 hour things, they just couldn't figure out a good way to transition out of that. And then COVID gave them a great excuse. I don't know anything about 7/11 some of these other stores. But just speaking personally, for my own convenience, that is something I really miss now. Because now I have to go out and deal with traffic and deal with the more people that I'm comfortable with. And it cuts into my writing time. I'm very productive in the afternoon and early evening. And I'm not awake in the morning. And if I have to go out

and do something during those times, I'm just not happy. It doesn't seem like a good use of my time. But that's that's only tangentially related.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:08:25

I'd love to hear anything you have to share on how your writing practices have or haven't changed over the last few years.

**Erin Palette** 1:08:34

Only. Well, my writing has fallen off. But really it has nothing to do with COVID in everything to do with my family situation. Because my father he has Parkinson's, which has been determined by the VA to be the result of exposure to Agent Orange in the Vietnam War. And so Parkinson's results in loss of balance. Lots of falling lots of dropping things. And because it is a I don't know if it's specifically brain or nervous system, but the point being is it's a form of dementia all on its own. And it is frequently comorbid with other forms of dementia. And my father started to get worse. Well, I want to say like 2018 is when we really noticed things were getting worse. And that's when the stress and family drama really kicked in and that sucked away my ability to write because at the risk of sounding like some sort of delicate hothouse flower here is it so it sounds in my head when I talk about it. I can't just say, Okay, I'm going to write and sit down and write. I will I need the time, I need the energy, if I'm exhausted, because I haven't been sleeping well, or if I've been having to do things, if I've had to take my father to the emergency room, I just don't have the energy. So there's time, there's energy, and then there's desire. And that's can be really frustrating. Okay, it's quiet. I've got the energy, I can't think of anything to write. Because at least for me, creativity comes in the small quiet spaces. And if I did not have a steady amount of solitude, where I can hear myself think and allow ideas to percolate, it's all just, I'm dealing with noise, and I can't be creative. So COVID Didn't make it worse. But it certainly didn't make it better either. And I'm only now getting better. And this is with a concerted effort to Okay, even if it's crap, I'm going to do something on my blog, just to get into the habit of writing again, because I have fallen out of the habit. And so if I can just make myself type something, even if I think it's crap, then I've accomplished something. And maybe that is, you know, it's building success. I'm, I'm struggling with it. I'm still not where I want, but I am getting better. And I don't know if I will ever really be back to my hoisin days of writing, where I could, you know, write like, 1000 word blog entry every day. I'd like to, I don't know. But I can't blame that on COVID, unfortunately.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:12:30

If I follow you correctly, that your father left the house, due to the diagnosis during the pandemic? Like did I get the timeline right in my head?

**Erin Palette** 1:12:44

Well, I'm just trying to determine when the when the pandemic ended really.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:12:51

Interesting. Yeah. Ok.

**Erin Palette** 1:12:53

So. And again, I have difficulty remembering anything in the before times. But I do know that in like, 2018 2019, you know, we all realized that he was not getting any better, and he was getting worse. And I think, I don't remember if it's 2019 or early 2020, where we basically said, we don't want you driving anymore. And we took

away his keys and his driver's license. But because of the pandemic, and because VA homes have a waiting list, he wasn't able to be admitted to the VA home until August of last year. So that was August 2021. I don't know if that qualifies for the pandemic being over or not. But we were able to get him into a home then.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:14:03

What do you remember about that transition looking like?

**Erin Palette** 1:14:12

What you mean transition from him being home to him not being home?

**Kit Heintzman** 1:14:29

Yes.

**Erin Palette** 1:14:26

Well, honestly, it was a relief because he was regularly falling in unable to get up. And he would hurt himself frequently. And let me see if I can piece together roughly the timeline sometime in spring of 2021, he fell and I don't know if he broke some thing or sprain but the point being he fell, and he needed to go into physical therapy, and was at a, he was at like a local old folks home where he was getting physical therapy. And he was there for many months. And then he came home and he wasn't home for like 48 hours, until he fell and injured himself again. And so then he went back to the hospital, and then they put him in the exact same rehab home. And they wanted to send him home, and we were going, how can we do this, because he's just going to fall again. And it's a really annoying fact of life. And I don't know why Florida is like this, considering all the retirees. But the standard door size in homes does not accommodate wheelchairs, and you would think, given the large retiree population of Florida, that they would make the doors large enough to accommodate wheelchairs, but they don't. And so we really weren't sure what would happen when they released him. Because, you know, mom can't take care of him. You know, if I'm constantly picking him up, you know, I don't have insurance. And if I injure myself, you know, that's not good for anyone. But the application finally went through and they just transferred him directly from the rehab facility, to the retirement home. So in terms of him going into the home, it really wasn't that much of a change, other than well, that's one less thing to worry about. But it's just been one worry after another really, and this is really nothing to do with the pandemic, but it's just, he's, he's going downhill, and we aren't sure if he's going to make it to the end of the year at this point. So every time the phone rings, we worry if it's, you know, that phone call from the home.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:17:26

Other than COVID-19, what have been some of the issues on your mind and heart over the last couple of years?

**Erin Palette** 1:17:50

So I think that there is an unhealable divide in our country. And I'm honestly surprised that we aren't already in a shooting the Civil War about it. Things were looking bad. Well, basically since 2016, when Trump was elected, and I'm not gonna tell you what side I'm on, I just am observing that, from the moment he was elected, there was a lot of panic, and a lot of bad feeling on various sides. And I do believe a lot of, no, I'm not going to get into that. The point being is that there was COVID. And then there were the George Floyd riots later that year. And, you know, from what I've observed in the, the 2020 elections, and then the 22 midterms. I, my worry is that the United States of America, as it currently exists, does not have much longer. And if we are lucky, we can achieve some

sort of somewhat amicable divorce. But both sides are stubborn. And so I think it's far more likely, we're going to have another civil war, this time based around politics and class issues, and probably racial issues as well. And I don't want that, I love this country. But I don't see any way um, to stop it at this point there there have been opportunities but I think they've been squandered. And so as a prepper and a gun owner that's what I'm I'm looking at. I, I am absolutely not looking to overthrow the government. I just want to be left alone. The problem is both from my experience and observing other civil wars, and I know some people who lived through for example, the Balkan wars of the 90s civil wars are horrible, horrible things for everyone involved. And I am I am too old and too fat to fight and that's going to make things difficult if I need to defend my family my home I, and then of course, you know, with the war there's a loss of infrastructure and, yeah, that's going to be bad all around. And so I am trying to prepare for that. But it's one of these How do you prepare for it, it's not as bad as the end of the world but oh, gosh, I could go so off the deep end. I'm gonna try and hit the highlights here. It's very easy to prep in the short term. So prepping for 72 hours is a piece of cake. If you have camping gear, you have preps you know you've got a tent you've got a sleeping bag, you've got some you know, you've got a camping food maybe you got some MRE's. You got a canteen you are set you are set for if you can go camping for a weekend, you have preps to last you for you know, 72 hours. The problem is that the longer you have to go, the more involved the preps are. I know that I am good for a month. And that has taken a pretty significant investment of time and energy and money to do it. And I am happy to do this because it gives me peace of mind. Even if I never use it, even if this all ends up to be a waste of money, I have bought myself peace of mind. And that's worth the cost. But the further out you project to the disaster, then the more infrastructure you need. And past a certain point most Americans will end up starving or being shot for their supplies or shooting other people for theirs. And you know this, this is the you know, the quote unquote zombie apocalypse, you know, where everything collapses where there is no rule of law. And a lot of times that happens during the Civil War, it gets really bad. So that is my concern. I am really worried about what happens when things get so bad that infrastructure fails and fails for a month or more. I mean, just look at what happened in the big cities. During the pandemic, when people were running low on food. There was a lot of panic, a lot of worry. And this was a very, very cushy disaster. Imagine what would happen if there is no food coming in. People in the cities are going to start first and then they're going to leave the cities in search for supplies. And in prepper parlance that's known as the Golden Horde. Which is a reference to I think Genghis Khan and the Mongols when they would go ravaging out and they would basically you know, pillage the countryside. That is what can be expected when you've got, you know, a million starving people in the city who are looking for supplies. You and I don't want to hurt people. But on the other hand, I'm not going to hand over my supplies, either because they're for me and for my family. So I worry about a disaster that lasts for months. That's, that's my big concern. And I've, I've reached the point where the only way I can prepare further would be if I had a ridiculous amount of money. And it's like, you know, I have a bunker and I start laying in, you know, a year's worth of supplies at a time, and I just don't have that capability. Most people don't. So, that's, that's my big worry. And I mean, we aren't there yet. It's not inevitable, but I worry that it's going to happen.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:25:58

Can you share a bit about your journey with second amendment rights work?

**Erin Palette** 1:26:05

So I have always been pro gun, because my father was a career army officer. And for the first I'm gonna go with like, 15 years of my life, I grew up on army bases. I think this is really where my fascination with prepping started because for many years, I, during the Cold War, I was in Western Europe. And my father was responsible for the defense of the Fulda gap. For people who don't know what that means. Given the mountainous terrain of Europe,

there's really only one pass in the Alps that's large enough for the Russians to send enough tanks through in order to invade Europe. And that's known as the Fulda gap. And so, I grew up basically, in the shadow of a potential invasion and nuclear annihilation, I mean, it's a really heavy thing to tell a six-year-old. So, it's entirely possible that at some point, probably in the middle of the night, Daddy's gonna get a phone call, and he is going to have to go to war. And we will have to pack her bags, and get on a flight back to America, and be told that I would have to leave behind all my toys and our pets, and basically everything and never see my father again. And so I am certain, I mean, there's just no doubt in my mind, that is one of the things that got me into prepping, because just by that definition, there, we needed to be ready to evacuate in case of European invasion, or nuclear war. So yeah, that's prepping. I've been around prepping. Basically, all my life. And so because we are a military family, and I've been around military personnel, I've always been pro gun. But I didn't own a gun for a long time. And it wasn't out of any political or philosophical reason. It was just, I was young. And well, for a long time, I had my head up my ass and was absorbed in my own personal drama. And just the thought never occurred to me. For a long time, I was depressed. And if it had occurred to me, I would have said, Yeah, I probably shouldn't have one of those.

### **Erin Palette 1:28:58**

And also, I was very well, I still am poor. I've got a little bit more money now. But the point being is when I'm struggling to feed myself, I don't worry about having a firearm. But oh, sometime around 2009, 2010, something like that it all kind of came together. And I had the time and I had the money. But honestly, so I got into gun ownership through prepping because again, I prepped for disasters. And as I did my research, I realized that people are far more likely to fall victim to the small disasters than the big ones. And by that I mean a family member gets sick or has an injury and has to spend months in the hospital or what happens to you, you lose your job, your house burns down. The personal private tragedies are far more likely than the exotic hurricane coming in. You know, tornado, nuclear exchange collapse of the economy, zombies. And one of those personal disasters is assault. And the entire point of prepping, well, I can't say it's the point, but one of them is, you need to be able to respond to a disaster yourself. You, you don't depend on others, that's the entire point in being prepared. You know, if you aren't prepared, then you only really exist at the mercy or whim of other people. And maybe those are good people, like relief workers. And maybe those are bad people, like looters. And I didn't like that idea. I didn't want to exist at the whims of anyone except myself. And I wanted to be able to take care of myself in that moment. And so in addition to having first aid gear, I decided that it would be good to have a firearm, and I started off just buying a bolt action 22 rifle, because it was relatively inexpensive, and very forgiving. And that was what all the prepping resources told me, I should start with. Because it was inexpensive and easy to acquire, and very forgiving for new people. And you can do so many things with it. You know, in addition to going to the range and having fun, you know, you can hunt with it, you can harvest small game, you can if you have a really good shot, you know, defend yourself with it. And so it went from there, to acquiring dedicated self defense weaponry, and concealed carry permit and to holster and things like that. And so for me, carrying a gun is just a very logical extension of emergency preparedness, one of the emergencies I may need to respond to is an assault on me or a loved one. And I need to be able to protect them or myself. And one of the things which I which I tell people as part of my second amendment advocacy, because I hear a lot of shade being thrown at gun owners how we are, you know, we're just looking for an excuse to kill people, we're wanting to be cops, we're this, we're that. And I go, I carry a tourniquet. Because I never know when there's going to be a disaster, involving, you know, a terrible wound massive blood loss. This doesn't make me a paramedic, I don't think it never crosses my mind. This is just a tool that I have in the toolbox, so that I can respond appropriately. And immediately, while waiting for the professionals to arrive. I have a fire extinguisher in my house. It doesn't make me a firefighter. It's just a



tool that I have, so that I can respond immediately and competently to a fire while the professionals arrive. I have a firearm. It doesn't make me a police officer. It's just a tool in my toolbox that I can use to respond to a threat of violence against me or a loved one that I can use immediately until the professionals arrive. And so that's that's how I approach guns. Well, there's also the fact that guns are neat, and they're fun. And I take them out to the range. And all I do is shoot holes in paper and I don't hurt anybody. None of my guns have killed anything. So, you know, right now, that's about as moral as getting a sports car and filling it up with high octane gas and driving real fast. Actually, I think it's more moral because I operate a gun at a rate A change and I'm aware of my target and what's behind it, and no one's going to get hurt. Whereas if someone is being crazy operating a sports car, they could get in a crash and hurt other people. You take my point. And so, so no, guns are fun, guns are neat, you know from that sort of gearhead perspective. And I like having things I'm, you know, somewhat of a materialist. And so okay, this is a cool thing. And I've got a nice little collection, I've got this, I've got that I've got my little leashes set up. But all of those are really secondary to the point that, if necessary, I can use them to defend myself and my family, provide for myself and my family. And I view any attempt to restrict my ownership of them as an attempt to disarm me, and make me and my family vulnerable. It renders me incapable of responding to an emergency, it makes me dependent upon the police. And as much as I like the police, we don't live in Star Trek, where they can just beam to the source immediately. Police have to physically travel that intervening space. And the response time is the average is I think, between 10 and 15 minutes. And there's a lot of terrible things that can happen in that time, to someone who is unarmed, if they are facing someone who is larger than they are stronger than they are, has a weapon. So that's why I am a second amendment advocate. Because it gives me agency. And it allows me to defend myself in the moment. And anyone who wants to take that away from me. I get very suspicious. And I go, why do you want to render me helpless? Why do you want me not to be able to defend myself, I haven't committed a crime, in fact. So in addition to being photographed, fingerprinted, and my background checked on a regular basis, it's actually documented that concealed carriers commit fewer crimes, then, honestly, than police, because there's documentation for it. We know every person who is a concealed carrier, and if concealed carriers committed more gun crimes than people who didn't carry on a regular basis, that would be all over the news. But that hasn't happened. And because we know their names, because we know the states in which they live. And we can look at the amount of crime that they commit versus non concealed carriers versus police. And we are very, very, very law abiding, someone who wants to obey the law. Now I'm going to rephrase that. If you do not care about the law, you will not go to the trouble of getting training of buying an expensive permit to have you're filling out the application to be photographed it Do you have your photograph on file, do you have your fingerprints on file, to have your background checked on a regular basis, someone who wants to commit bad things is not going to go to all that trouble. They will just acquire a firearm illegally. But I and all of my other peaceable gun owners we have that paper trail and so we very clearly aren't up to bad things. So why are you treating us like criminals? And so that's that's my second amendment soapbox.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:39:41

Curious what does the word safety mean to you?

**Erin Palette** 1:39:49

That that's super open ended. Can you narrow that down at all?

**Kit Heintzman** 1:40:04

What would it mean to you to feel safe?

**Erin Palette** 1:40:22

For me to feel safe? Ah okay, fine, I'll just go with my gut answer here, I will be safe when I'm dead. There is no safety in the world, not in the true sense of the word. The only way I could, I could like I had the power. Well, okay, hypothetically speaking, I'm king of the world. If I wanted to make people as safe as possible, I would lock them in individual cells, where they couldn't hurt each other. And all their needs would be met. And they would have food and shelter and clothing and doctor's care. And they would be as safe as I could make them. But they wouldn't have any freedom. If you want freedom, you have to accept the risk that comes with it. And the more freedom you want, the more risk there is. Humans are predators, and there's no getting around it. Now, I'm not saying that everyone in the world is bad, quite the contrary. But we need to acknowledge the fact that we are a predatory species. And there is a subset of us that preys upon ourselves. And we need to acknowledge this, and take responsibility for protecting ourselves. I don't want you to think that I live my life in the state of worry, because I don't. And part of that is because I am aware of danger. And I have taken steps to protect myself, such as carrying a gun. But I am aware that there is no place that is ever truly safe. And it's just something that I have come to terms with. I couldn't tell you when it happened. It was a long time ago. It's just an acknowledgment that we live in a world where nothing is free. And there are bad people out there who want to do bad things to us. Look. Like I said I was in Europe when I was in single digits when I was like six or seven. And I remember the Iranian hostage crisis. I remember when various terrorist groups would bomb discos or hijacked planes. I mean, I was American. And I look I'm very Jewish, because my father was born a Jew in Austria in the 1930s. And he fled the Nazis. So I've lived all my life knowing. Well, I mean, I didn't know it as a kid. But you know, from a very young age, I knew that there were people who hated me, just for who I was not for anything that I'd done, but just for who I was because of an accident and my birth, and there's nothing that I could do to change that and they would hurt me or kill me if they could. And so that is why I believe there's no such thing as real safety. You just have responsibility for your own safety.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:44:31

What does the word health mean to you?

**Erin Palette** 1:44:53

Well, I guess health would be not worrying, that circular reasoning who is not worrying about my health, health is not being sick health is not being in pain. Health is living long. It's it's kind of an ephemeral thing much like safety. It's, it's something we need to work at, and it's not guaranteed. I don't know if I'm giving you good answers or not to be honest.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:45:38

As long as they're your answers, they're perfect.

**Erin Palette** 1:46:02

Okay.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:46:12

Some of this has to come up already. So feel free to say like, didn't I say that? But I'll ask you the question anyway. What are some of the, within the sort of narrow biomedical confines of safety from a virus, what are some of the things that you've been doing to keep yourself feeling safer over the last few years?

**Erin Palette** 1:46:29

Well, primarily, I just avoided people. But that wasn't much of a conscious choice. That was just my regular lifestyle in a way. I was a little more conscious of space. And, you know, people I was very careful about washing or using alcohol based sanitizer on my hands. But I don't really remember when it was that I basically went now, it'll be fine. I want to say it was by about this time in 2020. I'm not sure. I don't remember a whole lot. And I think I've mostly covered it already.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:47:37

Are you feeling about the immediate future?

**Erin Palette** 1:47:45

In regards to what? Anything? Well, I think I've told you that I feel like we're on a self destructive course. And nobody is willing to steer the car off the cliff. No one is willing to veer away from our course off the cliff. In I think you're asking in terms of COVID. And I'm I'm not worried about it at all. We've basically got herd immunity plus, viruses mutate like crazy. And viruses just like any form of life, although yes, I know, viruses are weird. Life just wants to exist and procreate. And a virus which kills its host does not. It's not very successful, especially if it kills its host. Before it can spread. fatal diseases burn themselves out. Which is why all between that and clearly and this is why we don't have a whole lot of bubonic plague lying around. I mean, the most successful virus in the world is the common cold in the US. I know that there are several different cold viruses. But the point being is that it doesn't kill its host. It just spreads and mutates and lives happily, because all it does is inconvenience us. And that's why it's the common cold because it doesn't kill us. The flu kills people, so it's not as common. So, it seems to me that it's in the nature of viruses to mutate to a state where they kill as few hosts of their possible so that they can continue to procreate and That is what seems to have happened with Omicron. Now that it's basically just a very miserable experience like the flu. I know it's not the flu. But you know, it's similar in terms of intensity and duration, rather than the much nastier strain it was at the beginning of 2020. So I know that COVID is here to stay, because it's in the biosphere, it spread to other animals. And it's just going to be a fact of life. But I think, just like in the before times, we had flu season. Well, I think that'll be either it will be replaced by COVID. Season, or we will have a similar COVID season. And you know, it'll just be well, I can't come in today, I've got COVID. So I'm not worried about it.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:51:00

What are some of your hopes for a longer term future?

**Erin Palette** 1:51:07

I don't I, I am cynical. I am. I came mentioned in my depressing talk about the future earlier. I think we are headed to a very dark place. And my definition of a cynic is a romantic who has gotten their heart broken one too many times. And that's me. I don't have hopes. Any more at least not not like that I have. I have short term immediate hopes, but nothing big for the future. Because when I do, I am invariably disappointed and crushed. And so now I've just got that nihilism that a lot of military veterans have. And, and that is just to assume that the world is going to fuck you over any chance it gets. And so just bend over and prepare for the reaming. And if for some reason, you don't get that fucked, then. Okay, that was unexpected and nice, but not one we should count on happening again. So no, I don't have any hopes of the future. I have plenty of fears for the future. And I have lots of concerns. But at this point, now, I don't hope for anything. The past two and a half years have beaten hope out of me. I would love for that to change. But right now. Right now, I am about as certain as I can be, that it's going

to get way worse before it gets better. And I mean that in a broad sociological way, not specifically regarding COVID, or the economy or anything like that, it's just things are going to get worse. And I think we as a nation, if not you know, the English speaking culture, or maybe the entire world, we all need to hit rock bottom. Before we pull our heads out of our asses and start working to make the world a better place, because right now we are more interested in blaming other people and punishing them, then we are in coming together and working together in a spirit of cooperation to make the future better. So yet another reason why I prep because I think some maniac somewhere is going to figuratively if not literally burn it all down. And while I can't stop that, I can at the very least make myself comfortable while I watched the decline.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:54:13

When you've been in moments of stress over the last few years, who's your social support been, who have you been able to turn to?

**Erin Palette** 1:54:29

My mother and my dogs and my online friends.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:54:49

What does that support look like?

**Erin Palette** 1:55:02

I mean, my mom is my mom, she loves me unconditionally. And she supports me and she helps me as best she can. And so I love her unconditionally, and I help and support her the best that I can. Um, my dogs love me unconditionally, and I love them. And there is tremendous stress relief in just petting a dog. I don't remember what study was, but, you know, just just stroking a dog lowers blood pressure. And so, I've been doing that. My friends, they give me friendship. Just like the name says, and they support me, they give me advice. They make me laugh, I game with them. And so they, I don't know how to explain it, it all seems very referential, you know, they're my friends. So they're friendly to me. And so friendship helps. Or, like, my mom is my mom, and that helps.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:56:25

What are some of the things you do to take care of yourself?

**Erin Palette** 1:56:40

I am not very good at self care. And that's, that's something I'm working on. But I am trying to aggressively guard my creative time. You know, no, I can't I need to work on this thing, which is important to me. I need to write and, you know, I need to be alone. But yeah, I'm not very good at taking care of myself, which is one of reason of many that I live with my family. And that's all I'm gonna say about that.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:57:36

Do you think of this pandemic as a historic event?

**Erin Palette** 1:57:40

How can you not? I mean, it was all the news talked about for years. It's absolutely a historic event.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:57:52

Thinking back to when you were growing up, what are some of the things you wish that you would have learned more about in history?

**Erin Palette** 1:58:15

Can you give me context? I'm not really sure what the question is asking.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:58:22

Sure, if you're thinking about, like, are there moments in your life where you go like, Hmm, I wish I learned more about that in history class when I was younger, like noticing the omissions as one grows up.

**Erin Palette** 1:58:36

So specifically about history. Nothing comes to mind specifically. Or I will say that it's good to have a generalized knowledge of history. Because while History doesn't repeat itself, it very frequently rhymes. Just looking at what's going on now. With the war between Russia and the Ukraine, sorry. between Russia and Ukraine, they really hate the THE in front of their name. I'm seeing a lot of parallels to the beginning of World War One, which is a topic I studied in college. And World War One was a mess because there were so many treaties and alliances and obligations that when Archduke Ferdinand was shot and things kicked off, everyone else just sort of got pulled in. Like like, you know, the A sinkhole beginning to form and then all of the structures around it being sucked in. And I can see the possibility of that happening again. over there. I mean, we very recently had a scare where it was believed that Russia had attacked Poland. And because Poland is a NATO member, if, if a NATO member is attacked, then it triggers I believe it's article five of the NATO Convention, which basically says, If one NATO country is attacked, they're all attacked. And they're expected to go to the aid. And the last thing we need is to go to war with Russia, because Putin is psychotic. And while I don't think he's the kind of person to use a nuclear weapon to win, I do think he's exactly the kind of asshole to go, if I can't win, no one can. And so he will make sure that everyone loses. So that's, that's the history of rhyming, I can see World War Three happening in a similar way to World War One. But in terms of if there's, there's something specific about history that I wish I'd learned, no, the things that I wish I learned were more chemistry and better mathematics, and all of the practical skills for prepping and survival. And there's just, it's not possible to know everything. That's why humans formed communities, so that one person can become an expert in one field, and someone else can be an expert in another and you can all contribute because no one can ever be completely self sufficient on their own.

**Kit Heintzman** 2:01:52

What do you think scholars in the social sciences and humanities so fields like, Literature and Political Science and Media Studies, what should we be doing to help us understand the human side of everything that's happened over the last couple of years?

**Erin Palette** 2:02:08

Fuck if I know. I don't understand people I've been trying for most of my life, I don't understand people. I can somewhat communicate. But even then, it doesn't work all the time. So I have no idea. I have no good solutions. I hope someone finds something. But I can't give any practical. No, wait, wait, no, I can give one bit of advice here. And that is when you are constructing an argument. Put yourself in the position of your opponent, and try to understand their argument and their position as best you can. And this is for two reasons. Number one, if you understand their position, you can make a better argument against it, rather than just repeating your own talking

points. And secondly, it can lead to greater enlightenment because if you understand their position, and they understand yours, you're a lot closer to reaching an understanding. Just as an example, as a second amendment advocate, I run into a lot of people who are stridently anti gun. And while I oppose their methods, I understand why they do what they do. Because at heart, they want to keep innocent people from being murdered. And I also wants to keep innocent people from being murdered. We agree on that point, we both are in agreement. We just now need to haggle over the specifics of how we're going to do that without infringing upon rights, or making other people vulnerable. And so that's a very important thing, try to find common ground. That's the only thing I can suggest.

**Kit Heintzman** 2:04:25

This is my last question. I'd like you to imagine speaking to a historian in the future, someone far enough away that they have no lived experience of this moment. What would you tell them cannot be forgotten about COVID-19?

**Erin Palette** 2:04:50

Okay, I'm actually going to spin that around, because you said I could and this is the last question. The first thing that I would do is I would ask if there were other instances of pandemics, like recently where it was much worse. And I need to explain what I mean by that. I think looking back at COVID, from the perspective of, you know, two and a half years, a lot of people are stating we overreacted. And a concern that I had from the very beginning was that overreaction now will lead to complacency later. And I say that because I have seen the exact same thing when it comes to hurricanes. Because you will have a weather forecaster who will tell people look, it's going to be bad, it's coming right for you, you need to evacuate. You know, if you don't, you're going to die. And the person does this with all well meaning. But when the disaster doesn't materialize, because the hurricane turns, or it loses intensity, or any number of other things, but the promised disaster doesn't come. People go, Oh, it wasn't so bad. I don't know what all the fuss was. And when the next hurricane comes, they're like, it'll be fine. We were fine last time, we'll be fine this time. And sometimes they are, and sometimes they die. And I have seen this in all sorts of disasters. And that was a concern that I had, that if the disaster the promised disaster of COVID-19 was inflated that when the next pandemic arises, because I mean, it will happen, we've had it before, you know, again, bubonic plague, we will have it. But when the next one happens, you know, whether it be Ebola, or SARS, or Mersa, or something like that, there will be a lot of people who will go, you know, the last time the government told us about this, it wasn't nearly as bad. And so I don't think we have anything to worry about. And they will be careless, and they will be sloppy. And it could work out or it could result in a lot of people dying. And so the question that I would have for that future historian is, did that happen? Did an overreaction in 2020 result in what could have been an avoidable loss of life, in 2030? As an example. I mean, I suppose to a certain extent, that would be what I don't want them to forget that. There was a lot of well meaning, but ultimately damaging panic, about COVID-19. Put my real question would be, Oh, my God, did we learn from our mistake, or was it so much worse? Because as I said, I'm cynical and currently have no hope for the future.

**Kit Heintzman** 2:08:45

I want to thank you so much for the generosity of your time, and the vulnerability and your answers. Those are all of the questions I know how to ask at the moment. So I just want to open up some space. If there's anything you'd like to share that my questions haven't made room for. Please take some space to share it.

**Erin Palette** 2:09:12

Oh, I'm probably gonna think of it 30 minutes from now. At the moment, I can't think of anything new. The only thing I want to say to anyone who might be bored enough to listen to this is I'm going to reiterate what I think is the key point to all of this. You are your own first responder and you are responsible for your own safety. The world doesn't owe you anything. The government doesn't owe you anything. And in fact, there has been a Supreme Court ruling that says they don't have to save you. So you need to be able and willing to self rescue. So, do whatever it takes to prepare yourself for disasters. I mean, I'm a prepper I clearly want you to be a prepper. You may you may think that's not for you, and well, okay, maybe it's not. If you're wrong, well, you're the one who's going to pay the price for it. I would prefer that no one pays the price. So, be prepared for disaster. Be prepared for harm and take precautions against that so that you can have the longest and best life possible.