

Week Two Report

Jefferson Educational Society

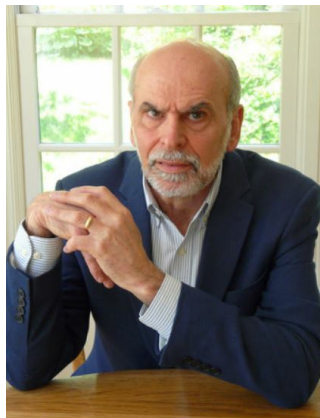
Global Summit XII: Digital Speaker Series

By Pat Cuneo
Jefferson Publications Coordinator
and JES Staff

What did we learn in Week Two of the three-week summit? Medicine and politics took over the spotlight along with Global Summit Chairman Steve Scully, who moderated the week's five programs.

The speakers were Gerald Seib, Dr. Michael Saag, Susan Page, Karen Tumulty, and Dr. Leana Wen. Find a sampling below.

We Should Have Seen It Coming: From Reagan To Trump -- A Front-Row Seat to A Political Revolution



Featuring Gerald Seib
Aired Monday, May 17

Wall Street Journal editor and columnist Gerald Seib “has helped us really understand the nuances of politics and public policy,” noted moderator Steve Scully as Week Two of Global Summit XII unfolded.

Author of “We Should Have Seen It Coming: From Reagan to Trump – A Front Row Seat to a Political Revolution,” Seib pointed out that former President Donald

Trump still has a firm grip on the Republican Party more than six months after he was defeated by President Joe Biden by more than 7 million votes, decisively in the Electoral College, but narrowly in the swing states.

Unlike previous one-term presidents like Democrat Jimmy Carter and Republican George H.W. Bush, Trump felt no loyalty to his political party, Seib said. Carter and Bush were “party presidents” and chose to get out of the way after their defeats so others could step forward. “Trump was there to bust up the party establishment,” Seib said. “His crusade was to transform the Republican Party and it is still underway.”

What did Trump see that others did not before his victory in 2016? “How did we all miss this? Clearly the rules of the road had changed.” First, the party of Trump was far different than the party of Reagan. It has become more of working-class party, Seib argued. In 2010, 40 percent of the white Republican Party members had college degrees. By 2016, it had fallen to 33 percent. The GOP heartland had become fueled by the feeling of economic resentment, particularly over free trade. “Trump sensed this,” Seib said. “He said you’re right to feel resentment ... we’re suckers and being taken advantage of.”

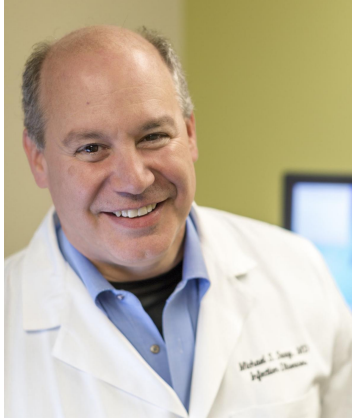
Over and over again, GOP leaders “tried to stay true” to the politics of immigration that was championed by Ronald Reagan and continued through President George W. Bush’s two terms, Seib said. “But they could never (accomplish) it because (immigration) was being fought by the grass roots of the party.” Ultimately, the rise of the Tea Party movement and the rejection of immigration, free trade, and internationalism set the stage for Trump.

Closer to home, given that Erie County is a swing county in a swing state, does it make us a suitable political laboratory? Seib thinks swing voting will likely continue, that Democrats may have “overplayed their hand” by urging progressive reforms, and that Biden’s win “wasn’t a rousing mandate.” He said the talk of “defund the police” and “cancel culture” – common attack refrains from the right – “scare the middle of the country.”

Back to the book, Seib said it’s his view that Trump Republicans got their start with Pat Buchanan’s run for the presidency in 1992 and grew through the populist campaigns of Ross Perot and Sarah Palin as she typically drew much larger crowds than her running mate atop the ticket, John McCain, in 2008.

Will Trump run in 2024? Seib said it looks like Trump clearly plans to, but if he doesn’t, expect as many as a dozen Republicans to seek the nomination, perhaps led by Mike Pompeo, Marco Rubio, and Nikki Haley.

NOTES: Jefferson President Dr. Ferki Ferati and Vice President Ben Spегgen launched Week Two with a brief conversation about the Jefferson, and how Summit Chairman Steve Scully has been so important to the Jefferson’s Global Summit success. Dr. Ferati thanked Scully



Featuring Dr. Michael Saag
Aired Tuesday, May 18

Moderator Steve Scully introduced Dr. Michael Saag with an extraordinary compliment. In all of his many C-SPAN interviews since the pandemic, Scully never came across a person who could better explain COVID than Dr. Saag. The remark was no exaggeration.

Picture the cloud of dust all around the feet of the Peanuts' character "Pigpen," Dr. Saag advised. Raise the cloud to around his head. When he talks, see the cloud grow; when he screams, see it grow further; when he sings, see it grow even more. Such is the behavior of the COVID-19 virus. If you're in a closed space, within three feet, "you'll be breathing in the virus. ... If (Pigpen was) masked, it reduces the cloud about 90 percent."

How do you explain the exponential growth of the virus? If 10 people are in an indoor space, there is a 40 percent likelihood that someone has the virus. With 100 people, there is better than a 100 percent chance that one or more have the virus. A crowd of 1,500 probably has 10 to 15 people with COVID, statistically speaking. The environment matters. Today, there are about 35,000 new cases of COVID a day, compared to 250,000 a day around New Year's Day – a highly significant drop, yet risk remains. The effectiveness of the vaccine, however, as measured by real cases beyond trials, is extraordinary. He said Pfizer, Moderna (MRNA vaccines), and Johnson & Johnson are all safe and effective, though he agreed with the FDA pause on J&J and advised women 18 to 50 to take Pfizer or Moderna because of the extremely rare incidence of blood clots in females who took J&J. He credited the pause for working exactly as intended.

Later, Dr. Saag agreed with new CDC guidelines that nobody needs to wear a mask in a moderate size group of fully vaccinated people, inside or outside. But he remains leery of larger groups, especially when the vaccination status of everyone is unknown.

Why is India in such a perilous situation? It faces a more infectious strain of virus while only 1 to 2 percent of its population was vaccinated at the time of the breakout (a mass religious holiday celebrated on the Ganges River triggered the event, and thousands brought it back to their towns). More infectious means it might take just eight or nine minutes of exposure to the new strain to contract the virus, not the 15 minutes of the original strain.

Dr. Saag noted that the majority of people getting the infection today are young people. Why not vaccinate older people and leave young people unvaccinated?

“The answer is very simple. Young people are a continuing reservoir of infection ... we need to get everybody vaccinated.” Americans are so lucky, he added. The vaccine “is our way out – our ticket to ride. ... This vaccine is a miracle in our lifetime.”

In the current understanding, it appears 75 percent of the population could be vaccinated by the start of school, and 90 percent by mid-October. Dr. Saag said vaccine protection appears as if it will last for about a year and require one booster shot for continued protection. He envisions people receiving a flu vaccination as they do now at the normal time, and a COVID vaccine booster in January of each year – perhaps for the next eight to 10 years.

Those hesitant to get vaccinated need to know that the issue is not “get vaccinated versus don’t get vaccinated.” That is a false comparison, he said. Because the vaccine is so effective, the issue is “Get vaccinated versus face the risk of getting COVID.” He has personal knowledge of that pain, having contracted COVID in March 2020. He still has lingering hearing loss but has regained his senses of taste and smell.

What have we learned from the pandemic? “One, what works and what doesn’t,” Dr. Saag said. “Two, the destructiveness of politicizing public health – hope we’ve learned to never do that again. ... Three, don’t assassinate trust.” In a more positive sense, we have learned “how science triumphs,” how investing in drug companies makes sense, and that more and maybe all of our vaccines will convert to the MRNA platform within 10 years.

NOTES: Jefferson President Dr. Ferki Ferati and Vice President Ben Speggen started the program with a discussion of the first Jefferson Global Summit in 2009 – five events in two and a half days with a total attendance of about 570. It was the brainchild of current Jefferson board member and scholar Christine Riehl. By 2019, the summit had grown to 12 events and 18 speakers over three weeks, with 6,700 attendees. Dr. Ferati credited Steve Scully’s excellent work for the remarkable growth.

Madam Speaker: Nancy Pelosi and the Lessons of Power



Featuring Susan Page
Aired Wednesday, May 19

“Consequential and complicated.” That is how author-journalist Susan Page described the subject of her new bestselling book, “Madame Speaker: Nancy

Pelosi and the Lessons of Power.”

Prompted by moderator Steve Scully, Page noted that Pelosi is complicated because she incites strong feelings by followers and opponents alike. Though a “master of the inside game” of politics, she is not strong on the “public game,” such as making speeches and communicating with the public.

Soon after Pelosi entered politics at age 46 and after her five children had mostly left the house, she learned more from her first race – a loss in 1984 for chairman of the Democratic National Committee – than from any other race. Among the lessons was sexism, as Pelosi was falsely labeled a “party girl” and an “airhead.” She learned to ignore sexist attacks and not to count on friends in politics. Noted Page, “The number-one lesson Pelosi learned is that no one is going to give you power. You have to take it.”

It’s a lesson that her father – a five-term congressman and three-term mayor of Baltimore – would have agreed with. Tommy D’Alessandro Jr. was “a natural pol with a zest for big-city politics,” said Page, and a love of FDR – Nancy’s brother, the second oldest, was named Franklin Delano Roosevelt D’Alessandro! Nancy was the youngest and only daughter of seven children.

The D’Alessandro family lived in Baltimore’s Little Italy and in the safe confines of St. Leo’s Roman Catholic parish. Pelosi still attends Mass on most days, is a gourmet Italian cook (according to Scully), and it was her mom, Nancy Lombardi D’Alessandro, who kept “the Favor File.” A favor would be granted, the details added to the file, and the “reminder” brought to the forefront at election time. Politics 101.

And on and on Ms. Page’s recollections went, captivating the audience with charm, detail, and political horse sense. “(Pelosi and husband Paul) had five children in six years – the Catholic Way,” said Page, quoting Pelosi, and Pelosi would comment that raising her children was “great training” for her two tenures as Speaker of the House.

In Page’s first sit-down book interview with Pelosi, the Speaker (a chocolate fiend) served Page a Dove ice cream bar, but the symbolic confection promptly dissolved into many chocolate shards that went everywhere. Page remembered Pelosi offering the glance of a disapproving mom and, Page noted wryly, not once in the ensuing nine interviews did Pelosi offer her another snack.

Page, calling Pelosi the most consequential House speaker since the legendary Sam Rayburn, listed her top accomplishments as leading passage of the Affordable Care Act (by four votes “though she said she had a few more in her pocket” – Dems who would have voted yes if needed) and the financial bailout at the end of the George W. Bush presidency. Page also mentioned the pandemic relief packages, the first of which was negotiated with then-Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin because Pelosi and President Donald Trump “never spoke again” after her finger-wagging scold in front of Trump and his Cabinet.

Pelosi did rip up her draft of Trump’s State of the Union speech (“If he’s going to shred the truth, she’s going to tear up his speech”), but she said it started out as “little tears” she made to mark his inaccurate statements because she didn’t have a pen, but “the whole margin ended up a series of tears.”

Page also discussed Pelosi’s former rivalry with fellow Democratic House leader Steny Hoyer, relayed former Speaker Newt Gingrich’s strange praise of Pelosi – “I look across the ocean and see a fellow pirate” – and recalled former longest-serving Congresswoman Barbara Mikulski’s observation that Pelosi’s education at

all-girls schools (elementary, high school, and Trinity College) served her well in developing leadership skills that are often reserved for boys and men in co-ed schools.

Will Pelosi serve beyond 2022? Page said she doesn't know but surmises she might leave triumphantly if appointed ambassador to Italy or the Vatican.

In the meantime, after her bestselling books on Barbara Bush and Nancy Pelosi, Page is looking for a topic for a third book. Ideas, anyone?

NOTES: Jefferson President Dr. Ferki Ferati and Vice President Ben Spегgen opened the program by discussing the nonpartisan nature of the think tank and its role of prompting thought and conversation about local, national, and global issues.

Jefferson Chairwoman Joyce Savocchio introduced Ms. Page, who later complimented the former three-time Erie Mayor for her accomplishments and breaking a number of political glass ceilings.

Moderator Scully noted that, in addition to being close friends, he and Susan Page are both alumni of the highly respected Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University.

Nancy Reagan: Archives, Letters, Memoirs, and Interviews Offering A New and Revealing Look at the Former First Lady



Featuring Karen Tumulty
Aired Thursday, May 20

Americans already knew about the more than half-century love affair between Ronald Reagan and Nancy Davis Reagan. They knew about her image as an “ice queen,” the feuding with Barbara Bush, and her ouster of thorny Chief of Staff Donald Regan.

But until Karen Tumulty's book, “The Triumph of Nancy Reagan,” was released by Simon & Schuster in early April, perhaps only the closest insiders knew the scope of Nancy Reagan's impact on her husband, his two-term presidency, and major events like her role in helping to end the Cold War with the Soviets.

It is Nancy Reagan's “consequential role” on policy and administration that sets this instant bestseller apart after Tumulty embraced the hard work of reporting

and writing over four and half years – 400 interviews, devouring archives, diaries, letters, other books, and gaining the confidence of those who knew the Reagans the best, like her aide Nancy Reynolds, Chief of staff and adviser Jim Baker, Secretary of State George Schultz, and probably Ronald Reagan's closest friend and adviser, Stuart Spencer. Other members of the cast include Ed Rollins, Ed Meese, two of Ronald Reagan's White House doctors, and scores more.

Their love affair started with a blind date in 1949, though Davis had already had her designs on her future husband, Tumulty reported. Reagan's first wife, Jane Wyman, had grown tired of him and had "left the marriage," Tumulty said. Reagan was at a low point and was immediately drawn to Davis, an actress whose screen test with MGM Studios was set up by Spencer Tracy. At the time, Ronald Reagan was recovering from a leg broken in six places and had just finished two months in traction. He would later say, "if Nancy hadn't come along ..." he doesn't know what would have happened with his life or career.

Such a theme came back again and again. Not long after their marriage began, Ronald Reagan hit a nadir. His acting career was on the decline, and he was forced to take a master of ceremonies job in a floor show at a Las Vegas nightclub. But not long afterward, he was offered the host role for General Electric Theater, and the new television show "took off." All the while, Nancy was at his side as her husband found himself appearing before tens of thousands of GE workers at plants across the country. "This is when he really develops the feel for politics that take him to the governorship of California (in 1966)," Tumulty said. It's when he "gets his feelings for average Americans and their beliefs and concerns."

After his governorship, Reagan boldly decided to challenge sitting Republican President Gerald Ford in the 1976 primary – a race that went all the way to the Republican National Convention before Ford prevailed. Of all the victories to come, that was the most memorable race for the Reagans, even though a defeat, Tumulty said. Nancy Reagan later admitted she was "losing faith" by the time the campaign reached North Carolina – so broke that they had to pay for their hotel rooms in advance. She treated her North Carolina reception hosts badly, was balled out on the plane by aide Nancy Reynolds for her rudeness, and suddenly realized she had betrayed her husband's efforts. But no more. From that point on, she was a different person and her support and devotion to Ronald Reagan would never flag during his years in politics, his 10-year battle with Alzheimer's, and even after his death in 2004. British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher may have been Ronald Reagan's political soulmate, but Nancy Reagan was clearly his real soulmate and guardian of his presidency and legacy. Nancy Reagan was mostly responsible for talking her reluctant husband into running for president in 1980 because, as she told him, "this is your moment." She also tried to talk him out of seeking re-election in 1984.

Nancy Reagan had never had it easy, as Tumulty's reporting bore out. Reagan brought two children from his previous marriage into the Davis-Reagan marriage, and they had another two, though even the Reagans might have admitted they were "not very good parents," Tumulty observed. Ron Jr. often discussed his parents' total devotion to each other and acknowledged that no one else, including the children, could penetrate that bubble.

Nancy Davis, who was born Anne Frances Robbins in New York City, had an extremely difficult and traumatic childhood, and her insecurities would re-emerge during the White House years, especially after the attempted assassination of her husband. Her parents separated and she was raised by an aunt and uncle in

Maryland. “Her mother left her almost as soon as she was out of diapers,” Tumulty noted.

Years later, when her husband was shot in March 1981, Nancy’s feelings of total abandonment came roaring back. As Tumulty explained, the country did not realize how close to death Reagan – code name “Rawhide” – was in the operating room after the shooting on that March afternoon. Surgeons couldn’t find the bullet that threatened his life. “Her trauma over this really explains” many of the weird things in her life from that point forward, such as having an astrologer consulted on his daily schedule.

Nancy Reagan also faced lifelong addiction to prescription drugs as the result of her anxiety, ironically urging Americans to “Just say no” to drugs while she battled her own addiction.

Tumulty told many other stories that created headlines in the past month, such as George Schultz crediting her with helping to end the Cold War by arranging social events at which Reagan revealed himself as an excellent negotiator and foreshadowing his work with Communist leaders. She also played a central role in the aftermath of the Iran-Contra scandal and the ouster of Donald Regan, who she blamed for letting it happen. Her behind-the-scenes work setting up Reagan’s Mea culpa speech after Iran-Contra is largely seen as saving his presidency.

One unanswered question after the book project still gnaws at Tumulty: For all of Nancy Regan’s incredible work to nurture her husband’s image and legacy, how did she not protect her own image?

Nancy Reagan, who died at age 96 in 2016, died a lonely death, Tumulty said. Most of her friends were gone or incapacitated, and she suffered from glaucoma. She would have turned 100 years old this July 6.

NOTES: Jefferson Vice President Ben Speggen and Operations Director Angela Beaumont started the program with continued conversation about the Jefferson, its Civic Leadership Academy, and the terrific reading list that will be compiled from the many Global Summits since 2009. Several of them, including James and Deborah Fallows’ “Our Towns,” are required reading.

Covid-19: The Path Forward for Parents, Educators and Public Health Experts



Featuring Dr. Leana Wen
Aired Friday, May 21

Dr. Leana Wen – emergency room doctor, medical expert, Rhodes scholar, and writer – has given American audiences a steady diet of her unvarnished takes on the pandemic for more than a year, and it continued Friday at Global Summit XII. With questioning by moderator Steve Scully, Dr. Wen offered “a mixed picture” on the pandemic. Among the good news is that daily new infections are at their lowest since spring 2020, the curve is headed to exponential decline, and more than 60 percent of adults in America have received at least one dose of the vaccine. Also, more than 1 million children ages 12 to 15 have been immunized (in a group of 17 million) in what could be “a game-changer.”

However, she is “very troubled by the CDC’s abrupt change in guidelines last week.” In attempting to tell people about the benefits of vaccinations, she said, the CDC’s messaging has left many with the false belief that mask mandates are no longer needed. “I could see local outbreaks that could set back the progress we’ve made,” she said.

Why the mixed messages from the CDC and why so abrupt? “I think the messaging was really bad, and the policy was poor,” she said. In her view, the CDC got the science correct and was trying to do a good thing – that we now have overwhelming evidence that the vaccines protect against getting ill, protect against the variants,” and stop us from being carriers. But she wishes they had stuck to those alone. The CDC has a wider responsibility than to act as if it were a doctor talking with a patient assessing risk.

Dr. Wen, a CNN medical expert and a columnist for the Washington Post, had both praise and criticism for the federal government’s handling of the pandemic. She credited the Trump administration and scientists for the quick development of the vaccines under Operation Warp Speed, and strongly criticized it for its early denials and lack of testing to the point that the virus had already gained community spread by the time testing took hold. “We should have recognized it at the beginning. We were missing so many cases because we were flying blind – looking at Wuhan, but not China; looking at China without looking at Europe. The catastrophe in New York City came from Europe. ... We didn’t realize we had a giant problem until we had community spread. Having blinders on was a big part of this.”

There was no coherent national policy then, and she doesn’t see one now in many respects. “Is it living with a certain level of infection” and opening the economy or “trying to reach herd immunity? It is not clear.” The effectiveness of the vaccines has been a complete surprise. A year ago, it was expected that they might be like a flu vaccine – 40 to 60 percent effective – but they are completely effective.

Asked her view of statements made by Pfizer and Moderna leaders that a vaccine booster may be needed in six months, she said she was “cynical.” “They are projecting – speaking to their shareholders and investors – but a scientific answer is that these vaccines are very effective at six months, and we don’t know much beyond that.” But there is “no reason based on the science that we would need a booster in nine or 12 months; perhaps one year or two years.” Right now, there is no evidence a booster is needed soon.

Should schools at any level require students to have vaccines? She thinks it’s a good idea as long as people have the ability to opt out. A solution would be for a

school to require the vaccine or require COVID testing twice a week and filling out a health questionnaire daily. “That gives them a choice, even if it favors vaccine.”

The vaccine fearful and hesitant could be met with compassion rather than judgment, she said, but pointed out that getting coronavirus from the vaccine is “impossible.” Though side effects are expected, usually for two or three days, no side effects in the history of vaccines last beyond six weeks.

Dr. Wen, in discussing her new book scheduled for release in July (“Lifelines: A Doctor’s Journey in the Fight for Public Health”) mentioned her own life story. An immigrant, she came to America shortly before her eighth birthday. Both parents worked to make ends meet, “and in many ways public health saved our lives,” she said. Later, as an emergency room doctor, she saw the value of public health policy and pursued that path.

She remains uncomfortable about her own family (she has an 18-month-old and a three-and-a-half-year-old) mingling in larger groups and advises mask wearing in settings that include vaccinated and unvaccinated people. She also spoke passionately about how the virus disproportionately strikes vulnerable groups, mostly minorities. People of low income who often live in food deserts and reside in multigenerational housing are at heightened risk. Many are essential workers. “We have to pay attention to equity,” she said.

She sees the battle against COVID to continue indefinitely. “Overall, we’re going to have to learn to live with it,” she said, and urged researchers and drug companies to develop oral medications for COVID that act like Tamiflu for influenza. She also urged continued investigations into COVID’s origin in China (“It is really important to know how this happened”) and she said she is convinced that all current arguments about its origin are inconclusive. “I certainly don’t know (how it happened) and I don’t think others know either,” she said.

Are there other coronaviruses in our future? “It’s not a question of if, but when,” she said.

NOTES: Jefferson President Dr. Ferki Ferati and Vice President Ben Spегgen started the program with continued conversation about the Jefferson. They talked about the summit and its early challenges to encourage more young people to attend Jefferson programming. Noted Dr. Ferati, “Our board made the decision to offer all of our programming free to all students and we built relationships with local colleges and schools.” It was a key early decision.

**You can still register for the rest of the
Global Summit XII lineup!**

Registration itself is free, but there are limited spots.

There is no bulk registration as individual Zoom links are created for each of the events. You must register for events individually to reserve your spot to receive your customized links. Emails with your links will be sent out after registration, a week before the event, a day before the event, and an hour before the event for your convenience to ensure you have the link available to you.

See the lineup below:

Week Three

- David Ignatius: [Russia, China and What You Need to Know About America's Greatest Foreign Policy Challenges](#)
 - Monday, May 24 at 7:30 p.m.
 - Ambassador Christopher Hill: [Understanding America's 21st Century Diplomacy: Lessons from The Front Lines of Europe and Asia](#)
 - Tuesday, May 25 at 7:30 p.m.
 - April Ryan: [Front Row to History: Reporting from the Front Lines of The White House](#)
 - Wednesday, May 26 at 7:30 p.m.
 - James & Deborah Fallows, Steven Ascher, & Jeanne Jordan, ["Our Towns:" From the Pages to the Screen](#)
 - Thursday, May 27 at 7:30 p.m.
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