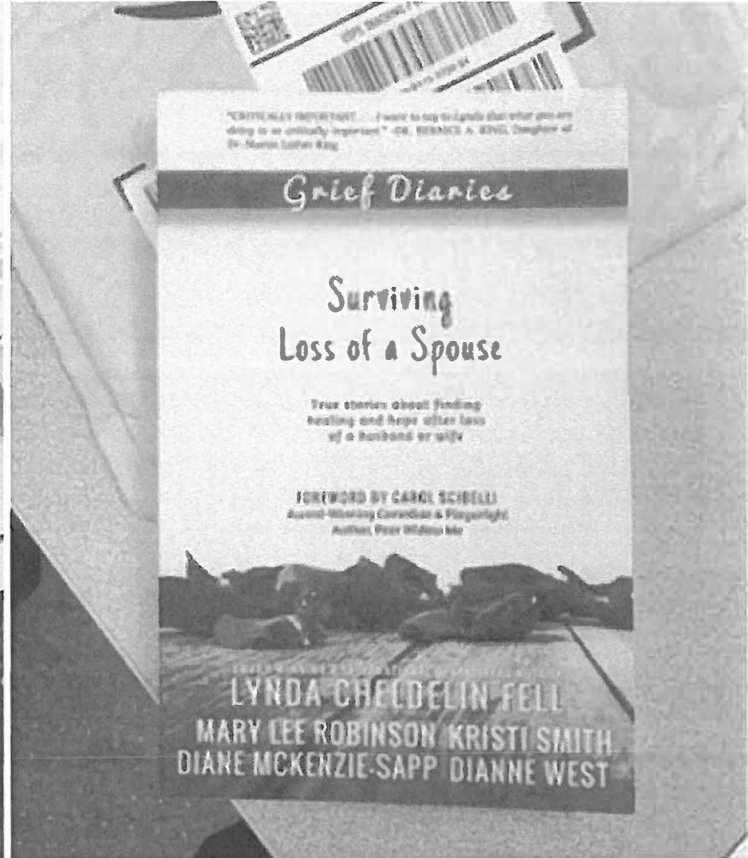


# EBay harassment mastermind says he previously worked for Joe Biden, Bill Gates

By Aaron Pressman Globe Staff, Updated September 28, 2022, 10:40 a.m.



The alleged deliveries to a Natick couple included a bloody pig's head Halloween mask and the book "Grief Diaries: Surviving Loss of a Spouse." HANDOUT VIA FBI BOSTON

A former eBay executive who masterminded a bizarre stalking and harassment campaign against a Natick couple said in new court filings that he had a prior career in security that included protecting Bill Gates and Joe Biden, when he was vice president and appeared at the Oscars.

Jim Baugh, who has pleaded guilty to criminal stalking and witness tampering, is scheduled to be sentenced on Thursday. Prosecutors are seeking a prison sentence of 71 months and a fine of \$60,000, while Baugh's lawyers said he should serve 30 months with no fine.

While he was the global head of security at eBay in 2019, Baugh directed a campaign against Ina and David Steiner, who ran a website called Ecommercebytes that covered the company. In August 2019, under Baugh's direction, eBay employees sent the Steiners a series of harassing messages on Twitter and bizarre deliveries, including a funeral wreath, live spiders, and a bloody pig's head mask. Baugh and several of his employees then traveled to Boston, where they attempted to install a tracking device on the Steiners' car and followed the couple around town.

In filings to Judge Patti Saris, who will decide the sentence, Baugh and his lawyers said that before going to eBay in 2016, he had worked for Microsoft and the Central Intelligence Agency's National Clandestine Service, and as an independent security consultant.

Baugh did not describe his work for the CIA but said it was challenging for his family, prompting a return to the private sector where, he said, he was "employed directly by Bill Gates" to provide personal protection on trips related to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The Gates Foundation did not respond to a request for comment.

Baugh's private assignments also included working for Apple, Amazon, and Walmart, according to the filings, as well as being on the security team for then-Vice President Joe Biden at the 2016 Oscars, according to the filings.

The filings included a thank-you note, apparently from Biden to Baugh, dated March 21, 2016. "Your patience and professionalism are apparent, and I wish you all the best," Biden wrote.



THE VICE PRESIDENT  
WASHINGTON

March 21, 2016

Jim Baugh  
Security Industry Specialists, Inc.  
1415 Western Avenue  
Suite 300  
Seattle, WA 92101

Dear Jim:

Thank you for your hard work on the security team at the Oscars. I hope you know that your contributions did not go unnoticed and I am truly thankful for your support.

Your patience and professionalism are apparent, and I wish you all the best.

Sincerely,



Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

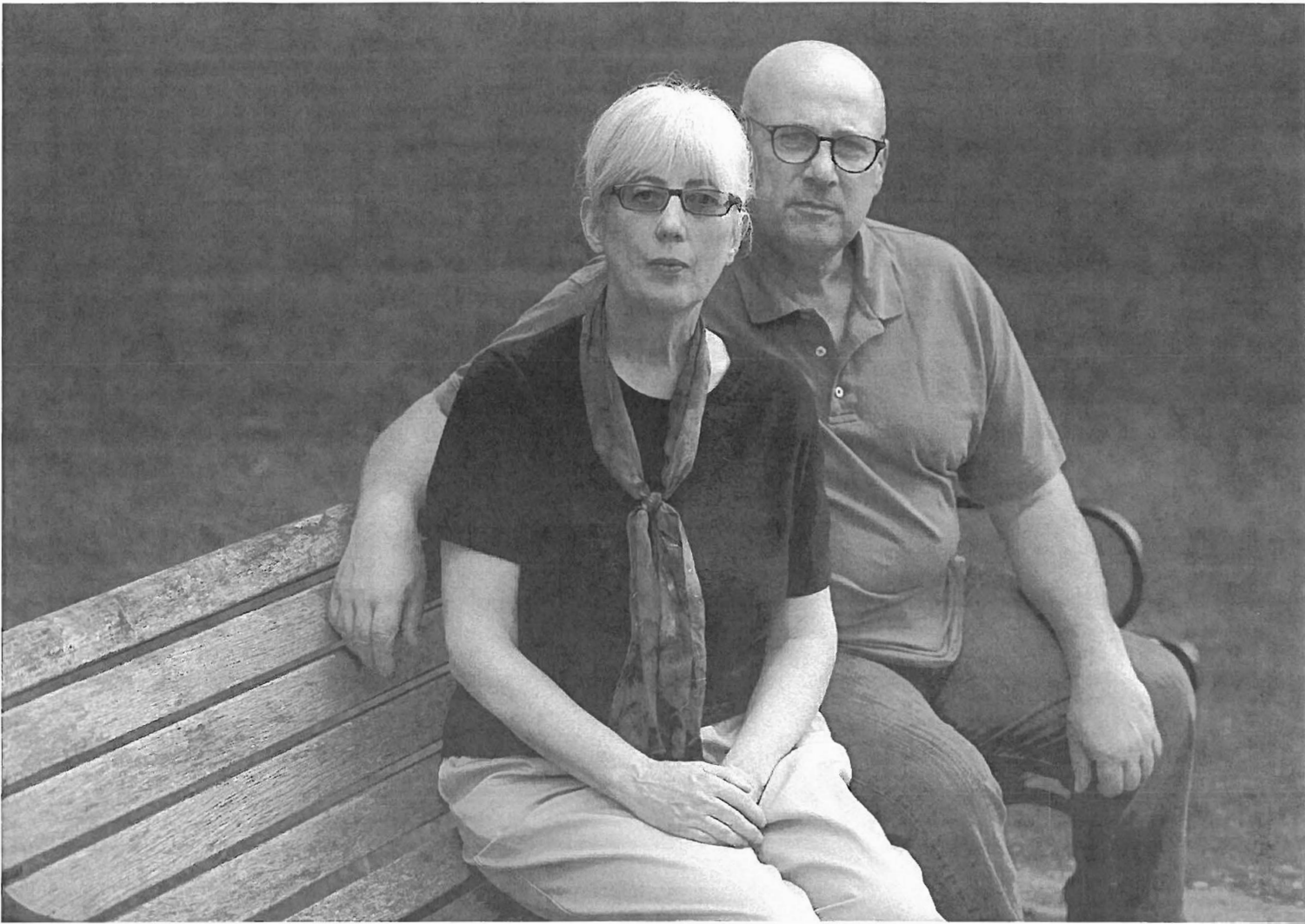
Seven former eBay employees including Baugh have pleaded guilty for their participation in the harassment campaign, which followed complaints from high-level executives about coverage of the company on the Steiners' website.

In 2019, eBay's then-chief executive Devin Wenig told a subordinate to "take her down," in reference to Ina Steiner. After eBay's lawyers said they had no legal means to shut down a commenter on the site who also posted on Twitter, Wenig told Baugh in an e-mail that the problem "might be worth some research, Jim."

The new filings also reveal a text exchange between Baugh and Wenig in which Baugh promised the problem "will be fixed."

Martin Weinberg, a lawyer for Wenig, said in a statement to the Globe that the exchange "was both entirely lawful and utterly unrelated to what occurred," adding that "Mr. Wenig had absolutely zero knowledge of Mr. Baugh's actions. ... Had he known, he would have immediately taken steps to stop it." Wenig, who was allowed to resign with \$57 million of severance, has not been charged in the case.

After the Steiners reported the incidents to Natick police, detectives quickly tracked the activity back to eBay and got the FBI involved. Baugh directed his employees to create a fake document to throw police off the trail, lied to eBay investigators, and instructed one of his employees to lie to law enforcement, according to a sentencing brief filed by prosecutors in the case.



Ina and David Steiner of Natick were harassed and stalked by eBay employees. JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF

In seeking the longer prison sentence for Baugh and one of his subordinates, David Harville, prosecutors said they wanted to deter future misconduct by large companies.

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prosecutors wrote. “Senior employees at public companies cannot run ‘ops’ against people who say things they dislike on the internet. They cannot engage in illegal self-help instead of reporting a perceived threat to law enforcement, or using the courts to seek relief.”

In addition to a likely prison sentence, Baugh is also being sued by the Steiners. The lawsuit, which seeks unspecified damages from Baugh, Wenig, the company, and other participants, is ongoing in federal court in Boston.

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