

A brilliant life cut tragically short

Cato Mourns Intern's Death after Celebrating His *Jeopardy!* Triumph

Cato's interns have long applied the skills and lessons learned to go on to great things, launching careers in policy analysis, communications, politics—and in many cases, later coming back to work at Cato itself. But one intern managed to capture the national spotlight sooner than most.

Brayden Smith, a recent graduate in economics from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, participated in the Spring 2020 intern class. As he explained, he was aiming for a career in appellate practice after law school and saw a Cato internship as a valuable stepping stone toward that goal.

Smith fulfilled a lifelong dream last spring when he landed a spot on America's most popular game show: *Jeopardy!* In episodes aired in December 2020 and January 2021, the “policy intern from Las Vegas, Nevada”—as he was introduced at the beginning of each episode—notched a five-day winning streak and took home \$115,798 in prize money. As a five-game champion, he was preparing to compete in the show's Tournament of Champions.

Smith was also dubbed “Alex's last great champion” as the final contestant to enjoy a long-running winning streak during the 36-year tenure of host Alex Trebek. The beloved Trebek passed away following a long battle with pancreatic cancer, just

weeks before Smith's episodes aired.

Tragically, the Cato family's celebration of Smith's achievement turned to deep sadness when we learned that he passed away following complications from surgery in early February. He was



just 24 years old. Smith's untimely passing has been intensely felt at Cato, where scholars and staff mourn the loss of a brilliant young man with a principled dedication to liberty and a promising future.

One of those scholars, in particular, had attracted Smith to Cato. “I applied to the Cato internship because I wanted to work for Clark Neily at the Project on Criminal Justice,” he explained. “I knew him and his work in years past, and I knew that I wanted to pursue a career in law, so it seemed like a great match.” Neily is Cato's vice president for criminal justice, where he leads a team working on issues including the right to trial by jury and abolishing the doctrine of qualified immunity.

“It allowed me to do research and involved my reading dozens of court cases and law review articles, and I spent a lot of time doing archival research,” Smith said. “It was exciting being able to dig into American history to find what I was looking for.”

To honor his memory, the Brayden Smith Memorial Fund has been founded by his family, dedicated to furthering the educational aspirations of southern Nevada students. The memorial fund can be found on the CharitySmith website, and Cato offers its deepest condolences to the Smith family. ■

Cato News Notes

POP CULTURE FOR PEACE



Pop & Locke, Libertarianism.org's podcast covering movies and television from a libertarian

perspective, had a special guest for its recent episode: *M*A*S*H* actor Mike Farrell, who played Captain B. J. Hunnicutt on the show, which was known for its strong anti-war themes.

SUPREME COURT

Supreme Disorder: *Judicial Nominations and the Politics of America's Highest Court* by Ilya Shapiro, director of the Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies, led the *National Law Journal's* list of books of the year about the Supreme Court.



Freedom
Art as the Messenger

DESIGN AWARD

The catalog for Cato's 2019 art exhibition, *Freedom: Art as the Messenger*, won Best of Category for “programs” at the Printing and Graphics Association Mid-Atlantic competition among hundreds of entries.