



MISSION AT RISK

THE PENTAGON'S WATCHDOG FOUND THAT DEFENSE SECRETARY PETE HEGSETH PUT U.S. PERSONNEL AND THEIR MISSION AT RISK WHEN HE USED THE SIGNAL MESSAGING APP. **C3**

SOUTH JERSEY

Tale of the tape, lost from mom’s past, drives teen’s punk odyssey



Charlotte Astor, 16, looking through CDs at Sky Valley Records in Somerdale, has spent the last four years searching for the demo tape of Seed, a short-lived ‘90s hardcore band in which her mom, Shannon, was the vocalist. Photos by Joe Warner, for South Jersey Times

“She made something beautiful,” says hardcore aficionado of her parent’s legacy, picking up where her mother left off.

AJ McDougall For South Jersey Times

The cassette must be hidden in someone’s basement. Or attic. It’s got to be stashed at the bottom of a moldy cardboard box, under a pile of forgotten toys and crusty magazines.

Its plastic case is probably cracked, the cover art — a photo of a long-haired girl on a playground — hopelessly waterlogged.

But the tape would play just fine if she cleaned it off and popped it into her stereo.

This is Charlotte Astor’s fantasy, her obsession: to unearth a single piece of recorded music lost to time. To finally hear the thrashing guitar, the crunch of the bass — and the sound of her mother’s voice.

“I’m certain someone in New Jersey has that tape,” Charlotte, a 16-year-old from Camden County, told NJ Advance Media.

The phantom demo is the last vestige of a band called Seed, a short-lived ‘90s hardcore outfit from South Jersey. Charlotte has spent the last four years relentlessly searching for it.

Her mom, Shannon Astor, was Seed’s vocalist, and just 14 years old at the time.

Now 46, Shannon remembers the band with a roll of her blue eyes.



Charlotte and her mom browse through albums at Sky Valley Records on Oct. 4.

“It was a de-evolution of sound. Cowbells and bongos — not what you think of when you think of hardcore,” she said, then laughed. “It was a fantastic time.”

The experimental group burned hot and bright for a year or two. Shannon remembers messing around with lyrics and venturing beyond Jersey’s borders to support other bands on small tours.

But by her sophomore year of high school, Seed had dissolved, its members drifting to other projects.

Their sole recording: a demo spliced together at Wildfire Records, a long-shuttered Pine Barrens studio, around 1994. The band hawked a few dozen copies at shows,

all of which were snapped up by friends and collectors, Shannon said.

No members thought to hold on to a copy — or anything else Seed-related — for posterity. No photos, band shirts, set lists or lyric pages. Nothing to show that this fleeting but formative moment in Shannon’s adolescence even happened at all.

The group was unexceptional in that regard; many mercurial bands split and mutate into new factions before anyone knows they ever existed.

But Shannon made Seed stand out. Female-led outfits were uncommon in ‘90s hardcore, teenagers rarer still. She was a formidable voice, seething beyond her small stature in striped sweaters and vintage Levi’s 517s, a hurricane of flowing dark hair with a cheerleading captain’s stage presence.

“There are so few girl singers in hardcore. There’s a handful out of the thousands and thousands of dudes,” Charlotte said. “But she made something beautiful. She wrote the lyrics and had this ideology and was determined to get people to listen.”

Charlotte grew up on her mother’s stories: sneaking out and bumming a ride to a show in the back of a U-Haul; playing to packed rooms of sweaty, heaving crowds; crashing on friends’ couches up and down the East Coast; and embracing “straight edge,” the hardcore subculture that celebrates sober living and personal discipline.

She hung on every word, “badgering her” for more, wanting so badly to be her mom that sometimes she wished she could crawl under her skin.

SEE SOUTH JERSEY, A3

COLLINGSWOOD

Video evidence dispute likely delays trial for wrestling champ

Trial of 4-time state champion wrestler Anthony Knox Jr. and his father is delayed again over video evidence

Joe Zedalis For South Jersey Times

The trial for former St. John Vianney state wrestling champion Anthony Knox Jr. and his father, Anthony Sr., will likely be pushed back until January, based on the outcome of a status hearing in Collingswood Municipal Court on Wednesday.

In a virtual appearance, Lawrence W. Luttrell, the attorney for both Knox Jr. and Sr., told Judge Carol Fabietti he was still missing a piece of requested video evidence from the brawl, which broke out in the bleachers during a district wrestling tournament at Collingswood High School on Feb. 22 and is at the heart of the case.

Both Knox Jr., a four-time New Jersey state champion, and Knox Sr. were charged with simple assault-purposely/ knowingly causing bodily injury, according to court documents. Luttrell entered not-guilty pleas on behalf of his clients on Sept. 10.

“We are still missing video, which was referenced by the charging officer in the report,” Luttrell told the court. “We requested the additional video. Police provided the video. We did not receive it.”

“Mr. Luttrell indicted he did not receive discovery and, quite frankly, we believe we sent it,” said Collingswood prosecutor Timothy Higgins. “I assured Mr. Luttrell the discovery he seeks, which is certain video, will be sent to him, by me personally, before the end of business today (Wednesday).”

Luttrell said he would file an order with the court compelling the prosecution to provide the requested video if it is not received by Thursday morning.

Video discovery has now delayed the trial for a fourth time. Hearings scheduled in April, May and September were also

SEE TRIAL, A6

OCEAN CITY

Pier’s future uncertain

A proposal for Wonderland Pier that the city council rejected in August is being reconsidered at the suggestion of Councilman Jody Levchuk. **A2**

COLTS NECK

Event sparks pushback

The U.S. Secretary of Education will visit a N.J. school Friday as part of a tour in partnership with conservative groups that has outraged some parents. **A6**

Pardoned by Trump, but still wanted in Arkansas

Ex-nursing home mogul, who was based in Jersey, must serve time on fraud charges there, officials say.

Ted Sherman For South Jersey Times

Joseph Schwartz, who ran a nationwide nursing home empire out of an office above a New Jersey pizzeria, was released from federal prison last month after President Trump pardoned him just 90 days into a three-year sentence for Medicaid and tax fraud.

It could be a short respite.

The Arkansas Attorney General’s Office is seeking to have him returned to prison in that state in connection with unrelated Medicaid fraud and tax evasion charges that led to a one-year sentence that was intended to be served concurrently with the federal prison term.

“Per his plea agreement on state felony charges of Medicaid fraud and tax evasion, Joseph Schwartz must serve 31 more days in an Arkansas prison before he is eligible

for parole,” said Jeff LeMaster, a spokesman for Arkansas Attorney General Tim Griffin.

The state filed a motion in court late Tuesday asking that he be ordered to report to the Arkansas Department of Corrections within seven days to serve out the remainder of his sentence.

“In addition to his prison time, he still owes more than \$1 million to the state in restitution and fees. We will ensure he fulfills all of his obligations to the state,” said LeMaster.

Schwartz, 65, was criminally charged in Arkansas with illegally inflating rates paid at eight of the state’s nursing homes. He was also charged with failing to pay taxes that were withheld from employees’ paychecks and exaggerating the company’s costs by \$6.2 million. He later pleaded guilty to Medicaid and tax fraud in April.

An attorney for Schwartz said they would

contest the state’s action.

“We don’t believe the motion by the Arkansas attorney general is well made and are confident it will be defeated,” said Kevin Marino, who represented Schwartz in the federal case in New Jersey.

Schwartz, who lives in a \$1.4 million house in Suffern, New York, once operated 95 nursing homes in 11 states, including three in New Jersey, under a company called Skyline Healthcare. Run like a mom-and-pop operation, it was based out of a second-floor office above a pizza parlor in Wood-Ridge.

But he came under mounting scrutiny amid Skyline’s financial collapse more than five years ago. Some attributed the chain’s problems to its vast expansion or mismanagement, while others blamed it on outright fraud. Lawsuits across the country,

SEE PARDON, A6