

Wiretap reveals local father was paranoid that college bribery scam would implicate Kleiner Perkins John Doerr

BY [ALLISON LEVITSKY](#)

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A Hillsborough real estate investor accused of paying \$600,000 for his two daughters to get into UCLA and USC said in a wiretapped phone call that he was concerned about the scam being a “front-page story with everyone from Kleiner Perkins,” according to federal prosecutors.

Bruce Isackson, 61, co-founded the Woodside real estate firm WP Investments in 1991.

He and his wife, Davina Isackson, were both charged Tuesday in connection with the massive bribery scam along with 11 other mid-Peninsula parents.

The allegations against the Isacksons are similar to those against 31 other wealthy parents across the country, including in the Bay Area and Los Angeles and on the East Coast.

Prosecutors say that the parents paid Rick Singer, an admitted fraudster, to bribe athletic directors at elite schools to recommend their children as athletic recruits using falsified qualifications.

Many parents also paid Singer to help their kids cheat on the SAT or ACT by paying a proctor to give them the answers to a test as they took it in a private classroom. The Isacksons allegedly paid a total of \$500,000 in Facebook stock to have an athletic director at each school recommend their daughters as athletic recruits in soccer and crew, respectively.

They're also accused of paying \$100,000 in stock to hire a proctor who gave their younger daughter, the answers to the ACT as she was taking it in a private classroom.

Singer agreed to cooperate with federal investigators in hopes of getting a lenient sentence.

As part of the investigation, he made a series of wiretapped phone calls in which he told his clients that he was being audited to get them to admit their role in the scam in the course of the conversation.

He wondered if phone was tapped

"You know, I am so paranoid about this f***ing thing you were talking about. I don't like talking about it on the phone, you know," Bruce Isackson allegedly told Singer on a taped phone call on Dec. 3. "You know, I'm thinkin', you know, are they — I mean, I can't imagine they'd go to the trouble of tapping my phone — but would they tape someone like your phones?"

According to prosecutors, the Isacksons paid Singer to bribe Ali Khosroshahin, then the head coach of women's soccer at USC, and UCLA men's soccer head coach Jorge Salcedo to recommend their older daughter as an athletic recruit using falsified soccer credentials.

The teen was ultimately accepted at UCLA, her father's alma mater and her second-choice school.

Later, Isackson told Singer that his stomach "kind of fell out" in nervousness about getting caught.

"I'm just thinking, oh my God, because you're thinking, does this roll into something where, you know, if they get into the meat and potatoes, is this gonna be this — be the front-page story with everyone from Kleiner Perkins do whatever, getting these kids into school?" Isackson asked. "It's so hard for these kids to get into college, and here's — look what — look what's going on behind the schemes, and then, you know, the embarrassment to everyone in the communities. Oh my God, it would just be — yeah. Ugh."

The call wasn't the only time Kleiner Perkins, the Sand Hill Road venture capital firm behind Amazon and AOL, has been mentioned in relation to the scheme.

In 2014, a Facebook page advertising Singer's self-published book on college admissions named Kleiner Perkins Managing Director John Doerr as one of his clients.

Doerr didn't return the Post's request for comment.

A thank-you message

"I know it has been a rough ride, but I thank you from the bottom of my heart and soul for your persistence, creativity and commitment towards helping (our daughter)," Davina Isackson wrote in an email to Singer, Bruce Isackson and their daughter in June 2016.

Singer paid Salcedo \$100,000 for the admission and paid Khosroshahin \$25,000, the indictment states.

The following month, Bruce Isackson emailed Singer and Davina Isackson confirming that Singer had agreed to refund their \$250,000 "gift" if their daughter was not admitted to UCLA.

"Again, both Davina and I are greatly appreciative of all your efforts on (our daughter)'s behalf!" Isackson wrote. Singer responded the same day, confirming that he would return \$250,000 if the teen's UCLA admission was reversed.

In April, the Isacksons are accused of paying another \$250,000 in stock after receiving an acceptance email from USC.

Kleiner Perkins partner Doerr says his bribes only got him 'typical services' from fraudster Rick Singer, no bribery

[March 23, 2019 7:55 am](#)

John Doerr

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Admitted college admissions fraudster William "Rick" Singer bragged on social media about having helped get Kleiner Perkins venture capitalist John Doerr's daughter into an Ivy League school. A Hillsborough real estate investor who was indicted for allegedly hiring Singer to bribe his own kids' way into college said in a wiretapped call that he worried that the scheme would "be the front-page story with everyone from Kleiner Perkins."

Doerr said through a spokeswoman yesterday (March 21) that he did hire Singer, but that the scammer didn't help his daughters bribe their way into school as he did for at least 33 other wealthy clients.

“The scope of services provided to John’s children was limited to test tutoring and help with college applications — typical of services provided by thousands of private college counselors across the country — and nothing further,” Kleiner Perkins spokeswoman Katie Hutchison told the Post in an email. “He is not part of the fed’s probe into William Singer.”

Hutchison told Fortune Magazine on March 14 that Kleiner Perkins general partner Ted Schlein had also hired Singer for nothing more than typical college counseling. She declined to answer the Post on the record when asked whether anyone at the firm other than Doerr and Schlein had hired Singer.

“William Singer used high-profile client names to market his services,” Hutchison said. “John Doerr was a client of William Singer’s firm together with a long list of Valley luminaries.” Singer’s social media posts mention the Doerr family more than once.

Singer helped with a student project

A video that Singer posted to YouTube to promote his business in August 2013 reveals that in 2007, he helped Doerr’s daughter, Mary Doerr, launch a youth training program on climate change when she was a high school student at Castilleja School.

John Doerr used to serve on Castilleja’s board and gave the private Palo Alto girls school \$1 million, Gawker reported in May 2008.

Without naming her, Singer says in the video “Rick Singer / Personal Best” that in order to make Mary Doerr a more competitive college applicant, he helped her launch

“Inconvenient Youth,” inspired by the 2006 Al Gore documentary “An Inconvenient Truth.”

“That young lady was totally engaged in the environment. She loved the environment and wanted to do something really special,” Singer says in the video. “Because she was involved in global warming, we wanted to create an organization that would focus on global warming for youth, and get youth educated about global warming.”

Mary Doerr’s LinkedIn profile states that the program trained 80 or so teenagers and young adults at Stanford and partnered with Disney and the U.S. Olympic Gymnastics team on a national tour to encourage teens and young adults to take action against climate change.

Now 27, Mary Doerr is a veterinary student at North Carolina State University, according to her LinkedIn profile.

She earned a bachelor’s degree in biology from Brown University in 2015 and went on to study animal welfare at Michigan State University.

Her sister Esther Doerr, 22, graduated from Palo Alto High School in 2015 and is a junior at Georgetown University, where tennis coach Gordie Ernst was indicted for allegedly accepting bribes in exchange for athletic recruitment.

Quarter-million clients

The Doerrs are among a quarter-million or more people who have hired Singer over the years, according to Singer.

Singer claimed in an August 2014 Facebook post promoting his self-published book that he had worked with 250,000 clients over the last 26 years.

Among those were Doerr, the late Apple CEO Steve Jobs, former 49er Joe Montana, Sun Microsystems cofounder Bill Joy and former Facebook ad sales head Mike Murphy.

Montana said last week that Singer's company had provided "nothing more than minimal consulting services to our family, like so many other families, with the college application process."

"Fortunately our kids were able to pick from a number of schools to attend due to their hard work and their merit," Montana tweeted on March 14.

Pro golfer Phil Mickelson, whose daughter goes to Brown, tweeted a similar statement the same day.

"Our family, along with thousands of others, used Rick Singer's company to guide us through the college admission process," Mickelson wrote. "We are shocked by the revelations of these events. Obviously, we were not part of this fraud, our kids would disown us if we ever tried to interfere."

Jobs' widow, Palo Alto resident Laurene Powell Jobs, hasn't responded to the claim that her family hired Singer.

Among those indicted on March 12 were an Atherton hedge fund CEO and his wife, a Hillsborough real estate investor and his wife, a Menlo Park food entrepreneur, a Palo Alto radiation oncologist and his wife, a Menlo Park jeweler whose husband

owns Dialink Corp. and the wife of former 49er Lou Palatella, who lives in Hillsborough.

Kleiner Perkins mentioned on wiretap

The real estate investor, Bruce Isackson, allegedly told Singer in a wiretapped phone call on Dec. 3 that he was paranoid that the scheme would come out.

“Is this gonna be this — be the front-page story with everyone from Kleiner Perkins do whatever, getting these kids into school?” Isackson asked. “It’s so hard for these kids to get into college, and here’s — look what — look what’s going on behind the schemes, and then, you know, the embarrassment to everyone in the communities.”

Isackson’s name and photo have been removed from the website for the investment company he cofounded in Woodside in 1991, WP Investments.