

A close-up, profile view of a man with a well-groomed, reddish-brown beard and mustache. He is looking slightly to the left of the frame with a thoughtful expression. He is wearing a light blue collared shirt. In the foreground, a professional microphone with a black foam windscreen is partially visible, positioned as if he is speaking into it. The background is dark and out of focus.

I SURVIVED THE IMPOSSIBLE

M E R G E D
P O D C A S T

1

00:00:00,060 --> 00:00:03,780

they're like listen here's what's happened\h
you're likely never going to walk again you're\h\h

2

00:00:03,780 --> 00:00:08,880

never going to use your arms again and your flying\h
careers over and something inside me was like I'm\h\h

3

00:00:08,880 --> 00:00:13,320

just going to prove you guys wrong I think there's\h
so many steps you can take as an individual out\h\h

4

00:00:13,320 --> 00:00:18,660

there whatever your background and whatever your\h
injuries or ailments may be but you have to take\h\h

5

00:00:18,660 --> 00:00:24,240

it upon yourself and recognize there is no easy\h
solution there is no pill that you're going to\h\h

6

00:00:24,240 --> 00:00:28,560

take that's just going to magically fix you for\h
the rest of your life it's just not how it works\h\h

7

00:00:28,560 --> 00:00:33,300

you have to take it upon yourself to heal yourself\h
and you have to really want to heal yourself

8

00:00:36,660 --> 00:00:36,840

foreign

9

00:00:40,680 --> 00:00:49,500

I'm Ryan Graves today I'm joined by Kagan\h
smurfgill Kagan is a former U.S Navy fa-18\h\h

10

00:00:49,500 --> 00:00:56,100

Echo pilot in 2014 he sustained devastating\h
injuries from a high-speed ejection into\h\h

11

00:00:56,100 --> 00:01:00,480

the sound barrier surviving the fastest\h
ejection in the history of Naval Aviation\h\h

12

00:01:02,400 --> 00:01:07,680

after over a dozen surgeries and two years of\h
rehab he returned to Flying super Hornets today he\h\h

13

00:01:07,680 --> 00:01:13,560

is an ultra endurance athlete motivational speaker\h
veteran Advocate and he's completing his first\h\h

14

00:01:13,560 --> 00:01:18,540

book while raising a family he's on a mission\h
to heal mind body and soul through alternative\h\h

15

00:01:18,540 --> 00:01:24,780

modalities please be warned this episode contains\h
descriptions of severe physical trauma and may not\h\h

16

00:01:24,780 --> 00:01:33,120

be suitable for younger listeners and now Kagan\h
Gill I have with me today Keegan Gill Keegan uh\h\h

17

00:01:33,120 --> 00:01:39,600

we're gonna hear so much about your story former\h
F-18 pilot in foxtrots or Echoes uh Echoes awesome\h\h

18

00:01:39,600 --> 00:01:44,580

Echoes and you were flying off the coast of\h
Virginia Beach correct that's correct awesome\h\h

19

00:01:44,580 --> 00:01:49,140

well why don't you tell us a little bit about\h
um what Squadron with and and where you were\h\h

20

00:01:49,140 --> 00:01:56,760

in the Navy and a little bit about your story\h
absolutely um so I was stationed initially with\h\h

21

00:01:56,760 --> 00:02:04,020

vfa 143 the puking dogs out in as Oceana I think\h
we were there very similar times yeah I think so\h\h

22

00:02:04,800 --> 00:02:10,920

um as a J uh Jo there in the Squadron I'd been\h
around the Squadron for about eight months\h\h

23

00:02:10,920 --> 00:02:17,700

starting to get the hang of things a little bit\h
a lot to learn still um and I was about to go\h\h

24

00:02:17,700 --> 00:02:28,200

out on a flight uh is January 15 2014. and one of\h
the more senior jails in the Squadron basil came\h\h

25

00:02:28,200 --> 00:02:31,800

up to me before the flight and he's like you know\h
you've been here eight months but you just haven't\h\h

26

00:02:31,800 --> 00:02:38,820

done anything dumb enough yet to earn a call\h
sign so uh I think that jinxed me yeah another\h\h

27

00:02:38,820 --> 00:02:44,160

fun thing that morning fisty another jail in the\h
Squadron that joined about the same time as I he\h\h

28

00:02:45,060 --> 00:02:52,020

to keep Spirits light he put up on the Whiteboard\h
behind the sdo desk a big chart of all the white\h\h

29

00:02:52,020 --> 00:02:56,760

sharks and tiger sharks and all these big tag\h
sharks that were out swimming around in the ocean\h\h

30

00:02:56,760 --> 00:03:03,600

and there happened to be this 16 foot 3 500 pound\h
white shark named Mary Lee directly underneath the\h\h

31

00:03:03,600 --> 00:03:08,040

area we're going to be utilizing so that's that's\h
a nice little thing he said it would be a terrible\h\h

32

00:03:08,040 --> 00:03:13,140

day to eject because there's a giant white shark\h
that will gobble you right up and so we had a good\h\h

33

00:03:13,140 --> 00:03:18,540

laugh about that got ready for the flight it was\h
January and it had been a pretty unseasonably cold\h\h

34

00:03:18,540 --> 00:03:24,600

winter the water temperature at the buoy was\h
37 degrees Fahrenheit out so the water in the\h\h

35

00:03:24,600 --> 00:03:29,640

ocean where you would be where the shark would\h
be essentially yeah exactly so very cold water\h\h

36

00:03:29,640 --> 00:03:34,800

below freezing Air temps so we were wearing dry\h
suits for the day yeah yeah I remember those so\h\h

37

00:03:34,800 --> 00:03:39,060

they're very uncomfortable at least mine was did\h
you have your own or did you have to share one l\h\h

38

00:03:39,060 --> 00:03:44,520

was fortunate I I had my own but it was pretty\h
sweaty yes it's as gross as it sounds yeah\h\h

39

00:03:45,120 --> 00:03:49,680

um took off the initial part of the flight\h
we did some aerator refueling everything\h\h

40

00:03:49,680 --> 00:03:54,780

went smoothly and we ended up with some extra\h
Fuel and some extra time in the air space so\h\h

41

00:03:54,780 --> 00:04:01,680

we set up to do some bfm as you know like a\h
dog fighting set against 1v1 1v1 dog fighting\h\h

42

00:04:02,280 --> 00:04:08,040

um and it was kind of like stepping into the ring\h
with Mike Tyson I was fighting uh my Skipper that\h\h

43

00:04:08,040 --> 00:04:14,040

day so he'd been doing this for over 15 years he\h
was a Top Gun graduate really new as stuffed but\h\h

44

00:04:14,040 --> 00:04:19,620

as you know in the Navy that's how you train you\h
get your ass kicked yep we really don't do that\h\h

45

00:04:19,620 --> 00:04:24,300

much dog fighting uh before you get to what\h
we call the fleet you know the Squadron could\h\h

46

00:04:24,300 --> 00:04:28,740

be with for a while and so that's really where I\h
think you kind of really start to mix it up with\h\h

47

00:04:28,740 --> 00:04:33,420

people that are kind of off the Playbook so to\h
speak you know like just the no script it's just\h\h

48

00:04:33,420 --> 00:04:39,300

figuring it out so I was excited that was one of\h
my favorite things to do in Super Hornet you know\h\h

49

00:04:39,300 --> 00:04:44,340

it's probably what people think is like what\h
fighter pilots do is fighting other aircraft\h\h

50

00:04:44,340 --> 00:04:52,800

and I loved every a bit of it part art Farm part\h
part science but we set up in the area we did I\h\h

51

00:04:52,800 --> 00:04:58,800

think three or four sets and we hit Joker fuel\h
reset down to bingo which meant for the audience\h\h

52

00:04:58,800 --> 00:05:03,840

that we just had just enough fuel left for maybe\h
another little practice set of fight end of the\h\h

53

00:05:03,840 --> 00:05:08,400

flight pretty much one more into that flight so\h
we're kind of almost uh transiting our way out\h\h

54

00:05:08,400 --> 00:05:16,140

as we set up the pads uh scooter cars so we were\h
at twelve thousand five hundred feet uh 450 knots\h\h

55

00:05:16,140 --> 00:05:21,000

about a mile of beam okay so you're basically\h
lined up like this going pretty fast ready to\h\h

56

00:05:21,000 --> 00:05:27,300

set up so as pads are like you're you're starting\h
point exactly um and a skipper called three two\h\h

57

00:05:27,300 --> 00:05:32,940

one fights on WE pitched in at each other Skipper\h
went down so I matched him we came down to the\h\h

58

00:05:32,940 --> 00:05:39,120

merge I had just gotten my qualification with the\h
jehehics helmet which is uh for those watching\h\h

59

00:05:39,120 --> 00:05:45,540

it's basically a big bulging visor that allows\h
you to train your weapon systems and see all your\h\h

60

00:05:45,540 --> 00:05:51,720

flight data wherever you look very cool system\h
but just like any new piece of gear it takes a\h\h

61

00:05:51,720 --> 00:05:56,100

little bit of practice to integrate that so that
you're not thinking about the button pushing in

62

00:05:56,100 --> 00:06:02,040

in the the weight of it on your head so so I I was
still getting a little used to it I was focused in

63

00:06:02,040 --> 00:06:07,680

the merge on trying to get a radar acquisition
of my flight lead potentially get a shot off

64

00:06:09,420 --> 00:06:14,160

didn't didn't work out how I'd hope was a little
bit distracted at the merge and I didn't realize

65

00:06:14,160 --> 00:06:19,920

the air speed I had gotten up to um so it kind of
had your nose stuck down and you were accelerating

66

00:06:19,920 --> 00:06:24,060

more and more as you're approaching that merge
in just a few seconds from when we started a

67

00:06:24,060 --> 00:06:31,260

mile of beam to when we pitched in the jet rapidly
accelerated beyond what I had expected and I was

68

00:06:31,260 --> 00:06:36,540

already about 30 degrees nose low and partially
inverted at the merge so I opted to continue to

69

00:06:36,540 --> 00:06:41,340

roll inverted and pull the aircraft down in a
split ass maneuver which is a dive down towards

70

00:06:41,340 --> 00:06:48,180

the ocean and as I executed that I got to about
Bullseye nose low so pointed straight down and a

71

00:06:48,180 --> 00:06:54,780

feature on the aircraft called the G bucket kicked\h
in which was designed to prevent uh mild over\h\h

72

00:06:54,780 --> 00:07:00,060

stress of the Wings when you're in the transonic\h
flight region so about to break the sound so\h\h

73

00:07:00,060 --> 00:07:05,640

you're so fast you were already creeping up on\h
the sound barrier I was so was this like 650-ish\h\h

74

00:07:05,640 --> 00:07:12,420

knots at this point in the facility or nearby yeah\h
yeah and uh wow and as that kicked in the aircraft\h\h

75

00:07:12,420 --> 00:07:17,820

went from pulling a nice crisp seven and a half\h
G's and I could feel that weight say my head in\h\h

76

00:07:17,820 --> 00:07:24,240

my helmet weigh approximately 20 pounds multiply\h
that by almost eight so I have almost 160 pounds\h\h

77

00:07:24,240 --> 00:07:30,300

on my head as you know you feel like you can feel\h
that crushing it's an adult wait all right uh and\h\h

78

00:07:30,300 --> 00:07:34,800

I'm looking around and I can feel that and all\h
of a sudden I'm looking outside keeping an eye\h\h

79

00:07:34,800 --> 00:07:42,480

on my adversary and all of a sudden the jet\h
just eased up I could feel it settle which was\h\h

80

00:07:42,480 --> 00:07:48,540

you know the worst feeling at this point because\h
I'm pointed straight at the ocean my reaction was\h\h

81

00:07:48,540 --> 00:07:54,720

I pulled the throttle to idle I put out the speed
brake and it was too little too late and just a

82

00:07:54,720 --> 00:08:01,560

couple seconds later I was pointed 51 degrees
nose low going 695 miles per hour 0.95 Mach

83

00:08:02,760 --> 00:08:08,280

um and I pulled the ejection handle two seconds
before I impacted the ocean the ground Rush of the

84

00:08:08,280 --> 00:08:14,220

ocean coming up me was just so overwhelming that
it was my only chance so I assume the position

85

00:08:14,220 --> 00:08:21,600

pull the ejection handle a normal ejection
people get injured people uh have their spines

86

00:08:21,600 --> 00:08:26,820

compressed people get flail injuries this was
the fastest survived ejection in the history

87

00:08:26,820 --> 00:08:34,800

of the Navy so oh my gosh um coming out at that
speed was like hitting a wall with my body yeah

88

00:08:34,800 --> 00:08:43,200

it was essentially 10 times the force well 10
times uh at almost 700 miles per hour of like a

89

00:08:44,100 --> 00:08:50,100

cat one hurricane hitting my body so just extreme
wind Force if you ever stuck your arm out a car

90

00:08:50,100 --> 00:08:56,640

window going 70 miles per hour down the highway
you felt that force acting on your arm and that

91

00:08:56,640 --> 00:09:01,200

force of parasitic drag is exponentially stronger\h
so it would have been a hundred times that Force\h\h

92

00:09:01,200 --> 00:09:07,200

at 700 miles per hour and coming out into that\h
it uh in a split second it had ripped my helmet\h\h

93

00:09:07,200 --> 00:09:13,440

off smashed my head I broke my neck my left\h
shoulder both my upper arms my left forearm\h\h

94

00:09:13,440 --> 00:09:18,780

in multiple places this humorous bone ripped\h
through my brachial artery I did a variety of\h\h

95

00:09:18,780 --> 00:09:24,420

different nerve damage to my upper body my forearm\h
my steel toe boots on my legs were flailing around\h\h

96

00:09:24,420 --> 00:09:29,940

so violently that they bashed open my Tib fibs\h
and my lower legs so I had open leg fractures

97

00:09:33,000 --> 00:09:40,800

ah they were there's some sturdy boots that's\h
horrifying uh but uh so I was pretty bashed\h\h

98

00:09:40,800 --> 00:09:45,300

up the parachute opened just long enough\h
to keep me from dying on impact with the\h\h

99

00:09:45,300 --> 00:09:51,180

ocean and then I plunged into that icy\h
cold water I didn't awake I was in and\h\h

100

00:09:51,180 --> 00:09:55,560

out of Consciousness and I have a lot of\h
retrograde amnesia from it so I only can\h\h

101

00:09:55,560 --> 00:10:00,180

remember bits and pieces but we've been able to
recreate everything that happened through

102

00:10:00,180 --> 00:10:05,040

all the investigation that went into it the
flight data recorder the on-scene commanders

103

00:10:05,040 --> 00:10:09,900

that were there with the rescue effort the
SAR swimmer everything I've been able to Recon

104

00:10:10,740 --> 00:10:17,460

rebuild what happened yeah the story but man
just I can't imagine just the experience of

105

00:10:17,460 --> 00:10:22,440

hitting that wall coming out of the jet I
mean golly just being conscious and awake

106

00:10:22,440 --> 00:10:27,660

for that I can't even imagine um yeah
sorry please continue um so I don't

107

00:10:27,660 --> 00:10:32,760

don't remember actually impacting The Air
remember pulling the ejection handle and then

108

00:10:33,300 --> 00:10:40,500

after that things are in and out yeah quite a bit
yeah um but uh got just enough of the parachute

109

00:10:40,500 --> 00:10:46,020

to open that it kept me from impacting the
water so hard that I died and then very quickly

110

00:10:46,020 --> 00:10:51,060

that parachute that had just saved my life sunk
underneath the ocean current and was beginning to

111

00:10:51,060 --> 00:10:57,120

pull me under and this is out out in the Atlantic\h
Ocean in January and it's fairly rough seas and\h\h

112

00:10:57,120 --> 00:11:02,340

uh I started to basically be drowned alive and\h
if you've ever been held underwater when you\h\h

113

00:11:02,340 --> 00:11:07,800

desperately need a breath of air you know that\h
awful feeling I was inhaling a lot of salt water\h\h

114

00:11:08,760 --> 00:11:14,100

fortunately my lpu inflated so a little\h
life preserver around my neck gave me enough\h\h

115

00:11:14,100 --> 00:11:18,600

buoyancy that on occasion it would Bob me to the\h
surface so I could get a gulpit you couldn't swim\h\h

116

00:11:18,600 --> 00:11:23,220

I mean your arms are destroyed at this point\h
completely unusable both my arms and my legs\h\h

117

00:11:23,820 --> 00:11:28,680

um the sea Wars which is in our Riser that\h
connects to the parachute from our harness\h\h

118

00:11:28,680 --> 00:11:36,120

the the way that's supposed to work as you know\h
is uh when it gets into salt water it sets off\h\h

119

00:11:36,120 --> 00:11:40,560

a little explosive device and that disconnects\h
your parachute for you because of your bodies\h\h

120

00:11:40,560 --> 00:11:48,300

and injuries are so common in high speed ejections\h
or unconscious uh unfortunately one sea was fired\h\h

121

00:11:48,300 --> 00:11:53,700

but didn't disconnect the other sea Wars didn't\nh
even fire whatsoever so my parachute remained\nh\nh

122

00:11:53,700 --> 00:12:00,660

connected to me no ability to disconnect so it\nh
just took me for a ride fortunately uh my flight\nh\nh

123

00:12:00,660 --> 00:12:07,440

lead saw my parachute open he dropped a mark on\nh
my position coordinated on scene commander on the\nh\nh

124

00:12:07,440 --> 00:12:15,000

fumes that he had remaining in his fuel uh he got\nh
some other aircraft on scene and he spotted before\nh\nh

125

00:12:15,000 --> 00:12:20,400

he flew back to Oceana he spotted a fishing vessel\nh
that was about a mile from the position I was at\nh\nh

126

00:12:20,940 --> 00:12:28,620

and he turned up Maritime guard at button 16 and\nh
the aircraft tried to get him uh no response and\nh\nh

127

00:12:28,620 --> 00:12:33,540

so he got down really low and really fast and\nh
he thumped their bow so imagine a freaking Super\nh\nh

128

00:12:33,540 --> 00:12:39,120

Hornet flying over your boat at low level and got\nh
their attention they switched up to Maritime guard\nh\nh

129

00:12:39,120 --> 00:12:43,560

and he was able to guide them over my position\nh
past the lat long I was at that's incredible\nh\nh

130

00:12:43,560 --> 00:12:51,120

and so the fishing vessel was the first crap to\nh
show up they threw out a rope to me but I was so\nh\nh

131

00:12:51,120 --> 00:12:58,200

um so beat up and my arms were so unusable I\h
wasn't able to I wasn't able to grab it ended up\h\h

132

00:12:58,200 --> 00:13:06,120

just getting tangled in things and uh but at least\h
that boat gave a visual reference for where I was\h\h

133

00:13:06,120 --> 00:13:11,460

approximately because otherwise I mean I was just\h
a little tiny dark head bobbing around and I was\h\h

134

00:13:11,460 --> 00:13:16,200

getting pulled under so because it's just this\h
big parachute and all this water is filling up\h\h

135

00:13:16,200 --> 00:13:19,860

and that's why those explosives were there to\h
remove it so you don't get pulled down I mean\h\h

136

00:13:19,860 --> 00:13:25,440

this is a it's a pretty it's a pretty known thing\h
it's a it's a shame the equipment didn't work was\h\h

137

00:13:25,440 --> 00:13:29,520

the was the water so much that it so I mean gosh\h
you were underwater too so I was going to ask how\h\h

138

00:13:29,520 --> 00:13:32,940

big the waves were but really didn't matter you\h
know because you were coming down underneath them\h\h

139

00:13:32,940 --> 00:13:39,000

regardless huh yeah I would I would estimate\h
that they were in the four foot range but you\h\h

140

00:13:39,000 --> 00:13:43,500

know it's pretty disorganized and choppy out in\h
the middle of the ocean so it was just kind of\h\h

141

00:13:43,500 --> 00:13:50,160

like being in a washing machine yeah um the\h
beacon didn't function either so fortunately\h\h

142

00:13:50,880 --> 00:13:56,040

my Skipper was quick uh quick to think of getting\h
this boat over there otherwise I think I don't\h\h

143

00:13:56,040 --> 00:14:00,720

I don't think I would have made it yeah um I had\h
ejected so fast that my dry suit had shredded open\h\h

144

00:14:01,260 --> 00:14:07,380

so if you've ever felt 37 degree water it just\h
it's like gives you brain freeze and it feels\h\h

145

00:14:07,380 --> 00:14:13,620

like needles going into your skin it's so cold but\h
uh that cold water was actually helping to keep me\h\h

146

00:14:13,620 --> 00:14:19,140

from bleeding out so rapidly interesting and in\h
my mind you know I'm just getting drug underwater\h\h

147

00:14:19,140 --> 00:14:25,380

inhaling a lot of water and thinking any minute\h
Mary Lee's just going to come up and finish me off\h\h

148

00:14:25,380 --> 00:14:33,420

so you know it was like worst case scenario but uh\h
I hung in there and I was able to get up and get\h\h

149

00:14:33,420 --> 00:14:39,240

a breath of air occasionally enough to stay alive\h
did you know your Skipper was flying around trying\h\h

150

00:14:39,240 --> 00:14:46,380

to to help you out or yeah I was I was impurious\h
survival mode yeah just completely overwhelmed by\h\h

151

00:14:46,380 --> 00:14:54,240

being drug underwater um but eventually uh an h60\h
from a nearby aircraft carrier showed up they had\h\h

152

00:14:54,240 --> 00:14:59,160

been instructed to bring me back to the aircraft\h
carrier not realizing the extent of my injuries\h\h

153

00:14:59,160 --> 00:15:05,760

their rescue swimmer jumped in thinking I was\h
on the fishing vessel still and uh didn't get me\h\h

154

00:15:05,760 --> 00:15:10,620

still well you never you were never on the fishing\h
I wasn't but there was just uh I mean there was a\h\h

155

00:15:10,620 --> 00:15:15,120

hazrap just on the rescue effort because there\h
were so many different aircraft and vessels and\h\h

156

00:15:15,120 --> 00:15:20,640

different frequencies uh and nobody seemed to be\h
on the same page with the chaos of what was going\h\h

157

00:15:20,640 --> 00:15:29,640

down so that uh the first rescue swimmer swam past\h
my position fortunately another h60 had showed up\h\h

158

00:15:29,640 --> 00:15:36,960

and they saw the other rescue swimmer going to the\h
boat and fortunately the pilot of that helicopter\h\h

159

00:15:36,960 --> 00:15:41,220

spotted my little dark head as I had come to the\h
surface yeah and so they got over to my position\h\h

160

00:15:42,360 --> 00:15:49,440

their rescue swimmer Cheech the week prior in Navy\h
h-53 Sea Dragon had gone down in almost the same\h\h

161

00:15:49,440 --> 00:15:56,760

exact area and the policy at the time for the Navy\h
was anyone involved in an aircraft accident you're\h\h

162

00:15:56,760 --> 00:16:01,020

supposed to put on a backboard to lift them up\h
into the helicopter in case they have a spinal\h\h

163

00:16:01,020 --> 00:16:08,460

injury which was good a good thought but it took\h
so long for them to get the crew out of the water\h\h

164

00:16:08,460 --> 00:16:13,920

with that technique that some of the crew members\h
perish from hypothermia before they could ever get\h\h

165

00:16:13,920 --> 00:16:18,120

to the hospital that was just a week earlier and\h
so Cheech is coming off like the worst week of his\h\h

166

00:16:18,120 --> 00:16:24,060

life same rescue diver same same rescue swimmer\h
and he learned those lessons though from that and\h\h

167

00:16:24,060 --> 00:16:30,420

he said I'm not going to bother with the backboard\h
he jumped in he got down to my position he hooked\h\h

168

00:16:30,420 --> 00:16:35,640

into my titanium d-ring to keep uh keep holding\h
me and he said the force of that parachute just\h\h

169

00:16:35,640 --> 00:16:42,120

drug us underwater and for me you know that it was\h
always drugs him as well as a rescue swimmer he\h\h

170

00:16:42,120 --> 00:16:48,360

couldn't fight the force of that parachute pulling\h
both of us um and you know that was a terrifying\h\h

171

00:16:48,360 --> 00:16:52,920

feeling and even for him he had he had been in the pool doing rescues and getting drug under

172

00:16:52,920 --> 00:16:57,300

when you could see the bottom of the pool but he said when he was able to see just this dark blue

173

00:16:57,300 --> 00:17:04,080

abyss below us and that all the Paracord Tangled he you know he said it was pretty overwhelming but

174

00:17:04,080 --> 00:17:10,320

his training kicked in he uh he was able to cut me free of all the Paracord and quickly got me

175

00:17:10,320 --> 00:17:15,300

up into the helicopter riding up the helicopter line we were just spinning around we're getting

176

00:17:15,300 --> 00:17:21,900

blasted with prop wash and then they got me into the helicopter and headed towards Norfolk general

177

00:17:21,900 --> 00:17:28,740

which had a level one trauma unit and on the ride there they said I was in and out of Consciousness

178

00:17:28,740 --> 00:17:34,020

the whole way they were fighting to keep me alive uh doing sternum rubs and everything they could

179

00:17:34,800 --> 00:17:42,300

to keep me with them I was dangerously cold from hypothermia they got me to Norfolk general put

180

00:17:42,300 --> 00:17:48,780

me on a gurney I was conscious sitting up trying to get up and and move around and I was so out of

181

00:17:48,780 --> 00:17:55,440

it at that point I was just screaming help help\h
help and uh they got me into the hospital they\h\h

182

00:17:55,440 --> 00:18:00,000

treated me for severe hypothermia my core body\h
temperature by the time I got to the hospital\h\h

183

00:18:01,020 --> 00:18:06,240

I was already warmed up in the helicopter\h
for the 45-ish minute ride that it took\h\h

184

00:18:06,240 --> 00:18:12,000

to get there in my Core Body temp when I got to\h
the hospital was 87 degrees Fahrenheit which is\h\h

185

00:18:12,540 --> 00:18:19,140

at 86 Fahrenheit you're supposed to be just a\h
goner for sure but that hypothermia actually kept\h\h

186

00:18:19,140 --> 00:18:23,940

me from bleeding to death they said had my dry\h
suit function properly I would have perished way\h\h

187

00:18:23,940 --> 00:18:30,480

before anybody even showed up so incredible a wild\h
twist I was treated for organ failure my kidneys\h\h

188

00:18:30,480 --> 00:18:34,320

were just so overwhelmed with all the trauma and\h
the proteins and everything were breaking down\h\h

189

00:18:34,320 --> 00:18:40,680

and my muscles that had to be put on dialysis and\h
have blood transfusions I had lost a lot of blood\h\h

190

00:18:42,000 --> 00:18:48,480

um they treated me with a bear hugger to warm my\h
body had me on fluids all the stuff going on to\h\h

191

00:18:48,480 --> 00:18:53,580

try to get me stable enough so they could take
me to surgery once stable enough they brought

192

00:18:53,580 --> 00:19:00,900

me in and induced a coma and I spent the next
week in an induced coma as I underwent over a

193

00:19:00,900 --> 00:19:08,040

dozen surgeries they fortunately had the surgical
Dream Team on uh the day I showed up some of the

194

00:19:08,040 --> 00:19:11,940

best surgeons in the country were all working
together that same day incredible and uh they

195

00:19:11,940 --> 00:19:17,520

were able to put Humpty Dumpty together again uh
they uh they put uh first they did fasciotomies

196

00:19:17,520 --> 00:19:24,360

on all my extremities which is opening up the
compartments of the muscles uh to prevent them

197

00:19:24,360 --> 00:19:30,120

from constricting the blood flow there's so much
trauma and swelling that the swelling was cutting

198

00:19:30,120 --> 00:19:35,640

off the circulation to all my extremities
and historically that would be when you would

199

00:19:35,640 --> 00:19:41,460

amputate a person's limb because the damage is
so bad but with this fasciotomy procedure they're

200

00:19:41,460 --> 00:19:46,440

able to open those compartments up and relieve the
pressure and help blood to start circulating again

201

00:19:47,940 --> 00:19:55,080

had that on all four extremities uh they\h
rebuilt my skeleton with titanium rods screws\h\h

202

00:19:55,080 --> 00:20:00,840

steel plates I've seen the movie about this I\h
think yeah yeah Wolverine yeah yeah so that's\h\h

203

00:20:00,840 --> 00:20:06,240

what my x-ray looks like that's why the beard\h
I get it now it's all making sense uh and uh\h\h

204

00:20:06,240 --> 00:20:12,000

so they put me back together after a week in\h
that induced coma and all those surgeries uh\h\h

205

00:20:12,000 --> 00:20:18,960

there was a lot of doubt that I was going to\h
come to people you know my mom and dad are\h\h

206

00:20:18,960 --> 00:20:23,160

there a lot of my Squadron mates are all\h
sitting around in the waiting room and uh\h\h

207

00:20:24,420 --> 00:20:32,340

someone basil I think was the guy who's like ah\h
he's a scrappy [h__\h] he'll be fine and they took\h\h

208

00:20:32,340 --> 00:20:37,860

Scrappy [h__\h] and they shortened it to Smurf uh\h
and the politically correct cover story for my\h\h

209

00:20:37,860 --> 00:20:44,460

call sign is I'm a short guy that turned blue from\h
hypothermia it's uh now you know the true story uh\h\h

210

00:20:44,460 --> 00:20:52,740

anyways well earned as well yeah so man let's just\h
stop for a minute so one you probably won't even\h\h

211

00:20:52,740 --> 00:20:59,760

be alive right now if that rescue swimmer perhaps\h
not just a week earlier learned some very valuable\h\h

212

00:20:59,760 --> 00:21:05,040

lessons and I can't even imagine how motivated he\h
must have been to get you back on that helicopter\h\h

213

00:21:05,040 --> 00:21:10,740

once he got down there have you spoken with\h
him I have the uh the whole well most of the\h\h

214

00:21:10,740 --> 00:21:15,840

rescue crew that was in that helicopter showed\h
up at the hospital once I was conscious again\h\h

215

00:21:17,700 --> 00:21:24,360

but I I still keep in touch with Cheech and some\h
of the crew yeah and uh you know every time I talk\h\h

216

00:21:24,360 --> 00:21:30,420

to him like man I owe you my life you know he's\h
actually a sniper now in the Army oh really yeah\h\h

217

00:21:30,420 --> 00:21:35,280

all right she said I think he's deployed right\h
now too yeah well I don't know if you know this\h\h

218

00:21:35,280 --> 00:21:41,640

but uh one of my Squadron mates in in vfa 11 and\h
this was at the time that this was going down l\h\h

219

00:21:41,640 --> 00:21:47,820

remember when you ejected um my wife remembers it\h
most spouses probably in the area do because when\h\h

220

00:21:47,820 --> 00:21:53,220

something like that happens uh a jet goes down\h
it's happened multiple times while I was out there\h\h

221

00:21:54,180 --> 00:21:59,100

um essentially all the spouses are waiting\h
to hear something but it's a policy within\h\h

222

00:21:59,100 --> 00:22:05,100

the Navy not to allow people to essentially reach\h
out and communicate to their spouses that they're\h\h

223

00:22:05,100 --> 00:22:11,940

okay because the last thing we want to do is\h
have um you know the one spouse without a phone\h\h

224

00:22:11,940 --> 00:22:20,400

call wondering what's going on so it's not the\h
way we want to do things um in in in this case\h\h

225

00:22:20,400 --> 00:22:26,520

you know with with um all the people there was\h
your family able to kind of get that information\h\h

226

00:22:28,080 --> 00:22:32,820

um in a comfortable way or did the system\h
work in that manner uh I think largely it\h\h

227

00:22:32,820 --> 00:22:38,280

was comfortable for my family um my Skipper\h
called and my mom answered the phone and\h\h

228

00:22:39,000 --> 00:22:44,700

he's like I I think he said something like he\h
he fell out of the aircraft trying to explain\h\h

229

00:22:44,700 --> 00:22:49,260

to my mom in a way she'd maybe understand so my\h
mom's like Oh you fell out of the aircraft he's\h\h

230

00:22:49,260 --> 00:22:54,300

in the hospital and in her head the way she\h
interpreted it was I was like climbing up the\h\h

231

00:22:54,300 --> 00:22:59,580

ladder getting in for a flight and I like fell\h
off onto the tarmac and so it was probably a\h\h

232

00:22:59,580 --> 00:23:03,300

good thing that that's what she thought as she\h
was flying out to see me with uh with my dad\h\h

233

00:23:03,960 --> 00:23:10,380

because once she got there and then realized\h
how injured I was I think it was pretty hard for\h\h

234

00:23:11,340 --> 00:23:19,140

but kind of a funny story of how she found\h
out in a way um but yeah they my family\h\h

235

00:23:20,040 --> 00:23:25,680

my Squadron mates were all just standing\h
by hoping I'd come out of it and uh\h\h

236

00:23:26,460 --> 00:23:32,220

another wink went by I wasn't in an induced coma\h
anymore they were trying to get me up but I just\h\h

237

00:23:32,220 --> 00:23:39,360

was completely out and after two weeks the lights\h
just started to come back on I remember just\h\h

238

00:23:39,360 --> 00:23:45,900

darkness and being able to hear familiar voices\h
and I opened my eyes and there's this room filled\h\h

239

00:23:45,900 --> 00:23:52,920

with my friends and family and you know I largely\h
recognize everybody but I was completely confused\h\h

240

00:23:52,920 --> 00:23:59,460

of where I was at and I had no recollection\h
of what had happened no memory and you know\h\h

241

00:23:59,460 --> 00:24:05,460

the doctors came in and the staff and they want\h
to just kind of tell it to me straight I think\h\h

242

00:24:05,460 --> 00:24:10,560

and they're like listen here's what's happened\h
you're likely never going to walk again you're\h\h

243

00:24:10,560 --> 00:24:16,140

never going to use your arms again and your flying\h
career is over and something inside me was like\h\h

244

00:24:16,140 --> 00:24:21,120

I'm just going to prove you guys wrong already\h
at that point huh yeah there was just this fire\h\h

245

00:24:21,120 --> 00:24:26,100

like okay you want to tell me I can't do something\h
that just makes me want to do it even more and uh\h\h

246

00:24:27,120 --> 00:24:31,860

so I I was in a in a gurney uh they\h
had already taken out the ventilator\h\h

247

00:24:32,640 --> 00:24:39,840

uh and my whole body was wrapped in this plastic\h
wrap and all the fasciotomies were stitched and\h\h

248

00:24:39,840 --> 00:24:44,940

stapled up and I just had I was covered in\h
stitches and Staples I remember trying to\h\h

249

00:24:44,940 --> 00:24:51,300

move and I thought the wool blanket over my body\h
was made out of lead or it was tied down because I\h\h

250

00:24:51,300 --> 00:24:55,440

couldn't budget but it was because I was paralyzed\h
I thought you weren't strong enough yeah wow\h\h

251

00:24:55,440 --> 00:25:03,240

I was just so weak um and I spent the next two weeks uh transitioning to the ICU step down

252

00:25:03,240 --> 00:25:10,140

uh slowly was able to like start scooting around on the bed I got stable enough they were able to

253

00:25:10,140 --> 00:25:16,500

transport me to Richmond VA poly Trauma Center in Richmond Virginia at the VA Hospital there

254

00:25:16,500 --> 00:25:23,100

and I started undergoing every kind of therapy out there basically uh I was doing speech therapy

255

00:25:23,100 --> 00:25:29,460

vision therapy occupational therapy Physical Therapy kinesio therapy recreational therapy

256

00:25:29,460 --> 00:25:34,500

was it just like a full-time job it was wow basically every day all day was just

257

00:25:35,640 --> 00:25:42,060

just relearning how to do everything between the drugs and the head injury I was really out of it

258

00:25:42,060 --> 00:25:48,540

I was easily confused like I couldn't find my way around on my own I was I was still in a wheelchair

259

00:25:48,540 --> 00:25:53,160

getting wheeled around by people were there more surgeries at this point or were you finished up

260

00:25:53,820 --> 00:26:00,900

um at that moment I was done for a little bit um I eventually did have more surgeries but uh that

261

00:26:00,900 --> 00:26:07,800

was largely the the rehabilitation I did there\h
was largely therapy based and I addressed every\h\h

262

00:26:07,800 --> 00:26:13,260

day was just kind of like what can I do today \h
can't walk I can't use my arms I can't remember\h\h

263

00:26:13,260 --> 00:26:19,980

my way back to my room but like maybe I can give\h
it my all and so every therapy session whatever it\h\h

264

00:26:19,980 --> 00:26:26,220

was I just like poured my soul into it and little\h
by little I started to regain a little function\h\h

265

00:26:27,120 --> 00:26:34,260

um re-learned how to walk on a walker my arms\h
still didn't work and eventually my pinky and my\h\h

266

00:26:34,260 --> 00:26:41,220

ring finger on my left hand started to work and so\h
I first one I relearned how to brush my teeth how\h\h

267

00:26:41,220 --> 00:26:46,380

to do everything with those two fingers and then\h
one day this hand just started kind of tingling\h\h

268

00:26:46,380 --> 00:26:51,780

and little by little it came back so you're moving\h
your hands pretty good right now what how long ago\h\h

269

00:26:51,780 --> 00:26:59,400

is is this period in your life right now it's been\h
nine years now almost nine years incredible um \h\h

270

00:26:59,400 --> 00:27:08,160

had I was very fortunate to receive a lot of good\h
treatment and care and uh anyways I eventually got\h\h

271

00:27:08,160 --> 00:27:12,240

to the point I could walk around in a on a walker\h
I started to be able to do things with my hands\h\h

272

00:27:12,240 --> 00:27:19,380

again and I was transferred uh I got to go back to\h
Virginia Beach and do Outpatient Therapy back to\h\h

273

00:27:19,380 --> 00:27:23,400

where you where you came from right you moved back\h
to your old house at this point is this your first\h\h

274

00:27:23,400 --> 00:27:30,000

time kind of going back home in a sense it wasn't\h
and so my Squadron made fisty and my friend Vinnie\h\h

275

00:27:30,000 --> 00:27:35,160

they took me in and I started Living with those\h
guys as I did all this Rehabilitation awesome\h\h

276

00:27:35,940 --> 00:27:42,180

um I did another surgery that went terribly\h
wrong at Naval Hospital Portsmouth how so\h\h

277

00:27:42,180 --> 00:27:48,000

um the surgery itself went well but they ended up\h
after the surgery I think they thought somebody\h\h

278

00:27:48,000 --> 00:27:53,400

was coming to pick me up who and there wasn't\h
anybody coming to pick me up in my hospital gowns\h\h

279

00:27:53,400 --> 00:27:58,500

still just coming out of anesthesia they wheeled\h
me in a wheelchair down to the lobby to like the\h\h

280

00:27:58,500 --> 00:28:05,160

exit to have somebody get me and as I came to out\h
of the anesthesia I was you know my ass is hanging\h\h

281

00:28:05,160 --> 00:28:10,800

out the back of the wheelchair and there's nobody\h
around and I'm like what's going on eventually a\h\h

282

00:28:10,800 --> 00:28:15,540

nurse came up and go it was like uh is somebody\h
picking you up and I was like I don't think so\h\h

283

00:28:15,540 --> 00:28:20,280

unbelievable she was visibly like I can't believe\h
somebody just leave you here that's incredible yes\h\h

284

00:28:20,280 --> 00:28:27,600

I can't believe it either they took me back to a\h
room and there was just like a graveyard crew on\h\h

285

00:28:27,600 --> 00:28:32,220

and they had I think they had called in these two\h
staff members to basically take care of me one was\h\h

286

00:28:32,220 --> 00:28:38,580

a brand new corpsman uh who I think must have just\h
gotten out of training who had no idea what he was\h\h

287

00:28:38,580 --> 00:28:43,800

doing and was in way over his head and an instant\h
nurse who also had no idea what was going on\h\h

288

00:28:44,640 --> 00:28:53,280

they put in a new IV port and instead of hitting\h
a vein it went under and sub-cued and so that\h\h

289

00:28:53,280 --> 00:28:57,480

fluid instead of getting into my system was\h
just swelling up like a water balloon on my\h\h

290

00:28:57,480 --> 00:29:02,820

forearm oh my goodness and I kept telling him hey\h
I think this is sub-cued at that point I was very\h\h

291

00:29:02,820 --> 00:29:10,140

familiar with IVs and they're like oh no it's
okay it looks fine and I think they just didn't

292

00:29:10,140 --> 00:29:15,180

know so this is a this is a explain this hospital
again that you're at I mean this is like this is

293

00:29:15,180 --> 00:29:20,820

Naval Hospital Portsmouth wow which is actually
one of the main training hospitals for the Navy

294

00:29:20,820 --> 00:29:26,520

and so they do a lot of training but this day in
particular they didn't seem to be anybody with

295

00:29:26,520 --> 00:29:30,420

any oversight of what was I want to think your
case would be one that you'd want to train on

296

00:29:31,200 --> 00:29:39,600

hey yeah I really wish there was some a grown-up
in the room uh there but uh as the time went on

297

00:29:39,600 --> 00:29:46,260

I was getting very dehydrated the anesthesia
was wearing off and I started to feel the pain

298

00:29:46,260 --> 00:29:52,320

from the surgery which was relatively minor but
when it started to get really bad I was starting

299

00:29:52,320 --> 00:29:58,500

to go through withdrawals from this Cornucopia
of different pharmaceutical medications I was

300

00:29:58,500 --> 00:30:04,740

on at that point I was on gabapentin at 2 400
milligrams a day so very high doses of the nerve

301

00:30:04,740 --> 00:30:12,720

pain medication oxycodone Oxycontin amitriptyline
Tramadol Trazodone and the list goes on and all

302

00:30:12,720 --> 00:30:18,300

the medications I had to take to counteract the
side effects of those and I basically as I'm

303

00:30:18,300 --> 00:30:23,700

stuck in this room had gone cold turkey off all of
those at once and started to suffer the withdrawal

304

00:30:23,700 --> 00:30:27,540

symptoms it was just a normal thing though right
or were you supposed to be getting I was supposed

305

00:30:27,540 --> 00:30:34,560

to be getting my medication but uh the two folks
in charge of taking care of me didn't know how

306

00:30:34,560 --> 00:30:40,200

to get to the pharmacy didn't know what to get
me I was explaining my dosage and everything I

307

00:30:40,200 --> 00:30:44,340

needed and said hey there's a pharmacy one floor
below but no below it so you guys can go there

308

00:30:44,340 --> 00:30:50,640

but they just they didn't know what to do um and
so that's incredible at this point they had me

309

00:30:50,640 --> 00:30:56,400

try to pee into a urinal and when I went in the
urinal eventually after a lot of straining it

310

00:30:56,400 --> 00:31:03,360

was like a dark brown liquid that came out so I
was in severe dehydration probably kidney failure

311

00:31:03,900 --> 00:31:09,060
and just miserable and it was just\h
getting worse and worse and worse and\h\h

312
00:31:09,900 --> 00:31:14,400
they said okay well if you want to be able to go\h
home we need you to be able to walk down to the\h\h

313
00:31:14,400 --> 00:31:19,920
end of the hallway on your Walker to demonstrate\h
that you can be mobile so I had just been out of\h\h

314
00:31:19,920 --> 00:31:25,080
surgery a few hours ago but I wanted to get the\h
hell out of there and so I grabbed the Walker\h\h

315
00:31:25,740 --> 00:31:32,520
and with what little strength I had left \h
remember standing up and I could hear crunching in\h\h

316
00:31:32,520 --> 00:31:40,080
my leg of probably that titanium rod settling in\h
there and it was very painful but what was worse\h\h

317
00:31:40,080 --> 00:31:44,880
was the combination of the dehydration making me\h
extremely nauseous and then all the withdrawals\h\h

318
00:31:44,880 --> 00:31:50,220
hitting me but I hobbled my way down to the end\h
of this hallway and when I got to the end of the\h\h

319
00:31:50,220 --> 00:31:56,400
hallway I stumbled into a room which I think was\h
a physical therapy clinic and there were a couple\h\h

320
00:31:56,400 --> 00:32:01,380
I think one guy was a physical therapist and then\h
maybe a physical therapist assistant were in there\h\h

321

00:32:01,380 --> 00:32:06,000

and they're like what is this guy doing in there\h
and by the time I got in there I had collapsed\h\h

322

00:32:06,000 --> 00:32:12,180

onto the chair and I was dry heaving into a into\h
a garbage can and they're like what is going on\h\h

323

00:32:13,140 --> 00:32:18,900

um I think they called one of my friends uh\h
Amanda Johnson who's a physical therapist\h\h

324

00:32:20,160 --> 00:32:25,860

um and she ended up coming in with her husband\h
uh Luke Smuggler who was in my Squadron as a\h\h

325

00:32:25,860 --> 00:32:32,640

department head and they were there witnessing me\h
go through just awful withdrawals I was screaming\h\h

326

00:32:32,640 --> 00:32:39,720

I was yelling as those waves of pain and misery\h
would hit me and I don't know how many hours had\h\h

327

00:32:39,720 --> 00:32:47,160

gone by but eventually a doctor showed up and they\h
put me on a patient-controlled uh drip of Dilaudid\h\h

328

00:32:47,160 --> 00:32:54,120

and so by hitting that little button it gave\h
me some relief I mean were you were you kind of\h\h

329

00:32:55,020 --> 00:33:01,500

like fully aware of how shitty your situation was\h
at this point or was it just kind of yeah I knew\h\h

330

00:33:01,500 --> 00:33:07,200

it was there was something terribly wrong and you\h
know Amanda who was very familiar with Portsmouth\h\h

331

00:33:07,200 --> 00:33:13,860

I think she had worked there previously she was
appalled by what was going on but uh eventually

332

00:33:13,860 --> 00:33:19,680

they got me my medications um and the next day
I got to leave but it was a pretty miserable

333

00:33:19,680 --> 00:33:25,200

experience once I got back to Virginia Beach uh
Amanda actually in her off time when she wasn't

334

00:33:25,200 --> 00:33:29,580

working in the physical therapy clinic kind
of took me under her wing and started doing

335

00:33:29,580 --> 00:33:35,820

uh some training with me she showed up outside
of the VA system right outside of the the Navy

336

00:33:35,820 --> 00:33:40,140

hospital and everything and she showed up the
first day of training and she had an analog

337

00:33:40,140 --> 00:33:45,360

bottle and it said patience tears on the side
had a king at this point and she's like I don't

338

00:33:45,360 --> 00:33:49,440

want to ever see you walking with that cane again
she like snatched it away and she proceeded to

339

00:33:50,160 --> 00:33:55,440

basically beat me into shape and I loved every bit
of it you know I had been an athlete growing up

340

00:33:55,440 --> 00:34:01,260

and kind of liked that you know physical well sure
but you got iron rods and you're like now or you

341

00:34:01,260 --> 00:34:06,480

know Titanium or what have you um was it was that
just was that a struggle every day I mean it must

342

00:34:06,480 --> 00:34:11,700

been physically challenging painful but also just
like the lack of muscle builds up oh yeah yeah the

343

00:34:11,700 --> 00:34:18,420

between the all the nerve atrophy and damage in
the in the surgeries and I was also my whole body

344

00:34:18,420 --> 00:34:23,640

was so messed up from all the medications uh being
on all these antibiotics that were required for

345

00:34:23,640 --> 00:34:30,060

the surgeries had just destroyed my gut microbiome
my whole body was out of whack my hormones were

346

00:34:30,060 --> 00:34:38,100

jacked up I was a mess but I just kept every day
keeping up the training and the therapy and uh my

347

00:34:38,100 --> 00:34:44,220

friends started taking me out surfing like I could
barely paddle my arms and my buddy uh Spicoli took

348

00:34:44,220 --> 00:34:51,120

me out in Virginia no life jacket I was wearing
a wetsuit which gave me some buoyancy but but uh

349

00:34:51,120 --> 00:34:55,740

I was getting beat up by the waves and held under
and I popped up and I remember just laughing like

350

00:34:55,740 --> 00:35:00,840

this is funny right didn't kind of give you any
no I was kind of concerned that maybe it would but

351

00:35:01,380 --> 00:35:08,820

um I really loved it uh that was your first time\h
back in yeah and I got back Spicoli took me out\h\h

352

00:35:08,820 --> 00:35:16,200

downhill mountain biking I could barely use\h
my my left hand to use the front brake and uh\h\h

353

00:35:16,200 --> 00:35:21,060

but he got me back out doing stuff my friends were\h
taking me out and and the Strike Fighter Community\h\h

354

00:35:21,060 --> 00:35:28,020

was so welcoming of me awesome um being back and\h
keeping at it and I had to go through a fee nap\h\h

355

00:35:28,020 --> 00:35:35,340

which is the field Navy Naval aviator evaluation\h
board because I had just crashed a 89 million\h\h

356

00:35:35,340 --> 00:35:43,560

dollar aircraft and um that was a pretty tough\h
process they really tear apart your life but uh it\h\h

357

00:35:43,560 --> 00:35:49,200

turned in my favor and they granted me permission\h
to go back and fly super Hornets if I could get\h\h

358

00:35:49,200 --> 00:35:54,480

through my Rehabilitation which was still a big if\h
at that point so you're still you're still healing\h\h

359

00:35:54,480 --> 00:36:00,540

up but you've kind of gone through the potential\h
disciplinary process to say hey like it was just\h\h

360

00:36:00,540 --> 00:36:07,140

something that you did wrong in some sense or was\h
this an accumulation of of you know bad things\h\h

361

00:36:07,140 --> 00:36:11,820

that happened and they're like hey you're good\h
to go should you get medically up yeah you know\h\h

362

00:36:11,820 --> 00:36:15,720

they looked in and they interviewed everybody\h
in my Squadron and they looked at the case of\h\h

363

00:36:15,720 --> 00:36:22,980

what had happened you know that g bucket has bit\h
many aviators far more experienced than me uh both\h\h

364

00:36:22,980 --> 00:36:29,700

before and after my ejection and I also you know\h
people in my Squadron like me I was a good pilot\h\h

365

00:36:29,700 --> 00:36:34,560

it wasn't like I was uh on The Struggle Bus before\h
this happened because I think that could have gone\h\h

366

00:36:34,560 --> 00:36:37,800

very different yeah just because that you know\h
something bad happened you go through this Pro\h\h

367

00:36:37,800 --> 00:36:42,960

you have to go through process no matter you know\h
whether everyone thought you'd save the day or not\h\h

368

00:36:42,960 --> 00:36:47,640

this is just kind of a normal view process so it\h
sounds like the process worked it did and did that\h\h

369

00:36:47,640 --> 00:36:52,380

feel you know did that feel like the work that\h
you had put in was leading on the right path or\h\h

370

00:36:52,380 --> 00:36:57,840

did it just kind of further motivate you to keep\h
going on the physical therapy or do you have some\h\h

371

00:36:57,840 --> 00:37:02,580

questions of whether you wanted to get back in the cockpit I really I really wanted to get back

372

00:37:02,580 --> 00:37:07,320

on the horse the whole time that was what that was like my driving force is I want to get back

373

00:37:07,320 --> 00:37:13,860

on the horse and and get back at this I don't want this to be the end of that chapter in my life and

374

00:37:14,580 --> 00:37:20,040

um you know I went to the either you do this informal board with some uh with a lieutenant

375

00:37:20,040 --> 00:37:25,440

and a lieutenant commander who really interview you and then I went to a formal board where you

376

00:37:25,440 --> 00:37:31,140

walk in and it's a board room of aviators on both sides of this big long table I was

377

00:37:31,140 --> 00:37:37,380

dressed in my summer whites and uh the Admiral came in and he sat down and have everybody sit

378

00:37:37,380 --> 00:37:43,740

down and you just the only question he asked me was Lieutenant Gill are you fearless and I said

379

00:37:44,640 --> 00:37:50,400

sir I don't remember a lot from the ejection but I'm certain what little cushion there is

380

00:37:50,400 --> 00:37:54,780

on the ejection seat was puckered up inside me real good when that happened he didn't

381

00:37:54,780 --> 00:37:59,460

smile he didn't say no I didn't even crack\h
a grin he just got up and walked out of the\h\h

382

00:37:59,460 --> 00:38:03,900

room and then uh so were you thinking at that\h
point were you like I was like oh I don't know

383

00:38:06,240 --> 00:38:10,260

but uh it ended up going well and uh he\h
granted me permission to go back and fly\h\h

384

00:38:11,460 --> 00:38:17,520

which was more motivation and after two years\h
of that Rehabilitation I was able to max out the\h\h

385

00:38:17,520 --> 00:38:23,880

PRT again I was the PRT what's that so the\h
physical Readiness test for the Navy which\h\h

386

00:38:23,880 --> 00:38:28,080

is basically uh you got to do push-ups\h
sit-ups and then run a mile and a half\h\h

387

00:38:28,740 --> 00:38:33,840

um so you're walking around you're running you're\h
doing push-ups I mean I had gone from hobbling\h\h

388

00:38:33,840 --> 00:38:39,720

around on a cane to basically being able to outrun\h
nearly everybody in my command wow and uh that's\h\h

389

00:38:39,720 --> 00:38:46,020

incredible and it was just such a huge relief once\h
uh they gave me the permission to go back to fly\h\h

390

00:38:46,800 --> 00:38:52,260

um I was actually at the wing recovering\h
uh what's the wing so this is the Strike\h\h

391

00:38:52,260 --> 00:38:58,920

Fighter Wing Atlantic which uh is sort of an
administrative role in as Oceana okay it's a

392

00:38:58,920 --> 00:39:04,020

common command for people to go to while you're
recovering from injury or if you have issues

393

00:39:04,860 --> 00:39:09,840

that take you out of the cockpit temporarily
got it thank you and so I was doing a variety of

394

00:39:09,840 --> 00:39:17,160

ground jobs as I was doing my Rehabilitation okay
and I got an email uh from a variety of different

395

00:39:17,160 --> 00:39:22,920

people in different fighter squadrons on base and
they were saying that they were spotting uh these

396

00:39:22,920 --> 00:39:27,540

craft out in the working areas they didn't know
what they were but you know some of the people

397

00:39:27,540 --> 00:39:33,060

were like we need to load up some aim9xes and
go out and shoot these things down and other

398

00:39:33,060 --> 00:39:37,920

people you know were concerned with just the
safety of flight issue so this is right at the

399

00:39:37,920 --> 00:39:42,180

coast of Virginia Beach this is the same working
areas this is right where I had our experience

400

00:39:42,180 --> 00:39:49,380

okay very interesting same time period too yes
same time period this would have been um 2015

401

00:39:49,380 --> 00:39:57,480

to 2016. yep and uh so at first I thought maybe\h
people were just pulling my leg and I responded\h\h

402

00:39:57,480 --> 00:40:03,360

to the email something like Strike Fighter Wing\h
Atlantic X-Files Fox Mulder signing off uh in the\h\h

403

00:40:03,360 --> 00:40:08,460

email response and then someone came back it was\h
like uh we need to move this conversation over\h\h

404

00:40:08,460 --> 00:40:13,440

to sipper which is the secure internet oh so that\h
happened pretty quick so I realized oh this isn't\h\h

405

00:40:13,440 --> 00:40:19,080

this isn't a joke like these aren't just people\h
screwing with me uh and very shortly thereafter\h\h

406

00:40:19,080 --> 00:40:25,380

uh I classed up and started retraining the F-18\h
and I had been back for a couple months flying\h\h

407

00:40:25,380 --> 00:40:33,180

and I was out doing a I can't remember if we were\h
doing an air intercept during the initial phases or\h\h

408

00:40:33,180 --> 00:40:39,360

if it was during fighter phase doing more advanced\h
air-to-air presentations but I was in the wingman\h\h

409

00:40:39,360 --> 00:40:43,980

position flying out to the area and as we got\h
out to the area my flight lead was picking up\h\h

410

00:40:43,980 --> 00:40:50,160

all these contacts all around the airspace that\h
we were supposed to have to us that day and I was\h\h

411

00:40:50,160 --> 00:40:55,980

primarily focused on flying formation being the
wingman and not hitting my lead but while I while

412

00:40:55,980 --> 00:41:00,720

I could I was using the radar and I was able to
pick one of these up take an acquisition and then

413

00:41:00,720 --> 00:41:06,120

I train my flear to it and it was it was fairly
far away I don't remember the exact range nor

414

00:41:06,120 --> 00:41:11,700

could I probably share that anyways but it looked
just like a sphere it was a very grainy picture

415

00:41:12,420 --> 00:41:19,680

um oh you were on TV mode yep and uh and I think I
cycled through some of the IR modes as well but uh

416

00:41:19,680 --> 00:41:24,060

well do you remember if there was any IR energy
that came off of it you know I don't remember

417

00:41:24,060 --> 00:41:31,440

clearly I did the white hot and the black hot
and it I could still see it in that mode and

418

00:41:31,440 --> 00:41:35,280

don't remember which one I could make it out the
best but all I could tell is it was this little

419

00:41:35,280 --> 00:41:42,780

sphere out there and we ended up having to cancel
that event that day because there were so many of

420

00:41:42,780 --> 00:41:49,980

these out throughout the working areas and when
we got back I logged sharp at the sdo desk and

421

00:41:49,980 --> 00:41:55,260

can't remember the name of the reporting that you\h
did at the end of sharp it might have been part\h\h

422

00:41:55,260 --> 00:42:01,260

of sharp ASAP ASAP yeah and there's a there's a\h
commercial Aviation ASAP but it's not that just\h\h

423

00:42:01,260 --> 00:42:05,820

for people listening there's a the military as\h
their own program with the same name and they're\h\h

424

00:42:05,820 --> 00:42:11,700

not necessarily connected so and uh and so I\h
I filled out a form with that largely saying\h\h

425

00:42:11,700 --> 00:42:15,840

congratulations to our adversaries for discovering\h
a way to disrupt Naval Aviation training\h\h

426

00:42:16,920 --> 00:42:22,980

um again not knowing what it was uh and and kind\h
of making light of it but uh a lot of other people\h\h

427

00:42:22,980 --> 00:42:26,940

were seeing these out there and they were they\h
were becoming a safety of a flight issue yeah\h\h

428

00:42:28,140 --> 00:42:33,240

but uh did you ever see one with your own\h
eyes I never saw one with my own eyes flying\h\h

429

00:42:33,960 --> 00:42:40,140

um while I was living in Virginia Beach I had\h
an encounter during my recovery I was living\h\h

430

00:42:40,140 --> 00:42:46,920

out on the inlet kind of in a wooded area with\h
uh my buddy fisty and Vinnie and I was up on the\h\h

431

00:42:46,920 --> 00:42:51,720

Second Story floor of the house that we were in and in the middle of the night one night

432

00:42:51,720 --> 00:42:56,520

I woke up to use the restroom and there was a bright light coming in through the window

433

00:42:56,520 --> 00:43:00,900

and it looked like maybe somebody was out in the parking or on the driveway with their brights on

434

00:43:01,740 --> 00:43:08,340

so I looked out the window and up above way off the ground was what looked like a set of Stadium

435

00:43:08,340 --> 00:43:15,720

lights it was maybe eight circular Lights by five or six circular lights in a rectangular

436

00:43:15,720 --> 00:43:19,800

pattern was sitting right outside the window just shining in on like above the tree line

437

00:43:19,800 --> 00:43:27,660

it was below the trees it looked like it was very close to the house really um and I just got this

438

00:43:27,660 --> 00:43:34,200

overwhelming sense of everything was okay I don't think I even went to the restroom I just got back

439

00:43:34,200 --> 00:43:39,660

in my bed and fell asleep wow and I woke up the next morning and I kept wondering was that a dream

440

00:43:40,260 --> 00:43:46,320

but it was so crisp in my memory and remains in my memory that way that I don't think it was a dream

441

00:43:46,320 --> 00:43:51,240

because I feel a lot of my dreams will fade over\h
time whereas this is something that was so vivid\h\h

442

00:43:52,500 --> 00:43:57,420

um it really stuck with me that's interesting\h
I don't remember anything else I assume yeah\h\h

443

00:43:57,420 --> 00:44:03,060

no or is that is that the only time that's\h
occurred that was the only time you know\h\h

444

00:44:03,060 --> 00:44:08,100

did you what did that you know did you what\h
do you take away from that you know I mean\h\h

445

00:44:08,100 --> 00:44:13,560

do you feel like that was some type\h
of experience with with this unknown\h\h

446

00:44:13,560 --> 00:44:17,280

phenomenon do you do you feel like there's\h
room for some other explanation in there

447

00:44:18,120 --> 00:44:27,060

I don't know what it was um it the overwhelming\h
sense I had from it was it was something very\h\h

448

00:44:27,060 --> 00:44:34,500

positive and something caring that wasn't\h
their hostel as a hostel uh or hostile intent\h\h

449

00:44:36,060 --> 00:44:39,240

um but I I have no idea what it\h
is I don't I don't know if it's\h\h

450

00:44:40,320 --> 00:44:48,060

our technology if it's alien technology if it's\h
trans-dimensional if it's I don't know what it is\h\h

451

00:44:49,260 --> 00:44:58,200

but it was uh pretty exciting to to have that\h
experience and see that and and now meeting you\h\h

452

00:44:58,200 --> 00:45:05,400

guys with a lot of similar experiences um yeah\h
and so it's been eye-opening yeah not just you\h\h

453

00:45:05,400 --> 00:45:09,120

know we've been interviewing a number of pilots\h
and we were all fortunate enough to hang out\h\h

454

00:45:09,120 --> 00:45:14,280

before we're taping this uh and it's incredible\h
just listen to the stories everyone telling about\h\h

455

00:45:15,180 --> 00:45:20,340

um just how common this is and and how everyone\h
has different experiences with this that are all\h\h

456

00:45:20,340 --> 00:45:26,400

you know seem somewhat similar although different\h
it's you know I encourage other people that have\h\h

457

00:45:26,400 --> 00:45:31,080

these experience to you know reach out and to\h
have these conversations because I think it's a\h\h

458

00:45:31,080 --> 00:45:37,080

lot more common than than we realize and it seems\h
to be on the increase uh of people seeing this\h\h

459

00:45:37,080 --> 00:45:41,760

sort of phenomenon that's what we're seeing you\h
know we spoke with a commercial pilot yesterday\h\h

460

00:45:41,760 --> 00:45:48,120

who has been tracking this for about the last\h
eight months and there has been a market increase\h\h

461

00:45:48,120 --> 00:45:54,360

not only in his uh perception but basically the
general Erica that he's been talking with we've

462

00:45:54,360 --> 00:45:59,220

been uh I've been I've been reached out to by a
number of these pilots and I've been communicating

463

00:45:59,220 --> 00:46:02,460

with them and they've expressed to me that hey
we're all talking about this in the air now we're

464

00:46:02,460 --> 00:46:06,660

we're looking around we're not afraid to initially
talk about it amongst the pilots to some degree

465

00:46:07,680 --> 00:46:14,100

um but whether they were talking about it or not
before they were definitely looking up right these

466

00:46:14,100 --> 00:46:19,020

guys have 30 000 Plus hours and you know they
know the difference between a satellite and an

467

00:46:19,020 --> 00:46:25,440

aircraft and so yeah so funny story uh if you will
there's a gentleman that was in a squadron with

468

00:46:25,440 --> 00:46:33,180

me he was a Jo Junior officer about maybe like
four to six months ahead of me and his wife was

469

00:46:33,180 --> 00:46:41,640

a helicopter pilot and she was on a a flight or
she was on duty and she was called To Go rescue

470

00:46:43,140 --> 00:46:46,380

um the helicopter went down
she was on that flight as well

471

00:46:47,700 --> 00:46:53,220

um diver went in and then and just as you\h
said you know they learned some lessons\h\h

472

00:46:54,060 --> 00:46:59,760

um and then when your objection occurred uh my\h
buddy's wife was on the helicopter that went out\h\h

473

00:46:59,760 --> 00:47:05,760

and picked you up as well so as you know it's\h
a very small community so I'm I'm really happy\h\h

474

00:47:05,760 --> 00:47:09,840

to see that everyone was able to support you you\h
know throughout the Air Wing during your recovery\h\h

475

00:47:09,840 --> 00:47:16,020

and the support was massive yeah she might have\h
been the one that spotted me even um I know one\h\h

476

00:47:16,020 --> 00:47:20,640

of the pilots spotted me oh really that was the\h
first that's how they got it wow that's incredible\h\h

477

00:47:21,720 --> 00:47:27,120

there's a there's a strange thing that\h
happens with you know emergencies in the Navy\h\h

478

00:47:28,320 --> 00:47:32,940

um the spouses really go\h
through quite the stress when\h\h

479

00:47:32,940 --> 00:47:38,940

um there is an accident because they kind of have\h
to wait for the process to evolve and it's usually\h\h

480

00:47:38,940 --> 00:47:46,320

no one's communicating to their spouses so that\h
no one has left behind there was an incredible uh\h\h

481

00:47:46,320 --> 00:47:51,420

incident that occurred in Virginia Beach during the time I believe you were there when it occurred

482

00:47:52,620 --> 00:48:00,060

um I believe it was in 2014 but I'll have to check that date a squadron mate of mine we were

483

00:48:00,060 --> 00:48:05,940

in training at this point we were in the rag at 106. and we went to take off to do a air-to-air

484

00:48:05,940 --> 00:48:13,020

training Mission and it was a wreck so it was pretty basic just 2v2 coming at each other and

485

00:48:13,020 --> 00:48:18,960

two aircraft took off the ones we were going to uh simulate our battle against and then I

486

00:48:18,960 --> 00:48:24,540

took off and then there was one aircraft that was intending to come after us my wingman essentially

487

00:48:25,200 --> 00:48:28,740

and so we went out to the area and the other aircraft never showed up

488

00:48:30,300 --> 00:48:34,500

we didn't really think much of it that happens often the aircraft will break or generator will

489

00:48:34,500 --> 00:48:42,180

go down or a million other things as you know and um so no big deal um I made it we did our set we

490

00:48:42,180 --> 00:48:48,300

did the best we could with the three aircraft and then we checked out of the area and instead of

491

00:48:48,300 --> 00:48:56,100

routing us back to NES Oceana they were routed\h
this to NAS um Norfolk to the north which is\h\h

492

00:48:57,120 --> 00:49:01,740

um it's a base where there's some big Wing\h
aircraft and there's it's where all the ships dock\h\h

493

00:49:01,740 --> 00:49:07,560

and whatnot common divert out of Oceania exactly\h
something's going on at Oceana exactly so you know\h\h

494

00:49:07,560 --> 00:49:13,800

God I was such an idiot and we were flying back\h
and I made some stupid joke to my instructor l\h\h

495

00:49:13,800 --> 00:49:18,660

was like well I don't see any smoke so at least\h
they didn't crash I guess I just wasn't looking\h\h

496

00:49:18,660 --> 00:49:26,760

in the right spot so uh we went back to Norfolk\h
parked the Jet and uh walked inside the FBO and\h\h

497

00:49:26,760 --> 00:49:32,220

there was a bunch of other f-18s there and that's\h
when we knew something was you know not great and\h\h

498

00:49:32,220 --> 00:49:40,260

um we saw on the TV we saw of course now the\h
smoke and and whatnot so good job Ryan but\h\h

499

00:49:40,260 --> 00:49:46,740

there was an entire apartment building I believe\h
four or five stories that was golfed in flames and\h\h

500

00:49:47,520 --> 00:49:52,920

at first I didn't know that it was a jet crash\h
I just saw all the fire and I couldn't even see\h\h

501

00:49:52,920 --> 00:49:59,940

any parts because the jet was just gone for the\h
most part um and you know we're like oh boy you\h\h

502

00:49:59,940 --> 00:50:03,660

know we end up seeing at some point that it was\h
106 and of course people everyone's checking the\h\h

503

00:50:03,660 --> 00:50:08,340

schedule and it turns out it was guys you know our\h
wingman that was going to join us on that mission\h\h

504

00:50:09,840 --> 00:50:13,200

um crazy story they took off and they had\h\h

505

00:50:13,860 --> 00:50:19,020

um essentially what was the result of one engine\h
failure compounded with a problem with the other\h\h

506

00:50:19,020 --> 00:50:26,160

other engine at the same time couldn't hold the\h
altitude and the it was it a Delta right it was\h\h

507

00:50:26,160 --> 00:50:33,600

one I believe it was yep sort of uh underpowered\h
two-seat Legacy Hornets yeah they are there's you\h\h

508

00:50:33,600 --> 00:50:37,920

know a great debate within Naval Aviation about\h
you know should they put the gear up should they\h\h

509

00:50:37,920 --> 00:50:42,000

put it down can they maintain level you know\h
there's so many Monday morning quarterbacks that\h\h

510

00:50:42,000 --> 00:50:47,460

go on with that in fact at the time they actually\h
had us try to fly in the Sim after it happened to\h\h

511

00:50:47,460 --> 00:50:52,740

see what we would do and and you know how far we\h
could make it and if we could have maintained what\h\h

512

00:50:52,740 --> 00:51:01,620

we call Wings level it was a really common uh\h
occurrence in EP Sims after that yeah yeah so\h\h

513

00:51:01,620 --> 00:51:06,900

you know they actually ended up they were able\h
to punch their Center Line tank off before they\h\h

514

00:51:06,900 --> 00:51:12,600

ejected I believe it hit the highway so there's\h
NES Oceana and then there's the ocean over here\h\h

515

00:51:12,600 --> 00:51:16,560

and you essentially just take off and then fly\h
right over the ocean but there's a highway in\h\h

516

00:51:16,560 --> 00:51:22,440

between that and they were coming down over the\h
highway when they punched the tank off and it\h\h

517

00:51:22,440 --> 00:51:27,300

fell onto the road didn't hit anyone as far as\h
I know so like Miracle number one as they say\h\h

518

00:51:27,300 --> 00:51:34,560

a full tank of gas and then they punched out I\h
think it was like 40 or 60 feet when the weapon\h\h

519

00:51:34,560 --> 00:51:39,900

system officer in the back actually pulled the\h
handle and that's way way too low I mean you\h\h

520

00:51:39,900 --> 00:51:45,720

essentially have to be Wings level but their their\h
shoots I don't think really inflated at all that\h\h

521

00:51:45,720 --> 00:51:51,360

the weapon system and officer in the back goes
out first and his shoot mostly inflate and he

522

00:51:51,360 --> 00:51:55,680
came down and he was like conscious and whatnot
uh the pilot was basically just trying to fly

523

00:51:55,680 --> 00:51:58,620
all the way down and he you know I even talked to
him he's like I probably would have just I would

524

00:51:58,620 --> 00:52:01,440
have flown that right into the dirt you know
like I wouldn't have ejected I would have been

525

00:52:01,440 --> 00:52:05,580
trying to save that the whole time it just never
occurred to him you know and the instructor in the

526

00:52:05,580 --> 00:52:08,940
back the weapon assistant officers basically
want to just saved his life by punching out

527

00:52:09,480 --> 00:52:15,660
he he doesn't remember uh punching out um it was
probably about 40 feet for him and like 60 feet

528

00:52:15,660 --> 00:52:21,420
for the backseater his parachute got snagged in
the tree so he just woke up dangling in a tree

529

00:52:21,420 --> 00:52:27,240
next to a burning apartment building and his first
thought was I just I just killed maybe 150 people

530

00:52:28,560 --> 00:52:33,960
um he was mortified I remember seeing the
pictures where they were just like in tears

531

00:52:33,960 --> 00:52:39,900

just confused at the at the scene you know I mean\h
I can't imagine flying an aircraft like that and\h\h

532

00:52:39,900 --> 00:52:44,220

you're just you know you're in the zone you're in\h
complete control of everything you know up until\h\h

533

00:52:44,220 --> 00:52:49,860

the moment you're not and you're not expecting it\h
and it must be just an incredible shock to just go\h\h

534

00:52:49,860 --> 00:52:55,560

off for a flight with your buddies and literally\h
seconds later you're waking up in someone's lawn\h\h

535

00:52:55,560 --> 00:53:01,560

potentially you know next to a burning building \h
mean thank God your rejection at least as it might\h\h

536

00:53:01,560 --> 00:53:05,280

have saved your life at least it was over water\h
you only had to worry about your own aircraft\h\h

537

00:53:06,360 --> 00:53:08,700

um your own you know your own damage if you will\h\h

538

00:53:10,080 --> 00:53:14,940

um and this was actually occurring on uh Good\h
Friday believe it or not when this happened\h\h

539

00:53:16,080 --> 00:53:21,360

um but for whatever reason on that day uh every\h
single person was out of that building except for\h\h

540

00:53:21,360 --> 00:53:27,300

one person's cat and that was the only fatality\h
of that crash it's almost unbelievable but yeah\h\h

541

00:53:27,300 --> 00:53:37,020

pretty incredible yeah after he had recovered from\h

his injuries he was in my my first class going\h\h

542

00:53:37,020 --> 00:53:42,660

through vfa 106. so I became friends with the\h
pilot yeah I flew with that wizo as an instructor\h\h

543

00:53:42,660 --> 00:53:49,920

um but pretty incredible that no one was harmed\h
in that I mean he he took some some injuries for\h\h

544

00:53:49,920 --> 00:53:57,000

sure but he's back back to the fleet and he\h
was a successful uh yeah he went to the fleet\h\h

545

00:53:57,000 --> 00:54:01,380

and he ended up in uh Meridian Mississippi as an\h
instructor pilot at the same time I was there so\h\h

546

00:54:02,280 --> 00:54:05,640

um essentially we went for a flight together and\h
he ended up punching out and I didn't see him\h\h

547

00:54:05,640 --> 00:54:11,580

again for uh seven years or so when we both ended\h
up as instructor pilots in Meridian it's like oh\h\h

548

00:54:11,580 --> 00:54:20,400

hey dude remember that day welcome back so yeah\h
just a crazy job comes with the territory I guess\h\h

549

00:54:21,600 --> 00:54:24,240

and you you kind of put it\h
behind in the back of your mind\h\h

550

00:54:25,140 --> 00:54:30,660

you know that something like that could happen to\h
you compartmentalize that you have to but then fly\h\h

551

00:54:30,660 --> 00:54:35,340

scared like that you know sometimes it comes up\h

and gets right in your face and a reminder how\h\h

552

00:54:35,340 --> 00:54:41,400

serious that job is and did you have any sense of\h
just like how the how fast it all happened like\h\h

553

00:54:41,400 --> 00:54:47,460

like that transition from like in control to what\h
was really but you just thought I mean did were\h\h

554

00:54:47,460 --> 00:54:53,640

you waking up and it was confusion or or was it\h
fear as you went through the process in a sense so\h\h

555

00:54:54,900 --> 00:55:03,540

um my memory is spotty throughout but I vividly\h
remember the sinking feeling in my stomach as I\h\h

556

00:55:03,540 --> 00:55:10,800

felt the g-force ease off of me so once once you\h
ejected and you're like no as as I'm in this dive\h\h

557

00:55:10,800 --> 00:55:16,740

Bullseye knows low and that g limiter function\h
kicks in from the G bucket as I hit the transonic\h\h

558

00:55:16,740 --> 00:55:22,560

flight regime right before I break the speed of\h
sound I could feel that ease in the pole and that\h\h

559

00:55:22,560 --> 00:55:28,140

was a terrifying feeling to be pointed and have\h
the stick all the way in my lap commanding this\h\h

560

00:55:28,140 --> 00:55:34,440

thing to turn as hard as it can and now it's not\h
and in the few seconds that I had between then and\h\h

561

00:55:34,440 --> 00:55:41,520

when I punched out it was just this overwhelming\h

feel of discomfort and tear and I remember the\h\h

562

00:55:41,520 --> 00:55:49,020

rush of the ocean coming up at me and just being\h
like oh my God but I responded appropriately\h\h

563

00:55:49,860 --> 00:55:54,240

and it was I managed to just pull the\h
ejection handle but it was I mean there\h\h

564

00:55:54,240 --> 00:56:00,000

was no other option at the point uh I had\h
reached uh do you ever dream about that I do\h\h

565

00:56:00,960 --> 00:56:07,860

um for a long time I've dealt with sleep issues\h
related to flashbacks and night tears with it\h\h

566

00:56:07,860 --> 00:56:14,340

I get little clips of being in the ocean and the\h
emotions I was experiencing as I was being drowned\h\h

567

00:56:14,340 --> 00:56:20,760

alive the fear of the shark that was I knew was in\h
the world what if you were feeling fearing that at\h\h

568

00:56:20,760 --> 00:56:25,140

the time that was like a emotion that came through\h
I thought they came it was just absolute dread\h\h

569

00:56:25,740 --> 00:56:32,760

um in the pit of my stomach that I'm not coming\h
out of this I mean between just my body just\h\h

570

00:56:32,760 --> 00:56:40,080

being completely useless the The Sting of the\h
ocean and the Brain Freeze and just how did you\h\h

571

00:56:40,080 --> 00:56:43,980

even breathe I mean I understand you're going to\h

the water a lot on your body I mean like is every\h\h

572

00:56:43,980 --> 00:56:49,080

breath like a struggle to stay alive or did you\h
get into like this pattern where you're like \h\h

573

00:56:49,080 --> 00:56:55,380

could do this for a bit I mean you know I I have\h
it in in such little clips of that memory I don't\h\h

574

00:56:55,380 --> 00:57:02,760

I don't recall exactly if I had gotten into a\h
pattern but I have vivid memories of that feeling\h\h

575

00:57:02,760 --> 00:57:08,580

of inhaling salt water while being underwater\h
with not thinking I was gonna get another breath\h\h

576

00:57:08,580 --> 00:57:14,820

getting to the surface and coughing and getting a\h
sip of air and then being pulled right back under\h\h

577

00:57:16,200 --> 00:57:21,900

um I had this great fear that I knew I was injured\h
and likely bleeding and you know there's all the\h\h

578

00:57:21,900 --> 00:57:27,960

talk of you know sharks they smell your blood\h
I learned after the fact that sharks actually\h\h

579

00:57:27,960 --> 00:57:32,520

are very repelled by the smell of human blood\h
where they'll smell the fish blood and yeah\h\h

580

00:57:32,520 --> 00:57:40,560

but they smell our blood and it's like uh the\h
slop it you know in the chow hall when someone\h\h

581

00:57:40,560 --> 00:57:45,600

reheated some old lentil soup or something\h

shark's like nah I'm not that hungry what\h\h

582

00:57:45,600 --> 00:57:51,480

about your dye pack so we we fly with this this\h
pack that should open up and then it leaves this\h\h

583

00:57:51,480 --> 00:57:57,720

colorful stream in the water so that people\h
can help rescue did that go off at all it's uh\h\h

584

00:57:57,720 --> 00:58:03,480

a lot of the gear was I ejected so fast a lot\h
of that gear shredded off my vest in the initial\h\h

585

00:58:03,480 --> 00:58:09,360

ejection and went who knows where I don't know for\h
certain if that die pack was still attached to me\h\h

586

00:58:09,360 --> 00:58:15,780

when I went in the ocean and if it deployed but I\h
was in the water long enough if it did Deploy on\h\h

587

00:58:15,780 --> 00:58:21,300

its own because I had no ability to activate\h
it if it somehow managed to activate itself\h\h

588

00:58:22,560 --> 00:58:28,860

um by the time anybody saw me there was there was\h
no die so that likely had dissipated if it was\h\h

589

00:58:28,860 --> 00:58:33,900

there at all did you did you expect to actually\h
get rescued I mean was that the expectation\h\h

590

00:58:34,500 --> 00:58:41,880

I mean I was so in and out of it I just I was just\h
focused on getting a breath of air and that's it\h\h

591

00:58:41,880 --> 00:58:48,780

just and and I think I got to a point in where my\h

brain just shut down and I have this retrograde\h\h

592

00:58:48,780 --> 00:58:54,960

amnesia which is where my brain is protecting\h
me from these extremely traumatic memories and\h\h

593

00:58:54,960 --> 00:59:00,240

while I get little clips of them I don't have\h
a linear memory from like the ejection all the\h\h

594

00:59:00,240 --> 00:59:06,360

way through being picked up just these little\h
snapshots in Remembering those emotions and uh\h\h

595

00:59:06,900 --> 00:59:12,840

tear of it and then by the time they\h
picked me up though I was just so out of it\h\h

596

00:59:13,380 --> 00:59:19,380

um I must have been in shock and severely\h
hypothermic and a lot of blood loss and\h\h

597

00:59:19,380 --> 00:59:25,860

at that point my Consciousness is just the\h
tapes were off you know which is probably a\h\h

598

00:59:25,860 --> 00:59:32,220

good thing there's a chance that as time goes on\h
some of these memories may continue to come up\h\h

599

00:59:33,540 --> 00:59:40,200

do want them to and part of me is frustrated that\h
I can't remember everything but at the same time\h\h

600

00:59:40,200 --> 00:59:47,280

knowing the emotions that have come with some of\h
the clips that I have gotten I'm I'm kind of happy\h\h

601

00:59:47,280 --> 00:59:54,300

that maybe maybe that stuff can just stay buried\h

somewhere in my mind and not surface so you know\h\h

602

00:59:55,560 --> 01:00:00,540

the brain is very sensitive your body would beat\h
the [h__\h] uh I have to assume you know we talk\h\h

603

01:00:00,540 --> 01:00:05,700

about memory and all that we want to talk about\h
perhaps you know your your mental recovery as\h\h

604

01:00:05,700 --> 01:00:13,080

well and perhaps the damage yeah I was you know\h
they they sent me down to Nami in Pensacola I\h\h

605

01:00:13,080 --> 01:00:19,920

had to speak to multiple psychologists uh Nami is\h
basic I forget what the acronym stands for it's\h\h

606

01:00:19,920 --> 01:00:25,440

the aeromedical institute for the military it's\h
basically the flight dogs the flight docks that\h\h

607

01:00:25,440 --> 01:00:30,840

are in charge of issuing waivers and assessing\h
people for their Fitness yeah you got to get\h\h

608

01:00:30,840 --> 01:00:35,580

through that it's the it was the headquarters for\h
that which uh there's a common thing called the\h\h

609

01:00:35,580 --> 01:00:41,340

Nami whammy for people going into the military you\h
you can sign up and you can join and you can show\h\h

610

01:00:41,340 --> 01:00:47,220

up at OCS and you can be through that process and\h
then get the Nami whammy it's happened to some of\h\h

611

01:00:47,220 --> 01:00:55,500

my friends and uh sorry sorry about your dream but\h

uh we just discovered this and so that was pretty\h\h

612

01:00:55,500 --> 01:01:01,560

strenuous and and I was really put under a\h
microscope in all my mental function cognitive\h\h

613

01:01:01,560 --> 01:01:06,000

abilities and after a couple days of being\h
interviewed by these independent psychologists\h\h

614

01:01:06,000 --> 01:01:11,340

that kind of collaborated after the fact they both\h
came back and said we believe that you still have\h\h

615

01:01:12,000 --> 01:01:17,520

the the attitude and the aptitude to be a pilot\h
should you be able to recover from your other\h\h

616

01:01:17,520 --> 01:01:24,660

injuries um I did a variety of neurological\h
testing as well in my first battery of tests\h\h

617

01:01:25,200 --> 01:01:31,200

um I was on a massive amount of these medications\h
combined with a fresh brain injury and and I\h\h

618

01:01:31,200 --> 01:01:36,240

really struggled to do very simple and I scored\h
pretty low on a lot of weight and so this is\h\h

619

01:01:36,240 --> 01:01:42,060

this is um you've been cleared of wrongdoing in\h
the flight right you've had your feed nap board\h\h

620

01:01:42,060 --> 01:01:47,820

right so now it's okay I'm I'm physically in a\h
position you know your medical doctor is signed\h\h

621

01:01:47,820 --> 01:01:53,880

off on your ability to essentially return to some\h

Duty and now you're going to your the aviation\h\h

622

01:01:53,880 --> 01:01:58,500

specialist doctors and saying okay put me back\h
through the ringer so that I can get back in a\h\h

623

01:01:58,500 --> 01:02:05,700

cockpit at this point right right and and it was a\h
very complex yes process but so and then you still\h\h

624

01:02:05,700 --> 01:02:14,280

have to yeah get trained back up but that that\h
check down there at the um at Nami um it took\h\h

625

01:02:14,280 --> 01:02:19,020

two days and they had a hoverboard review but they\h
said at the end of it you're good to go right they\h\h

626

01:02:19,020 --> 01:02:22,620

did and so these what about these memory issues\h
you talked about now that was before or after\h\h

627

01:02:23,520 --> 01:02:29,340

so I had the memory issues prior and after okay\h
but you're still clear you're good to go and those\h\h

628

01:02:29,340 --> 01:02:33,840

guys were still fine there was uh you know there\h
was a massive amount of support from the medical\h\h

629

01:02:33,840 --> 01:02:39,780

community at Oceana um this massive support from\h
the community to get me back and everybody knew\h\h

630

01:02:39,780 --> 01:02:45,540

how badly I wanted to get back and so there were\h
there were a lot I had a lot of help getting the\h\h

631

01:02:45,540 --> 01:02:52,980

medical waivers required and an issue with the\h

TBI is prior to going into the military we don't\h\h

632

01:02:52,980 --> 01:03:01,860

take a baseline test we don't take we don't take a\h
thorough neurological evaluation the way that you\h\h

633

01:03:01,860 --> 01:03:08,160

get it evaluated so they only had this picture\h
after the accident so they didn't really have a\h\h

634

01:03:08,160 --> 01:03:16,080

baseline after I had gotten off the medications\h
I went back and retested and my scores improved\h\h

635

01:03:16,080 --> 01:03:20,460

dramatically from where I was initially after\h
the crash and I think that was enough for them\h\h

636

01:03:20,460 --> 01:03:27,600

to issue a lot of the waivers that I had I mean I\h
had to have waivers for all sorts of the injuries\h\h

637

01:03:27,600 --> 01:03:32,160

that I had so they came off the meds that you were\h
on and came out of your body and they said yep the\h\h

638

01:03:32,160 --> 01:03:38,400

things are looking good yeah and and I think I\h
I kind of proved myself both at the wing I was\h\h

639

01:03:38,400 --> 01:03:45,720

you know doing a lot of different jobs I was very\h
busy and involved there and doing well and then I\h\h

640

01:03:45,720 --> 01:03:51,900

also physically was we would go to command PT and\h
I was you know I was a freaking fortunate I was a\h\h

641

01:03:51,900 --> 01:03:57,720

PT stud and I could just run circles around a lot\h

of the people there and I know the Commodore was\h\h

642

01:03:57,720 --> 01:04:01,380

just like in awe like I can't that would be so\h
motivating for everyone to just see you doing\h\h

643

01:04:01,380 --> 01:04:06,840

that I mean yeah I mean my my scars and everything\h
were still So Fresh So in PT gear I just had these\h\h

644

01:04:06,840 --> 01:04:14,580

bright red lines and everything but uh you know\h
I I was doing well and I was mentally back and\h\h

645

01:04:14,580 --> 01:04:21,780

I felt strong and I had so much like yourself \h
did yeah I did and um when I got back to the to\h\h

646

01:04:21,780 --> 01:04:28,140

the reg or the FRS at vfa 106 I mean I I was\h
crushing it man like I was doing really well\h\h

647

01:04:28,920 --> 01:04:33,360

like the Sim instructors and the instructors\h
both were just like so welcoming to have me\h\h

648

01:04:33,360 --> 01:04:39,960

back awesome and it really built my confidence\h
back quickly um I did have a couple little\h\h

649

01:04:40,500 --> 01:04:50,160

mental lapses while flying one time in a carrier\h
qualification simulator I flew was literally the\h\h

650

01:04:50,160 --> 01:04:54,900

Iso's like that's the best pass I've ever seen\h
anybody do in the simulator and the next time\h\h

651

01:04:54,900 --> 01:05:02,820

around it was like I had this mental lapse for a\h

second and I almost I busted through my rat out so\h\h

652

01:05:02,820 --> 01:05:07,920

I had somehow zoned out just for a few seconds to\h
the point where you know I did something without\h\h

653

01:05:07,920 --> 01:05:12,360

the rat out being there I could have potentially\h
impacted the ocean so yeah you're right out as\h\h

654

01:05:12,360 --> 01:05:16,140

a radar altimeter it's basically a radar at the\h
bottom aircraft tells you how high you are and we\h\h

655

01:05:16,140 --> 01:05:22,260

set these alarms so that if we accidentally start\h
descending through it oh hey I'm descending and\h\h

656

01:05:22,260 --> 01:05:28,500

so that was in the back of my mind was concerning\h
but largely my mental function felt strong okay\h\h

657

01:05:28,500 --> 01:05:36,360

and so I completed uh the rag I returned to\h
Flying I was assigned vfa 136 out in Lemoore\h\h

658

01:05:36,360 --> 01:05:45,360

California and which 136 136 The Nighthawks um I\h
cruise with them yeah yeah 20 uh 2012 and 20. okay\h\h

659

01:05:45,360 --> 01:05:49,980

that was when they were still in Oceana they kind\h
of got them they switched over they had to send a\h\h

660

01:05:49,980 --> 01:05:55,020

squadron from Oceania out to Lamar and they got a\h
short straw I guess we were supposed to go vfa 11\h\h

661

01:05:55,020 --> 01:06:00,480

was supposed to go to the West Coast and they\h

changed it up anyways um but I was back I was\h\h

662

01:06:00,480 --> 01:06:06,900

largely feeling good and little by little maybe\h
it was the accumulative stress of just Squadron\h\h

663

01:06:06,900 --> 01:06:12,540

lifestyle where you're working pretty dang\h
hard and and not always getting the best sleep\h\h

664

01:06:13,200 --> 01:06:20,280

I started to have more things that I was noticing\h
from memory lapses issues concentrating I used to\h\h

665

01:06:20,280 --> 01:06:25,620

be able to go sit down and read chapters and study\h
and retain the information and I would sit down\h\h

666

01:06:26,280 --> 01:06:30,660

and I noticed that it was a lot more\h
difficult for me to retain new information wow\h\h

667

01:06:31,380 --> 01:06:37,140

um I kind of pushed through it and I'd been at\h
the Squadron for a few months and we went on a\h\h

668

01:06:37,140 --> 01:06:45,960

weapons Detachment to Tyndall Air Force Base to\h
do some live fire exercises uh on some drones my\h\h

669

01:06:45,960 --> 01:06:52,920

went out and I got to do an A9 mic fire which\h
is a heat-seeking missile and it was against a\h\h

670

01:06:52,920 --> 01:06:59,700

drone and I fired a missile at this drone and then\h
afterwards broke off and got to go do some dact or\h\h

671

01:06:59,700 --> 01:07:05,940

dissimilar air combat training against F-22 Raptor\h

from the uh the Hawaiian Raptors Squadron happened\h\h

672

01:07:05,940 --> 01:07:11,880

to be uh there at the same time as us which that's\h
got to be like a pretty pretty good gig to have\h\h

673

01:07:11,880 --> 01:07:17,760

flying Raptors out of Oahu yeah that's as good as\h
it goes um but uh afterwards you know fought this\h\h

674

01:07:17,760 --> 01:07:22,680

uh another lieutenant or I guess he was a captain\h
since he was Air Force but a couple Jos out\h\h

675

01:07:22,680 --> 01:07:28,080

fighting some of the coolest aircraft out there\h
and I remember you know seeing this F-22 Raptor\h\h

676

01:07:28,080 --> 01:07:33,180

coming over the top and doing its Cobra move\h
yeah and I was like I wasn't even thinking about\h\h

677

01:07:33,180 --> 01:07:37,800

fighting the jet so much as I was just like I\h
can't believe I'm getting to do this with a raptor\h\h

678

01:07:37,800 --> 01:07:43,560

right now that's incredible I came back from the\h
flight and I was watching my tapes for the missile\h\h

679

01:07:43,560 --> 01:07:49,920

shoot and I realized like I didn't remember almost\h
everything from the missile shoot wow and that was\h\h

680

01:07:49,920 --> 01:07:55,740

a live actual missile too right like that's a big\h
deal like that firing uh firing on a drone and so\h\h

681

01:07:55,740 --> 01:08:03,000

that was concerning I kind of didn't say much and\h

the next day I was on duty uh just standing at the\h\h

682

01:08:03,000 --> 01:08:07,680

sdo desk answering phones and coordinating\h
the flight schedule uh running the radio\h\h

683

01:08:07,680 --> 01:08:12,780

and everything like that and I just continued\h
throughout the next day it wasn't getting better\h\h

684

01:08:12,780 --> 01:08:18,540

and I was getting worse and like that night I went\h
back to the hotel room after standing sdo all day\h\h

685

01:08:18,540 --> 01:08:24,480

just trying to like power through and I remember\h
sitting on the bed and the floor underneath me\h\h

686

01:08:24,480 --> 01:08:31,860

just started pulsating I started to get really\h
bad vertigo and I was so dizzy and my anxiety was\h\h

687

01:08:31,860 --> 01:08:38,340

just spiked my heart rate was racing and I could\h
not fall asleep all night up to the point where\h\h

688

01:08:39,180 --> 01:08:44,520

there had been a variety of issues with the\h
decompression sickness in the Hornet and Super\h\h

689

01:08:44,520 --> 01:08:50,340

Hornet community at that time familiar yeah and\h
so I thought maybe I got decompression sickness\h\h

690

01:08:50,340 --> 01:08:55,080

on my flight I didn't know what else was going\h
on it didn't make sense like I was feeling great\h\h

691

01:08:55,080 --> 01:09:02,100

after my crash and now I'm having these issues and\h

I contacted the squeezer the safety officer or the

692

01:09:02,100 --> 01:09:07,080

Squadron I was like hey I think I might have
gotten DCS on my flight I told him some of the

693

01:09:07,080 --> 01:09:12,000

things I was having go on and he uh you know all
the department heads and the skipper and EXO and

694

01:09:12,000 --> 01:09:16,680

everybody came together really quickly and were
like all right there's a dive base in Mayport a

695

01:09:16,680 --> 01:09:23,460

Navy database and they have a hyperbaric chamber
so squeezer drove me uh with Skipper and we we

696

01:09:23,460 --> 01:09:28,800

showed up the dive base and they did an assessment
and ended up putting me in this pressurization uh

697

01:09:28,800 --> 01:09:36,540

chamber for a few hours over the course of that
night and uh I I started to regain you know I

698

01:09:36,540 --> 01:09:43,380

guess I'd describe myself as like a zombie when
I showed up I was just flat personality just had

699

01:09:43,380 --> 01:09:49,920

this thousand yard stare and those are symptoms of
decompression sickness right and uh they squeezed

700

01:09:49,920 --> 01:09:55,680

me and I felt a little bit better after my sense
of humor started to return and the dock there was

701

01:09:55,680 --> 01:10:01,020

a young doc who's brilliant and he's like you know

it could have been decompression sickness but you\h\h

702

01:10:01,020 --> 01:10:05,820

have a lie else going on in your medical history\h
so when you get back to Lemoore I need you to go\h\h

703

01:10:05,820 --> 01:10:12,600

in and see medical and for me that was like oh man\h
the last thing I wanted to do is go into Medical\h\h

704

01:10:12,600 --> 01:10:19,020

in my career after all this comeback and all the\h
support and the retraining and I was like this\h\h

705

01:10:19,020 --> 01:10:23,880

could really let people down and I didn't want\h
to give up but at the same time it was like I l\h\h

706

01:10:23,880 --> 01:10:30,180

don't want to injure somebody else I don't want to\h
crash another jet another mishap because I didn't\h\h

707

01:10:30,180 --> 01:10:36,540

call myself out and so I spoke with the flight\h
doc when I got back and he recommended I go see\h\h

708

01:10:36,540 --> 01:10:46,080

the Psychiatry department and the TBI component\h
and granted my medical history is so complex and\h\h

709

01:10:46,080 --> 01:10:53,100

retrospectively it was very clearly those were\h
likely TBI symptoms at least in part and they\h\h

710

01:10:53,100 --> 01:11:00,180

kind of bit off on all these diagnoses of Psych\h
disorders uh I was uh classified as delayed onset\h\h

711

01:11:00,180 --> 01:11:07,740

PTSD and then they tried a variety of different\h

therapies that were kind of executed half-assed\h\h

712

01:11:07,740 --> 01:11:13,680

in my opinion and quickly things resulted\h
in me seeing the psychiatrist and being uh\h\h

713

01:11:13,680 --> 01:11:19,620

put on some psych medications really to try to\h
help me sleep insomnia was so bad at that point\h\h

714

01:11:19,620 --> 01:11:26,160

I just couldn't sleep um from the lack of sleep I\h
was getting paranoid I was getting hyper vigilant\h\h

715

01:11:26,880 --> 01:11:33,960

but as they started to issue me these pain meds or\h
the sorry the antipsychotic medication for sleep\h\h

716

01:11:33,960 --> 01:11:41,220

I was taking a medication called Quetiapine and I\h
started on a fairly low dose I think of 25 to 50\h\h

717

01:11:41,220 --> 01:11:46,320

milligrams per night and that initially kind of\h
knocked me out at night so I could sleep in the\h\h

718

01:11:46,320 --> 01:11:53,220

sort of drug-induced coma that it put me in But as\h
time went on they had to keep increasing that dose\h\h

719

01:11:53,220 --> 01:11:58,500

and my psychotic symptoms got to the point where\h
they were talking about schizophrenic diagnoses\h\h

720

01:11:59,460 --> 01:12:04,500

I remember it points I thought I was it's making\h
it worse and you're and that's what's had going\h\h

721

01:12:04,500 --> 01:12:08,640

on now and at the time you know we didn't\h

know and at the time it was the meds were\h\h

722

01:12:08,640 --> 01:12:13,140

the answer so let's just increase the meds\h
but the symptoms kept getting but they kept\h\h

723

01:12:13,140 --> 01:12:18,060

getting worse and I didn't recognize that\h
pattern until a long time after that but uh\h\h

724

01:12:18,720 --> 01:12:23,400

I got to the point where I thought I was in\h
The Truman Show where everybody was watching\h\h

725

01:12:23,400 --> 01:12:27,780

me and recording like literally like you felt\h
like I felt like I was that character I didn't\h\h

726

01:12:27,780 --> 01:12:32,760

think I was Jim Carrey but I was like yeah yeah\h
I thought the radio station was tuned to me and\h\h

727

01:12:32,760 --> 01:12:37,800

I thought people were actors almost like at Sears\h
school or something where they were watching me\h\h

728

01:12:37,800 --> 01:12:44,880

and and these they were like fake interactions\h
you know um yes yeah that's a stress reduced\h\h

729

01:12:44,880 --> 01:12:48,420

response that a lot of people have when they go\h
through that interrogation training that people\h\h

730

01:12:48,420 --> 01:12:52,800

in our position have to go through that's an\h
interesting that's an interesting comparison\h\h

731

01:12:53,940 --> 01:12:59,160

um and so things just kind of continue to degrade\h

to the point where it was clear I wasn't going to\h\h

732

01:12:59,160 --> 01:13:04,800

be able to go back flying I remember going\h
and seeing my XO and you know I was like l\h\h

733

01:13:04,800 --> 01:13:11,280

don't think I'm gonna be able to fly against her\h
and he's like Marie said is the psych Department\h\h

734

01:13:11,280 --> 01:13:16,860

already buried their talons into you I was like at\h
the time I didn't really know I was like well they\h\h

735

01:13:16,860 --> 01:13:21,660

seem like they're trying to help me but he meant\h
because they had put me on these drugs now he knew\h\h

736

01:13:22,500 --> 01:13:27,420

that it was going to be nearly impossible or\h
impossible for me to get back flying and uh\h\h

737

01:13:27,960 --> 01:13:36,120

so just one incident hey go see the dock and now\h
right and you're on a path it seems and maybe PTSD\h\h

738

01:13:36,120 --> 01:13:42,660

was a small component of it but retrospectively\h
this was largely classic TBI symptoms and\h\h

739

01:13:43,620 --> 01:13:48,540

you know years later I've gone through these\h
different treatments and modalities and I had\h\h

740

01:13:48,540 --> 01:13:56,280

I had those mentalities at that moment I'd still\h
be flying I bet uh for the Navy and anyways things\h\h

741

01:13:56,280 --> 01:14:03,120

degraded to the point where um I was going through\h

a medical board to get out of the military that

742

01:14:03,120 --> 01:14:07,920

was a nightmare of a process basically being
treated like I was faking these symptoms and

743

01:14:07,920 --> 01:14:14,040

despite having this massive stack of medical
records largely from military hospitals they

744

01:14:14,040 --> 01:14:19,920

were just denying and denying I remember going
to see the neurologists at the VA and I have all

745

01:14:19,920 --> 01:14:25,140

this extensive nerve damage and it's visible you
don't have to be a doctor to see a lot of it and

746

01:14:25,140 --> 01:14:30,000

I remember the neurologist looked at me he took
out this little Pokey Wheeling went like this and

747

01:14:30,000 --> 01:14:36,120

he goes you don't have any issues and basically
ignored unbelievable and there was a lot of that

748

01:14:36,120 --> 01:14:43,020

at the VA and uh um but eventually I was medically
retired I moved back to Northern Michigan with my

749

01:14:43,020 --> 01:14:52,500

wife and my then very young son Leo we moved back
to Northern Michigan and that I got in with the VA

750

01:14:52,500 --> 01:14:59,460

and my dosage of Quetiapine continued to increase
and shortly after increasing my dose from 300

751

01:14:59,460 --> 01:15:05,580

milligrams of Quetiapine a night to 450 milligrams

a night my wife heard me rustling around in the\h\h

752
01:15:05,580 --> 01:15:12,060
house and she found me I had shaved off almost all\h
my hair on my head and chunks I had shaved off my\h\h

753
01:15:12,060 --> 01:15:17,220
eyebrows for some reason what facial hair I had at\h
the time and I was completely naked except I had a\h\h

754
01:15:17,220 --> 01:15:24,180
black plastic garbage bag tied around my neck and\h
she got style I thought I I was gonna go out and\h\h

755
01:15:24,180 --> 01:15:29,700
fight fight crime like Batman in the Michigan\h
snowy weather dress like that oh my gosh so my\h\h

756
01:15:29,700 --> 01:15:35,700
wife called the VA the VA is like we're hanging up\h
we're calling the police a squad car showed up in\h\h

757
01:15:35,700 --> 01:15:41,760
my driveway with this completely clueless looking\h
Deputy wandering out and my wife is like there's\h\h

758
01:15:41,760 --> 01:15:46,200
no way in hell we're going to put him in the\h
back of a police car in the state so she loaded\h\h

759
01:15:46,200 --> 01:15:52,560
up my little boy luckily my mom was there visiting\h
and we start started to drive about an hour into\h\h

760
01:15:52,560 --> 01:16:00,660
Traverse City hospital where there's an actual ER\h
and on the drive behind us looked like there had\h\h

761
01:16:00,660 --> 01:16:06,600
been a nuclear explosion in my mind and there\h

was shrapnel and debris and boats and vehicles\h\h

762

01:16:06,600 --> 01:16:11,280

tumbling through the air and broken trees and\h
and all this stuff it looked like there had been\h\h

763

01:16:11,280 --> 01:16:17,460

this explosion and it was all completely in my\h
imagination it's like a reoccurring theme too it's\h\h

764

01:16:17,460 --> 01:16:23,580

just like things are just breaking down for you\h
in a sense it was it was hellish man uh and they\h\h

765

01:16:23,580 --> 01:16:28,440

got me checking what's that mean to you does that\h
have any any have you thought about that I have\h\h

766

01:16:29,100 --> 01:16:33,120

um and I'll get into it a little bit\h
as I get into some of the healing\h\h

767

01:16:33,720 --> 01:16:41,280

um if that's cool please uh but they got me in the\h
ER they checked me in I ended up in a Plexiglas\h\h

768

01:16:41,280 --> 01:16:48,180

room I was there for I think at least one night\h
if not a couple and they got me stable enough to\h\h

769

01:16:48,180 --> 01:16:54,420

where they put me into an ambulance and drove me\h
down to Battle Creek Michigan and I was put into\h\h

770

01:16:54,420 --> 01:17:01,260

the Battle Creek VA psych ward as an inpatient\h
and the hospital made like the hospital just the\h\h

771

01:17:01,260 --> 01:17:06,060

hospital the ER they didn't they couldn't hold\h

me like they weren't designed to take long-term\h\h

772

01:17:06,060 --> 01:17:11,640

sites and the other psych facilities in the area\h
were all full and they found out I was military\h\h

773

01:17:11,640 --> 01:17:16,500

so like oh well we send you to the VA they have a\h
psych facility so at the time it seemed like the\h\h

774

01:17:16,500 --> 01:17:22,200

right call I started to come out of it I started\h
to gain more Lucid moments um like did you where\h\h

775

01:17:22,200 --> 01:17:27,480

you wear it like you were actually like in a like\h
some type of like say Jack psychiatric facility or\h\h

776

01:17:27,480 --> 01:17:34,920

dude it took it took me a while to come out of it\h
and eventually I I realized I could open the door\h\h

777

01:17:34,920 --> 01:17:41,280

and I Could Walk The Halls and there are other\h
people there oh wow but I was in and out of pretty\h\h

778

01:17:41,280 --> 01:17:49,860

bad psychotic state to the point where um they\h
had to put me on one-on-one care where I had to\h\h

779

01:17:49,860 --> 01:17:55,740

have somebody wake me up every 15 minutes with a\h
flashlight in my face to make sure I was okay that\h\h

780

01:17:55,740 --> 01:18:02,220

sounds like seriously it was the same the same and\h
this is in moments of being Lucid there were there\h\h

781

01:18:02,220 --> 01:18:08,820

were a lot of things there I know that I imagined\h

but in the Lucid moments I had I recognized that\h\h

782

01:18:08,820 --> 01:18:15,060

a lot of the same methods that you would use\h
against uh enemy combatant and a prisoner of\h\h

783

01:18:15,060 --> 01:18:22,020

work situation they were using the same things on\h
American veterans that were in the psych facility\h\h

784

01:18:22,020 --> 01:18:29,640

just trying to get better the they they can find\h
you you have sleep deprivation because one a psych\h\h

785

01:18:29,640 --> 01:18:34,740

facility is not an easy place to sleep in there's\h
people yelling going out of their minds stomping\h\h

786

01:18:34,740 --> 01:18:39,900

through the hallways everything is this hard tile\h
and hard walls so everything Echoes throughout the\h\h

787

01:18:39,900 --> 01:18:44,700

room even if you have your door shut and you\h
oftentimes had roommates um it's gonna make\h\h

788

01:18:44,700 --> 01:18:51,120

you crazy you you get completely sleep deprived\h
you are malnourished because the food there was\h\h

789

01:18:51,840 --> 01:18:58,620

abysmal no nutritional value there was not fruit\h
or vegetable in sight everything was just highly\h\h

790

01:18:58,620 --> 01:19:04,980

processed crap food you're confined inside we were\h
lucky if we got to go outside once every three or\h\h

791

01:19:04,980 --> 01:19:10,320

four days and when we did go outside we were put\h

in the small concrete yard that was between the\h\h

792

01:19:10,320 --> 01:19:15,420

buildings with fences all around it so it wasn't\h
even like the prison side it was a prison and\h\h

793

01:19:15,420 --> 01:19:18,900

there was what it sounds like there were other\h
veterans there that through their struggles\h\h

794

01:19:19,680 --> 01:19:25,260

um had been in and out of federal prison and\h
I sat down at a meal with a bunch of them and\h\h

795

01:19:25,260 --> 01:19:30,960

every single one of them agreed that they would\h
way rather be in federal prison than stuck in\h\h

796

01:19:30,960 --> 01:19:35,940

this VA psych facility because the treatment was\h
better they got better food they got to go outside\h\h

797

01:19:35,940 --> 01:19:42,360

every day they kind of knew their schedule um\h
which was wild to me you get treated better as\h\h

798

01:19:42,360 --> 01:19:49,800

a prisoner so hold on man this is such a crazy\h
story here now you're in a psych ward in the VA\h\h

799

01:19:50,640 --> 01:19:56,280

when were you last in a a fighter aircraft at this\h
point how many years had it been at this point it\h\h

800

01:19:56,280 --> 01:20:01,020

had been years it had been about a year and a half\h
I want to say so a year and a half you're you're\h\h

801

01:20:01,020 --> 01:20:09,720

fired spiders and all of a sudden just like that\h

you're everything's great from just a complete\h\h

802

01:20:10,860 --> 01:20:16,740

lack of a lack of caring for the TBI that I had\h
that was initially causing the issue unbelievable\h\h

803

01:20:16,740 --> 01:20:23,040

snowballed into this pharmaceutical regime that\h
had just tore me apart um now what about your wife\h\h

804

01:20:23,040 --> 01:20:30,420

at this point where where is she in this story so\h
she um at this point is very she's struggling to\h\h

805

01:20:30,420 --> 01:20:37,200

take care of our little boy and me and it was\h
a massive strain on a relationship while I was\h\h

806

01:20:37,200 --> 01:20:45,180

in the VA facility she moved down to Battle Creek\h
which is not the nicest place to be the only hotel\h\h

807

01:20:45,180 --> 01:20:52,140

that she could afford because there was no stipend\h
or anything for her was this rundown Motel when\h\h

808

01:20:52,140 --> 01:20:58,140

she got there with my son and my mom they had to\h
go to the Kmart and purchase um cleaning equipment\h\h

809

01:20:58,140 --> 01:21:03,420

because there was this layer of grime all over the\h
floor in this crappy hotel and my little boy was\h\h

810

01:21:03,420 --> 01:21:09,600

crawling around on it and uh so she was living in\h
very crappy conditions and she would come in every\h\h

811

01:21:09,600 --> 01:21:16,800

day that she could with my boy so I could see them\h

and that that saved my saved me from going into\h\h

812

01:21:16,800 --> 01:21:24,960

a very dark place wow getting to see them and see\h
that they loved and cared for me still um man was\h\h

813

01:21:24,960 --> 01:21:31,740

powerful but I got to the point where I recognized\h
how awful this place was I was voluntarily\h\h

814

01:21:31,740 --> 01:21:38,880

admitted and when that happens I thought you could\h
say hey it's time for me to go home I think I\h\h

815

01:21:38,880 --> 01:21:43,800

would be better to go elsewhere but they held me\h
there and said no we're not going to let you go\h\h

816

01:21:43,800 --> 01:21:48,720

yet we cannot we have to wait for this assessment\h
and this and this went on for weeks and then weeks\h\h

817

01:21:48,720 --> 01:21:56,160

and weeks and my family and my mom and dad they\h
were all trying to get me out of there my wife had\h\h

818

01:21:56,160 --> 01:22:01,260

her experience uh in the ER my mom was a physician\h
my dad worked in the medical community so they had\h\h

819

01:22:01,260 --> 01:22:06,660

they had the ability to take care of me and so\h
they were really advocating to try to get me\h\h

820

01:22:06,660 --> 01:22:10,140

out of there they realized something's up at this\h
point I mean they're like they didn't they didn't\h\h

821

01:22:10,140 --> 01:22:14,940

know that it was to the level because nobody can\h

come in and visit and even if you didn't even have\h\h

822

01:22:14,940 --> 01:22:20,580

visitors you they could visit you but you had to\h
be taken over to this separate area that wasn't in\h\h

823

01:22:20,580 --> 01:22:25,680

the psych facility and sit down in these little\h
rooms and so they never really saw the facility\h\h

824

01:22:25,680 --> 01:22:31,200

and even if you were to walk into the facility you\h
know it's there's fresh paint on the walls there's\h\h

825

01:22:31,200 --> 01:22:36,480

corporate art yeah sure and you know they're\h
giving people Oreos and Nutter Butters but very\h\h

826

01:22:36,480 --> 01:22:44,040

under the facade surface of it it is a train wreck\h
and I got very frustrated to the point where I\h\h

827

01:22:44,040 --> 01:22:49,200

started um talking to other I call them prisoners\h
other veterans that were in there with me\h\h

828

01:22:49,860 --> 01:22:58,140

um to try to escape and I started compiling warm\h
clothes and snacks and I was making weapons with\h\h

829

01:22:58,140 --> 01:23:02,880

wet socks inside of other socks in case I needed\h
to fight somebody to get out and I came up with\h\h

830

01:23:02,880 --> 01:23:08,580

a plan that I was gonna pull the fire alarm and\h
if they took us outside a lot of the people there\h\h

831

01:23:08,580 --> 01:23:14,100

were so out of it from all the drugs that they had\h

been pumped full of for decades um they would just\h\h

832

01:23:14,100 --> 01:23:17,760

be herded back inside like sheep but for those of\h
us you're probably thinking you were going to be\h\h

833

01:23:17,760 --> 01:23:24,360

there for decades at this point right like I don't\h
blame you it didn't look good man and so I pulled\h\h

834

01:23:24,360 --> 01:23:29,160

the fire alarm one night and apparently somebody\h
had already tried that trick so they shut it off\h\h

835

01:23:30,000 --> 01:23:35,400

um the base police came in they just shut off the\h
fire line and uh and the head nurse there who was\h\h

836

01:23:35,400 --> 01:23:40,920

actually a great dude there was some other staff\h
there that was there for the wrong reasons and\h\h

837

01:23:40,920 --> 01:23:46,320

had some weird complexes uh if you ever heard of\h
like the Stanford Prison experiments there was a\h\h

838

01:23:46,320 --> 01:23:51,840

lot of that Dynamic going on like we were these\h
problematic prisoners Vice American veterans\h\h

839

01:23:51,840 --> 01:23:57,840

trying to deal with mental health issues um but\h
the head nurse there Mike I really trusted him and\h\h

840

01:23:57,840 --> 01:24:02,880

after I pulled the fire alarm he had the syringe\h
and he's like we can do this the hardware we can\h\h

841

01:24:02,880 --> 01:24:09,300

do this the easy way and so you know I bend over\h

on a table and I was like stick it in my ass Mike\h\h

842

01:24:09,300 --> 01:24:17,100

she shoved this syringe of uh Haldol and as it\h
went into my bloodstream it started to feel like\h\h

843

01:24:17,100 --> 01:24:23,460

insects were crawling underneath the inside of my\h
skin all I wanted to do was just rip my skin off \h\h

844

01:24:23,460 --> 01:24:29,220

felt incredibly Restless all I could do was Pace\h
up and down the hallways screaming and yelling\h\h

845

01:24:29,220 --> 01:24:34,260

is that the intent of that medication so it's\h
a it's an antipsychotic that's supposed to help\h\h

846

01:24:34,260 --> 01:24:41,700

bring you down if you're really wound up but the\h
trauma that it causes is so abysmal it's crazy to\h\h

847

01:24:41,700 --> 01:24:46,140

me that there's not a better medication to give\h
people there's got to be something better that\h\h

848

01:24:46,140 --> 01:24:52,680

doesn't cause that like there's a physical toll it\h
takes oh yeah the physical pain that you feel on\h\h

849

01:24:52,680 --> 01:25:00,420

that medication at least for me um was awful and\h
and traumatic in itself and after that though they\h\h

850

01:25:01,140 --> 01:25:05,940

they really made me comply and they made me\h
take the pills that I didn't want to take and\h\h

851

01:25:05,940 --> 01:25:11,640

they forced me in it to the point where I was\h

drooling on myself I was just this zombie and\h\h

852

01:25:11,640 --> 01:25:16,440

while I was in that state I was brought into\h
a room with the soulless lawyer and she had me\h\h

853

01:25:16,440 --> 01:25:22,860

sign documentation declaring me as mentally\h
defective and committing me to the hospital\h\h

854

01:25:22,860 --> 01:25:29,400

and because of that I'm no longer allowed\h
to own or purchase a firearm and anytime\h\h

855

01:25:29,400 --> 01:25:34,200

I'm pulled over I come up on the law enforcement\h
Information Network as if I committed a felony\h\h

856

01:25:35,280 --> 01:25:40,980

um and so that was extremely frustrating\h
forward so what for what for just being\h\h

857

01:25:41,760 --> 01:25:47,460

for me and here you are yeah it doesn't make any\h
sense to me it's just this crazy slide of of just\h\h

858

01:25:49,020 --> 01:25:54,900

people not helping you not doing their job it\h
sounds like just kind of leaving you to fight\h\h

859

01:25:54,900 --> 01:25:59,280

for yourself a sense other than your family and\h
your Advocates that and they're trying to support\h\h

860

01:25:59,280 --> 01:26:05,220

you yeah unfortunately they were eventually able\h
to get me out and got me back home and I spent the\h\h

861

01:26:05,220 --> 01:26:12,300

next six months at home being outside with my\h

kid getting fresh air eating a good diet again\h\h

862

01:26:12,300 --> 01:26:17,820

getting some exercise and I slowly came out of\h
that psychosis where I was at but at that point\h\h

863

01:26:17,820 --> 01:26:22,860

the answer was still hey we just got to give you\h
more of this drug and more of this drug okay and\h\h

864

01:26:22,860 --> 01:26:28,140

I at the time I could barely do the dishes\h
and I could hardly read a paragraph without\h\h

865

01:26:28,140 --> 01:26:34,200

forgetting it but I stumbled through the book how\h
to change your mind by Michael Poland which is uh\h\h

866

01:26:34,200 --> 01:26:39,840

a really well done book on the use of psychedelic\h
medications for healing mental health ailments\h\h

867

01:26:39,840 --> 01:26:44,340

and to me like a light bulb came on like\h
that's the direction I need to go because\h\h

868

01:26:44,340 --> 01:26:49,320

the only other option I've been giving for the VA\h
now for years is to be on these psych medications\h\h

869

01:26:49,320 --> 01:26:55,440

the rest of my life that were they had me just\h
numb and angry and yelling at my little boy just\h\h

870

01:26:55,440 --> 01:27:01,440

for trying to play it play with them and just at\h
this point my relationship with my wife was very\h\h

871

01:27:01,440 --> 01:27:08,160

close to divorce and we had already talked about\h

divorce and how we were gonna you know do it and\h\h

872

01:27:09,120 --> 01:27:15,660

did you like understand that decision from her\h
perspective or was it I did I was I was so broken\h\h

873

01:27:15,660 --> 01:27:21,600

and just beat down at that point that I was just I\h
understood I felt like she was this bird stuck in\h\h

874

01:27:21,600 --> 01:27:30,480

a cage and I had put her there um but uh I found\h
this psychedelic medication and I found someone to\h\h

875

01:27:30,480 --> 01:27:36,120

administer a ceremony with me and I came out the\h
other side of that it didn't cure everything but\h\h

876

01:27:36,120 --> 01:27:44,040

to use uh Michael Poland's explanation it was like\h
this fresh snowfall on these entrenched ruts that\h\h

877

01:27:44,040 --> 01:27:48,660

I had been sledding or skiing down my whole life\h
these negative emotions that were so entrenched\h\h

878

01:27:48,660 --> 01:27:54,240

that they had just consumed me and with that fresh\h
snowfall it filled in those ruts and I was able to\h\h

879

01:27:54,240 --> 01:28:01,200

start taking New Paths down the fresh powder uh\h
of the Mountain of my life and I started to make\h\h

880

01:28:01,200 --> 01:28:07,440

the correlation of those medications every time\h
they increased them and changed the dosage I got\h\h

881

01:28:07,440 --> 01:28:12,960

worse and worse and so against the advice of the\h

Psychiatry Department of the VA against the advice\h\h

882

01:28:12,960 --> 01:28:20,880

of my wife and my family I decided to wean myself\h
off of cotyping and it took a few months but \h\h

883

01:28:20,880 --> 01:28:25,860

slowly got a little better and a little better my\h
sleep was absolutely awful like I could not sleep\h\h

884

01:28:25,860 --> 01:28:32,760

hardly without it and I discovered an organization\h
called Vet Solutions and well hold on a minute so\h\h

885

01:28:32,760 --> 01:28:36,960

you're telling me that you're that you're out\h
of the you're out of the the psych ward from\h\h

886

01:28:36,960 --> 01:28:40,500

the VA because you're you're wife supporting you\h
and your family's reporting you basically pulled\h\h

887

01:28:40,500 --> 01:28:47,580

you out of it yeah and then yeah and then you\h
you're like well I'm actually gonna stop taking\h\h

888

01:28:47,580 --> 01:28:53,340

my medication and and that created a tremendous\h
amount of stress in my relationship with my family\h\h

889

01:28:53,340 --> 01:28:58,140

and my wife because they all thought you know\h
they had they've heard the narrative oh here's\h\h

890

01:28:58,140 --> 01:29:03,000

a psych patient getting off his mess we know\h
what happens every soap opera or whatever maybe\h\h

891

01:29:03,000 --> 01:29:08,340

your wife has seen it before you at the hospital\h

that she worked at that I mean wow but I was so\h\h

892

01:29:08,340 --> 01:29:15,240

desperate I I and I something was telling me that\h
was the right direction and uh my friend Matt he\h\h

893

01:29:15,240 --> 01:29:20,640

gave me the book called Finding Ultra by Rich Roll\h
and that's his story of going from this sort of\h\h

894

01:29:21,180 --> 01:29:27,600

life is a corporate lawyer and stressed out and\h
drinking too much to just disconnecting from all\h\h

895

01:29:27,600 --> 01:29:36,660

that and using plant-based diet and exercise to\h
heal and becoming this Ultra endurance athlete and\h\h

896

01:29:36,660 --> 01:29:43,080

that was a huge motivation for me to I had eaten\h
I had eaten fairly healthy but I really went hard\h\h

897

01:29:43,080 --> 01:29:49,080

into the health and the nutrition the exercise\h
the you know the gut microbiome I start I read\h\h

898

01:29:50,040 --> 01:29:56,640

brain maker by Dr Pearl Mudder and I just started\h
my brain was coming back on without all these\h\h

899

01:29:56,640 --> 01:30:00,660

drugs hindering and I was able to just start you\h
were assuming you're off of the Pharmaceuticals\h\h

900

01:30:00,660 --> 01:30:05,220

that point or you're tapering off and it was\h
through the process of tapering off my mental\h\h

901

01:30:05,220 --> 01:30:12,660

function improved um I had exercised while I was\h

on Quetiapine and as I had come off it felt like I\h\h

902
01:30:12,660 --> 01:30:17,400
had been training with a hundred pound Ruck on my\h
back and I remember going out running and my heart\h\h

903
01:30:17,400 --> 01:30:22,200
rate was way lower and I was running way faster\h
and it was like this weight was lifted off my\h\h

904
01:30:22,200 --> 01:30:27,720
body I don't know what that medication was doing\h
to my physiology how it was poisoning me if it was\h\h

905
01:30:27,720 --> 01:30:35,640
histotoxic hypoxia that stuff just overwhelming my\h
cells with junk but as I came off of it I started\h\h

906
01:30:35,640 --> 01:30:44,820
to regain a lot of my abilities and um memory\h
memory improved and eventually I started to get\h\h

907
01:30:44,820 --> 01:30:51,480
a little bit of sleep without the medication and I\h
found this organization called Vet Solutions which\h\h

908
01:30:51,480 --> 01:30:59,160
is a former Navy SEAL Marcus Capone and his wife\h
Amber started this after he saw the incredible\h\h

909
01:30:59,160 --> 01:31:06,840
impact that psychedelic medication had on his\h
injuries from years of very high level combat\h\h

910
01:31:06,840 --> 01:31:14,400
with the SEAL Teams and that really piqued my\h
interest I reached out to their program to try to\h\h

911
01:31:14,400 --> 01:31:19,260
get become part I didn't really qualify because\h

the you know the way they explain it's like\h\h

912

01:31:19,260 --> 01:31:23,820

Schindler's List like they want to be able to help\h
everybody but they only have so much funding to\h\h

913

01:31:23,820 --> 01:31:30,120

send people and their focus is healing operators\h
guys with two or more combat deployments uh in\h\h

914

01:31:30,120 --> 01:31:34,920

the Special Forces Community which I was neither\h
of those things but that's a pretty common issue\h\h

915

01:31:34,920 --> 01:31:39,780

I mean traumatic brain injury in the military\h
is a very serious issue and it's also one that\h\h

916

01:31:39,780 --> 01:31:46,740

you can't just look out and see you know so it's\h
a tricky It's Tricky and uh I I didn't they they\h\h

917

01:31:46,740 --> 01:31:52,920

sent me an email and they put me in touch with the\h
organization called Warrior Angels foundation and\h\h

918

01:31:52,920 --> 01:31:58,020

this is run by a former Green Beret and his\h
brother who was an Apache attack helicopter\h\h

919

01:31:58,560 --> 01:32:05,880

and they started this organization to promote\h
more holistic healing for people and they were\h\h

920

01:32:05,880 --> 01:32:10,560

doing this event it was the four by four\h
by 48 challenge off the out of the mind of\h\h

921

01:32:10,560 --> 01:32:17,520

David Goggins where you run four miles every four\h

hours for 48 hours straight and uh I saw they were\h\h

922

01:32:17,520 --> 01:32:23,160

doing a fundraiser for the event and I just had\h
this urge to share my story and I I did a brief\h\h

923

01:32:23,160 --> 01:32:28,260

synopsis on their fundraiser page about what had\h
happened to me and I didn't have any social media\h\h

924

01:32:28,260 --> 01:32:33,720

at this point but I just started texting the\h
link to a few friends and before I knew it it\h\h

925

01:32:33,720 --> 01:32:39,480

had just spread like wildfire in my my fundraiser\h
page had raised over ten thousand dollars in like\h\h

926

01:32:39,480 --> 01:32:46,980

a week and uh and so I got a call from Adam uh\h
the Apache pilot and he's like hey man your your\h\h

927

01:32:46,980 --> 01:32:51,240

story is incredible we really want to fly you\h
down they flew me down to Texas for the event\h\h

928

01:32:51,240 --> 01:32:57,660

and I participated in the event running the four\h
miles every four hours and each time I was running\h\h

929

01:32:57,660 --> 01:33:02,760

with a different group and it was largely people\h
from the operator Community there were seals and\h\h

930

01:33:02,760 --> 01:33:08,580

Green Berets and MARSOC Marines and and all these\h
guys had very similar stories I mean completely\h\h

931

01:33:08,580 --> 01:33:14,520

different ways that they were injured but they\h

had these tbis and then they went down the path of\h\h

932
01:33:14,520 --> 01:33:20,820
these psych meds that made them far worse and they\h
had recognized like me that they that was not the\h\h

933
01:33:20,820 --> 01:33:27,360
answer and so I finally had this confirmation that\h
I was on the right path and it wasn't just you and\h\h

934
01:33:27,360 --> 01:33:32,940
it wasn't just me and and just the community and\h
the camaraderie that was built over those two days\h\h

935
01:33:34,260 --> 01:33:38,580
um was incredible and and it put me on\h
this whole new trajectory in my life it\h\h

936
01:33:38,580 --> 01:33:43,860
reignited the hope that like I was meant for\h
something good still that I didn't have to be\h\h

937
01:33:43,860 --> 01:33:51,780
this miserable drug addicted shell of a human\h
that I had been before and um they put me in\h\h

938
01:33:51,780 --> 01:33:58,560
contact with uh heroic Hearts project which is\h
run by Jesse Gould he's a former Army uh Ranger\h\h

939
01:33:59,160 --> 01:34:05,340
and he put together heroic arts project\h
to send veterans to do Ayahuasca and\h\h

940
01:34:05,340 --> 01:34:13,440
psilocybin uh Retreats and he sent me down\h
to Peru and over the course of a week I had\h\h

941
01:34:14,160 --> 01:34:20,400
I guess the best way I can explain it in short is\h

like a soul surgery it was like all that darkness\h\h

942

01:34:20,400 --> 01:34:25,980

and everything that had built up over the years of\h
everything that I'd been through was was resolved\h\h

943

01:34:25,980 --> 01:34:31,860

in so many ways just like that I mean you just\h
felt that came out and it was like I had the\h\h

944

01:34:31,860 --> 01:34:37,920

energy and I had a smile on my face again I didn't\h
before you know people were afraid of me I looked\h\h

945

01:34:38,580 --> 01:34:45,180

just had this look in my face like I was this\h
angry human being which I was and afterward I saw\h\h

946

01:34:45,180 --> 01:34:50,040

pictures of myself and it was like there's that\h
childhood version of me that was still under there\h\h

947

01:34:50,580 --> 01:34:57,840

and uh that was hugely healing and then uh another\h
organization Defenders of Freedom they funded me\h\h

948

01:34:57,840 --> 01:35:03,360

to go down to the resiliency brain clinic in\h
Dallas Texas where again I met an incredible\h\h

949

01:35:03,360 --> 01:35:10,320

group of these other humans largely Rangers and\h
Special Forces types that had had the same story\h\h

950

01:35:10,320 --> 01:35:16,560

and over the course of two weeks at this TBI\h
Clinic they ran this massive blood panel on me\h\h

951

01:35:17,820 --> 01:35:22,440

um and they actually looked at my physiology to\h

see what was all off what's really common with\h\h

952

01:35:22,440 --> 01:35:29,940

TBI is for you to have hormonal imbalances and\h
before you know the VA had done some blood tests\h\h

953

01:35:29,940 --> 01:35:35,400

but they were so they were so minimal and even\h
once they did have my testosterone levels and\h\h

954

01:35:35,400 --> 01:35:41,040

things they were comparing me to like 80 year old\h
veterans that were there and they didn't just they\h\h

955

01:35:41,040 --> 01:35:45,480

didn't even have the scale to compare it to to say\h
oh yeah your testosterone is actually extremely\h\h

956

01:35:45,480 --> 01:35:51,960

low for your age and they took this this snapshot\h
of my physiology they did a bunch of neurological\h\h

957

01:35:51,960 --> 01:35:57,420

testing and they really looked deep into my case\h
and over the course of the week of largely doing\h\h

958

01:35:57,420 --> 01:36:04,020

things as simple as these eye exercises where I\h
would follow a DOT with my eyes up and down as\h\h

959

01:36:04,020 --> 01:36:09,300

your eyes are an extension of your brain and that\h
helped to heal my brain there was a bunch of other\h\h

960

01:36:09,300 --> 01:36:16,380

Medallion wires back together huh yeah they did um\h
they didn't want a medallion called transcranial\h\h

961

01:36:16,380 --> 01:36:21,420

magnetic stimulation which is uh basically a Tesla\h

coil that they put right up against your frontal

962

01:36:21,420 --> 01:36:26,160

lobe and pulse it and they use different pulses
on the right and left hemispheres of your brain

963

01:36:26,160 --> 01:36:33,900

but after seven minutes on that machine so much my
anxiety was settled and I was clear and focused uh

964

01:36:33,900 --> 01:36:39,720

and after between the Ayahuasca Retreat and that
brain Clinic I came home and I was sleeping again

965

01:36:39,720 --> 01:36:47,100

for eight hours a night without any medications
and uh and since then you know I've been on this

966

01:36:47,100 --> 01:36:52,080

Incredible Journey of all these opportunities have
been opened up speaking to people like yourself

967

01:36:52,080 --> 01:37:00,660

the podcasting done corporate speaking uh writing
uh it's like I have my life back again so you're

968

01:37:00,660 --> 01:37:06,000

now writing a book is that correct so and about a
year and a half ago you essentially could not read

969

01:37:06,000 --> 01:37:12,660

yeah believe it or not you're working on your
own book right now and that's awesome and you

970

01:37:12,660 --> 01:37:19,680

know doing a lot to heal my relationship with my
family and my wife and rebuilding everything that

971

01:37:19,680 --> 01:37:26,100

was you know she went through hell she went into

hell to pull me out and it's it scarred her and\h\h

972

01:37:26,100 --> 01:37:31,680

you guys are still together we're still together\h
um congratulations you have a new baby girl uh\h\h

973

01:37:31,680 --> 01:37:38,640

she's 18 months old now or 19 months old now and\h
you know it's like we're getting a new chance at\h\h

974

01:37:38,640 --> 01:37:44,100

life that we just we got to the point we're almost\h
so hopeless that that was never going to happen\h\h

975

01:37:44,880 --> 01:37:50,400

um but it's it's been a wild ride man\h
glad you made it brother thanks brother\h\h