

Episode 100: Jeff's arm was torn off

Remember back in the day, when everyone got up on Monday morning, and went to work?

I've worked from home for a long time, but I do remember having jobs with that kind of routine. Wake up, take a shower, have some coffee and breakfast, drive to work, and come back home at the end of the day. Next morning, you do the same thing.

In the past couple of years, because of the pandemic, a lot more people are working from home instead of going into an office. But still, even if you don't leave your house, your work process means that there are things you do each day, day after day. To some extent that can get kind of boring. But in some ways, there's a certain comfort in the routine, because you know exactly what to expect. When you go to work, you know – for the most part – what's going to happen.

My conversation today is with Jeff. He had a job that pretty routine. It was manual labor, not very enjoyable, but he knew what to expect. He knew each day what was going to happen when he got to work.

Except one day.

When he arrived at work on this particular day, he had no idea that this would be his last day working at this job.

He also would never have guessed that even though he arrived at work that day with two arms, he would leave with only one.

Scott

How old were you when this happened?

Jeff

I was 18 years old. I had just graduated from high school about a month earlier and I was 4 days away from my college orientation.

Scott

This was summer. You got a summer job. What were you doing?

Jeff

I actually worked 2 jobs at the time of my accident. I was working at Taco Bell. I had been working at Taco Bell for 2 years. I was the annoying guy that when you came through the drive-thru, I was like, "Welcome to the border. Can I take your order?" So, I've been working doing that for 2 solid years. The summer before I started college, my dad got me a job at the glass plant that he had been working at for 23 years. Basically, there were me and 7 other soon-to-be college students who were working at this glass factory to earn a little bit of extra money before we go to college.

Scott

Did you like working there?

Jeff

I would say "No", only because it was so hard. It's the hardest work I'd ever done in my life. They actually called our team "The Rats" because we were the people that went into the areas of the factory that nobody else wanted to go into. We were sent into the dirtiest and the hottest areas, like, on our first day on the job. After our orientation, we had to go to what's called the "Hot End" and rake out glasses. When glasses are being made, they run through a furnace. If there are any imperfections on the glasses, they'll shatter and fall to the bottom of the furnace. Well, somebody's got to clean those up, so why not get the soon-to-be 8 college students to do it? So, we were sticking these really long metal rakes inside of this blazing hot furnace to rake glasses out. It was so hot in there that they wouldn't let us wear any kind of jewelry because if you wore a gold necklace, it would actually heat up to the point that it would burn your neck. So, we had to take off any kind of jewelry we were wearing if we were to be working in the Hot End.

Scott

Not exactly a dream job.

Jeff

No.

Scott

You can do anything for a little while, right?

Jeff

For a little while, yes. Making tacos and burritos was a lot easier than raking glasses out of a furnace. You can do anything for a little while, and that's what I did. I only work there for 10 days.

Scott

Not by choice?

Jeff

Not by choice. I only work there for 10 solid days.

Scott

Alright. Let's talk about what happened that day. Before we get into that, I need you to explain - because this is a critical part of the story - what is a screw auger.

Jeff

A screw auger - if any of the listeners don't understand - is basically a giant screw. There is a casing that wraps around the screw. The way a screw auger works is: when you turn it on, this giant screw starts to turn on the inside of the auger, and when you drop debris into the auger, it gets caught in the threads of that giant screw. So, as the screw is turning, the debris gets caught in the threads of that auger which pushes it up the shaft that the giant screw was in, and then it drops it out of a chute on the opposite end.

Scott

So you're throwing debris and it's taking it to a dumpster or something.

Jeff

Yes, sir. We were at the job site getting this debris, loading it into the auger, and dumping it in on one end of the auger. The auger actually went up a flight of stairs. On the opposite end of the stairs was a dumpster. So, the debris would fall into the dumpster at the other end of the auger.

Scott

It seems like one of the issues here was that there really wasn't any safety equipment in place. Was there anything that should have been there but wasn't?

Jeff

Anything that should have been there wasn't. Basically, all of the safety equipment had been removed from this piece of machinery. The factory bought this screw auger from a local farm. When they bought it, it's unclear whether the safety equipment didn't come with it or it was removed once it got there. I believe what happened was, at least, some of the safety equipment that came with it was removed because, at the opening of the auger where you dump the debris, there's supposed to be a grating that goes over the opening of the machine that keeps you from being able to get any clothing or body parts or anything down inside the auger - so, it keeps it safer - but somebody said that they had removed it because it made the job so much slower because you had to take the pieces of debris and break them down smaller and smaller and smaller until they would fit inside of the grating. You can put pieces of debris inside of the auger that is too big to actually fit through the screw auger - the opening to the auger was a lot bigger. Once it gets down to where the auger is, there are a lot of smaller pieces of equipment. So, a big piece can get into the auger but not actually get down into the threads of the screw auger.

Scott

And that's really the reason for what happened.

Jeff

This was my 10th day on the job, but it was only my second day out of the Hot End. In my first day out of the Hot End, we were in a different area of the plant. On this day - my 10th day on the job - There was like a powdery type substance that they used in the glass making process. They would drop this powdery substance onto this conveyor belt. When they drop this substance onto the conveyor belt, the dust would build up and settle on the ground. Well, this plant had been open for more than 20 years. From what it looked like, nobody ever cleaned the floor of that silo area where we were working. Those dust would build up and settle on the ground. It had been like that for over 20 years and people were walking on it. In some areas, this debris was 3-4 inches thick. Our job was to go in there with shovels, bust that debris up on the floor, load it into wheelbarrows, and then run the wheelbarrow from our job site to the screw auger. We would dump the debris into the auger and then it would go up the shaft and fall into the dumpster.

There was a guy at the dumpster who would take a shovel or rake and he would push the debris from the front to the back of the dumpster so that it all doesn't pile up under the opening. When I was working that day, I had either had a shovel in my hand all day or I was running the wheelbarrow back and forth from our job site to the auger. When we went on our lunch break and came back, everybody switched jobs. Now, I was the guy who is standing at the base of the screw auger. They told me, "When you're standing at the base of the auger, your job is make sure everything goes down okay." They didn't say, "If it doesn't go down okay, this is what you do." They just said, "Make sure everything goes down okay." The very first load we did when we came back from lunch, a buddy of mine that I'd played baseball with my entire life came, dumped a load of debris into the auger, turned around, and walked away. I looked down into the

auger and most of it is going the way it's supposed to, but there is one piece of debris that's a lot bigger than the rest of the pieces of debris that went into the auger - it was too big to fit. So, I started figuring out, "How can I make that piece of debris go down?" There wasn't, like, a rake or shovel or anything like that at my job site. They were all at the job site where all the debris was being cleaned up from. If I would have seen one of those, I would have just taken the handle and tried to break the piece down. Because there wasn't anything like that there-- again, my job is to make sure everything goes down. I was just thinking of getting the job done. So, what I decided to do was to reach in and grab that piece of debris. I was going to take it out, bust it on the ground, pick the pieces up, and put it back into the auger.

Well, we had our own gauntlet gloves. A gauntlet glove is basically, like, a regular glove. At the wrist, it flares out just a little bit - like bell bottom jeans for your wrist. When I reached in and grabbed that piece of debris, I felt a tug. When I did, I immediately jerked back as hard as I could with both of my arms. My left arm came out fine, but my right arm didn't. What happened was when I grabbed that piece of debris, the thread of the auger pinched the corner of my glove between the auger and the casing that went around the screw. I started jerking as hard as I could as I was trying to get my hand out of my glove but my glove had been cinched around my wrist really tightly. The auger was, kind of, rotating down and away from me in a circle. So, my hand actually went down into the auger. It was taken under the auger and then brought back up towards me. I remember my wrist dislocating and hearing my forearm snap in half. And my arm was at this point, just starting to get wrapped inside. While that was happening, I was trying to pull myself out. At this point, the machine actually started to pick me up off the ground and pull me in head-first. At that point, I started screaming because (1) it hurts, and (2) I wanted somebody to turn the machine off because I knew that I wasn't able to get myself out.

The guy who was at the other end of the auger heard me screaming. He came and visited me when I was in the hospital. He said, "When I turned around, you were about halfway into the machine at that point." So he ran down the stairs around the machine and turned it off. At that point, I was about 6-12 inches from being pulled into the machine head-first. When he turned the machine off, I was holding on to the outside of the machine with my left arm. My right arm was obviously wrapped on the inside. My right shoulder was dislocated. My left shoulder actually got dislocated as well from hanging on to the outside of the machine and trying to stop myself from being pulled in. After he turned the machine off, even though my left shoulder was dislocated, I was able to work my way out of the machine. When I did so, my right arm was gone. I could see my bone sticking out. I kind of looked like a blood sprinkler - blood was just spraying everywhere. So, I was standing there. The guy who turned the machine off was standing there looking at me, and then he just turned around and took off running - I didn't know where he was going. I didn't want to be by myself, so I also took off running after that.

Scott

That just seems like the oddest response from him and for you - not to get down on the floor, stop the bleeding or anything - just run.

Jeff

We just ran. Later, he told me that he said, "Let's go!" I don't remember that. He told me that he said, "Let's go." So, he took off running. I didn't hear anything but, as I said, I didn't want to be by myself - I had a feeling that if I stay here I'm gonna die. So, when he took off running, I took off running after him. We're running through this area of the plant called the silos where we were working that day. I was holding my right arm directly out in front of me because of the way I was losing the blood. For some reason, if I left my arm hanging next to my side, I could feel the

blood shoot into my side. So, I actually held my arm out in front of me. You could see blood shooting out in front of my face.

Scott

It sounds like a Quentin Tarantino movie scene.

Jeff

A little bit. My blood was shooting out and hitting a wall that was 10 feet away from my left-hand side - it looked like McDonald's arches. As we were running, I started thinking, "Where are we going?" I'm not running for sport or training for anything. As we were running, there was an office that was about 50-75 yards away. A lot of times, there would be somebody in the office. If there isn't, there's a phone in there that we can use to call for help. We were running through the bottom of the silos, then up a flight of stairs through a set of doors to this office. I never had my arm ripped off by a machine before. So, I was kind of learning as I was going. I had never read a book on what to do if you have your arm ripped off by a machine. So, I was in a little bit of a state of shock as well. When I ran up to the office - there's this giant plate glass window - I ran up to the window and just stood there looking in. I didn't knock on the window. I didn't open the door to the office and say, "Hey, does anybody in here have a band-aid or anything like that?" I just stood there looking in through the window.

There were three guys in the office - they all saw me. I talked to one of the guys years later and he told me that the two guys immediately looked at him and said, "We can't go out there because they just couldn't handle the sight of blood." So, he said, "I'll go out there, but listen to me: if I need something, help me out." So he ran out to where I was. This guy actually used to be a bouncer at a nightclub. He's a mountain of a man. Actually, his nickname was Mountain Dude. He came out and tackled me down on the ground. He told me later, "I was scared that if I didn't get you on the ground, you might take off running again due to so much shock."

So, he got me down on the ground, yelled at the guys in the office, "I need paper towels!" These two guys in the office are terrified of the sight of blood. So, they opened the office door and reached their hands out holding a single paper towel. They're obviously in a little bit of shock as well at this point. He took the paper towel, put it on my arm, and it immediately just soaks through. I mean, I'm losing blood at a rapid pace here. So he yelled at him again, "I need more paper towels!" Again, that office door opens up, a hand comes out holding a single paper towel, he puts it on my arm, and it immediately soaks through. Then, he yelled out, "I need the whole roll!" in so many words. I think he added some expletives with that at that moment. Then, the guys inside the office ripped the paper towel dispenser off the wall and just handed the entire dispenser. He was wrapping my arm with paper towels, at this point, as I was laying there staring up at the roof of the factory.

Scott

I'm sure it was a day to remember for those two guys who didn't come out. They were probably traumatized for life.

Jeff

It was a day to remember for everybody who worked there - even to this day, somehow. Occasionally, I would talk to somebody or run into somebody that was there that day. They remember that day so vividly. I mean, this happened in a small town in North Carolina. In small towns, everybody knows everybody. Somebody from my high school graduating class called my accident "The JFK" of class 1993.

Scott

Everybody knows where they were?

Jeff

Everybody knows where they were. Yeah.

Scott

When you were on the floor, what was going through your head this whole time? What was your self-talk like, at this point?

Jeff

I guess the best way to describe it is I was terrified. I was in an absolute state of terror constantly, because when my arm got ripped off from the time it happened until he got me down on the ground, I was saying the non-Christian version of "Oh crap!" And I was saying it over and over and over, except I wasn't saying that. I said that the entire time until they got me down and until I saw my dad. I had never cussed in front of my dad, so as soon as I saw my dad, I said, "Oh, God!" I changed it. I think he would have forgiven me, but I wasn't sure so I just changed it up. I was laying there and I was just 1,000,000% terrified that my life is about to end. I'm 18 years old and my life is ending 4 days before my college orientation. So, those were my thoughts while I was laying there on the floor of that factory.

Scott

You mentioned your dad got there. How did he hear about this? Was he working somewhere else in the building or on the grounds?

Jeff

My dad had started at the factory as a maintenance worker. He'd been at the factory for 23 years. Actually, he told me on my first day on the job, "It took me 23 years to earn a good reputation out here. Don't you come to ruin it in one summer." I was, like, "Yes, sir. Message heard loud and clear." My dad was in a meeting in the front office. A call went out, basically, across the whole factory that there was an accident in the silos. So, anybody who felt like they could help was going in that direction. My dad was probably the third or fourth person to get to me that day. The next person who got to me was actually the last baseball coach I ever had. When he heard the call out, he started running in that direction. Somebody came by on a golf cart, he jumped on with them, and they rode out there. My old baseball coach was in the Navy in his younger years. He knelt down beside me, took his hand, and basically turned himself into a human tourniquet. He grabbed me under my right armpit and just squeezed as tight as he could to slow down my blood loss. The next person that got there was my dad and the look on his face was one that I had never seen before. Like I was saying earlier, he was in a meeting in the front office. When he heard one of the college students had been hurt, he didn't wait on them to say, "Meeting adjourned." He jumped up and took off running. When he got there, he walked up to me, we were looking at each other - I'm sure the look on his face matched the look on my face. It was just a look of just pure fear and dread terror.

Scott

When you made eye contact with your dad, what do you think was in his mind then?

Jeff

I think, at that moment, my dad blamed my accident on himself because he had gotten me the job. I'm his only son - his youngest kid. He saw me laying there on the floor of that factory, basically, bleeding to death. There's a massive puddle of blood that had already formed beside me. I think my dad actually took my accident worse than I did - he struggled with me losing an arm until the day he died. I told him numerous times, "It wasn't your fault. You didn't get me the job so that I would get hurt. You were trying to help me earn extra money for college. You were doing something in my best interest. And accidents happen." I told him that 30-50 times. The last time I told him, I think he got it because I didn't say it to him anymore after that. He was, like, "I've been waiting for you to tell me that for so long." I said, "Dad, this is probably the 30th, 40th, or 50th time I've told you that. But it was the first time you really heard it."

When he ran up and saw me laying there on the floor of the factory - he had a work pager on his hip - he took it off his hip, turned around, and threw it across a train shed which was right next to the silos. That's where they came and dropped the powdery substance off - there was a train parked there. He took that pager off, turned around, threw it up against the train, and his pager just shattered into a million pieces there. My dad actually walked away. When I told this story, they were like, "Well, how could your dad do that?!" My dad was in such shock. At that moment, he didn't know what to do, so he only walked, like, 3-5 steps away.

Then one of the next people that got to me is actually now the safety director at that factory. He came in, stood above me, and saw me laying there. He was also an EMT. He had to make a decision whether to put a tourniquet on Jeff's arm or not - it seems like a no-brainer of a decision. Well, of course, you put a tourniquet on his arm! But he also knew that if he put the tourniquet on, there would be no chance for them to be able to reattach my arm because of the damage that would happen to the arteries, veins, and stuff. So, he had to make a split-second decision of, "Do we risk him dying with the potential of getting his arm back? Or do we do everything we can to save his life?" So, he made the decision to save my life. I was laying there on the floor of the factory looking up at the ceiling when I saw him taking his belt off. I was laying there, looking at him, like, "Hang on, it's not that kind of party. Let's keep our pants on here." He took his belt off, wrapped it around my right arm, and cinched it as tight as he could to slow whatever blood loss.

Scott

That action probably saved your life, then.

Jeff

Oh, definitely. I think that by the time that it took the ambulance to get there, if that tourniquet hadn't been cinched in, I don't think I would have made it. My baseball coach was really good friends with my dad - they would go play golf together sometimes. He walked over to my dad and said, "Jeff needs you, buddy." So, my dad came over, knelt down beside me, grabbed my hand, and said, "Let's pray." As we were on the floor of the factory together, we said the Lord's Prayer. A little while later - from the time of my accident until the ambulance got there was nine minutes because the hospital was only about 5 minutes away from the factory - the ambulance arrived, they loaded me up on the ambulance, and took me to the local hospital, which was only about 5 minutes away. They had already called a helicopter to come down and get me because we're in a small town with a small hospital, so it can't always handle a situation like mine. So, they're just basically trying to keep me alive until they can get me somewhere that can help me. I got to the emergency room at the local hospital. Within a few minutes, my mom and stepdad came in. My dad came in and we were there talking. I was writhing in pain and yelling and moaning at times because my arm was pulled and ripped off - it wasn't chopped off. The big

bone in the upper part of my arm was snapped in half. I saw 2-3 inches of my bone because my skin had been ripped up higher than where the bone had stopped. So my family came in and talked to me as I was laying there in excruciating pain.

Scott

Did they give you anything for the pain?

Jeff

Yes, they did. They started giving me morphine for the pain. Eventually, it got to the point where it was starting to take the edge off a little bit, but it didn't take the pain away. They gave me something to make me comfortable but it wasn't really working. At the same time, I'm still terrified. Even though I was in the hospital, I was still in an emergency situation and I was scared that basically any breath or heartbeat could be my last at any possible moment. I was in a lot of pain. I was in constant fear. Then my mom told me, "Your Grandpa is here and he wants to see you." I said, "Okay. Just give me a second." So, I just did my best to calm myself down because my grandpa and I were as tight as two people could be. I love my grandpa. He passed away years ago, and I still think about him every day - we were as tight as any two people could be. I laid there and said, "Okay, bring him in." They brought him in, I lifted my head up, and I said, "Hey, Paul. How are you doing?" He said, "I'm doing okay. How are you?" He came in, stood there, and grabbed my right foot. My grandma was standing next to him and seeing the looks on our faces. When he said, "How are you doing?" I said, "I'll be okay. I'll be out there swinging a baseball bat again before you know it." He said, "Okay" and he squeezed my foot. Then, he turned around and walked out. I laid there and said, "Is he gone? Is he gone?" Once they said that he was gone, I started yelling again because I didn't want him to hear me in pain.

Scott

This was pretty bad timing for your mom and your stepdad because they were in the middle of a project at their house. What was that?

Jeff

My parents were having a brand new carpet put in their house. Every piece of furniture that we owned was sitting on our front porch or in our front yard. My dad was still at the factory when they were taking me to the ambulance. When my dad called my mom - my mom's name is Phyllis - he said, "Phyllis, are you sitting down?" She said, "No." He said, "Well, I need you to." So, she sat down and he told her, "Jeff has just lost his arm." She said back to him, "What do you mean 'Jeff has lost his arm'?" "He's been in an accident and he lost his arm." So, my mom was also in a state of shock. When the person that was at the house installing the carpet heard that, he got up and left the house. He told his boss later, "I had to get out of the house because I was about to throw up on their brand new carpet."

My mom immediately started calling church people and said, "Pray for Jeff. He's been in an accident." My parents were trying to decide, "What do we do? We've got our furniture everywhere and our son's in the hospital with only one arm." When people found out about that, they came and put everything back into the house. My mom and stepdad left and went to the hospital with all of our furniture still sitting out on the porch and in the yard. When people found out about this, they came to the house and started moving everything back in - that's one good thing about living in a small town. So, my family got there. They were talking to me. I don't like my family to worry about me, so I tried telling them, "I'm going to be okay." They could tell I was lying because I didn't know if I was going to be okay.

Scott

You had to fly to a major hospital. How far was that? I mean, if your family is going to drive there, how long will it take to get there?

Jeff

Yeah. They told me that it would be a 2-hour drive from that hospital to our hometown, Duke - they weren't sure. Although I had a tourniquet on, I was still losing blood, so getting there by ambulance wasn't an option. So, they had already called for a helicopter to come to get me. I was in the emergency room at the hospital when they loaded me up on the gurney and took me out to the helicopter. That's when I found out that they were taking me to Duke University Medical Center. I'm a North Carolina Tar Heels' fan, so the last place I wanted to go was Duke University Medical Center because that's as big a rival as you can get - North Carolina and Duke. So, why would I want to go somewhere that's rooting for the enemy? I'm like, "Well, I'll go there if they can reattach my arm." At that point, I was still hoping that they could reattach my arm. I didn't know anything about a tourniquet. I didn't know the condition of my arm. They loaded me up on the helicopter and started flying me to Duke University Medical Center, but then we started having issues on the helicopter. You would think, "Well, what kind of other issues could you possibly have?" Well, I told you that they were giving me morphine for the pain. Morphine made my nose itch - like, you wouldn't believe how bad was it.

Scott

I've never heard of that side effect.

Jeff

Oh my gosh. Anytime I have to take any kind of pain medicine, the first place I feel it is at my nose - I don't know if I'm weird. Maybe, I'm the only person in the world who experiences an itchy nose from any kind of medication. Morphine made makes my nose itch like crazy. Well, I only have one arm now and my left arm is full of IVs, tubes, and anything that you can think of, so I cannot bend to my left arm. My nose was itching and I couldn't scratch it. They also have an oxygen mask over my nose and mouth because I would start to hyperventilate occasionally. I never lost consciousness throughout this entire thing. I remember everything in vivid detail. I never lost consciousness until they put me to sleep. So, they got this oxygen over my nose and mouth. I was laying there and my nose was itching like crazy. When they were taking me out to the helicopter, I told the nurse to scratch my nose because it's just so bad and I can't scratch it. In the emergency room, my mom would basically sit there and scratch my nose for me.

So she told the nurse on the helicopter, "He's having a side effect from the morphine. It's making his nose itch. Can you please scratch it for him?" She said, "Sure, no problem." When we got up in the air and started flying, other things were happening as well - she was watching my vital signs and not thinking that much about my nose. I got this oxygen mask over my nose and mouth which I was trying to shake off so that I could tell her to scratch my nose. As I was shaking my head, she thought that I was freaking out and she's like, "Calm down, calm down" while I was trying to talk to her and tell her to scratch my nose through the mask. When I finally got it off, I said, "Can you scratch my nose, please?" So, she scratched it for, like, 2-3 seconds, and then she puts the mask back on. I think she scratched my nose twice in that flight. It was supposed to be a 45 minute flight, but we had to fly around thunderstorms to get to where we were going. So the 45 minute flight ended up taking up to an hour and a half. At that point. I was like, "Why don't we just fly through the thunderstorm? I mean, what else is gonna happen? Are we gonna get struck by lightning and go down in a plane or helicopter crash?" If so, then I can be on the 'What was that like' podcast twice for having an arm ripped off and surviving a

helicopter crash. We flew around the thunderstorms and finally got there in an hour and a half later. The only good thing about it was that my mom arrived a, maybe, 30 minutes later because I took an hour and a half helicopter ride while she took a 2-hour car ride. By the time I got to the hospital at Duke, my medical records said that I had lost 75% of my blood at that point.

Scott

I'm wondering how you could even survive on 25% of your body's blood?

Jeff

The only thing I can say is, it was because I had a whole lot of people praying for me and also the tourniquet. He's one of my really good friends now - his name is Judson Smith. He's the one who put the tourniquet on my arm - that played a key role in saving my life. I also think that everybody praying played a key role in saving my life because I don't understand how I could survive and stay conscious with just 25% of my blood.

Scott

That's the other thing - you were conscious the whole time! So, your mom got a ride to Duke, but your stepdad stayed behind to pack a bag and make sure the house, furnitures, and everything else is secured inside. Then, he had to call your sister. Where was your sister at this time?

Jeff

My sister was living in a town about 3 hours away. She had gone to college and got married. When she got married, they moved about 3 hours away. She was at work when my accident happened. You're right - my stepdad had to stay around because everybody can't just go somewhere that's 2-hours away without anything. So, he stayed around to pack a bag while a friend drove my mom to the hospital. As soon as she heard the news, she went out the door and left, but my dad or my stepdad stuck around to call my sister. My sister and I were always very close. She's three and a half years older than me. Me, my mom, and my sister have always been really close. My parents got divorced when I was in 3rd grade, so there was always just me, my mom, and my sister - we became really, really tight. My stepdad knew the effect that my accident was going to have on my sister - now, this was way back before social media and things like that, so the chances of her finding out about this was tougher - but he didn't want her to hear about it from anybody outside of our family, so he stuck around and he made that phone call to my sister.

Scott

Let's hear from your sister - her name is Christi - about getting that phone call.

Christi

My name is Christi Thompson and I am Jeff's sister. At the time of my brother's accident, I was studying in college and working a part-time job at a makeup counter in a department store in Spartanburg, South Carolina. The day of Jeff's accident was just a typical day. That day, the phone rang at my counter. It was my manager asking me to come to her office, which was out of the ordinary. If she needed me, at any other times, she would just come to find me. She had never asked me to come to her office before, so I felt like something must be wrong. My first thought was that I had made a customer mad, so I was trying to replay the day's events as I made my way to her office. When I reached her office door and saw the look on her face, I had a physical reaction. I felt sick on my stomach and I just wanted to yell, "What?! Just tell me who is it! Who died?!"

I don't think I said anything at all. She handed me the phone and told me that my stepdad needed to speak to me. I was in panic mode at that point. He spoke to me so calmly, but I could also hear that he was trying to mask his emotions. Time seemed to stand still and race at the same time - the room seemed to be spinning. He told me, "There had been an accident. Jeff's arm had been severed. He is being airlifted to Duke." The word 'severed' just seemed to bounce around in my brain. A picture of my brother with a really deep cut on his arm immediately formed in my head. Then, it was like the word 'severed' sunk in - I knew that it meant 'cut off', but it was just hard to accept that. I said, "Does that mean cut off or badly cut?" and hoped that I was wrong about what it meant. To this day, I still don't like that word. Again, my mom was racing. My first thought was that I had to get there. Duke was over 3 hours away, and I still had to pack my bags. My manager was kind enough to drive me home so that I could throw some things together and get to Duke. I needed to be with my family so badly. I needed to see my brother's face. As she drove me home, all I could do between the tears was pray. I felt, like, I was a million miles away from where I needed to be and time was standing still, but I knew that God heard my prayers.

Scott

It sounds like it was pretty traumatic for her to hear that news.

Jeff

Extremely traumatic. It would have been the same for me if I had heard something like that happen to my sister - I would drop everything, get to wherever she is, and do whatever I can to help her. I wouldn't expect anything less from her when this happened to me. Yes, going through my accident was really tough, and it's really hard to describe how painful it was. Most people would know what it's like to break a bone or to dislocate something, but to experience it all at the same time - to have your skin, basically, torn and your bones breaking into half - that pain was unbearable. Knowing what I put my family through was brutal. I never want to cause my family any issues. After I lost my arm, I always tried to pretend like I was okay because I didn't want my family to worry about me. One of the things that probably still bothers me a little bit is the fact that I put my family and co-workers through such a traumatic situation. I played baseball with quite a few of my co-workers - we were either on the same team or playing against each other - so, these guys were my friends. Just knowing that my accident put everybody through that was tough to deal with.

Scott

Did somebody go and retrieve your arm from the auger?

Jeff

Yes, sir. One of the things that my dad told me was, as he was running past the screw auger - he was maybe 10-15 feet on the other side of it - he heard somebody yell, "We've got to get this auger open and get his arm out." So, he knew that somebody had just lost an arm, but he didn't know exactly who it was. He said that when he ran out of the meeting that he was in, as he pushed the double doors open, he prayed a quick prayer and said, "Please, God. Don't let it be Jeff." He told me later that he heard God kind of whisper to him, "Well, who do you want it to be then?" So, my dad told me, right then, he already pretty much knew that it was me. So, some of the guys who were working in that area opened the auger up, took out what was left of my arm, put it in a cooler, and put it on ice. My arm was in the ambulance with me when we were heading to the hospital. Then, it was on the helicopter with me heading to Duke University Medical Center. When my mom got to where I was at Duke, she laid her hand on me and

prayed for me for a little while. Then, she would go over to the cooler, put her hand on the cooler, and she would pray for God to work this situation out. I can't imagine what those people saw when they opened it up, because my arm was so mangled as it went through the machine - I just can't imagine what they saw.

Scott

That's not what they signed up for.

Jeff

No, it's not. Honestly, if anybody was a counselor or a therapist in my hometown, they should send me a cut because of all the people that I put in therapy - I should get a cut of that because I kept them in business for a long time. When I got there, they took me into, I guess, like, a prep room. They couldn't just rush me in - they had to get the team ready and everything. The thing that I remember most vividly about prior to my surgery at Duke was them loading me up on a gurney and taking me into the operating room. I was laying there looking up at the ceiling. It's what you see on the TV shows - all these bright lights shining on you, it's just really cold, and everything looks like stainless steel. They told me that they were going to give me anesthesia to put me to sleep for surgery. I remember trying to fight - which seems weird - because I had this feeling that if my eyes close, they would never open again. I will tell you this: you want to live even more when you think you're about to die. So, I was trying to sit up and get off the table, but they had my arms and chest strapped down, so I couldn't go anywhere. They started giving me the anesthesia and told me to count backward from 100 - I don't think I made it to 98. I remember so vividly that my eyes were closing and the last thing I saw were these bright lights in this operating room shutting down on me.

Scott

Did you think of any possibility that your arm would be reattached when you wake up?

Jeff

I really did. I didn't understand what the tourniquet meant. I also didn't know what condition my arm was in. I didn't know how far my arm had gotten into the machine. When you turn the machine off, it doesn't just immediately shut down - it's not like turning a light switch on and off. It takes time for the machine to just stop rotating. So, I didn't know how far my arms had gotten into the machine. I was really hoping that it was still intact - broken bones, things like that - that they would be able to piece me back together, but the wrist was crushed, the forearm was snapped and cut in a couple of places, and the elbow was completely crushed. It's like the opposite of a clean cut. It's almost like you have a bag of ice which you decide to break it up - you lay the bag of ice down and just beat it with a hammer. Well, that's kind of what happened to my bones - they're just being snapped and broken into so many pieces that you can't do anything with it.

By this time, my entire family had made it to the hospital. My pastor, family, and friends had basically taken over the waiting room at Duke University Medical Center. They were all in there talking, praying, sitting, and just being with each other. At one point, the surgeon came out to talk to my family and said, "Well, Jeff's arm was too mangled - it can't be reattached - but his hand made it all the way through the machine with no issues." The reason why is because of where the auger grabbed my glove. As the auger returned, my glove just stayed right next to that thread, so nothing happened to my hand - my hand was in perfect shape. So, the surgeon came to my parents and said, "We can't reattach his arm, but we can attach his hand to the end of his arm." My arm had been cut or pulled off a few inches above my elbow, and they said, "We

can attach his hand to the end of his arm." So, my family was like, "Well, okay. Will he be able to use that hand?" The surgeon said, "He'll probably not be able to use that hand, but it's never been done before." I was thinking that there's a reason why it's never been done before. If I have woken up with a hand at where my bicep is, I would have been very angry and wanted to hit somebody in the face. If I wanted to hit somebody in the face with my right hand, they have to be standing really close to me.

Scott

You would be invading their personal space.

Jeff

I was thinking, like, "Does the surgeon expect me to walk around clapping like a seal with my two hands right up by my chest?" Thankfully, my family said, "No. Let's not do that." Instead, what they did was-- because I had more bone than skin, they actually cut the skin on the palm of my right hand off - and a little bit at the outside of my arm - and attach it so that we didn't have to do major skin grafts from the rest of my body. So, I was thankful for that.

Scott

Given your love of comedy now, if you had a hand hanging off of your right bicep today, would you kind of get a kick out of that?

Jeff

No, I wouldn't. If I have woken up with the hand there, I would be, like, "Take me back in and cut it off! I don't want it!" especially because I couldn't use it. That was the one thing that made no sense to me. When the surgeon said it's never been done before - there's a lot of stuff that has never been done before - the reason why it's never been done before is because it's stupid.

Scott

It seems like the only reason they would consider doing it was so that you would, at least, still have a hand and wouldn't look too unusual, but that would seem much more unusual. When people would look at that in public, they'd say, "What's the story behind that? How did that happen?"

Jeff

I get stared at enough as it is. It's not because I'm that good-looking. I do get stared at because my wife's good-looking - like, how did that guy end up with that girl? The only thing I can say is prayer works and miracles still happen. I get stared at all the time for just having one arm. If there would have been a hand there, I cannot imagine the looks that I would get from people. I mean, people stare at me all the time. I've always wear a sock over my arm because of the way it got mangled and the way it looked is just odd to this day - 28 years later. I still don't like looking at my arm because of how mangled it got. Now, I do use my arm for one-handed jokes - I've got all kinds of one-handed jokes and things like that. It's gotten me out of speeding tickets before. People would be, like, "Well that's not fair!" I was like, "No, you have two hands and I have one - that's not fair! I'm just playing the hand that I've been dealt." They're like, "Well, you can't always use that." I'm like, "As long as I have one hand, Yes, I can."

Scott

I've seen some pictures of you but I don't see a prosthetic. Did you get one of those? What are your thoughts on that?

Jeff

I have a couple of prosthetics. After I lost my arm, I wore it every day. I always wore long sleeves no matter what the temperature was - it could be 120 degrees - because I was trying to hide the fact that I only had one arm. So, when I walked, I would try to swing it like a normal arm. I couldn't do or hold anything with it - it just filled up the sleeve. That hand was rubbing against my jeans and, before long, it started to turn blue - so, I started looking like a smurf. When I went to college in the mountains of North Carolina, people probably thought that I got frostbite because I was walking around without any gloves when the temperature is 67 degrees below 0, and they're like, "Oh, my gosh! His hands turned blue! He's getting frostbite!" But no, the hand is just not real. It's got the dye from my blue jeans on it. So yeah, I have prosthetics. Actually, they're up in the attic of my house right now. The last time I wore it was when I spoke at my grandpa's funeral - I haven't worn it since then. It was uncomfortable, and I've just learned to be comfortable with who I am. I can live my life so much better without a prosthetic. So, I make the best I can with what I got.

Scott

What are some of the challenges or situation that you realize, like, maybe, even unexpectedly, "Oh, wait a minute, I can't do this."?

Jeff

I was in surgery for 13 hours, and I was in the hospital for 16 days after I lost my arm. In the first part of my stay in the hospital, they made sure that there was no infection, that they had gotten it cleaned out, and that I wouldn't have any issues. In the second half of my stay, I was learning how to live left-handed because I was right-handed before my accident. People told me that I'm left-handed now but, actually, I'm only one-handed, but whatever - it's just semantics. I was learning things in the hospital that I couldn't do, like learning how to use my left hand to feed myself and to brush my teeth. For some reason, I couldn't do the circling hand motion, so I would literally put the toothbrush in my mouth and just shake my head around to brush my teeth. By the time I got out of Duke University Medical Center, I believe that I had lost 30-35 pounds. So, when I got out, the first thing I wanted to do was eating a steak, so we went to a steak house. When my steak was in front of me, I was looking at it and trying to figure out how to cut my own steak because, normally, you'd have a knife and a fork working together as a team, but my team got cut into half. So, I took my knife and just started sewing. I basically carved my initials at the top of the steak because I couldn't cut it at all. My family had to get used to me only having one arm as well. When my mom looked at me, she was like, "Is there something wrong with your steak?" I was like, "I don't know." She's like, "Why not?" I said, "Because I haven't tasted it yet." She said, "Why not?" I said, "I can't cut it." Then, the look on her face changed as she felt so bad, like, "Oh my gosh. I should have known that!" So, it took me and my family a long time to get used to what it was like for me to have one arm.

Scott

Those are situations that you couldn't predict - something like that is gonna take you by surprise because you never thought about it.

Jeff

I call them 'sneak attacks'. I never knew when a sneak attack would come. One time, I went to a McDonald's to get something to eat. When I was done, I went to throw my trash away. This was back when they had those - I haven't been in a fast-food restaurant for so long because of COVID, so I don't even know if they still have them - swinging doors that you had to push open to get to the trashcan. I was thinking, "Well, how do I do this?" I kind of pushed the tray in to

open the door up, but it knocked all of my trash down on the floor by my feet. At that point, I was so embarrassed because everybody was looking at the poor helpless one-armed kid who can't throw his trash away properly. So, I never knew when those sneak attacks were going to come. Believe it or not, 28 years later, I'd still have a sneak attack every now and then. Thankfully, I'm married now and my wife is probably the most thoughtful person on the planet. If you want to do a "What was that like" on "What's it like to be the most thoughtful person?", I've got your perfect guest. She thinks of things before I do. Like, if I have to take any kind of medicine in those tin foil packets that are, sometimes, really hard to open, she'll just go ahead and open them all, put it in a packet, and label what it is, so that I don't even have to worry about it. She did it without even telling me. When I go to take my medicine, I'm like, "Well, there it is. She's already got it." So, I'm super thankful for a thoughtful wife.

Scott

One of the things that you wrote was that you, kind of, had to learn to walk again, because of losing one arm. I never would have thought that it would affect your balance.

Jeff

That's something I never would have thought about either. Having to learn how to walk again would have never crossed my mind. The first time I stood up, I almost fell down on my left-hand side because my balance was off. I learned how to walk by walking down the hallway while leaning against the wall on my right side, because I felt that I was leaning so far to the left. That was how I learned how to walk - by leaning up against a wall. While I was in the hospital, something else that I found very interesting was the doctors told my family - my parents and sister - "Do not mention the fact that Jeff only has one arm. He needs to be the first one who mentions it. Do not mention it." So, to every visitor who came to my room, my family would stand outside and say, "Do not mention to Jeff that he only has one arm." When I woke up, I looked over at where my right arm should be and it's covered in heated blankets because they're trying to promote circulation in my right arm. So, I can't see my arm. When I tried to lift it, I could tell that it was gone. At that moment, I already knew that I only had one arm. The doctors told my family, "Make sure nobody mentions the fact that he has one arm until he does it himself."

Scott

And that was mainly for your mental health?

Jeff

Exactly - for my mental health.

Scott

Okay. Talking about mental health - this happened 20 years ago but you just recently had a diagnosis of PTSD from this. How did that come about?

Jeff

After my accident, they sent me to counseling almost immediately, which I hated going to but it was, like, a requirement - They were making me go. I can't tell you how many different counselors I went to. My mom would drive me there and she's like, "How was it?" I was like, "Take a good look at this office because we're not coming back." I had nothing against the counselor. I just didn't want to talk about it. Eventually, I realize that they will send me to every counselor on the planet until I talk to one and I am just prolonging this process. So, I finally went to one. I said, "Okay, I'll talk to this guy." I think they made me go to 8 sessions. I said, "I'll go to

these 8 sessions.” So, after I went to these 8 sessions, I never went back. I thought I was okay. Yeah, my arm got ripped off. It was a lot of pain. It wasn't until this year that I started dealing with some anxiety and depression, and I was like, “What is going on with me?” I went to talk to my primary care physician and she said, “I think you have PTSD.” I was like, “But I haven't been in war.” I thought the only way to qualify for PTSD is to go to war. Since then, what I found out is if you have been in a situation where you were genuinely afraid for your life, you are a candidate for PTSD. I genuinely believe that's exactly what it has been. For all these years, there were times I would deal with anxiety and depression. This past year has been one of the worst years of my life, honestly. I've gone through some really low lows, but I'm thankful where I'm at now. Praying with my wife and family, getting into counseling, and finding something that has really worked has helped me learn how to deal with what happened to me.

Scott

The thing that has worked - you told me about this - is EMDR therapy. I've heard of that but I don'ts really know anything about it. First of all, what is that? Did you expect it to work as you were going in?

Jeff

EMDR - I know the first two letters stand for Eye Movement - I can't remember.

Scott

It's Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing therapy. I only know that because I looked it up.

Jeff

I looked it up too, but I always forgot. The only thing I can ever remember is the eye movement part. I'll be honest: I thought it was the dumbest thing I've ever heard of. When I went to see a counselor or therapist, they started talking to me about EMDR. I said, “Listen, I'll try anything.” I was at a point that I was feeling so miserable. I said, “I'll try anything. Tell me what to do and I'll do it.” She said, “Okay, there's this thing called EMDR.” There are a couple of ways that they can do it. The most common way was to hold one thing in one hand and another thing in the other hand - that's the best way that I understand it. Obviously, I haven't done that kind of therapy because I only have one hand. I think the way that works is you get a little impulse in one hand and you get a little impulse in the other hand, and it triggers, like, something you have when you're in your REM sleep cycle.

She said, “I want to do this but you only have one one hand. So, I don't know how that would work.” I said, “I'll put it behind my knees. I'll put it under my armpits. If you think it'll help, I'll do whatever.” She said, “Well, let me figure some things out. The next time you come, we'll give it a try.” The next time I came, she said, “What we're going to do is put these headphones on. I'm sure you've had one of those hearing tests where you listen for a beep: whichever ear you hear a beep, you'd raise that hand or the other hand. Basically, you'd hear a beep - it's just like a metronome - beeping back and forth from ear to ear. That is also supposed to somehow trigger what it's like when you're in that REM sleep cycle. It helps to get down to the core - like, what's really rooted deep down inside. Even though I told her, “Listen, I'll try anything”, I thought that this is the dumbest thing I have ever heard of in my life.

So, we put the headphones on and it started beeping. Before the beeping would start, she would ask me questions. Then, she would ask me a question after the beeping stopped. She was like, “How do you feel right now?” I was, like, aggravated and annoyed. She's like, “Oh,

okay. What made you aggravated and annoyed?" I was like, "This thing is stupid." She was like, "Just give it a chance." I'm like, "Okay, so what am I supposed to think about?" So, she told me what I was supposed to think about and I would start thinking about that. Then, the beeping would start again. Then, I would take them off.

It's the only time in my life that I've ever heard a doctor - a therapist, counselor, or anything - say, "This works for everybody." So I was like, "Okay, I'll give it a shot." So, I put the headphones back on, it started beeping, I took the headphones back off, and I was like, "What am I supposed to think about?" Again, she explained it to me. I put the headphones back on and listen to the beeps. I was still thinking, "This seems, like, hocus pocus. This seems so weird." But I was like, "Jeff, you said you would try anything, so try it." I closed my eyes and I started thinking about what she told me to think about. Then she said, "Okay, what did you get?" I was like, "I didn't get anything." She's like, "Okay, let's do it again." Before long, the thing she told me to think about was, like, on the surface. After doing this 4-5 times, I was all the way down to the root of what I thought my problem was. After a few of those cycles, I was down to what the root of the issue was. I have been absolutely blown away at how it has worked. Since then, I've talked to a couple of other people who have done it and they said that it's been the exact same experience for them. She said, "This works for everybody." So for listeners listening to this, I would say give it a shot because you're not gonna lose anything. It has done absolute wonders for me.

Scott

I'm just fascinated by what our minds and brains are capable of. We know so little about them, but they're just incredible things. I want to be respectful of your time. We've gone on for a while here. There are a couple of things that I want to talk to you about. I hope you filed a lawsuit against the glass factory because, obviously, they were involved.

Jeff

I did file a lawsuit. We thought we were making a very good decision. We picked some attorneys that were 2 hours away from my hometown. We wanted that law firm to have no ties to that factory at all and to just keep them separate. That way, there were no hidden agendas or anything. So, we went and got these attorneys. They told me, "Oh my gosh, your case is so strong. This is a slam dunk. This is going to be one of the easiest cases we've ever handled."

Scott

It seems like it would be!

Jeff

Yeah. The sad thing is we, kind of, got hoodwinked a little bit because we found out that the law firm that we hired told me, "You've got it. This is easy." and then, all of a sudden, their narrative changed. When they talked to me and my family, they said, "They're offering you a settlement. You should take it because if you don't take it, you might not get anything." I'm like, "Well, what happened to 'this is a slam dunk'?" They're like, "No, we've come to find out that it's not that easy. There's a lot involved." We're like, "Oh my gosh! So, it's better to get a little bit than to get nothing?!" The attorneys were pushing us so hard to settle. They're the experts, they know what's going on better than we do, so we took the attorney's advice and said, "Okay, we'll settle for just a ridiculously low amount." Later, we found out that the law firm that we had hired had, like, a case worth millions of dollars that could come into that law firm. What they were doing was trying to clear their books. They said to every one of their clients, "You need to settle." We didn't know what was happening, so we settled.

I have decided to forgive everybody who had anything to do with my accident. I've decided to forgive them for taking the safety equipment off the machine or having the equipment without any safety equipment on it. The people at the factory - who are no longer there - lied about me. I started having shoulder issues and they were saying that my left shoulder issues were caused by the overuse of my left arm. They were saying - we had to go see a mediator one time - that I fell off a cliff while I was rock climbing, but I caught myself by the tips of my fingers and that's how I started having shoulder issues. They said in court that I fell 100 feet and caught myself by my fingertips. I was like, "Superman isn't that strong." But I made the decision to forgive all of these people because it's one of the things that I live by. Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. If I choose to not forgive somebody, I'm giving them power over my life and I'm not allowing that to happen.

Scott

I think that's the best way going forward. Since this happened, you have actually set a world record in an unlikely category. What did you do?

Jeff

Years ago, back in 2005 - I did it again in 2006 - I broke the world record for the longest drive of a golf ball that was hit with one arm. Initially, the record was hailed by a guy - I think he was in Sweden or Norway - whose record was 236 yards. That record is measured from the point you hit the ball until the point the ball first touches the ground. They don't count the bounce, the roll, and stuff like that because, if that's the case, I'd go out to an airport, bounce the ball down the runway, and I'd hit 3 miles. They count it from the point you hit the ball to the point the ball first touches the ground. You have to get the land surveyed to make sure it's flat enough because if you go stand up on a mountain and just hit it off into a valley, you're a monster. The first time I broke the record, I was living in Oklahoma. That was where I had gone out to Oklahoma to attend Bible college after I graduated from Appalachian State University.

The first time I broke the record was out there at a driving range where I hit the ball - I always forget what the distance was the first time because I always remember the second - I think, 252 yards away. However, that would never become official because the driving range where I broke the record told me, "We'll get the land surveyed. We will submit the paperwork and it's done." Well, they never did. So, the following year, I flew home to North Carolina and broke it on one of the golf courses that I grew up playing on at a golf course in Laurinburg, North Carolina called Scotch Meadows. That day, it was my last swing. I was so tired because I had been warming up. You'd think that you won't really get tired from swinging at a golf ball, but when you unleash every ounce of you into every swing, you tire out quickly. With my last swing, I ended up hitting the ball into the air, 258 yards away, 2 feet 4 inches on the fly. It was pretty cool because I actually made it on the ESPN top 10 plays of the week for that. They called me by the wrong name. I was on ESPN twice for breaking the record and they still called me by the wrong name. The first time they called me was Jeff Barnhill. The second time they called me was Steve Bardel. People asked me if I was going to break the record again and I was like, "I'm gonna keep breaking it until ESPN gets my name right." In the video of the top 10 plays of the week, it said that I hit the ball 263 yards away because that's what one of the laser measurement tool that they were using was saying. When they surveyed it, it actually said 258 yards, 2 feet 4 inches - that was the precise number.

Scott

Still enough for the record, though.

Jeff

It was enough for the record. Unfortunately, that one never got into the Guinness Book of World Records because before mine became official, there was a guy with two arms who competes in, like, long drive competitions around the world - his arms looked like my thighs - he used one arm to hit the golf ball off the club, I think, 292 yards away. I can hit a ball 292 yards away with one arm, but that's counting the bounce and the roll. We were in talks with Guinness for a long time and they considered setting up a separate category for just people with one arm. I have went to 1-2 long drive competition for one-armed golfers - that's always a lot of fun. I did attempt to break the world record to really just be able to open doors, to be able to go out and speak because that's what I love to do.

Scott

That's what you were doing these days. You're speaking. You've written a book. You've got a website that talks about all of this. Tell us how can people get in touch with you on what's going on and all that.

Jeff

People can get in touch with me by going to my website: JeffBardel.com. You can hear me share my testimony. I travel around, speak to churches, and share motivational messages about losing my arm and breaking the record. I'd share motivational messages in schools, businesses, and things like that. I also do safety seminars as well because I don't want my accident to be in vain. There are three main things that I want my accident to do:

1. Lead people to Jesus.
2. Help motivate people to do things that they thought they couldn't do but they can.
3. Keep people safe in these factory situations.

People are working in these dangerous situations all the time and they might think it's safe, but it could always be safer. Those are, kind of, the 3 things that I'd like to achieve when I go out and talk. My book is called "If I Would Have Died That Day." That's available on my website as well at JeffBardel.com/shop. You can actually go onto my website. On the homepage, you can read the first chapter for free just to see if it floats your boat. If it does, then you can go over to the shop and purchase it, and then I'll get it shipped out to you as quickly as I can.

Scott

I know you're on Facebook and Instagram. We'll have links to all of these things on the show notes for this episode. Also, we'll have a video of that record-breaking golf shot.

Jeff

That swing was actually made at a long drive competition. There was a group of long drivers who said, "Will you set the record for our long drive competitions for the longest drive with one arm?" I told him, "I would." I think that one was 288 yards, but that one counted the bounce and the roll. But yeah, there is a video of that. There's also a picture of the long drive competition down in South Carolina and a picture of the long drive competition that I won.

Scott

Thanks for coming on here. Thanks for sharing your stories. Very interesting.

Jeff

Scott. Thank you, man. This is just so much fun. I was super nervous even though I travel and do public speaking. I told my wife that I'm more nervous about this podcast than I have been. I said, "I feel like I'm about to speak to 50,000 people." She said, "Well, you kinda are."

Scott

Yeah, you kinda are.

Jeff

So I just hope that my story will help somebody, motivate somebody, maybe keep somebody safe, or just to draw somebody closer to Jesus. That's why I live my life the way I do.

Scott

Jeff didn't really go into this during our conversation, but when he got to the hospital right after the accident, and he was taken into surgery, he came very close to dying because of the extensive amount of blood he had already lost. He does talk about that in the book though.

One of the things he mentioned really stuck with me. Remember when he was in the ER, and in severe pain, and his grandfather came in to see him. And Jeff prepared himself to put on a strong face, because he didn't want his grandpa to see him in such pain.

It reminded me of a previous episode I did, quite a while ago. This was with my friend Sue, who was skydiving, and her parachute didn't open properly, and she came crashing to the ground. She was still barely conscious but in really bad shape with a bunch of broken bones. But even in that condition, her first thought was about her teenage daughter, who was on the ground and had seen Sue fall. Sue didn't want Jessica to be traumatized by this, so she came up with a plan and gave instructions to the person who got to her first:

Sue

I said, "Lee, My daughter's 14 years old. She has long blonde hair. She's wearing jeans or shorts and a T-shirt or whatever. If you see a young lady come over who looks like that, tell me and I will stop moaning because I don't want her to hear me in pain. I want her to know that I'm okay." He said, like, "Okay, she's like 20-50 feet away." When she came over, I said, "Honey, mom's fine. Can you go to the car and get my driver's license?" So she went to the car. As soon as she was out of earshot, I would moan again because the pain was just excruciating. When she came back, I said, "Thanks, honey. Now, can you go get my sunglasses?" Then, she went to the car and did that. The third time she came back, I asked her to go get my insurance card because I knew that the paramedics were coming. I reassured her that I was okay, but I knew she was worried.

Scott

If you haven't heard that episode, you should go listen to it because Sue is a pretty amazing person and her recovery after that crash is incredible. It's episode 17 called "Sue crashed a skydive".

Okay, we're not even close to being done yet here in this episode. I've got a really cool announcement about a new benefit for supporters of the show, but just before that we've got a couple of voice mails.

First one is from Tracy, with an observation about the episode “Danny found a baby in the subway”:

Tracy

Hi, this is Tracy. I just wanted to point something out. First, I find your podcast very interesting. It makes my long-distance ride much quicker. I listened to the story about a couple who found the baby on the subway and I wanted to point out a very interesting coincidence - the police named him Daniel, the hospital named him ‘Ace’ and his last name was ‘Doe’ because his parentage was unknown. If you put that together, that says “DAD.” The man who found him pointed out that it was meant to be. I think the fact that he ended up with those initials is just another sign that it really was meant to be. They sounded like they did a great job with him. He’s such a lucky baby to have been found. Keep up the good work! Take care!

Scott

And I also got this message from Bill. He was the guest in the last episode, titled “Bill got a dreaded phone call” where he told the story of his daughter Kristin being murdered. Bill’s passion now is to raise awareness about dating violence, so he has written a book, and he has a podcast where he talks about that -

Bill

Hi, Scott. It's Bill Mitchell. I just wanted to say that I love how the momentum is going after our interview started airing. I feel this surge and it feels pretty good. I say that because it took a lot of time to get the whole campaign going at this end - the paperback, the Ebook, the audio book which is new, and the podcast. I have to tell you that this infusion of interest that I'm seeing has to be from our interview on “What was that like”. That episode is sending great numbers of newcomers to me. It's great because when they come my way, they can learn all kinds of life-saving messages and what to do. So, you've really helped get people to learn about what I'm doing. Thank you so much. My podcast is, like, lighting up. The book sales are way up. Anyway, I just wanted to say that, together, you and I have practically guaranteed to improve hundreds of lives and save a few. Preventing the next Kristin Mitchell tragedy has always been my central goal. I couldn't have done this without you and your podcast, Scott. I just want to, really, thank you again. I hope we can chat again soon. Bye.

Scott

Okay, here’s what’s new. After the last episode, I arranged a Zoom chat for anyone who’s a supporter of the show. You can sign up to be a supporter at [WhatWasThatLike.com/support](https://www.WhatWasThatLike.com/support). Anyway, we got on Zoom and had a bunch of listeners on there, and they asked me questions about the podcast, how I put it together, sort of some behind-the-scenes stuff, and we talked about some of the episodes, and it was nice, just getting to know each other.

And we’re doing it again – this Sunday afternoon at 4 pm eastern time. If you support the show at any level, you’ll get that invitation. And this time we’re going to be doing some What Was That Like podcast trivia. You’ve binged all 100 episodes? Think you have a pretty good memory of the details? Well, here’s your chance to test it out. It’s gonna be fun, so I hope to see you there! Again, you can sign up as a supporter at [WhatWasThatLike.com/support](https://www.WhatWasThatLike.com/support).

And related to that, the new Raw Audio episode, #21, was just released.

In this episode:

1) There’s an unexpected officer-involved shooting, at the scene of a car crash,

- 2) A police officer approaches a suspect, not knowing what the man has in his pocket –
- 3) And police try to save a woman who's being held at knifepoint inside an apartment –

Alright, that was a lot of things to cover. And that means we're now at this week's listener story. This one is from Mary, and it comes with a content warning. This story involves non fatal injury to an animal. Stay safe, and I'll see you in two weeks.

(Listener Story)

This is Mary from Southern California. I'm fairly new to your podcast. I find that first-person accounts are so interesting. It gives dimension to the stories - some of which made headlines. Your recent episode of Karen Runge's encounter with poachers and their dogs in South Africa made my heart race because of an experience I had with my dog. This happened in March of 2020. My dog, Mila, was 11 at the time. She's a rescued mixed breed - she's black and caramel in color - and our best guess is, maybe, she's a mix of Doberman, Beagle, Shepherd, or Boxer. She has short hair, ears that flop at the tips, and she can smile. She has 40 pounds of energy, athleticism and curiosity. She's super smart and friendly. She and I walk daily about 4 miles on a fairly consistent route through our suburban quasi rural neighborhood. It's not unusual to encounter other dogs and even horses on our walks. Most of my neighborhood doesn't have sidewalks so we typically walk in the street or on the horse trails.

On this particular march morning, Mila and I had set out on our usual 7 o'clock walk. Our route took us by a number of houses where dogs would bark as we walk pass them. Being mindful of the early hour, I would do my best to walk on the opposite side of the street so as to keep the barking to a minimum. We were in the last half of our walk heading south down at the side street that wasn't heavily traveled. The only people who uses that particular street live in one of the dozen or so houses on the street. For that reason, I usually walk down the middle of the street and occasionally check behind me for any improbability of a car approaching.

We had just turned down this street when I caught movement out of the corner of my eye. When I looked behind me, I spotted two Rottweilers approaching at a slow trot. I held up my hand and said "stay", which they did. Instead of looking curious like most dogs we've encountered, I can only describe them as being watchful. To go directly home, I would have to walk in their direction. I decided to pull Mila closer to me and continue walking away at a leisurely pace, so as not to encourage them to chase us. I said "stay" one more time, and turned to walk away. In no time, they were right up next to me. My dog didn't seem alarmed. I was hoping that they would all just sniff and move on. But before I could even comprehend what was happening, the larger one of the two dogs clamped his mouth down on the back of my dog's neck and dragged her to a front yard that we were in front of. He proceeded to press her down with his mouth off of her neck. The most ungodly screaming was coming from her. I was screaming for help too.

The second Rottweiler was standing next to my dog. I was afraid that if the larger dog was able to flip me over, the second dog would go for her belly. A friend who has many dogs once told me, "If two dogs are fighting, you don't grab them by the collar because you don't want your hands that close to their mouth. Instead, you should grab their back legs and pull them apart." I grabbed the dog's back legs in an attempt to do just that. He shifted position in such a sudden jerky motion that it knocked me down on my back. I tried again to grab anything that I could get ahold of to get him off my dog, but he was so muscular - there was just nothing to grab. I remember realizing that these dogs were killing my dog right in front of me and that I couldn't

stop them. The home I was in front of was occupied by an older resident who was likely reluctant to come outside even if she heard me. The house to my left was unoccupied as it was for sale. The house behind me was newly remodeled and I doubted that I could be heard through their new windows. Plus, in March, not many people were leaving windows open, so the chances of anyone hearing me screaming were minimal.

Then, I realized that a car had approached. The driver stopped and came running over. I heard him say, "What are you guys doing out?" as he proceeded to kick the larger dog. As soon as my dog was freed, I asked if he would, please, drive me home. He said, "Yes." So, I managed to get my dog into his car. Her eyes were wide with terror and she was trembling uncontrollably. It took him a few minutes to return to his car which he used to drive us home. I managed to get his first name - Andrew. I learned later that he recognized the dogs - they belong to his neighbor. He had called the neighbor, whose wife came out and got the dogs. Once we got home, I took Mila into the bathroom where I could wipe her off. Her neck was wet with what I had thought was slobber, but the washcloth turned out to be bloody. So, I knew that she was more seriously injured than I originally thought.

I took her to our vet who irrigated and cleaned her wounds. They said that they generally didn't do deep cleaning as the tissue was already so damaged and they didn't want to do further damage. They sent her home with antibiotics and cautioned me to watch for infection. As it turned out, the wounds became infected and she had to undergo another surgery with stitches and drains. To give you an idea of how large the Rottweiler was in relation to Mila, the wounds stretched from punctures next to her right ear across to her left shoulder. She was a pretty pitiful sight.

I was able to track down our guardian angel, Andrew, who said that he had left for work a little later than usual that morning. If he left for work in his normal time, it's unlikely that any other cars would have driven past. I was able to track down the owner of the Rottweilers as well. He admitted that it was his fault that his dogs were out. His automatic gate closer had bumped into his truck bumper as he had left for work. Unbeknownst to him, the gate had reopened, allowing his dogs to get out. He took full responsibility for the attack - covering all of our vet bills which were quite extensive. Mila's fully recovered. She's more wary of loose dogs than she used to be. She'll be 13 next month. We still walk every day - not always - for miles. She determines our route and duration these days. She has severe arthritis in her back legs, but she's still game for walks every day. In so many of your guests' stories, there's a turning point when something just happens at the right time. If I had been able to get the larger dog off my dog, I'm not sure how that would have unfolded. I can't imagine those dogs allowing my dog and I to just retreat. In my case, a guardian angel named Andrew arrived at just the right time.