

Episode 106: Tessi heard a tree fall

I live in a wonderful little town in Florida, called Safety Harbor. It's in the Tampa Bay area. And one of the things that people love about this place is that there are lots of big, shady trees.

There's one particular tree that everyone knows about. It's a huge oak tree, called the Baranoff Oak, and it's named after one of the early property owners here. This tree is estimated to be over 300 years old, and it's huge – the diameter of the trunk is around 20 feet, which is almost 7 meters. And experts have estimated that it weighs around 800 tons.

If you do a Google search for Baranoff Oak, you can see pictures of it and you'll see why it's so special. You can also read about how, a few years back, the city took action to try to protect it, and in doing so, they almost killed it. It's still there though, and I get to see it almost every morning.

My guest today is Tessi. When she was younger, she had a job working outdoors. And by outdoors, I mean in the deep forest. So she and her co-workers were literally surrounded by trees – really BIG trees – all day. Some were over a hundred feet tall.

Working in the forest is physically demanding, and Tessi loved being out there for days at a time. But things changed when one of those huge trees came crashing to the ground.

Scott

Where were you when this happened?

Tessi

I was in the Eastern Sierras. The incident took place in the Golden Trout Wilderness. We were down by Jordan Hot Springs. So, that's pretty far south from, like, Mammoth and Bishop Lakes, California.

Scott

Is that all part of the Inyo National Forest?

Tessi

Yes. That east side is the Inyo National Forest. Farther north is Yosemite National Park - just to give a reference. Yosemite is in Sierra.

Scott

You had an interesting work setup. What you were doing? How far were you from, like, the nearest town or from other people?

Tessi

Well, this year, we were pretty far south. I'll go into a little bit of what the trail work is and describe what it is so that you guys know what is going on there. I worked with the Inyo National Forest and I was a part of a trail crew. There were probably about 4 trail crews that season out of Bishop and a couple more out of Mammoth Lakes. Normally, I'd always work up north in the higher Sierra - like, 10,000-to-11,000 feet. Usually, there would be just rock and you would be

above the treeline. This year of the incident, we were in a completely different zone than we were used to. It was a 3-hour drive south from Bishop. Then, we would hike 6-miles from there.

Scott

So you weren't near anything?

Tessi

No. It took a while to get there.

Scott

What exactly is trail work? What were you doing?

Tessi

We didn't make new trails - these are all existing trails that we would go and maintain. Like, in the High Sierra, we were building rock walls, water bars, check steps, and just trying to keep the trail from eroding because the entire landscape there would be completely destroyed if it keeps eroding away. So, the place we're in that year of the incident was, kind of, completely different because instead of hiking straight up into the rocky alpine area of the Sierra, we were hiking down. There were more trees and meadows - it was a completely different scene. The reason we were there was to rehab a fire area that had burned the year prior - the McNally fire, I believe. If all the trees, brushes, and everything were burnt, there's nothing that can hold the soil in. So, we were there to, kind of, maintain the existing trail. That meant using logs to make a water bar or a bridge or just anything to keep the fill back into the trail.

Scott

So you guys were so far away from everything. You must have stayed out there for a certain amount of time. Like, it was kind of camping, right?

Tessi

Oh, yes. Our schedule was we'd work 9 days on and have 5 days off - that included the drive time and hiking in. Then, once you're out there, you want to stay in work. We do 9-hour days of completely physical work. The trail workers are definitely the hard-working bunch. It was just physical - you're moving rocks. We worked in the wilderness area, which also meant that you can't use any power tools. You can't even have a wheelbarrow or anything that's not primitive. So, we always had those kinds of challenges, which made it special. Like, we took pride in our work in using crosscut saws and all that kind of stuff.

Scott

How many people were in this group?

Tessi

In my group at Jordan Hot Spring were me, Gwen, Brent, and Chad. So, there were four of us. On that tour out, we had our main hire boss, Kevin, come out because there was an enormous tree blocking the trail, like, a mile down from where we were camping. He was there to blast it out with dynamite or whatever he used. So, he just happened to be out that night. Otherwise, it would have just been me, Brent, Chad, and Gwen. Gwen was actually our crew leader, so she's the one who has, like, the radio or any other way of getting a hold of anybody. So, it's actually very much a blessing that Kevin was there.

Scott

I read that there were also 3 dogs with you. .

Tessi

Yeah, I had my dog, Sancho. He'd been a trail dog. This was probably his third season doing trails with me. Gwen had Abbey, a Border Collie. So, those were the two that were on the crew. Then, when Kevin came out to meet us, he had his dog, which is a German Shepherd - I can't remember his name. It was kind of normal to have dogs on the crew. It made me more comfortable.

Scott

The dogs must love being outdoors and running around all day while you guys are working.

Tessi

Yeah, I had mine as a puppy. So it kind of grew up outside - it was quite a transition moving indoors.

Scott

Let's talk about what happened that night. Everyone went to bed. Were you each in your own tent?

Tessi

Yes. We had a wall tent set up which had our cooking gear and everything in it. And, if it starts raining or anything, you have some kind of cover to go into. So, that was set up. Then, we were on our own individually with our tents and choosing anywhere to set up. Gwen and I actually had gone in one direction, so we weren't that far from each other. I don't know where the other boys went. Some of them were in the opposite direction. I went to bed like normal pretty early because we started early and worked a 9-hours day. The day prior, it had rained - some pretty good rainstorms just came and gone. That night - I'd say it was about between 4 or 4.30 in the morning - I remember waking up to a little bit of sprinkled rain on my tent. My dog was outside the tent, so I called him in - that's how I remember being so aware and knowing what time it was. I don't remember falling asleep after that. I was just, kind of, laying there. There was no wind. There was no rain at that point. It was quiet. Out of nowhere, I heard this crack and then a thud. I mean, it was huge. I automatically let out a scream without even knowing what I was screaming for. I just knew that something was dangerous. At that minute, I got out of my tent and screamed Gwen's name. I just wanted somebody to, like, "Did somebody else hear this? Is this just me?" She didn't answer and I didn't think anything of it. I was just, like, "Okay, she's sleeping. Maybe it was just these big branches that are behind my tent." So, I just, kind of, started making up scenarios in my head at that point. When I shined my headlamp over to Gwen's tent, the vestibule of her tent was facing me. The vestibule is, like - when rain flies over a tent - a little space before you actually get in the tent where you can put your shoes so that everything won't get wet. Abbey - her dog - was staring. I could see them glowing at me, as I was pointing my headlamp there. So, that automatically made me think, "Oh, she was just sleeping. I guess it wasn't that big of a thing." I went back into my tent. I did not sleep. I just knew, like, something big had happened.

Scott

But you didn't see anything when you were out?

Tessi

No. It was still dark at that point. I wasn't actually near the tree either at that point - I was just shining at it. I didn't go too far.

Scott

When you're out in the forest or in the deep woods like that, it's really dark too...

Tessi

Oh, yeah. There's no natural light around at all. It was about probably 6 - like the normal time of getting up - when I was, like, "Okay, I can get out of my tent now." As soon as I got out of my tent, I went straight to Gwen's. That's when I saw, like, the end of the tree had fallen on the tent. I mean, it took me a minute to try to figure out what was happening. It was really just a confusing moment. Before I know it, I was screaming for the guys to come help, "Please help!!!" I was just screaming. Kevin, our main boss, was the first one who got to me. I was just, like, yelling at him, "Is she okay?!" Then, we were trying to lift the top of this tree off, but it was so heavy that we just can't move it.

Scott

Can you describe what's the size of this tree? I'm trying to picture how big it was compared to where it fell on the tent.

Tessi

I mean, it was enormous. A 150-foot-tall tree... I can't remember what the diameter was, but it was a huge tree. Strangely, it was just, like, the top of the tree that hit Gwen - that's what we were, kind of, trying to lift up and move. Like, it was just so confusing. At that time, I was telling Kevin, "Well, maybe she's down at the Hot Spring. Maybe she's not even in here." I remember him saying, "I can feel her." At that same time, Abby, her dog, was biting at our hands like she was trying to protect Gwen. We're trying to get the tree off and she's just biting at us. I think Kevin must have yelled to the other guys to bring some tools because we have, like, rock bars and those kinds of tools that we could probably use to move the tree. When they were going to go get that - I have no idea what happened - before we even knew it, Kevin and I had lifted and moved the tree. The second he pulled back the tent, I instantly knew she was dead and let out the most gut-wrenching scream I probably ever have in my life - it was just automatic. Like, "Oh my God. she's no longer with us. The tree hit her. If she had just been, like, 2 feet over in her tent, she would have probably been really scared or, maybe, injured, but the tree just landed right on right on her head. So, she was crushed.

Scott

You said it was, like, a 150-foot tree and it was the top of the tree. So, this tree was like half a football field away from where it was standing, and it just fell that far...

Tessi

And in that direction. It was actually a live tree. We're in an area that had burned - that's why we were there. Of course, we wouldn't have put up camp near a dead tree area. We had chosen what we thought was the safe zone. It was actually better for the tree to hit my tent but, for some reason, it went between these 2 thin other trees and right onto Gwen's tent.

Scott

I can't imagine how horrifying it was to discover her there like that.

Tessi

Yeah, it was definitely something I've never seen in my life. Of course, my life had changed instantly from that moment on. I didn't know much about trauma. I was just living my best life. Like, life was great. I was working trails. We were all just, like, in the best shape of our life. I had trained for marathons in the mountains. On our 5-days off, we would go climb peaks. We loved our lifestyle. We knew we were lucky to be living in the Sierra mountains. Camping is not for everybody - it is a lifestyle to get used to. But yeah, we all felt very lucky to have the jobs we had. So, right after that, we told the boys not to come over because they didn't need to see her. So, we just kind of left that area and went back to the wall tent. Luckily, Kevin had the radio to call out. Otherwise, I guess, we probably would have to look in Gwen's tent for the radio - that would have been pretty scary. So, he made the call out. Because we were so far south - I think we ended up, like, on in a different county or some sort of weird thing like that - it ended up taking, like, 5 hours for a helicopter to come out because they had to get proper authority to come out with them. So, we literally just, kind of, had to sit around camp while Gwen was dead on the ground. It was surreal.

Scott

What is that conversation for 5 hours like when you were waiting for people to get there?

Tessi

That was really weird. It would come in different waves of emotion. We would have realizations of-- Gwen's friend, Niki, was going to come out with us on our next tour. She was flying in from France. She was actually in the air on the day Gwen had died. So, she was on her way to California. I remember we were talking about that, like, "Oh my gosh, her friend's on her way." Then, Gwen's boyfriend Patrick was on another crew in the Sierra further north. So, we were talking about, like, "Oh my God. What's Patrick gonna do? Who's going to tell her mom?" There were times when we just, kind of, had to be normal, I guess, and make coffee. I remember Gwen had given me, like, an apricot the night before. In the backcountry, fruits and fresh stuff are like prizes. I remember, for some reason, just eating that apricot because she had given it to me but I didn't want to eat it. It was weird. I had never experienced a physical shock like that in my life. I didn't know that just by seeing something horrific, your body can actually go into a shock. Like, my vision was all messed up and I couldn't even really see straight. It's really hard to explain what happened in my body because I don't really understand it myself. But yeah, there was just a lot of crying, walking around, and just waiting.

Scott

Your brain just has to take time to process something that's so sudden, shocking, and horrifying like that - it doesn't happen right away.

Tessi

Yeah. I wish I would have known more about trauma, response, and all that. So, we decided to walk out. A helicopter did come and we were offered helicopter rides out, but because of my dog, Kevin's dog, and Gwen's dog, we decided that we just wanted to hike out as a group. Finally, when the police showed up, we were able to leave. We didn't take down our tents or anything, we just packed what we could and took off. So, while we were hiking, Kevin's wife and another guy, Marty, had driven down from Bishop to meet us, knowing that we shouldn't be driving after that. So, they came and met us. One of them drove our truck that we had taken down and one drove the other. So, we were all very glad. I don't think we knew that they were going to be there, but it was quite a relief to have them there.

Scott

Is there some kind of guidelines for where to set up a tent so that you can avoid something like this? I mean, there must be. Do you check the wind direction? What's the best practice for that? I mean, you're in the forest, so it's hard to set up your tent not near to any trees, right?

Tessi

Exactly. You kind of want some trees just for a little bit of protection or some shade because the area we were in got hot - it was only, like, 8,000 feet compared to, like, 10,000-11,000 where we had normally been working. So, it was a rough season to begin with. Just because we were working in a burnt area, you'd come home black - everything was just black from all the ash. So, it was really rough. None of us were super excited to be in that zone, except for Gwen. She was happy anywhere. She would make the best out of anything. We did have a natural hot spring that we were able to soak in, so that did make it nice.

Scott

That's a benefit. You said that this was the first time you experienced a physical shock. At what point did you realize that was happening?

Tessi

That wasn't until later that night. When we had gotten picked up, we drove for 3 hours back to Bishop. During that time, they actually had called the other trail crews to come out and let them all know what happened because we're really tight-knit. Like, you don't just work together - you're living together. We were definitely more like family than anything - being part of a trail crew.

Scott

When you're together 24/7 for 9 days at a time, I can imagine it would be just like family.

Tessi

Yeah. Even on our days off that year-- my boyfriend, who is actually now my husband, was with me, but he didn't work trails. We all actually live at Horton Creek Campground on our days off. It was one that you could pay - I can't remember what it was - \$200 and, kind of, own the site for the summer. So, I had, like, a site. Then, right next to mine was Gwen who had her big camper van. So, that's where, like, our days-off life was. So, her van was right next to ours. It was, kind of, rough waking up and seeing that in those first couple of days.

Scott

Did you get counseling or therapy to help you get through this?

Tessi

Yes and no. It was definitely offered. I was not the best at taking it. The next day after this event, we did go to a debriefing that was called with a therapist. There were some other people there who weren't in the crew - they must have been some of the other trail crew. We had to share our experiences and explained what happened in detail. I heard Kevin say that the thing that stuck in his head was the scream I made after we open the tent and found her. After the debriefing, I was offered to go to that same therapist for therapy, and it would all be covered. Being part of the trail crew, it was really hard to go from being this really tough, strong person--

Scott

To admit that you needed help as well?

Tessi

Yeah. I just wanted to be okay and I didn't know that you'd have to take the time to do it. I was more angry at myself. Like, I would be mad at myself for not getting back on track and not finding happiness again. Like, what's wrong with me?

Scott

Did you go back to work?

Tessi

We were off for, I think, the rest of that tour. Then, I didn't know what I wanted to do. I felt that trails weren't going to work for me again, but I did try going out once more. What they did was put us with the other crews. So, Brent and Chad actually ended up staying with another crew and working out the season there. I made it one night and I couldn't even sleep. I was just a mess. I didn't feel safe. Nothing felt normal. So yeah, I tried it one night and I just couldn't do it. The Forest Service actually offered me to work with the engineering department because they go out to work and come home every day. They're not, like, in the backcountry. They work more on the campgrounds, they put in restaurants, they do all the big machinery types of stuff with loaders and all that kind of work. So, I was able to go work with them. It was a blessing because I didn't have to go out into the backcountry, but I also lost, like, my family. These guys were more construction dudes. You just talk shit all day. There's no comforting or asking how you are and, like, that type of thing. So, that was really hard, especially knowing that they probably didn't really want me on the crew. I was the only girl, so I'm sure the dudes didn't want to work with a girl. But all-in-all, they were great. Like, I was really lucky to still have a job. I even finished out that season. Then, I worked a season with the winter and the water department to cut down salt cedar trees. Then, I went back with the engineering crew for the following year. Surprisingly, I actually stayed with the Forest Service for one more year. Strangely enough, we had met and worked with them earlier in the season before we went down to Jordan Hot Springs. We helped them with a project at the Whitney Portal - it's like the parking area for Mount Whitney. They were needing a pipe to go from the spring down back down to the parking lot. So, we spent that tour digging a ditch, like, kind of, straight up a mountainside to the spring. Then, the engineer guys came with the pipe and we all helped move that up the hill. Then, they would put it all together. So, it actually worked with them. They had met Gwen, and they actually ended up making a little plaque and naming that spring, "Gwen Saltis Spring."

Scott

Oh, that's nice.

Tessi

Yeah, that was pretty neat.

Scott

Yeah, I'm sure she would like that. That one night that you tried overnight, what prevented you from sleeping? You said you didn't feel safe. Were you afraid a tree was going to fall on you or were you thinking other things?

Tessi

Yeah, not that a tree would fall on me. There must have been, maybe, some heat lightning or something - in my head, things were on fire. I kept thinking that there was a fire. I was afraid nobody else was up. I also, kind of, knew that my mind was probably playing tricks on me. So, it

was just a long and weird night. I'm sure that I did think a tree would possibly fall. I guess I had that fear for a long time afterward.

Scott

When you went through a night like that, it's got to be next to impossible to wake up and go to work because you're exhausted from being up all night.

Tessi

Yeah, I ended up heading out that day. I didn't stay at work.

Scott

Were you actually diagnosed with PTSD?

Tessi

Yes. I did see a doctor a couple of months after. He did start me on some medication for that. I'm sure, like everybody else, we just hoped that medication would take everything away, but it didn't. I think it still helped me get through, at least, a certain amount of time.

Scott

What should you have done? Or what would you have done differently had you been aware of what you're going through?

Tessi

Yeah. I've thought about that often. I know I probably needed to take some time off. What happened was, when Nikki did come - Gwen's friend who was coming from France - she did eventually make it to the Bishop area and met us up at Horton Creek Campground and all that. She and Patrick, Gwen's boyfriend, ended up doing a road trip up to Whitefish, Montana, where they have a ton of other friends. There was, like, a whole group of them ended up living there from, like, the Vermont area. So, they wanted to go and just be with their friends up there. That was probably the best thing they could have done - to just go be with her in a group of other friends and just really, like, memorializing her, I guess.

Scott

Well, they were with a group of people who have all lost the same person. That's got to be a common bond.

Tessi

Right. Then, you'd have people who are going through it with you. I didn't really take that route - I kind of backed away from the world. I was embarrassed that I wasn't okay. Like, it was bizarre having it. It played like a video in my head nonstop from beginning to walking out over and over and over. So I felt like I couldn't have regular conversations with people. Like, why do you talk about normal when you have this horrible tragedy going through your head? So, that lasted probably six months - it was, like, a constant repeat. Then, it kind of became me telling the story in my head. Like, I didn't want to forget any detail, so I would just tell it over and over.

Sometimes, I would start over because I missed something. It was bizarre. Then, back to that first night when I realized that I had a shock, we had all met up because all the crews came down, we met up at Kevin's house in Paradise just to be together and support each other. So, we were there. I hadn't actually gotten a hold of my boyfriend at that time. I was really worried, like, "What if he's going down to the hot spring? It's a weekend. What if he was going to surprise me?" So, I had all this weird stuff going through my head and decided to drive back to the

campground in case he showed up there. So, I just remember driving back. My vision was so bad that it was kind of scary to keep driving. Luckily, it was, kind of, all backroads. I didn't have to be on any major road. I just remembered, kind of, blinking my eyes and wondering, "Oh my gosh, what is wrong with me?" That night, I didn't sleep in the tent - I slept in the back of my truck. Well, it's more like fuzzy sleep because your mind is just racing.

Scott

Do you consider yourself fully recovered from this now?

Tessi

Yeah. This happened in 2003. It was probably around 2010 when I really started to feel better. It was a really, really rough time in between. Of course, I wanted to be okay, so I don't want to talk about it all the time with anybody. I wasn't good about getting the help I needed. I did realize that a pain pill takes stuff away - even the pain in your head. So, I kind of went down that road, on and off, till about 2010. Then, I did get stronger and started running again. I did a couple more marathons. But yeah, it took a long time.

Scott

For someone that's been through a trauma like that or similar, the time that it took to recover could have been shortened greatly had you continued with therapy, I guess, right?

Tessi

I truly believe so, yes. I didn't want the help. Honestly, trauma-- you need help. Just the way your brain is working after that is not normal. You, kind of, need somebody to help tell you the things to help get it back to normal.

Scott

It's kind of a conundrum because your brain needs help, but your brain was telling you, "No, I don't need help." So, I just that you just have to figure it out, I guess, eventually, that counseling is gonna help.

Tessi

Yes. And I did have a lot of help with EMDR. It was further, probably, in 2009 when I started to get that. Yeah, that made a big difference.

Scott

That's interesting. I just had a previous guest on not too long ago - that's what made a huge difference for him.

Tessi

Yeah, it was recommended to me, so I found a therapist that did that and she was amazing. It definitely got me out of, like, this trauma as my identity. I felt like this was so a part of me and it was almost hard to let go. You kind of hold on to pain, strangely. Like, not wanting to let it go becomes a comfort.

Scott

Also, I would think that, maybe, you don't want to try to get past it because it would almost seem like you're dishonoring her memory by trying to move on with your own life.

Tessi

Absolutely. Boy, I did live with some survivor guilt. Yes, it is a real thing, especially when she was so amazing. I mean, Gwen was just an awesome person who is full of life. She would talk to anybody and have conversations with the homeless. Her whole thing was just wanting to get to know people and to really get to know them.

Scott

I've seen a few pictures of her - she just got the biggest smile in every one of them. I'll surprise you with this question, so you can think about it for a minute if you want. What's your favorite memory with Gwen?

Tessi

Some of the memories I have are just like little pictures that go through my mind and it's usually just funny things that she had done. I remember seeing her in Bishop and she'd be riding her bike with an umbrella over and, like, these bright crazy clothing. I would just be like, "Oh my gosh! There's Gwen!" Then, one time at Horton Creek, the campground, she had a trumpet and decided to play it at, like, 7 o'clock in the morning. I remember hearing the trumpet and then this guy yelling, "Shut the fuck up!" Then, our trumpet keeps going. Oh, those are just funny small memories.

Scott

She played by her own rules. Now, I know this is something that my listeners would definitely want to know. With Gwen being gone, what happened to her dog?

Tessi

Yes. Abbey hung out with Patrick and Nikki for a while and then she got back to Whitehall, New York to Gwen's mom, Carol. Carol just needed Abbey to be with her, for sure.

Scott

I can imagine what a comfort it must've been to have her daughter's dog with her during that time. I understand Gwen's memory kind of lives on. There's a Facebook page called Friends of Gwen Saltis. What I saw there was an Annual Memorial Float & Clean The Highway. What happens at that kind of event?

Tessi

Yeah. That started with all her friends up in Whitefish. Nikki definitely got that going because she's a good planner of all that. So, every year, it would always be on the weekend of July 19 - whenever that lands - because that's when she passed away. We have a part of the highway named after her. So, we clean up that part of the highway. It's the road that goes into Glacier Park, so it's a gorgeous piece of road. There river right below us. Honestly, it doesn't really get that dirty, so it doesn't take that long to clean up, but we do the clean-up and then, right after, do a float.

Scott

What happens on the float? What are you floating on and how far do you go?

Tessi

Nikki and all those guys up there have lots of rafts. I'm sure we've rented some sometimes because there can be up to sets of 5-7 rafts of people - we definitely take up some space. I don't actually know how far it is. We take a very long time because we make a lot of stops hanging out and swimming - like, it's a full day. Then, we always stop and give our cheers to

Gwen. It's really quite special. Her family has actually been out for it a number of times. I've gotten to know her mom, Carol, and her sister, Sherry. She ended up having 2 kids that Gwen never got to meet. She named her daughter, "Sierra." They've all come out to Montana a few times and it was kind of neat getting to know them.

Scott

It must be so gratifying for her parents to realize she affected so many people in such a positive way.

Tessi

Yeah, who would have thought that? It'll be 19 years this year. So, she had been thought about more than once a year, of course. Like, we won't forget her. She really was that special of a person. I kind of feel like she's the one that brought all of these other great people together because our friends that I've met up in Whitefish are amazing. They're all just really cool people.

Scott

All right. Well, we'll have links to the Facebook page and all of that, as well as your email address if anyone wants to contact you by email. We'll have that on the show notes page for this episode as well. Tessi, thanks for sharing your story.

Tessi

Thanks for letting me share it.

Scott

I wanted to add a little bit of good news to this conversation. Tessi and I didn't talk about this for the podcast, but she told me afterward. Remember she talked about Gwen's best friend, Niki, who was flying in to meet her on the day of the accident? And she also talked about Gwen's boyfriend Patrick. Well, at some point, through this tragic situation, Niki and Patrick met. And they ended up together. They've been married now for 17 years, and they have two boys. And I'm pretty sure that would make Gwen very happy. And what a story when someone asks them, so, how did you guys meet?

And in case you didn't know, this is not the first episode where we've talked about a tree falling on someone. Back in episode 58, James and his co-worker Charlie were cutting down a huge tree, and it didn't fall in the direction they expected it to –

James

The next thing I remember is I was, sort of, led into a cocoon of branches right in the middle of the tree. The trunk was about 2-3 foot to the left of me. I remember calling out to Charlie and he was, sort of, 2-4 on the other side of the trunk. Fortunately - I didn't know this at the time - there was a mount next to the green that the tree had hit, which mean that the trunk didn't go all the way down to the floor. I think if it had gone all the way down to the floor, it would have been game over.

Scott

That's episode 58, called "James was crushed by a tree".

Okay, I have a few things to talk about here.

First, I wanted to let you know that I've put out some content that's different, and it's not really related to the podcast. Although I did post it on the podcast YouTube channel – so if you subscribe to that YouTube channel you may have already seen it.

I'm starting to put together a plan to create a new YouTube channel, and it would be for sleep meditation. What I'm picturing are 10-20 minute videos, where I would talk in the beginning and provide some guided sleep meditation for a few minutes, then the rest would be calming music to help you drift off to sleep. From the research that I've done, there seems to be a demand for this type of content.

So I'm in the very early stages of this process, and I came up with this idea to make a kind of one-off goofy meditation video. Like, meditation with a little bit of humor thrown in. If you want to hear it, just go to the YouTube channel at [WhatWasThatLike.com/youtube](https://www.youtube.com/WhatWasThatLike.com) and you'll see it listed there.

So I'd really like to know what you think about the actual YouTube channel I'm planning to create. Is this something you would use? Do you listen to podcasts or YouTube to fall asleep? I'd love to hear what you think. You can email me at Scott@WhatWasThatLike.com.

And, I just released a new Raw Audio episode. There are now 23 of these episodes, and they're bonus, exclusive content for anyone who becomes a supporter of the show for \$5 a month. These are actual 911 calls with the stories that go with that call. This new one is a little different, because I only cover one story – but the 911 call is actually more than 40 minutes long. These two mothers were on a hike with their kids, and a couple of the kids went exploring into a cave, and then the roof of the cave collapsed, burying them under tons of ice and snow.

911 Operator

Okay, and how many feet deep do you think it is? Can you tell from where you are?

Woman

No! I can't! Are you sending somebody?!?! They're going to die!!! Are you sending somebody?!?!

911 Operator

Alright. Listen to me...

So you can hear that story, and you can binge all 23 episodes with tons of 911 audio, by signing up to support the podcast at [WhatWasThatLike.com/support](https://www.WhatWasThatLike.com/support).

And now here we are at this week's Listener Story. If you're new to the show, we always end each episode with a short story from one of the podcast listeners. What's interesting is that everyone has a story that would work. Yes, even you! Just think of something that happened to you that's funny, interesting, outrageous, or even really sad. You have a story like that – you just have to think of what it is. So if you can come up with your story and you can tell it in about 3 minutes, call it in to the Podcast Voice mail line – 727-386-9468. If you need more time than 3 minutes, just contact me and we'll figure it out.

This week's Listener Story is on a topic we haven't had in a while – it's a childbirth story. I hope you enjoy it.

Stay safe, and I'll see you in two weeks.

(Listener Story)

I got pregnant with my husband who is 6'5" and built like a linebacker - he's really, really thick and strong. So, we knew we were gonna have a big baby. I am 5'7". I was a little overweight, so I tried to do exercise. I had pregestational diabetes. I had an amazing pregnancy with no depression or anxiety, which is what I live with on a daily basis. During my pregnancy, everything stabilized and I was like, "Oh my God, I need to be pregnant for the rest of my life. It was absolutely amazing!" So, we got to the end of the pregnancy. I passed my due date which was on the 28th of August, 2007. I was with the doctor at my regular appointment. There was a long weekend coming, so I asked the doctor if he could induce me on Friday, so that I didn't have to stay pregnant during the long weekend because I was, like, big - the baby was big. My stomach did get hard, but I wasn't feeling any pain - that was going on for about a week. So, when he checked me, apparently, I was in active labor but I was fine - my water hadn't broken. So, we just stayed there.

On my father's birthday on Friday, the 31st of August, we went in for an induction. They broke my water at 1.30 o'clock. The pain I didn't feel before - I felt that now. I've never felt pain like that before. It was really bad. I was hungry, so my husband went and got me a wrap. I ate it. Then, it was time for the epidural to come. While they were putting it in, apparently, it looked like he had to try 2-3 times. My husband was looking at the doctor. I was leaning onto my husband. Every time he lifted his fingers up, there would be blood on them. My husband was like, "Oh my gosh, just get it done." While he was doing this in my back, I threw up. So, my husband ran and got a little pail. Then, I threw up in the pail. He was so good. He ran to the bathroom to rinse it in the sink but then realized that there was a grid in the sinkhole, so he had to scoop up the chunks and then flushed them into the toilet. Once I had the epidural, I felt great.

Then, I started pushing at 7 PM. As I was pushing, everything was going really well. My mom was on one side while my husband was on the other. They were holding my legs to help me push. Sometimes, they forget to put my legs down after because they were chatting with each other. Then, the head came out. Right before the head came out, the doctor saw hair and was like, "Oh my gosh, the baby has a lot of hair!" My ex-husband - who was my husband at that time - was born the same way, so we kind of knew that the baby was going to have hair. We didn't know if it was going to be a boy and a girl - we wanted to keep it a surprise. Then, what happened is that the doctor had actually told me to stop pushing because he needed to work the baby's shoulder out of my canal, but I didn't listen. I just want to get the damn thing out, so I pushed and it ripped to the fourth degree. So, I had to have surgery after.

When the baby came out, I started hemorrhaging and lost about a liter and a half of blood. We have about 6 liters of blood in our body. So, I was hemorrhaging was really bad. I could feel liquid running down my leg. Apparently, there was just blood gushing out of me - it was pretty dramatic. They put the baby on me but I was losing blood, so I was kind of out of it. They took pictures. Thank goodness. They were going to stitch me up right there and then but, first, they had to get the bleeding to stop. They had to get my uterus to contract again. So, I had one nurse pressing down on my stomach and I had the doctor with his arm - all the way up to his elbow - inside of me trying to contract the uterus. It was so painful - it was worse than having the baby. I guess, when they stopped the bleeding, they were going to stitch me up, but I'm like, "No, I don't want any more pain." They were like, "It's not going to hurt." "Everything hurts!" They were going to take me into surgery anyway to make sure everything was okay - they ended up

doing the stitching there. So, I didn't get to see my daughter - like, truly see her - because while I was gushing blood, they lost me for about 10 minutes. I was unconscious. I didn't die there, but I was unconscious. I woke up and I've got my parents who were divorced for a long time - one on one side and one on the other. I woke up and I didn't know if it was, like, real-life because it was weird to see them together. They've whisked me off to surgery.

My ex-husband was taking care of the baby. We came to find out later that he had to feed the baby with a tube with his pinky finger because they didn't know if I wanted to breastfeed. When the baby came out, my husband was looking and realized that the absence of a penis meant that it was a vagina. So, we were all excited. It was a girl and we named her Mia.

I was in surgery, and I didn't get out till 11.30. So, I didn't have the baby in my arms until 11.30. The whole family had been there. So, I came in, held her, and tried to breastfeed her. My ex-in-laws were sitting there and I'm like, "They're not getting the hint to get the hell out of the room so that I can, like, pop my boob out." Anyways, we tried that and it didn't work. So, we decided not to breastfeed. I had a breast reduction, so we knew that this could be a possibility. He gave me Mia and put her in my arms. I have pictures of it and it shows how yellow I am because I was anemic and it was pretty bad.

For a whole day and a half, I did not connect with Mia. I was, like, crying to my mom in the middle of the night, "Give her back. I don't want her. Take her away." I got it all out. My mom is a tough mom. She's a nurse and an amazing woman. She looked at me and said, "Okay, that's enough. Suck it up. You got this. She's your baby!" So, after that, I started connecting with Mia. Before that, I didn't have any energy. So, I got out of bed, took a walk with her, and really bonded with her during that walk - it was absolutely amazing. The morning after I gave birth, my husband came back - he couldn't sleep at the hospital. He still has the bloody jeans and the bloody shoes on. He just wanted to get back there - he's a very loving father - so he came back and we have a beautiful girl.

Now, she's 14 years old and she's 5'11" - much taller than her mama. She's built like her dad. She plays hockey. That thick hair never went away. A lot of people would comment on her hair when she was a baby. She was just a really happy and funny baby - big smiles, always giggling, and always smiling. Watching her grow those first 3 years was absolutely amazing. We got a divorce after 3 years, so it changed the dynamic, but it was just amazing to watch her grow. I know people say this all the time, "Oh, it goes so fast." It used to annoy me and I was like, "Yeah, yeah." Well, it does. She's 14 and in grade 9 in high school. It's just unbelievable. It really is a miracle that we can form these little creatures in our tummies. I forgot to say that she came out as a 9-pound 1-ounce and a 21-inch baby - she was very long and very big. Thank you for listening. And Scott, I love your show.