

Episode 76: Gil fell off a cliff

When I was a kid and even as a young adult, I had no fear of heights. I was always climbing trees, climbing all over the roof of our house, never having a second thought or any fear about it.

Then, when I was 30, something happened that changed that.

We were living in Maine. It was my wife Jeanne, and our two kids. Our son David was 8 years old, and our daughter Brianne was 5.

We lived in a house that had a fireplace, and the chimney was equipped with this interesting device. You know chimneys get soot and stuff that builds up inside, and they need to be cleaned out pretty regularly. If you don't do that, it can be dangerous because the residue can actually catch on fire. It wasn't unusual to hear about chimney fires sometimes when this happened.

But this chimney was equipped with this thing that had a handle at the bottom, down in the basement, and there was a cable that was inside the chimney, and it went all the way up to the top. And attached to the cable was this stiff wire brush. So you could crank that handle around, and the brush would travel up the chimney, brushing away all of that gunk that had built up, and then at the top it's supposed to reverse direction and come back down.

And most of the time, it worked pretty well. But there was one time when it got stuck at the top, and I couldn't get it loose. So the only way to get it working again would be to actually get on the roof and reach down into the chimney. So I got the ladder out, and we had a large wooden deck on the back of the house, and that's where I decided to set it up. I leaned the ladder up against the edge of the roof. I climbed up and was just about to the roof level, when the base of the ladder started sliding away from the house. And at that point there was nothing I could do, there was nothing to grab on to, I just knew I was going down. So the ladder hit the deck first, and then I landed on my back, on top of the ladder.

It was probably about a 10 foot drop. And I wasn't really injured, hadn't broken any bones, but it knocked the wind out of me and I had to kind of just lie there for a minute.

Well, of course the rest of the family had heard the noise and had come running. They opened the sliding glass doors to the deck and saw me still lying there. I assured them I was okay, but this was still a pretty traumatic thing for David. At 8 years old, you really don't want to see your dad in a spot like that, so even though I assured him I wasn't really injured, he was still pretty upset.

David's an adult now of course, and I asked him what was the first thing he remembered about that day.

David

The part of the story that I remember firsthand is coming up the stairs, looking out the sliding glass doors out onto the second floor deck that we had and just seeing you laying there on your back; and I probably freaked out.

So I got up slowly and started to walk around, sort of doing a self-assessment to make sure I was okay. And I really was okay – the only sign that anything had happened would be a big bruise on my leg. So I went back down to the basement to see if I could figure out how to get the chimney brush unstuck.

In the meantime, upstairs - my wife Jeanne could see that David was still shook up by this whole thing, so she had an idea about something that would make him feel better. She got a couple of pain pills, like Ibuprofen, and gave them to him, along with a glass of water, to bring to me downstairs. That way he would feel like he was helping out with my recovery.

But David didn't quite get the instructions that the pain pills were for me -

David

So later, I'm sure you were inside at this point, when mom gave me pills to give to you, I guess I didn't hear her say they were for you. It made sense to me since I was freaking out so badly, I probably just thought, "Oh these are to help calm me down." So I took your pain pills without realizing it.

Yep, 8 year old David swallowed the pain pills.

David

I think mom at some point asked you if I gave you the pills. When you didn't know what she was talking about she came to me and said, "David, where are those pills I gave you to give dad?" Oh, I probably freaked out 10 times more because at that point I realized they were for you. I'm sure I just ran all the worst case scenarios in my head. It was not a fun time.

So now Jeanne and I are kind of panicking because a kid isn't supposed to take an adult's dose of pain medication, and David's REALLY upset now because it's obvious that he shouldn't have done that, and he can see mom and dad are worried, and we're trying to figure out what to do, because this is way before Google, I think our only computer then was a Commodore 64 and of course we didn't have internet.

But back then, in the old days, we had this thing called the phone book, and in there was the Poison Control hotline, which we called and it turned out to be not that big a deal. Everyone survived the trauma.

But since that day, I have had a weird feeling about heights. Not a big fan. And what happened to me wasn't even that bad.

But imagine you're walking along a trail, and there's no guardrail next to it, and the other side of that trail is a 100 foot drop, which is about 30 meters, and the bottom of that is rocks. And suddenly you get too close to the edge, and you start to lose your footing.

That's what happened to Gil.

Scott

Prior to this, had you ever broken any bones?

Gil

Up until 2019 I had never broken a bone before. It was one of my easy go-to 'never have I evers.' In October of 2019 when I was 23, I did actually break my clavicle skateboarding. Less than 6 weeks later I also fractured my skull biking to work and spent 2 nights in the same emergency room that I was in after I fell off the cliff.

Scott

Man, you made up for a lifetime of no breaking (laughs) all of the sudden.

Gil

Yeah I guess I decided I didn't have an interesting enough childhood so I had to make up for it somehow.

Scott

Well let's talk about what happened on that day. Well this is actually before that day, this was on your 25 birthday. How long in advance did you plan this trip?

Gil

So it wasn't exactly on my 25 birthday, it was the day before. Because I work 2 jobs, the only day off I have in the week is Friday. So I had known ahead of time that I wanted to do something on that Friday since it was my only day off and I sort of knew I wanted to go to the beach and the coast. We live an hour from the coast, it's beautiful and serene and just a nice place to go and have a quiet birthday. The last 2 previous years I had done big blowout parties for my birthday so this year I wanted to find a way to do a Covid birthday. I just wanted something quiet with just me and my partner that still felt as meaningful as having a huge party.

In terms of where we went that day, I didn't plan ahead. I didn't even make up my mind about where I wanted to go until the day of. We had been to Hug Point before so I knew it was good for a drive and a day trip and I knew that it was really beautiful. So I said, "Screw it, let's just go back to Hug Point."

Scott

Yeah, the pictures I've seen look really beautiful. What's the park like overall?

Gil

Oh god, it's really beautiful. The reason why we originally had gone to Hug Point back in last October was because we stayed the night in our car at Cannon Beach, which is a town that is about 10 minutes north on the coast. The thing that's great about Cannon Beach is it has really great tidepools. So we had gotten up early and gone to the Cannon Beach tidepools and they were kind of crowded, so I thought maybe I could do a deep dive on the internet and see if there were some other cool places to see tidepools in the area. Probably after about half an hour of searching we found Hug Point.

Scott

So there are tidepools there?

Gil

Yeah there's tidepools when you go at low tide. You can see sea anemone and starfish and it's a really wonderful park. If you go at low tide there is actually an old road blown out of the side of the rock with dynamite that they used to use old cars and horses on back in the early 20th century. You can get up on the old road and it will actually lead you to the other side of the cove

that has a waterfall and sea caves and you can get down at low tide into a lot of tide pools in the rocks.

Scott

This sounds awesome. It must be a pretty popular place.

Gil

You'd be surprised. Not that many people know about it so it's a pretty quiet place to go.

Scott

You had hiked there before?

Gil

Yeah we'd hiked there before and we had gone there early in the morning so we had taken the road path over to the other side of the cove. We saw the waterfall and played in the caves and climbed on the rocks and ya know, poked a sea anemone.

Scott

Who was with you that day?

Gil

That day it was my partner June, both the day that we went before and the day we went for my 25th birthday.

Scott

I gotta ask you this, before this happened, how did you feel about heights?

Gil

I actually don't mind heights too much. My mom when we were growing up was so nervous when my brother and I were near anything high up that it was a pretty early act of rebellion for me to intentionally get up somewhere high to freak her out.

Scott

(Laughs)

Gil

If I'm stuck at the top of a ferris wheel I'm not having a good time; but if I'm climbing a tree or if I'm on top of a cliff I don't usually get too wiggled out about it.

Scott

Yeah I saw some of the pictures and it looks like you're in some precarious positions like on the side of a rock wall or something.

Gil

Yeah I think I struggle more with having no fear than having fear. I think my mom would prefer that I have more fear.

Scott

I think that's true of a lot of parents probably.

Gil

Yeah.

Scott

Ok, so let's talk about that day. Can you take us through what happened?

Gil

So we'd gone to the coast and we got there pretty late in the afternoon. We probably didn't get there until about 1 or 2. It was way past low tide so we couldn't get to the other side of the cove that you have to take the road trail to get to, so we were just hanging out on the initial part of the beach that you can walk without hiking anywhere. We had taken some pictures on the rocks and were just chilling and hanging out. We had eaten some cakes that we picked up on our way out of town.

Around 4pm we said, "It's still daylight and early, I don't want to go home yet so let's see if any of the trails that are in the grass in the cliffs above the coves will lead to the otherside so we can get to the sea caves and the waterfall." So it was not an established trail but it was kind of packed dirt trails where you can tell they are frequently hiked by people, but it didn't have any signs and wasn't anything official. So we were going through these trails for about 10 or 15 minutes and we kept running into dead ends. We were having a good time because it was really beautiful and really nice weather, but we were still on this mission to get to the other side of the cove.

We were running into dead end after dead end. Eventually I found a place where it looked like the trail dipped down and hugged the side of a rock wall and looked like it did go around to the other side. I said, "Let's check this out and see if it goes through." I climbed down and as I was poking around it then my partner climbed down too. It was a pretty narrow looking trail and didn't look very precarious when we were looking at it, it was pretty flat and didn't have a lot of rocks or obstructions but it was fairly narrow. I said, "Hold on babe, let me go first because it looks like this could potentially be slippery."

From where we were we couldn't see that if you did fall you would go over a cliff edge, we just thought that if you fell you might have a tumble in some rocks and grass that wouldn't be very comfortable. Less than a minute in, probably 5 or 6 steps in, I was putting my weight against the side of the rock wall on this little trail and my feet just slipped. One foot slipped and the next foot slipped. Then I had probably about 10 feet or so of dirt and roots that I was trying to catch myself on to no avail. Then a sudden drop.

It happened within seconds and honestly when it was happening and probably for a good few minutes after it happened I was completely convinced that it was a dream. Especially because I tend to have stressful dreams most nights. I dream about crashing my car or falling off a cliff or getting shot. So my mind did not register that it was real, it felt so surreal and dreamlike to suddenly be slipping and then have no ground under me. The moment I went over the edge I'm pretty sure I actually blacked out.

Scott

Do you think that was because of fear or that maybe you hit your head on something?

Gil

I do think it was more of fear. I think it was kind of a blackout of resolution while my mind was registering that I went over the edge. It was telling me, "Alright bitch, you're dead. Good night. We're fucking dead. You went over a cliff and either this is a dream and you're about to wake up or this is real life and you're dead. So just go to sleep."

I remember waking up on the rocks and my head ringing and this memory of the fall playing back over and over again. Waking up still in complete belief that it was not reality until I slowly came to the realization, "Yeah, I just fell off a cliff and there is blood all over me and things on my body that are definitely broken."

Scott

What was the surface like where you landed?

Gil

It was all rock. It was mostly smaller rocks, not pebble sized but like garden stone sized. It wasn't necessarily so jagged that I landed on boulders but it was not a soft landing for sure. I had pulled myself up and could see that there was blood all over where I landed. I think the first thing I felt was my face.

My lip had split completely down the middle. It was split so wide open that it actually felt to me that my lip was missing. It felt like I had completely bitten off my lip. I could see that the blood on the ground was looking a little chunky. I thought, "Jesus Christ I bit my lip off. I'm going to be disfigured." My eye was so swollen and crushed that when I was trying to touch it and feel it in the socket, it felt like I had crushed my eye and that I was going to lose my eye as well.

Scott

So you were only seeing out of your left eye at that point?

Gil

Yeah, and I have really bad vision too. My prescription is like -3.25, which isn't as bad as they get but it's bad enough that when I don't have my glasses on I can't see past a foot in front of my face. At some point in the fall I had lost my glasses and had no idea where they went as I never found them. So I could only see out of my left eye and I couldn't really see from my left eye at all because my vision is not ideal.

Scott

You're looking at all that blood knowing, "Hey, that's all my blood."

Gil

Yeah and because I couldn't see my face but I could feel that it felt pretty rough, I was convinced I was going to be disfigured. I remember at one point yelling up at my partner, "Babe, I'm going to be disfigured, are you still going to love me?"

Scott

That's when June called 911.

Gil

Yeah she had called 911 right away. I remember waking up on the rocks and, according to them, between my falling and me responding to them was a couple of minutes. No one was timing that so I don't know how long that actually was, it might have been a couple of minutes it

might have just felt like a couple of minutes because they were scared; and it might have in reality been a couple of seconds. According to them I was out for a couple of minutes.

The first thing that I realized after I knew I was awake and not dreaming, was that I could hear them calling my name. I could hear them somewhere above me yelling, "Gil! Gil!" I just managed to get out this super gargled yell, "Help!!" You know? You're in that situation and you just know, "I'm fucked." It just switches on, and that is the one word on the tip of your tongue is, "Help me. Fucking come help me please." I could hear them calling my name and once they could tell that I was yelling back to them I heard them yell, "I called 911!"

911 Operator

911 what's your emergency?

Caller

Hi, I'm at Hug Point.

911 Operator

Mhm.

Caller

My partner and I were walking across the trails and we walked to the right of the trail where the parking lot is and they just fell down a cliff and I think they might be unconscious.

911 Operator

Ok so another- so you're at Hug Point state park. What trail did you take?

Caller

Basically when you get to the parking lot you take a right-

911 Operator

Take a right?

Caller

Yeah. It's down a wooden dirt path.

911 Operator

Ok down a wooden path. What number are you calling from?

(---)

Ok I'm going to get fire heading down that way. Can you go to the parking lot to flag them down to lead them to where that person is?

Caller

Yes.

911 Operator

Ok hang on one moment, don't hang up.

Station 32 respond to Hug Point in the parking lot. My caller is going to walk you down the path he took for a hiker that fell off the cliff and is unconscious.

(Yelling in background)

Gil!

911 Operator

So what's your name sir?

(Yelling in background)

Gil! I'm calling 911!

911 Operator

Can you hear that person talking to you or are they unconscious?

Caller

I can't hear them.

911 Operator

Can you see them?

Caller

I can't see them.

911 Operator

Ok. Did they fall off the cliff on the oceanside or-

Caller

Yes on the oceanside.

911 Operator

Is he in the water or on rocks?

Caller

On rocks.

911 Operator

On rocks ok. Is he moving at all?

Caller

I think I hear a voice but I'm not sure.

911 Operator

Ok.

Caller

I think I can hear screaming.

911 Operator

Ok.

Gil

It was really within like a minute that I could hear the sirens pulling up to the park.

Scott

It looked like there was no easy way for someone- I mean June couldn't climb down and get to you at all.

Gil

No. They actually couldn't even see me from where they were. They saw me fall and then just saw me disappear and then couldn't hear me or see me until I woke up and started yelling for them. They actually had to backtrack further back on the trail to another part of the cliff to get to a vantage point where they could see down to me.

They called 911 and had to go back to the parking lot to lead the paramedics down to where I was. Then because I was in such a desolate part of this cove, it took the paramedics probably 20-25 minutes to figure out a way to get down to me, once they actually arrived.

Scott

You really picked a spot didn't you??

Gil

Yeah I really did. I had so much time to kill down there. I managed to sit up pretty soon after I woke up and tried to crawl around a little bit, but both of my arms were really janked up and and I couldn't tell how bad my legs were.

Scott

Where were you feeling pain? What was hurting?

Gil

Everything. I think people are really afraid of being in a bad accident or dying. My experience with pain usually is that you don't feel it until at least 2 hours afterward. My initial feeling waking up maybe wasn't pain but was probably terror. I could look down at my arm and could tell that it was pretty fucking broken and twisted into a shape the human arm should not be twisted to. I couldn't feel it yet though, I didn't start feeling it until I got to the hospital. Adrenaline will do a lot for you. I felt actually pretty fine for the first 10 or 15 minutes. I was pretty broken up but still trying to crawl around on the rocks.

I was pretty determined to find my phone because my phone had come out of my pocket when I'd fallen. One of the first things I called up to June after I confirmed they were there and had called 911 was, "Babe can you call my phone?" I was just like, "Ok, this is happening. I've fallen off of a cliff. I'm injured. My face might be disfigured. My arm is definitely broken. Do I really have to buy a new phone too?" So in the time I was waiting for the paramedics I had actually been slowly inching around the beach trying to find my phone, not being able to see jack shit because I'd lost my glasses. I did eventually find it about 20 feet away from me.

Of course I had 20 missed calls from my partner because they had just kept calling and calling me. Of course my fucking phone was unharmed. Me, broken, my phone, fine. I guess that's a

free plug for Google Plus. It was a huge relief to find it because my partner and I couldn't really hear each other that well because of how far we were. When I did finally get my phone they hadn't stopped calling me so I was able to pick up and actually talk to them. They said, "The paramedics are there. They're trying to find a way down to you, it's just really steep. They're going to try to grapple down."

Scott

That's incredible. So you were able to communicate with June the whole time you were waiting?

Gil

Yeah it was really nice. I think one of the first things I said to them- I think once I had my hands on my phone that's when the adrenaline started to drain out of me and I started to get really cold and really tired. I just remember telling them, "Tell those guys to hurry up because I think I might die down here."

Scott

So the local fire department and first responders were able to eventually get to you.

Gil

Yeah.

Scott

They couldn't get you out of there though.

Gil

No they couldn't. Eventually someone did manage to get down to me. According to June the people who responded to my fall were the local sheriff, the fire department with their paramedics, and a local rescue team. I'm still not completely sure if they were a volunteer rescue force or if they were someone employed by the county since I'm sure a lot of accidents happen in the county and the area.

The first person to make it down to me was someone from this local rescue team. He came and was the first person to talk to me and check on me. He came down and didn't have any equipment, he just made it down and looked me in the eyes and was just like, "Stay awake." The first thing I said when he rolled up was, "I'm glad you're here man, I'm getting really tired and I don't know how much longer I can stay awake." He just looked at me and said, "Ok, stay awake."

The second person to make it down was a firefighter paramedic who actually did manage to make it down with some equipment. I think the first thing they did was cut my jackets off of me, I actually had 2 jackets on because the Oregon coast is really cold. He also brought down a stretcher and I think they took some vitals from me, but the first thing they did was cut my clothing off my body and got me on the stretcher and tried to protect me from the wind and the surf because the tide was rising too.

Then they just tried to wait for the Coast Guard helicopter to get to a place where they could pull us up. This cove was so small and awkwardly positioned that it was probably another 20 or 30 minutes before I could actually get helivaced up because of how difficult it was for the Coast Guard to pull the helicopter into a position where they could safely evacuate me.

Scott

Where you landed, how far were you from the water?

Gil

When I first landed, in my mind I felt like I was far, maybe 10 feet from the water. There were a couple of times where the waves would get close enough to almost lick me. Then there was one point where the rescue team responder was guarding my body from the waves of the water. They were really about to press up on me.

Scott

There's some pretty incredible films, actually 2 different videos. One taken from June at the top of the cliff, videoing you being lifted from the ground into the Coast Guard helicopter. Then the Coast Guard had their own video from the vantage point of the helicopter straight down as they brought you up in the basket. Do you remember them putting you in that basket?

Gil

Yeah I absolutely do. That was probably one of the scarier parts of the entire experience honestly. It felt so precarious. They strap you to a board and then they tie the board to the rope that is used to hoist you into the helicopter. It feels so precarious. You're basically swinging from a string as they haul you another 100 feet in the air into this helicopter.

When they got me up there they actually missed the door at first. Then when they could finally put a hand on me and pull me in, to do so they kind of have to balance you on the lip of the helicopter. You're sort of hanging backwards out of it. In my mind I had to keep telling myself the entire time, "They do this all the time. They never drop anyone. I'm sure they do this every week and they never drop anyone. It's ok. They're not going to drop you." But I definitely felt like, "Yeah, I'm about to be dropped out of this helicopter."

Scott

Yes, as I was watching the video, it's not a quick process, it's very slow getting lifted up toward the chopper there. I could see that they were having trouble getting the whole thing swung around to get in the door the right direction.

Gil

Yeah, yeah. Once we were in the chopper I pretty much knew that once I got in there I was going to be fine. I knew once they could get me on an IV and stabilize me I would be ok. My only fear of being afraid I might die before that was that I had lost quite a bit of blood and I was really cold and really tired. I thought, "I don't know at what point my body might decide, 'Aw fuck it. It's not worth it. Let's just give up.'" As soon as I was in the helicopter the next thing they did was stick an IV in me. As soon as they got that going I was like, "Cool. I know I'm going to be fine."

Everything after that actually felt like it happened remarkably fast. I'm sure a helicopter ride from the coast to Portland can't be 5 minutes, but it felt like 5 minutes. They actually took me up to Astoria which is a little further up the coast, maybe like an hour by car from where we were. They took me to Astoria first because from there they transferred me into a Lifeline helicopter ambulance.

In that ambulance that's when they finished cutting the rest of my clothing off and did more vitals. At that point I think the Coast Guard may have given me some painkillers and anti nausea

medication, so then they gave me some more. From that point I was basically snoozing until we got back to Portland. They unloaded me at the Legacy Emanuel Hospital, which is one of only two trauma centers in Oregon State.

Scott

What were your actual injuries?

Gil

I do not know how I came out of this accident so miraculously unharmed. Every person who came into my hospital room told me I was really lucky. The only really serious injury I had was that my right arm was severely broken. Later when they were looking at the X-rays for it and I asked them how bad it was; they told me, "This is pretty much as bad as we see."

So that was severely broken, mostly my wrist. It had broken at my wrist but the break was severe enough that it had gone down into my forearm and the bone split all the way through. They weren't completely sure if the bone had broken through the skin or not because there were some abrasions on my skin where they couldn't tell if that was from the bone penetrating through my skin or if I had been cut by some of the rocks on my way down. So that was the really bad one.

Other than that, I had a fracture in my sinus, I fractured my right orbit around my eye but it was not displaced. I fractured 2 of my ribs, also not displaced. I fractured my sacrum which is the back of your tailbone. I also fractured my left elbow. All things considered, none of my fractures were displaced, just my right arm was severely broken. What I think probably happened when I fell was that I broke the fall for my head with my right arm, which is why my right arm was as broken as it was and my head was as undamaged as it was.

Scott

It really is remarkable. You could have been paralyzed or brain damaged or just all kinds of stuff after falling 100 feet onto rocks.

Gil

Yeah really. I didn't even break any teeth, and dental work is expensive so I'm pretty happy about that one too.

Scott

So are you back home now?

Gil

Yeah I'm back home. I stayed overnight in the hospital for 2 nights. The first thing they did when they got me out of the ambulance was give me some milk of magnesia and reset the break in my arm. Then they kept me there for 2 more nights. I fell that Friday and I got surgery not the following Monday but the one after that, which was about 10 days after that. That was just a day surgery. I didn't have to stay the night. So I've been home pretty much every night since Sunday night after the fall.

Scott

As we're recording this, it happened just a little over 2 weeks ago.

Gil

Yep, not that long at all.

Scott

Are you mobile at all? Are you able to walk around?

Gil

Yeah I'm actually really surprised by how mobile I am actually. The first 24 hours in the hospital I couldn't lift anything to my face so my mom or a nurse had to give me all of my water and had to feed me. I was thankfully able to use the bathroom on my own, which I was pretty determined to do because I was not going to let a grown man wipe my butt at 25 years old.

I've been walking around ok. The first couple of days in the hospital when I was fresh from the fall it was kind of uncertain how well I was going to be able to walk and if I was going to be able to take the stairs. I'd say 48 hours after the fall I was walking around on my own pretty successfully. Now I walk on my own just fine. I went to the post office by myself yesterday and only almost tripped a couple times and freaked every passerby out.

Scott

Do you think you'd ever go hiking at that place again?

Gil

Yeah it's actually the first thing I want to do once I've recovered honestly. Especially because I lost my glasses during the fall, I don't even know what it looked like. Everyone tells me it was 100 feet, but I don't know how accurate that is or where they were measuring from. I feel like Hug Point has to be the first place I go back because I have to see how far it was when I actually fell. Maybe try to find my glasses too because I'm still wondering where those went.

Scott

How would you evaluate that? Would you go down to the place you landed and look up at where you started from?

Gil

I would definitely go low and look up. I don't think I would try to find the trail I'd fallen off again except to maybe throw some sticks on it so nobody else tries to go down there. If I go back there and try to figure out where I fell from, I'll probably go during low tide so I can take the proper route through the old automobile trail and try to find the rocks I fell onto and trace it with some of the photos we have. Then I'd try to get a good look up there to see if I could tell where the trail was when I fell.

Scott

In the past you've struggled with depression and even thoughts of suicide. How had that affected that mentality?

Gil

I don't know if it's affected the mentality so much as it's been a really awesome confirmation of how far I've come as an adult since I was a teenager. As a teenager I was not a happy kid and I was pretty suicidal as a teenager. I kept sticking it through more out of fear than anything. Now I'm this adult who's really happy to be alive, who really loves my partner, who loves the house I live in, loves my job and I'm excited about the future and have a good relationship with my family. How awesome it is to have that confirmation that I'm not somebody that wants to die

anymore. I'm a person that wants to live and really wants to live. Even in a moment where my body really wanted to go to sleep and give up I was like, "Fuck you. I'm staying awake no matter how much you want me to pass out, I'm staying awake. I'm turning 25 tomorrow and I'm really excited about it and I'm excited about the future. So we're doing this baby! A cliff is not killing us, we're staying alive!"

Scott

Good for you, I love that. Well whatever your 26 birthday is, you've set a standard that's going to be pretty hard to top I think.

Gil

Yeah I'm going to have to find a 200 foot cliff I think.

Scott

Have you spoken with any of the first responders since that day?

Gil

No I actually haven't. Actually the first time I saw the Coast Guard video was when one of June's coworkers had sent it to them and said, "It looks like they're getting ready to take Gil out" because there was a cross hair over me on the video. I later found it on FaceBook and I even commented on the post being like, "LOL, that's me." I never got any kind of response though. If I ever run into any of those first responders who saved my ass I'll be like, "Thank you so fucking much."

I'm sure the Coast Guard is used to idiots who fall off cliffs and need to be helivaced out pretty regularly, but those guys who made it down to me on the beach and stabilized my ass I would love to be like, "Thank you dude. I would be either dead or really fucked up if you hadn't been there so thanks."

Scott

Now you mentioned earlier that your mom doesn't like you to climb on things or get on things that are high up. Have you heard that phrase, "I told you so" yet?

Gil

I think she's been holding that one back but she does keep tellin me that I really owe her when I recover, so I imagine at that point a pretty big "I told you so" is coming.

If you want to see a couple of really incredible videos, I have Gil's rescue videos posted in the show notes for this episode. You can see those videos, along with some pictures, at WhatWasThatLike.com/76.

And you may have noticed something new in this episode – this one was the first new episode with an ad from a sponsor. This podcast has been going for almost 3 years without any ads, and I'm guessing almost all of the other podcasts you listen to have multiple ads with every episode. It's just something that comes with the territory.

So I wanted to let you know a couple of things about this.

First, if you hear me promoting something on this podcast, you can be sure that I've already researched the company and verified that it's something I can stand behind. Whenever possible, I will have actually even used the product or service myself so that I can talk about it from first-hand experience. I'm only going to promote products that I feel good about, and that can be of value to you.

And secondly, one of the benefits of being a supporter of the podcast is that you get all of the new episodes ad-free. With your Patreon account of \$5 a month, you get your own private RSS feed, which means all of the ad-free episodes come right into your podcast app just like all the other podcasts you listen to. And of course you get all of the bonus Raw Audio episodes that are ONLY available to the \$5/month supporters.

So you can hear the ads and learn about the products and services, or you can sign up as a patron and get all the new episodes ad-free, as well as the bonus episodes which are always ad-free anyway.

Either way is okay with me, because I'm just happy to have you as a listener! And I really mean that!

And I've mentioned this before, but I'll just say it again here – we have a great group of listeners and lots of wonderful discussions in the podcast Facebook group. And a lot of the guests from previous episodes are in there as well, so it's kind of fun for everyone to get to know them. And we don't just talk about the podcast either, we talk about all kinds of interesting things. And we never talk about politics. That's one thing I will always make sure of – it's at least one place on Facebook that will never have any political talk. So I invite you to join us! You can get in that group at [WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook](https://www.facebook.com/WhatWasThatLike.com/facebook).

We're gonna close out the show today with a short story from Tristan.

Thanks again for listening, stay safe, and I'll see you in two weeks.

Tristan

Hi my name is Tristan and this the story of how I gave my parents their first gray hairs. Before this day I had no significant health issues as a child whatsoever. This is a story from when I was 6 years old.

My parents picked me up from my grandmother's house and we drove out to a clear lake for a family day of fun in the sun. At this time my mom was 8 months pregnant with my little brother and looking forward to laying out by the water while she still had the chance before the newborn came. I had been running a fever at my grandmother's house, a fact she neglected to tell my parents, before they allowed me to wade in the cold lake water.

I remember getting my life jacket on and following my dad out into the shallow part of the water where he showed me some tiny fish. I remember getting out of the water, my mom wrapping me in a beach towel, and laying back in one of the chairs we unpacked. I even remember my mom letting me have a sip of her diet coke.

"Her lips are turning blue," was the next thing I remember hearing. I could hear my mom yelling but I couldn't see her or my dad, I couldn't see anything. After another couple of seconds I

couldn't hear anything either. The next thing I remember seeing was an X-ray of my chest on the light board across from me in my hospital room.

Normally you might think, "Ok, an ambulance was called and I was easily helped." Well keep in mind this was 1996, the days before everybody had a cell phone in their pocket and we were at a lake in a part of the city where most of the homes were vacation homes, meaning they were empty at the time. My parents knew I needed to get to the hospital but we were somewhere unfamiliar and they weren't sure where the hospital was.

My dad picked me up and took me in his arms along with my very pregnant mother and ran from door to door trying to get a hold of someone to call 911. They knocked on the doors of 5 or 6 houses until they saw a driveway with an ambulance parked in it. By the grace of God someone answered the door and it was the wife of the pediatrician who was next door playing darts with the ambulance driver.

Needless to say they picked me up and I rode with them to the hospital. My dad followed them in the van that was almost out of gas. When I woke up and was clear to go home, we were out of gas in our van, but the doctor who we'd seen earlier had a broken gas gauge and gave us his extra gas can to get home.